

Conservation Reliance Among California's At-Risk Birds

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Conservation-reliant species require continuing management to ensure their long-term persistence. Eighty percent or more of all listed species in North America are conservation-reliant.

We assessed the extent of conservation reliance for 92 California bird taxa listed under federal or California endangered species acts or recognized as [California Bird Species of Special Concern](#).

We discovered that the Species of Special Concern are every bit as conservation-reliant as are taxa listed as endangered or threatened. We believe that management of these yet-unlisted taxa may be especially effective in preventing them from slipping into a more precarious status.

Habitat loss and degradation are the major threats for over 90% of the taxa, whereas interactions with predators or brood parasites

threaten less than half, and human actions imperil roughly 40%.

Species experts propose some form of habitat enhancement to reduce the threats for most taxa, reinforcing the value of habitat-conservation strategies.

Protecting habitat for wetland taxa and restoring habitat for island taxa appear to be particularly costly actions relative to other management actions assessed.

Consideration of the magnitude of threats together with the degree of conservation reliance may help in prioritizing taxa for conservation. The philosophy and practice of conservation and resource management must recognize that continuing actions will be required to maintain the viability of populations of a great many species.

Management Implications

Birds with a lower level of risk status in California (i.e., Bird Species of Special Concern) were every bit as conservation reliant as those listed as threatened and endangered.

Habitat loss and degradation were the primary threats for all of the species examined.

Measures to improve existing habitat could benefit the most at-risk birds in California.

Conservation investments in species with low levels of conservation reliance may have good prospects of success and are likely to provide good returns on investments.

Resource managers and policy makers must recognize and plan for ongoing actions to preserve California's birds.

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