STREAKED HORNED LARK

listing update

Cat Brown
US Fish and Wildlife Service

A RARE SUBSPECIES

42 subspecies worldwide, from the Arctic to the Subtropical Zone

21 subspecies in North America

5 subspecies breed in OR and WA, but only *E. a. strigata* breeds in OR and WA lowlands west of the Cascades (the other 4 ssp winter here)

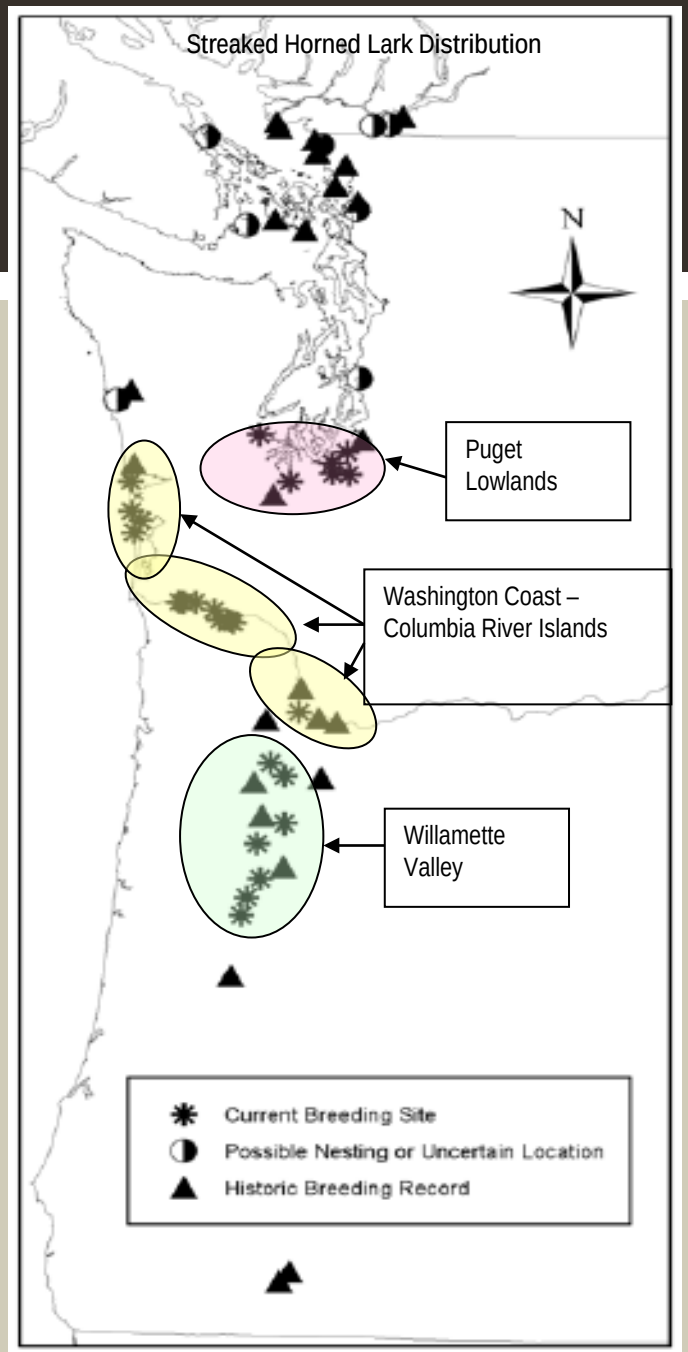
HISTORICAL & CURRENT RANGE

Historical Range:

- British Columbia, Canada
- Northern Puget trough
- San Juan Islands
- Puget lowlands
- WA coast and Columbia River Islands
- Oregon Coast
- Willamette Valley
- Rogue and Umpqua Valleys

Current Range:

