

**MOUNTAIN PLOVER**  
(*Charadrius montanus*)

**STATUS:** USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern; No Endangered Species Act status

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION:** Small bird (20-24 cm) (8 – 9 ½-in), about the size of a killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), but with longer legs and more upright posture. It is light brown above with a white forehead, throat, and breast but lacks the black breast band typical of many plovers. Crown may be mottled black to solid black during the breeding season with a distinct black loreal stripe extending from the eye to a black bill. In winter, the crown and loreal stripe become pale brown.

**HABITAT:** Mountain plovers are terrestrial and rarely found near water. They prefer disturbed short- and mixed grass prairie, semi-desert grasslands, agricultural lands, and prairie dog colonies. Common habitat attributes are short vegetation (vegetation less than 10 cm (4 in)), bare ground, and flat topography. Nesting is often closely associated with prairie dog colonies or sites that are heavily grazed. Mountain plovers are also attracted to man-made landscapes (e.g., sod farms, cultivated lands) which resemble natural grasslands, and may nest in fallow or recently tilled fields. Winter habitat is similar to breeding habitat with preference given to plowed or fallow fields. Commonly found on alfalfa fields after they have been harvested and grazed by domestic sheep, burned post-harvested Bermuda grass fields, or dried sod farms. Habitat elevation ranges from 274 to 2140 m (approx. 900 to 7,200 ft).

**RANGE: Historical:** Includes the Great Plains region from southeastern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan, Canada south through the U.S. to San Luis Potosí, Mexico.

**Current:** Breeding occurs from Canada to northern Mexico with the greatest numbers in Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Nebraska, and Wyoming, and to a lesser extent Arizona, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Utah. Winters in California and portions of Arizona, Nevada, Texas, and Mexico. In Arizona, breeding is documented in Apache County and suspected to occur in Navajo County. Small flocks of wintering plovers are generally found in Cochise, La Paz, Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, and Yuma counties where suitable habitat exists.

**REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY:** Habitat loss or degradation from prairie and grassland conversion to other human uses, energy and mineral development, and prairie dog control in mountain plover breeding and wintering range.

**LAND MANAGEMENT / OWNERSHIP:** Federal, State, Tribal, and privately-owned lands.

**NOTES:** The mountain plover was proposed for listing as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act on December 5, 2002 (67 FR 72396). We withdrew our proposed rule on May 12, 2011 (76 FR 27756). For additional information, please visit our website: <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/mountainplover>.

Mountain plovers are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 USC 703 *et. seq.*) and its implementing regulations (50 CFR Parts 20 and 21).

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