

mountain plover abundance, inherent differences in habitat quality, or both.

Knopf (in litt. 1991, 2001b) found mountain plovers on the Laramie Plains, in the vicinity of Shirley Basin, on the Chapman Bench (Park County) north of Cody, and on Mexican Flats (Carbon County) northwest of Baggs. Specific surveys of Chapman Bench between 1988 and 1999 found between 7 to 14 adult mountain plovers and some juveniles (P. Deibert, pers. comm. 1999a).

Mountain plovers also breed in shrub-steppe habitat in southwest Wyoming (Oakleaf *et al.* 1982). The BLM estimates 10 to 15 breeding pairs in the Jack Morrow Hills north of Rock Springs in Sweetwater County (L. Keith, BLM, pers. comm. 1999). Mountain plovers reported from Morton Pass in Albany County have declined from about 30 in 1997 to about 5 in 2000 (Young and Erickson 2003).

Based on the best information available from Wyoming, mountain plovers may number from 2,000 to 5,000 individuals (P. Deibert, pers. comm. 2003; F. Knopf, in litt. 2003).

**Nebraska**—A nesting mountain plover was found in Kimball County in western Nebraska in 1990 (F. Knopf, in litt. 1990), and two mountain plover nests were found in a fallow field in the same vicinity in 1997 (W. Jobman, Service, in litt. 1997). Seventeen mountain plovers were counted on 10 cultivated fields in western Nebraska in 1992 and 1995 (Shackford and Leslie 1995), and 1 nest was found in summer fallow in Kimball County in 1999 (W. Jobman, in litt. 1999).

No mountain plovers were found in 2001, following inventories of 92 sites, including black-tailed prairie dogs colonies, in 8 western Nebraska counties (K. Nelson, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, in litt. 2003). The lack of mountain plovers may have been due to the survey occurring late in the breeding season. In 2002, a survey occurred in Kimball County exclusively, which is dominated by dry land wheat farming with very little shortgrass prairie. A total of 118 mountain plovers were found at the 66 locations surveyed, and all but 1 individual were in wheat fields. A total of 27 juvenile mountain plovers also were seen, with most of these in tilled, fallow ground. We have no information to assess trends in Nebraska, but the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is concerned about the bird's viability in the State (K. Nelson, in litt. 2003).

**New Mexico**—Sager (1996) noted that the mountain plover was reported as "fairly common" in New Mexico in 1928, and recognized that the 152

mountain plovers he surveyed in 1995 would not likely be construed as "fairly common" today. However, he cautioned that mountain plovers may be more numerous than he reports because of their difficulty in detection and clumped distribution. Sager (1996) also reported that New Mexico is likely on the fringe of acceptable mountain plover habitat. We are not aware of a total population estimate or population trend for New Mexico.

**Oklahoma**—Historic records of mountain plovers east of Cimarron County do not mention breeding behavior, so it is unclear whether the mountain plovers reported were nesting or migrating to other locations. Hence, both the historic and current distribution may be confined to Cimarron County in the panhandle of Oklahoma. In Cimarron County during the nesting seasons of 1986–1990, Shackford (1991) observed 15 mountain plovers in native grassland and 10 in cultivated fields. Ten of the 15 birds observed in native grassland were on prairie dog colonies. The few plovers found, combined with the discovery of one mountain plover nest on a maize field, stimulated searches of cultivated fields in Oklahoma in 1992, 1993, and 1994. Using approximately the same search method and effort each year, 408, 428, and 108 individual mountain plovers were found on cultivated fields in each of these years, respectively, and up to 13 nests were found on the cultivated fields from 1986 through 1995 (Shackford *et al.* 1999, Shackford and Leslie 1995). The plovers reported include both plovers seen during the breeding season as well as mountain plovers in premigratory flocks. The decline in 1994 is attributed to a decline in mountain plovers seen during the nonbreeding season, not necessarily a decline in breeding birds. No other surveys have been completed in Oklahoma, and estimates of the total Statewide population have not been made (S. Harmon, Service, pers. comm. 2002).

**Kansas**—Counts of breeding mountain plovers on cultivated lands in western Kansas from 1992 through 1995 ranged from 52 (6 counties searched) to 114 (4 counties searched) (Shackford and Leslie 1995). Surveys of cultivated fields and rangelands within the boundary of the Cimarron National Grassland (Cimarron) in Kansas also have been conducted. Counts on the Cimarron in 1994, 1996, and 1997 ranged from 1 to 13, with most of the sightings on plowed fields (J. Chynoweth, Forest Service, in litt. 1997).

**Other Breeding Areas**—In Utah, the only site known to have breeding

mountain plovers is in Duchesne County, south of Myton, in the Uinta Basin. Counts of breeding mountain plovers in this area from 1992 through 2001 ranged from 6 to 29. From 1992 to 2001, broods were found in all years except 1992, 1999, and 2001; six adults and no broods were found in 2001; and no mountain plovers were seen in 2002 (T. Dabbs, BLM, in litt. 1997; F. Knopf, in litt. 1999; B. Stroh, Forest Service, pers. comm. 2002).

Three pairs of nesting mountain plovers were reported near Fort Davis, Texas, in 1992 (K. Brian, Davis Mountain State Park, pers. comm. 1992). More recent breeding in Texas has not been reported due to lack of access to private land (P. Horner, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, in litt. 1997).

From 1914 to the present, mountain plovers in Arizona have been reported during the breeding season from Apache, LaPaz, Maricopa, and Navajo Counties. A pair was found on Navajo Nation land near Winslow in June 1995, and an adult incubating three eggs was found near Springerville, Apache County, Arizona, in May 1996 (T. Cordery, Service, pers. comm. 1998; D. Shroufe, Arizona Game and Fish Department, in litt. 1999). In May 2002 breeding behavior was observed in three birds west of Springerville, in Apache County (Ted Cordery, BLM, pers. comm. 2003).

The most recent nesting record in Canada was one nest in southeastern Alberta in 1989 (S. Jewell, Service, in litt. 2000). No mountain plovers were found during searches conducted in Alberta and Saskatchewan in 2001 (C. Wershler, Sweetgrass Consultants, pers. comm. 2002).

Mountain plover breeding behavior was observed in 1998 in Nuevo Leon, Mexico, and one nest was found on a Mexican prairie dog colony in 1999 (Knopf and Rupert 1999a, Desmond and Ramirez 2002).

We believe that Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado represent the historic and current core mountain plover breeding range, although additional peripheral locations in Oklahoma and New Mexico may play an important role in the species' conservation.

Historically, mountain plovers have been observed during the winter in California, Arizona, Texas, Nevada, and on the California coastal islands of San Clemente Island, Santa Rosa Island, and the Farallon Islands (Strecker 1912; Swarth 1914; Alcorn 1946; Jurek 1973; Garrett and Dunn 1981; Jorgensen and Ferguson 1984; B. Deuel, American Birds Editor, in litt. 1992; D. Shroufe, in litt. 1999). In Mexico, wintering mountain plovers have been sighted in