

USACE Natural Resource Management

Migratory Birds



Oregon Vesper Sparrow

FAST FACTS

REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS: One of four subspecies of the Vesper Sparrow, the Oregon Vesper Sparrow is a migratory grasslands dependent bird. A petition to federally list the species under the Endangered Species Act has been reviewed by the USFWS, in which further consideration has been warranted. The NatureServe Status of the species in Washington is listed as critically imperiled, imperiled in the state of Oregon, and vulnerable in California.

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada designated the species as endangered in 2006 and confirmed the status in 2018. No breeding attempts have been confirmed in Canada since 2014 and the current population is near zero.

Population declines are attributed to the extensive loss of prairie and savannah habitats, degradation of remaining habitat, and genetic concerns in the existing small and isolated subpopulations.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: Conservation actions include maintaining and restoring grassland habitat, increasing plant diversity for greater insect diversity, and the control of key invasive plants. Reducing or avoiding mechanical operations such as mowing during nesting season, which is typically Mid-May to mid-July, will also aid the species. (Oregon Conservation Strategy)

HABITAT NEEDS:

- Typically nest in dry, herbaceous dominated, open landscapes.
- The species prefers grasses between six and 12 inches in height interspersed by small woody vegetation and bare ground.
- Will occupy edge habitat between grassy and wooded areas (e.g., fencerows and transition areas).
- The species generally avoids wet areas or sites with tall, dense herbaceous vegetation.
- Fence posts, fences, and other man-made structure have been found to be used for singing perches. (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife)

Size: The Oregon subspecies is considered a medium to large size sparrow. (*All About Birds*)

Color: The Oregon Vesper Sparrow has three distinguishing characteristics: a chestnut or rufous shoulder patch, white-edged outer tail feathers, and a white eye-ring. (*USFWS*)

Migration: The breeding range is restricted to a few areas within Washington, Oregon, and northwestern California. The species migrates to winter in central and southern California, west of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and south of the San Francisco Bay.

Photos Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and American Bird Conservancy

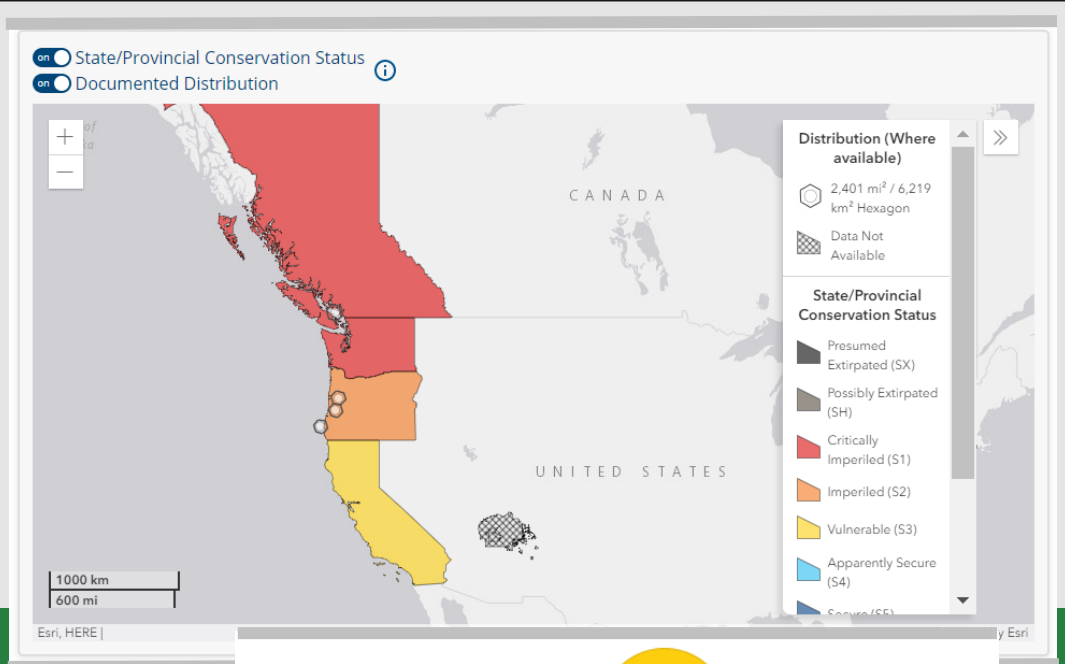
Natural Resource Management (NRM)

This fact sheet has been prepared as an unofficial publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). This online publication is produced to provide its readers information about best management practices related to special status species. Editorial views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Mention of specific vendors does not constitute endorsement by the Department of the Army or any element thereof.



USACE ROLE: The Oregon Vesper Sparrow has a current and historical range of occupancy in the Willamette Valley in western Oregon. USACE operates 13 dams in the Willamette River basin. Each dam contributes to a water resource management system that provides fish and wildlife habitat management.

