

## SPECIES PROFILE

# Horned Lark

*Eremophila alpestris*

Federal Listing: Not listed

State Listing: Not listed

Global Rank: G5

State Rank: S3B

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### ELEMENT 1: DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

#### 1.1 Habitat Description

The horned lark breeds in sparsely vegetated open lands that include airports, golf courses and cemeteries (MacLeod 1994, Beason 1995). Nest sites are on the ground beside grass, rocks, or wood that protect the nest from snowmelt and wind-blown snow (MacLeod 1994). Winter habitat is similar to breeding habitat, with the addition of beaches, dunes, and roadsides (when the ground is covered with snow) (MacLeod 1994, Beason 1995). Bare agricultural fields with ample seeds and insects provide year-round foraging and are augmented in winter by feedlots (Beason 1995, DeGraaf and Yamasaki 2001).

#### 1.2 Justification

The horned lark has been slowly declining throughout its range, most noticeably in the Northeast, where farms and open land are forested and developed (Beason 1995, Vickery et al. 1999).

#### 1.3 Protection and Regulatory Status

The horned lark is protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and through grassland bird conservation programs (North American Bird Conservation Initiative, Partners in Flight Northeast Grassland Bird Working Group).

#### 1.4 Population and Habitat Distribution

The horned lark can be found year-round in much of North America, with the exception of interior Canada, the Pacific Northwest, and the southeastern United States (Beason 1995). It is a breeding resident in Canada and Alaska and a permanent resident in the lower 48 states and Mexico (Ridgely et al. 2003).

In New Hampshire, historical records show that horned larks, most likely the northern subspecies (*E. a. alpestris*), bred in the White Mountains region and North Country and were uncommon in the south (MacLeod 1994). Horned larks nesting in the southern part of the state in the early 1900s were most likely the prairie subspecies (*E. a. praticola*) (MacLeod 1994). Between 1940 and 1970, horned larks sighted in winter were of the northern subspecies, and those sighted in summer were of the nesting prairie subspecies (MacLeod 1994). Current observations of breeding horned larks have been recorded at the Concord Municipal Airport, Lebanon Municipal Airport, Manchester Airport, Dillant Hopkins Airport, Pease International Air Force Base, Hampton Harbor Inlet, and Hampton Beach State Park (NHNHB 2005).

#### 1.5 Town Distribution Map

*Not completed for this species.*

#### 1.6 Habitat Map

*See Extensive Grassland habitat profile.*

#### 1.7 Sources of Information

Sources of information included the NHNHB database, MacLeod (1994), Beason (1995), and DeGraaf and Yamasaki (2001).

## 1.8 Extent and Quality of Data

Horned lark habitat and population distribution is well studied throughout its range. Population data in New Hampshire are limited.

## 1.9 Distribution Research

- Identify and protect key grassland habitat areas
- Continue monitoring grassland habitats to better assess horned lark population declines
- Determine the status of population in New Hampshire's coastal dunes
- Determine effects of airport management techniques on populations that occur in such habitats.

## ELEMENT 3: SPECIES THREAT ASSESSMENT

See *Grasslands habitat profile*.

## ELEMENT 4: CONSERVATION ACTIONS

See *Grasslands habitat profile*.

## ELEMENT 5: REFERENCES

### 5.1 Literature

- Beason, R.C. 1995. Horned lark (*Ermophila alpestris*). In *The Birds of North America*, A. Poole and F. Gill, editors. The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C., USA.
- DeGraaf, R.M., and M. Yamasaki. 2001. *New England wildlife: habitat, natural history, and distribution*. University Press of New England, Hanover, New Hampshire, USA.
- MacLeod, I.C. 1994. Horned lark. Pages 164-165 in *Breeding bird atlas of New Hampshire*, C.R. Foss, editor. Arcadia, Dover, New Hampshire, USA.
- Vickery, P.D., P.L. Tubaro, J.M. Cardoso da Silva, B.G. Peterjohn, J.R. Herkert, and R.B. Cavalcanti. 1999. Conservation of grassland birds in the western hemisphere. *Studies in Avian Biology* 19: 2-26.

### 5.2 Data Sources

New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau. 2005. Database of rare species and exemplary natural com-

munity occurrences in New Hampshire. Department of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Forests and Lands. Concord, New Hampshire, USA.

Ridgely, R.S., T.F. Allnutt, T. Brooks, D.K. McNicol, D.W. Mehlman, B.E. Young, and J.R. Zook. 2003. *Digital Distribution Maps of the Birds of the Western Hemisphere*, version 1.0. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia, USA.

## Distribution of Horned Lark in New Hampshire

**Distribution**  
■ Potential  
▨ Historic



0 10 20 40 Miles

Potential – possible breeding and other observations as reported in the NH Natural Heritage Bureau's Element Occurrence Database and obtained from NH Bird Records and the NH Breeding Bird Atlas, Audubon Society of New Hampshire.