- Puget lowlands
- WA coast and Columbia River Islands
- Willamette Valley



CURRENT POPULATION

Region	Number of Sites	Population Size
Puget Lowlands, WA (Olympia Airport, JBLM)	6	150-170
Washington coast and lower Columbia River islands (including sites in Portland)	~ 15	120-140
Willamette Valley (Airports, Wildlife Refuges, Ag Lands)	??	900-1300

RANGEWIDE POPULATION ESTIMATE ≤ 2,000 BIRDS

LARK HABITAT

- Large
- Flat
- Open, treeless
- Frequently disturbed, sparse vegetation, lots of open ground

LARK HABITAT – THEN…

- Willamette and Puget prairies
- Scoured floodplains and islands of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers
- Ocean beaches

LARK HABITAT – NOW…

- Airports
- Puget prairies
- WA coast*
- Columbia River dredge spoil islands
- Willamette Valley agricultural lands

* The only place where habitat is maintained by natural processes

LARKS ON AIRPORTS IN OREGON

KNOWN populations at:

- Portland International Airport
- Corvallis Municipal Airport
- Eugene Airport
- Salem Municipal Airport
- McMinnville Municipal Airport
- Independence State Airport

Other airports in western Oregon??

HABITAT: AIRPORTS

Any place you can land a plane…

HABITAT: DREDGE SPOIL SITES

Huge piles of sand in the Columbia River…

HABITAT: WILLAMETTE VALLEY AG LANDS

Underperforming grass seed fields…

Gravel roads

THREATS

- Habitat conversion
- **Loss of natural disturbance processes**, such as fire and flooding, followed by encroachment of woody vegetation
- Invasion of coastal areas by nonnative beachgrasses
- Predation (which is natural but the effect is magnified when populations are small and declining)
- Inbreeding depression, low reproductive success, and declining population size have been documented in the Puget lowlands population

FINAL LISTINGS: OCTOBER 3, 2013

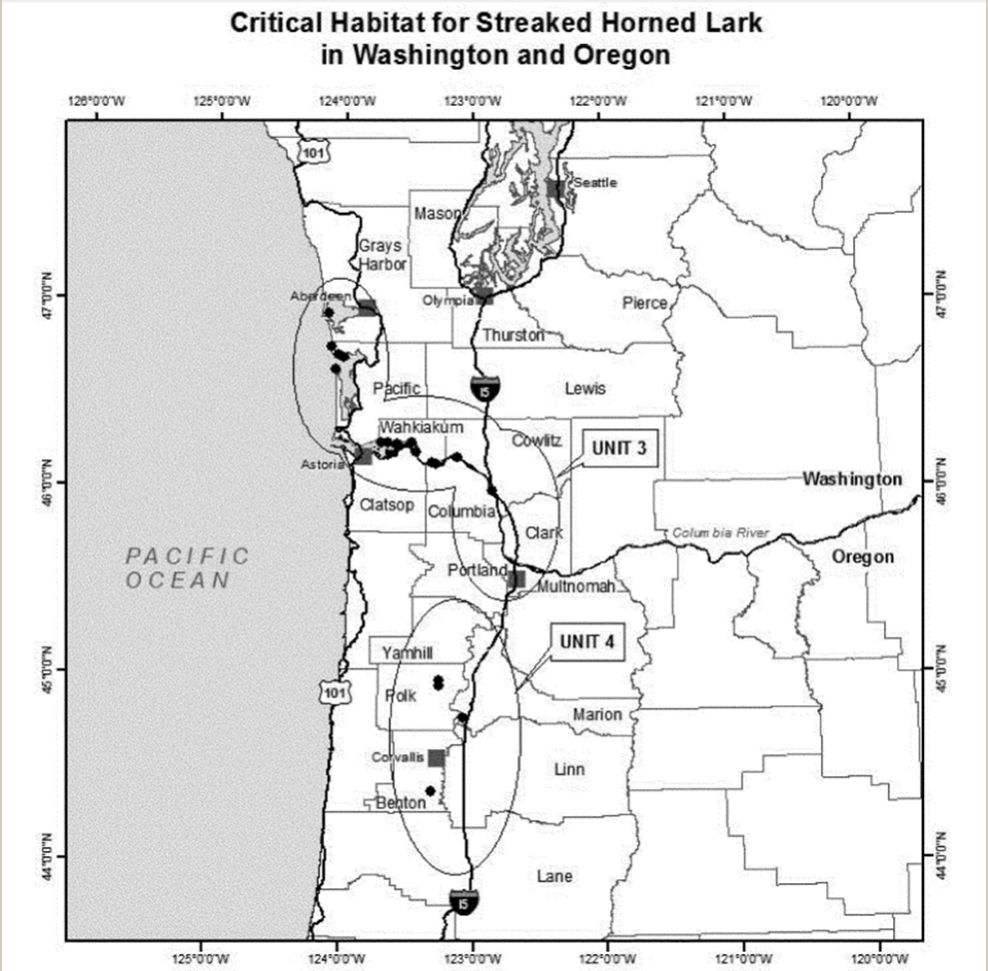
- Listed as a Threatened species
- Critical habitat designated
- Special rule for certain activities on ag lands, airports and prairie restoration sites exempted from “take” prohibitions

