

How can you help?

Grasslands provide critical habitat to many species of birds and other wildlife. Within the U.S., 85% of these grasslands are privately owned. Conservation practices that promote healthy grassland habitats are beneficial to both livestock and many species of wildlife.

Specifically, curlew habitat can be improved by implementing appropriate grazing management, avoiding conversion of grasslands, establishing native grasses and forbs, reducing the use of pesticides on grasslands to maintain invertebrates as a food source for birds, and avoiding disturbance during sensitive periods such as breeding.

Best Management Practices

- Manage for 4-12" grass cover by March 15, beginning of nesting season
- Avoid grazing nesting areas between April 15 and July 15
- Avoid sod-busting
- Maintain blocks of grass 120 acres or more
- Retain 5% of grasses/forbs 12-16" tall for broods
- Use native bunchgrass and forb seed whenever possible
- Reduce pesticide use on grasslands, especially near water
- Restore and maintain wetlands

Compatible NRCS Conservation Practices: Conservation Cover (327); Prescribed Burning (338); Forage and Biomass Planting (512); Prescribed Grazing (528); Range Planting (550); Restoration of Declining Habitats (643); Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645); Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644); Wetland Creation (658); Wetland Restoration (657); supplemental practices include Fence (382) and water developments for livestock.

Financial Assistance Programs

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization whose mission is to conserve native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas.

ABC has partnered with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to enhance Long-billed Curlew habitat in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

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Or contact your local
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
or **Soil Conservation District office**



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Grassland Conservation and the Long-billed Curlew



Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*)

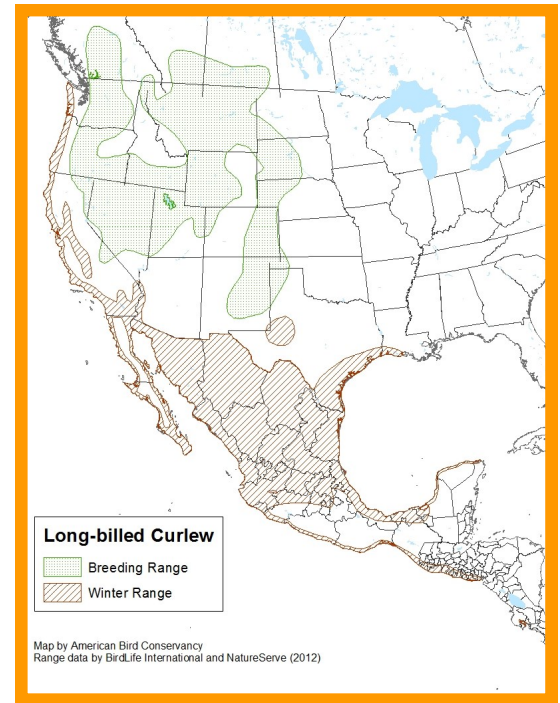


The Long-billed Curlew is North America's largest shorebird. Like many other grassland species, numbers have declined over the past 25 years as suitable nesting and winter habitat has been converted to other uses. The continued decline of curlew populations has resulted in this species being a conservation focus in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Their breeding and summer range consists of grasslands from Texas into southwestern Canada. They winter along the Pacific coast from California through Central America. Spring migration to breeding grounds begins in March. Fall migration south to winter grounds begins in late July.

Bird Description

- The Long-billed Curlew is about the size of a duck. It is about 1.3 pounds, 23" tall, and has a 35" wingspan. It has buffy, cinnamon colored plumage and blurred, brownish streaks in the neck and fading into the belly.
- It is best identified by its long, bluish legs and long bill that curves downward. The bill is orange at the base and darker towards the tip.
- It makes a loud, whistled "curr-leeeee" sound, which is heard frequently early in the nesting season.



Habitat Description

- Breeding and summer habitat consists of expansive, open, level to gently sloping or rolling grasslands with short vegetation such as shortgrass or recently grazed mixed-grass prairie
- Large blocks of native grassland (120 acres or more) are preferred
- Rarely nests but will forage in hayland, cropland, fallow, or stubble fields
- Forages in wetlands, mudflats, and shorelines
- Nests often located relatively close to a water source
- Typically avoid trees and large shrubs when nesting
- Diet of insects, worms, marine and freshwater invertebrates
- Predators similar to those of other ground-nesting birds
- Nest is usually located near an object like a dirt mound or cow patty
- Nest is approximately 8" across by 3" deep—lined with grasses, pebbles, bark, or dry dung
- Beige or light green eggs with brown or purple markings—usually 4 per nest
- Eggs about 2½" by 2" in size
- Chicks born with eyes open, covered in down, and able to leave the nest within hours of hatching

