

Streaked Horned Lark Knowledge, Conservation, Solutions

One-day Workshop – September 28, 2007 – Vancouver, WA



The Nature Conservancy of Washington will host a one-day workshop aimed at bringing together a variety of participants including biologists, conservationists, funding agencies, and public and private landowners affected by the streaked horned lark and its potential for listing under the ESA. The workshop will transfer up-to-date information regarding the natural history, conservation status, and conservation and restoration efforts, as well as identify gaps in knowledge and guide next steps toward recovery. It will provide a venue for

discussion among the varied participants, document new partners, and address concerns and limitations for landowners. With participation by many partners and creative strategies for conservation planning, together we can reduce the likelihood of ESA listing and find proactive, practical solutions to this complicated issue.

The streaked horned lark historically bred in lowland prairie and open coastal habitats from Vancouver Island, British Columbia to the Rogue Valley in southwestern Oregon. The current range of the species has contracted significantly from the north with the northernmost inland breeding population occurring on southern Puget Sound prairies, and from the south with the southernmost inland breeding population in the Willamette Valley. The only coastal population occurs near Grays Harbor on the Washington coast. The bird is also found on dredge spoil islands in the Columbia River. The common characteristic of lark habitat is wide-open treeless expanses, short vegetation, and plenty of bare ground. The current population is estimated to be 500-800 birds. The streaked horned lark is a U.S. federal candidate for listing as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife Species in Canada lists the streaked horned lark as endangered. It is state-listed as endangered in Washington, state sensitive in Oregon, and red-listed in British Columbia. If the streaked horned lark were listed under the federal ESA, land managers would be presented with considerable land use restrictions.

The lands that sustain populations of this species are extremely varied in their uses and management. For example, due to their wide flat nature and relatively short vegetation, airports can provide suitable breeding habitat. Agricultural fields also can provide suitable breeding habitat depending on the field type. However, in both these instances, productivity can be compromised depending on the type and timing of management activities. The streaked horned lark also can benefit from military training, which restricts development on wide expanses of remaining prairie lands, including the artillery impact area of Fort Lewis.

No current areas that contain larks are managed specifically for lark conservation. Due to the widespread and varied nature of lands upon which the streaked horned lark occurs, as well as the variety of public and private entities involved, cooperative, eco-regional conservation planning is necessary to ensure the continued existence of this rare species as well as ensure continued unrestricted land use and management for partners.