

Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*)

NMPIF level: Biodiversity Conservation Concern, Level 1 (BC1)

NMPIF assessment score: 13

NM stewardship responsibility: Low

National PIF status: No special status

New Mexico BCRs: 34, 35

Primary breeding habitat(s): Southwest Riparian

Other habitats used: Chihuahuan Desert Shrub, Agricultural

Summary of Concern

Common Ground-Dove is a widespread species with a limited distribution in southern New Mexico. State populations are considered vulnerable due to their reliance on limited areas of riparian habitat.

Associated Species

Gambel's Quail, Bell's Vireo (SC1), Abert's Towhee (BC1), Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet (BC1), Varied Bunting (BC2), Crissal Thrasher (SC2)

Distribution

Common Ground-Dove occurs at varying densities across the southern tier of states from California to South Carolina; among these it is least common and widespread in New Mexico. Its wide range extends south across the Pacific and Atlantic slopes of Mexico, much of Central America, and northern portions of South America.

In New Mexico, Common Ground-Doves primarily occupy lowland riparian areas in the southwest. They occur most frequently in the lower Gila Valley (from Cliff south) and in Hidalgo County, especially in Guadalupe Canyon. They also occur rarely in the Rio Grande Valley from Socorro south (where they may have once been more common) and in Eddy County (Parmeter et al. 2002).

Ecology and Habitat Requirements

Throughout its range, Common Ground-Dove occupies a variety of natural and human-modified habitats. Most are relatively dry, open, early successional. In the western and southwestern United States, habitat includes mesquite flats and river bottom woodlands, desert scrub and washes, and xeric riparian areas. Human-modified habitats include ranch lands, irrigation ditches, and (in Arizona) suburban habitats. In California, this species is heavily associated with irrigated orchards. Areas with sandy soils and reduced overhead cover seem to be preferred. In Texas, occupied habitat had greater cover of shrubs between 0.3 and 0.9 m tall and less herbaceous ground cover than did unoccupied habitat (Roth 1971, Rosenberg et al. 1991, Bowman 2002). In New Mexico, this species prefers shrubby riparian habitat or edges of riparian woodlands; it also occurs in desert shrub dominated by mesquite or *Opuntia* spp., and in abandoned agricultural fields with tall weeds.

Common Ground-Doves maintain persistent pair bonds from year to year. Nesting occurs over an extended period, from February to October in Florida and early March to late September in Texas. Typical clutch size is two, and three or occasionally even four broods may be produced annually (Bowman and Woolfenden 1997). Nests are placed in a variety of locations, both on the ground and in shrubs or low trees. In the southwestern United States, this species frequently nests in mesquite thickets and cottonwood/willow habitat. In Texas, it nests most frequently in *Opuntia* spp., blackbush and granjeno (Passmore 1981, Bowman 2002). Common Ground-Doves feed exclusively on the ground, in sparsely vegetated areas.

Conservation Status

Species Assessment

DISTRIBUTION	1
THREATS	5
GLOBAL POPULATION SIZE	3
LOCAL POPULATION TREND	3
IMPORTANCE OF NEW MEXICO TO BREEDING	1
COMBINED SCORE	13

Common Ground-Dove is a Biodiversity Conservation Concern, Level 1 species for New Mexico. The species is state listed as endangered by New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. From NMPIF, it receives a highest vulnerability score of 5 for threats to breeding in the state.

Population Size

PIF estimates a species population of 2.3 million. Size of the New Mexico population is unknown, but small.

Population Trend

No BBS data are available for this species in New Mexico. Historically, Common Ground-Doves have declined in Florida and increased in other areas, particularly California. A local population trend score of 3 indicates that trends in New Mexico are unknown.

Threats

Common Ground-Dove is considered highly vulnerable in New Mexico due to lack of preferred available breeding habitat. In California and Arizona, this species has increased with the spread of irrigated agriculture (DeSante and George 1994).

Management Issues and Recommendations

Little or no active management is required for this species in New Mexico, beyond protection of riparian habitat in the southwest.

NMPIF Recommendations

- Maintain a shrub component with bare ground in southwest riparian woodlands.
- Leave borders of tall weeds around agricultural fields.

Species Conservation Objectives

NMPIF Objectives

- Seek to better understand current population status and trends in the state.
- Maintain the current population.

Sources of Information:

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