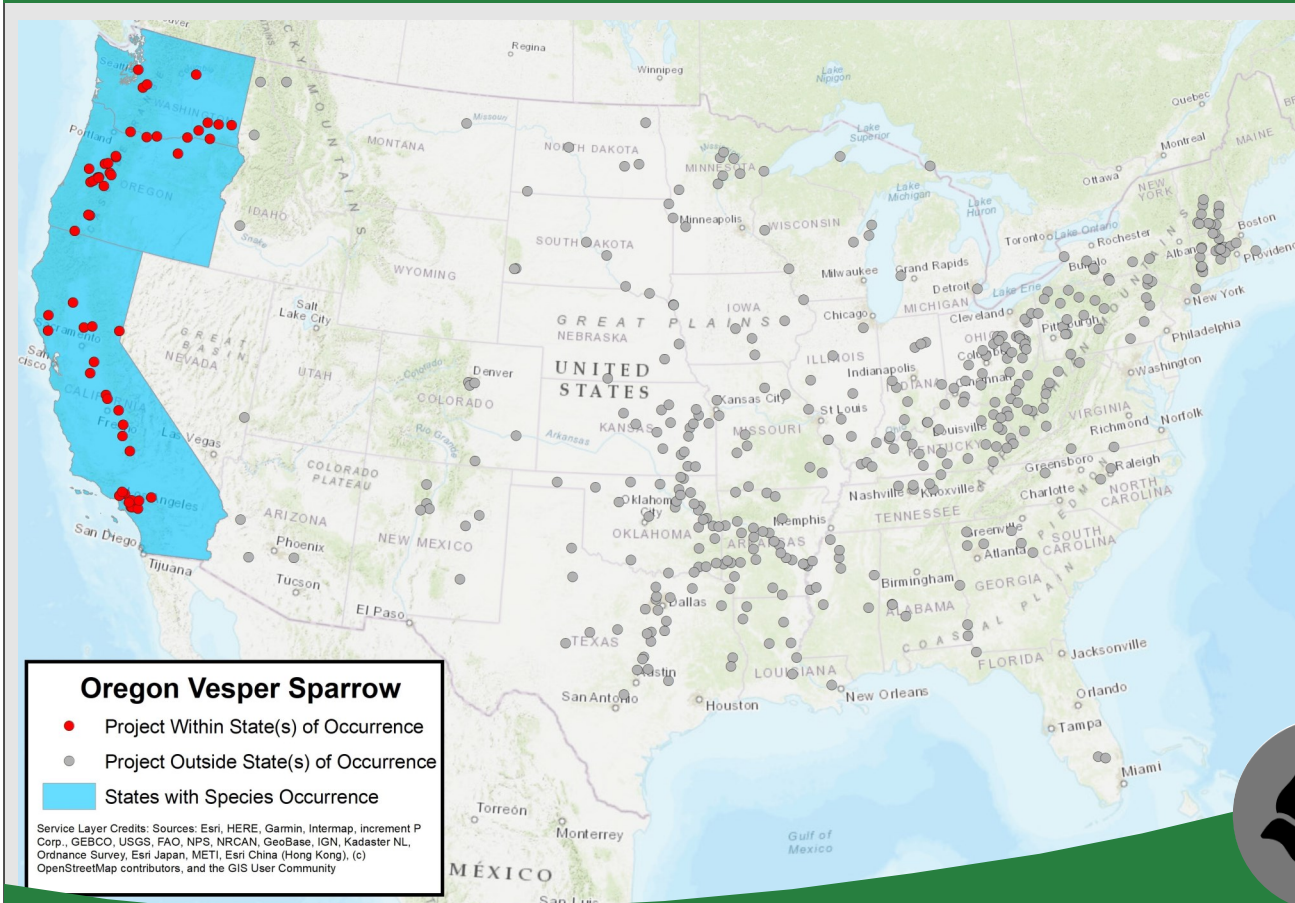
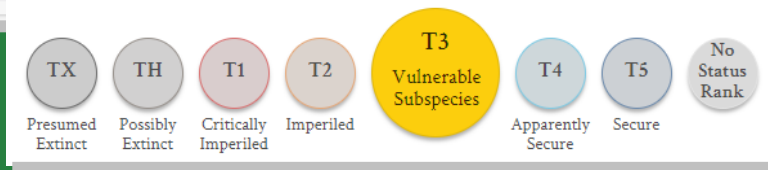
Photo: NatureServe Explorer State/Provincial Conservation Status for the Oregon Vesper Sparrow.



WHAT IS USACE NRM DOING:

The Fern Ridge Lake Project in Oregon, a Willamette Valley Project, is known for its birding opportunities.

Encompassing more than 11,000 acres, habitat ranges from open water to marsh, wet prairie and upland prairie habitats. More than 5,000 acres of the Fern Ridge Wildlife Area is managed cooperatively with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Inventoried occurrence of the Oregon Vesper Sparrow at the Fern Ridge Lake Project has been reported.



Source: Map provided by Ashleigh Boss, ORISE Fellowship, Institute for Water Resources

Migratory Birds

