

ATTACHMENT SS2

REGION 2 SENSITIVE SPECIES EVALUATION FORM

Species: <i>Calamospiza melanocorys</i> / Lark bunting			
Criteria	Rank	Rationale	Literature Citations
1 Distribution within R2	B	Breeding range distributed across all R2 states, including western SD, NE and KS and eastern WY and CO. Northern limit of the wintering range has expanded from N. Texas in the mid-twentieth century to southern CO & KS since the 1970s. Most commonly associated with shortgrass prairie along east side of CO and WY and west side of SD, KS and NE. Been observed using many other habitat types also. Given intensive agricultural development in eastern CO (high density of center pivots) and energy development in eastern WY as examples, habitat may be increasingly patchy and fragmented along the migration corridor. Unclear if displacing birds and populations, or getting to a level of substantially impacting the species.  Confidence in Rank Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neudorf et al. (March 30 2006). Lark bunting (<i>Calamospiza melanocorys</i>): A technical conservation assessment. USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region.</li> </ul>
2 Distribution outside R2	C	One of only 6 passerines endemic to the N. American Great Plains. Breeding range is from western Canada through the Great Plains to northern Mexico. Some breeding documented in Utah and as far west as CA.  Confidence in Rank High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same</li> </ul>
3 Dispersal Capability	C	Extent of migration corridor between n. Mexico and southern edge of western Canada provinces. Migration distance for individual birds and flocks varies within this range. Little information available for local dispersal patterns or barriers. Birds appear to breed in a variety of native and converted habitats, though appear to be most commonly associated with shortgrass prairie/pastures. Little indication that habitat is limiting or substantially limiting dispersal ability.  Confidence in Rank Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same</li> </ul>
4 Abundance in R2	C	Based on BBS data, densest populations appear to occur in eastern CO and eastern WY. Next highest in western SD, NE, KS and central WY. Difficult to ascertain from available information overall abundance, but appears to be broadly distributed within R2 with local population fluctuations over time characteristic to the species.  Confidence in Rank Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same</li> </ul>

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5 Population Trend in R2	A	<p>Population trends not well documented. Based on unpublished analyses of BBS data, the population trend in R2 appears stable or somewhat downward. Assessment goes on to say that between 1966 and 2003, population declines appear to be evident in all R2 states, with significant declines in CO and SD...but the data are inconclusive. Qualified by the inconsistent patterns in the trend data over time and questions about the biological significance of the BBS data. Local population fluctuations due to precipitation and food availability seem to be characteristic of the species and complicates interpretation of trend concerns over broader scales. Some indication that urbanization and habitat fragmentation along the Front Range in CO has accelerated local population declines.</p> <p>Confidence in Rank Medium</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same</li> </ul>
6 Habitat Trend in R2	A	<p>Lark buntings have been observed using a wide variety of habitats including agricultural and CRP lands, but it is unknown how successful they are in non-native habitats. Habitat loss and fragmentation across large areas of native grasslands in most states in the Great Plains including in R2 has occurred over the past century. This loss continues to occur including growing impacts of permanent habitat conversion from urban development of former prairie and energy development. Grasslands and grassland birds have been identified nationally as having been highly impacted from anthropogenic effects and at high risk. However, it is unclear from the available information to what extent this species has been impacted by these habitat changes to this point.</p> <p>Confidence in Rank High</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same</li> </ul>
7 Habitat Vulnerability or Modification	A	<p>See #6</p> <p>Confidence in Rank High</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same</li> </ul>

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8 Life History and Demographics	D	Typically breed once per year but capable of re-nesting (one CO study documented 30% of females produced second brood). Nesting success of 17 – 56% across 5 studies. Little information about longevity or variables affecting survival. One-year-old males have been observed mating and providing paternal care. Estimated survival rate is within range reported for other small passerines but on lower end for estimates for passerines in grassland-shrub habitat. Due to nomadic nature and population fluctuations observed, difficult to make inferences whether local population changes are real declines or merely birds regularly moving to more suitable areas with better food and cover available. Main predators are raptors, ground squirrels and snakes, but no indication predation is excessively impacting the species. No significant impacts of interspecific competition have been recorded. Some ectoparasites and endoparasites have been collected from lark buntings but impacts of them on birds are not known. Brood parasitism by cowbirds has been recorded at varying levels but appears to have greatest potential to impact nests in more fragmented grasslands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same</li> </ul>
Evaluator(s): /s/ Peter M McDonald			Date: 3/8/2007

**National Forests in the Rocky Mountain Region where species is KNOWN (K) or LIKELY (L)<sup>1</sup> to occur: Most grassland units east half of WY and CO and west half of SD, NE, and KS.**

<sup>1</sup> Likely is defined as more likely to occur than not occur on the National Forest or Grassland. This generally can be thought of as having a 50% chance or greater of appearing on NFS lands.