

ESKIMO CURLEW (*Numenius borealis*)

Description

This small, mostly brown or mottled brown shore bird, has a slightly decurved bill, and closely resembles its slightly larger relative the Whimbrel. The Eskimo curlew is approximately 12 inches (30 cm) tall, has short bluish-gray legs, and a rich cinnamon color on its belly and wing linings. It also has dark brown head stripes and an indistinct crown stripe. Its breast and flanks have rows of Y-shaped markings. Eskimo curlews eat grasshoppers and their eggs, grubs, cutworms, ants, small snails, seeds, and berries.

Distribution

The Eskimo curlew is a spring migrant through Nebraska in late March to mid May. In addition to the Platte River, its stopping places include York, Fillmore, and Hamilton Counties. Because of extremely low numbers, little else is known about their state and worldwide distribution.

Habitat

Eskimo curlew's non-breeding habitat includes grasslands, pastures, plowed fields, and less frequently marshes, and mudflats. During migration burned over prairies and marshes are highly attractive. It nests in arctic tundra usually in open sites with a wide view. In Nebraska, wet meadows are important habitat.

Status

Global: GH-Possibly Extinct. Federally Endangered. State Endangered. Nebraska: SX-Presumed Extirpated. Formerly abundant, now nearly extinct or perhaps extinct; no recovery of depleted populations after hunting stopped; winter and migratory stopover habitat lost and degraded due to agriculture and commercial development; present breeding and wintering areas unknown, no reliable sightings in Nebraska since 1987. Other possible reasons for decline include unusually cold weather on nesting grounds in addition to severe ocean storms during migration.

Management

Due to the low number of the Eskimo curlews, identifying and reporting sightings is crucial. Preservation of the habitat listed above is also needed, especially meadows along the Platte River.

More Information

<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/servlet/NatureServe?searchSciOrCommonName=eskimo+curlew>

<http://ecos.fws.gov/speciesProfile/profile/speciesProfile.action?sPCODE=B01A>