Shrub Brush Obligate Song Bird Grid Surveys in 2010

Breeding bird surveys (BBS) are the current method of song bird population monitoring at Atlantic Rim. BBS are conducted along roads at 0.5 mile intervals with a total of 50 stops. Surveys include counts of singing birds detected at three minute intervals at each stop. An unknown at this time is if roads have an effect on song bird presence and breeding thereby influencing survey results. Examples of effects include wildlife avoidance due to traffic on roads and dust on foliage.

BBS do not provide site specific habitat information in relation to species location within habitats. Grid surveys are a recently developed song bird monitoring technique which can provide baseline information using state of the art techniques to determine the numbers and types of song birds present at local and regional scales. Among the important data from grid surveys are the effects of development and habitat change on song bird use, data on species use of various habitat types, and song bird population trends with a regional perspective. Grid surveys provide information on the number of song bird species detected along with the habitat type association. Over the long term grid surveys allow analysis of species use and presence within habitats and the changes that occur as habitats are modified. Additionally, these breaks can be compared with results from surveys across the region.

Grid surveys are not connected to roads but rather randomly chosen throughout the study area. When used in conjunction with the existing dataset from the BBS, we would gain valuable insight into the effectiveness of both studies and the presence and distribution of song bird species throughout Atlantic Rim including the influence of roads and traffic on song bird breeding.

The Rawlins Field Office (RFO) has $20,000 budgeted in 2010 to perform song bird surveys. RFO will use the money to conduct shrub dependent song bird “grid” surveys at Atlantic Rim. Based on the conclusions drawn from the two surveys, several avenues may appear. Dropping of the BBS surveys along with continuation of grid surveys is one possibility. Maintaining and/or modification of the BBS protocol is another. A request has been submitted for BLM FY 2011 but funding is not guaranteed.

2010 BBS Monitoring and Report

The BLM believes it is necessary to conduct 2010 shrub dependent song bird BBS monitoring with the same protocols and routes as in the past.

Recommendations and Comments in 2009 Monitoring Report

The RFO has reviewed the 2009 BBS monitoring report and the recommendations made by Grassland Consultants in that report. The BLM response for the 2010 BBS questions and recommendations:

Recommendation 1. 20 Mile BBS Route

- *Eliminate 5 mile spur overlap.*
- *Eliminate survey at the water body.*
- *Move start point of the survey 1 mile east of the current starting point.*
- *Complete survey route at the locked gate on the Willows Road.*

Response: Leave the monitoring route the same as in the past.

Recommendation 2. Sand Hills

- *Road is closed within a Wyoming State walk-in area.*

Wyoming Game and Fish has indicated to RFO that vehicular access to perform the BBS monitoring will be allowed.

- *Monitoring point is adjacent to small reservoir.*

Response: Leave the monitoring route the same as in the past.

Recommendation 3. Dad Juniper Route

- *Route is across rough terrain*
- *Wellpad blocking route*
- *Loud development infrastructure noise*

Response: Leave the monitoring route the same as in the past.

Proposal: The BLM would like to request adding a component to the BBS. In addition to the survey protocol as used in the last two monitoring years, we would like to add on a specification to use a range finding instrument to determine the distance song birds are from the survey point, when they are visible. Record this information with the remainder of the survey point information.