STATUS: THREATENED

Based on small population and documented decline in WA, and relatively larger population with more habitat in OR

DESIGNATION OF CRITICAL HABITAT

- 4 sites on the WA coast
- 9 islands in the Columbia River
- 3 USFWS refuge units in the Willamette Valley



SECTION 9: PROHIBITED ACTS

- **Take**: *harass, harm,* pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or to attempt to engage in these activities.
- The take prohibition for wildlife applies to any person as well as States, Tribes, and Federal agencies.
- Also prohibits import, export, interstate transport, possession or sale.

SPECIAL RULE: AIRPORTS

Certain activities at airports for **hazardous wildlife management** are exempted from the take prohibition:

- Routine management, repair and maintenance of roads and runways
- Control of vegetation through mowing, discing, herbicide application and burning
- Hazing of hazardous wildlife
- Management of forage, water and shelter
- Includes incidental take of larks caused by accidental aircraft strikes

WHY ALLOW TAKE FOR A THREATENED SPECIES?

The special rule:

- Recognizes actions that <u>inadvertently</u> benefit the species

- Encourages landowners to continue those practices that provide habitat for the streaked horned lark – even though creation of lark habitat causes some adverse effects

- Acknowledges that the lark's use of working industrial lands demands flexibility

EFFECT OF THE 4(d) RULE

Removes the prohibition on take for *specified activities and actors*

- Does not remove the take prohibition for other activities at airports
- Does not remove the requirement for consultation under section 7 for Federal agencies (e.g., FAA)

COORDINATION WITH FAA

- FAA Regional Office in Renton is reviewing its activities, and assessing the need for consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service for planned projects that could affect larks

- Initiating surveys for larks at other airports in OR and WA

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOUR AIRPORT HAS LARKS?

- Get better information about lark numbers and distribution at your site
- Contact FAA to see if they can help with project review
- Contact the Fish and Wildlife Service to see if you need a conservation plan & take permit for activities not covered by the special rule (cat_brown@fws.gov)

FOR MOST LISTED SPECIES…

- Find the few existing, high quality natural habitats that will form the core of the recovery effort
- Save the last, best remaining habitats, and work to restore or recreate other suitable natural sites

This model doesn’t really work for larks

RECOVERING THE LARK

Recovery will require:

- artificially-maintained “natural” habitats
- maintaining the availability of “working landscapes”

Short-term: Maintain populations where they are (airports, ag lands, other industrial sites)

Long-term: Establish new, non-industrial sites with conservation management for lark populations

IF YOU BUILD IT, WILL THEY COME?

St Johns ~~Landfill~~ Prairie