Common nighthawk

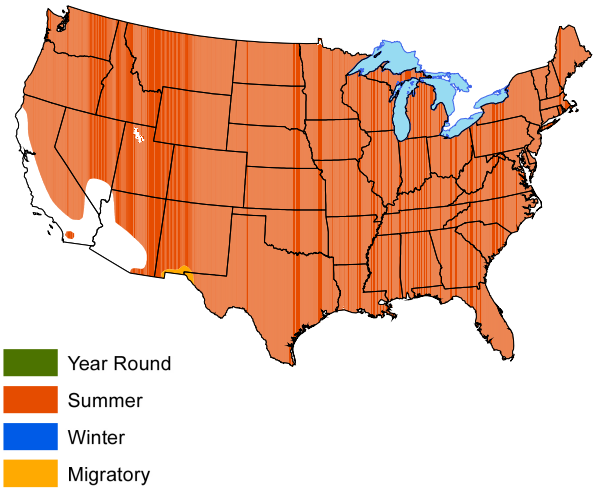
Gary Kramer

General information

Common nighthawks are found throughout the U.S. during summer, but migrate to South America during winter. Common nighthawks are found in grasslands, open woodlands, cities, and towns. In cities and towns, they are often seen flying over city parks and other open areas in late evening and early morning. Common nighthawks nest on bare soil or gravel areas common in fields or on rooftops. They use open fields for foraging. They are nocturnal and feed "on-the-wing" on flying insects.

Habitat requirements

Diet: flying insects, including flying ants, mosquitoes, moths, and June bugs
Water: obtain ample water from diet, but water sources attract insects, which provide food for nighthawks
Cover: riparian areas, ridge tops, flat rooftops, and other places with numerous sand and gravel areas are favorite nesting locations



Wildlife management practices

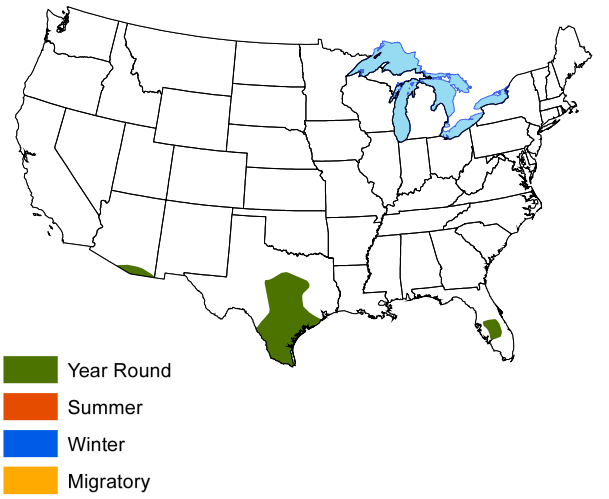
Livestock Management: grazing regimes that maintain open herbaceous areas provide foraging sites for common nighthawks
Set-back Succession: *Prescribed Fire*, *Disking*, and *Mowing* can maintain early successional areas for foraging; *Disking* and *Herbicide Applications* can promote bare ground for nesting; *Chainsawing*, *Dozer-clearing*, and *Root-plowing* can convert wooded areas to open, early successional areas; *Mowing* may be used to maintain foraging and loafing cover for common nighthawks in ***Urban*** areas
Wildlife or Fish Survey: observation counts can be used to estimate trends in populations

Crested caracara

General information

The crested caracara is a falcon sometimes referred to as the "Mexican eagle," as it is Mexico's national bird. They are often seen with vultures, eating carrion in open country, such as grasslands, pastures, croplands, and semi-deserts. Crested caracaras may prefer open areas, but are often adjacent to shrublands or areas with trees. Caracaras have long, featherless, and yellow legs. The body is mostly black, a black cap on its head with a small crest, red skin on the face, and a white and black tail. Their wide wingspan is used for soaring and for flying low while hunting for prey or carrion. They nest in trees and have clutch sizes of 1 to 4 eggs. They breed from January to September and fledge from mid-March to early May. They nest in trees or shrubs with average heights around 19 feet. Breeding pairs will defend their territory year-round and may even re-use or re-build a nest from the previous year. Both sexes contribute to building the nest out of sticks and finer vegetation. The female typically lays 2 eggs and both parents care for the fledglings. At one time, crested caracaras were declining, but currently the population is stable or slightly increasing. Florida is the only state that currently has the crested caracara listed as threatened and Texas has the largest breeding population. There is future concern for the species as more and more of its habitat is being developed for human or agricultural use.

Robert Burton



Habitat requirements

Diet: mostly carrion, but also insects, small vertebrates (fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals), and eggs

Water: freestanding water is used, but watering sites are not typically limiting because of the crested caracara's ability to fly long distances and some water needs may be met through the diet

Cover: open grasslands for hunting/scavenging; nests in trees or shrubs, often in the top of cabbage palms

Wildlife management practices

Control Nonnative Invasive Vegetation: when nonnative invasive vegetation begins to compete with native vegetation and degrade habitat

Livestock Management: grazing pressure should be reduced when overgrazing begins to degrade habitat for prey

Plant Shrubs: where trees and shrubs are lacking to provide nesting cover

Plant Trees: where trees are lacking to provide nesting cover

Set-back Succession: *Disking*, *Prescribed Fire*, *Herbicide Applications*, and *Mowing* are options for maintaining grasslands and early successional areas; *Prescribed Fire*, *Herbicide Applications*, *Chaining* and *Root-plowing* are used to reduce shrub cover and stimulate more herbaceous groundcover

Wildlife or Fish Survey: observation counts are commonly used to estimate trends in populations

Crissal thrasher

General information

Crissal thrashers are found in the southwestern ecoregion of the U.S. south to Mexico. They prefer dense, low shrub cover in desert, foothill, and riparian areas. Crissal thrashers nest in shrubs 2 to 8 feet above ground. Nest is constructed of twigs.

Habitat requirements

Diet: forage on the ground and eat a variety of insects, spiders, seeds, and soft mast
Water: freestanding water is essential and needed daily
Cover: thick shrub cover for nesting and loafing

Wildlife management practices

Control Nonnative Invasive Vegetation: when nonnative invasive species begin to reduce habitat quality for crissal thrashers
Livestock Management: should restrict overgrazing and ensure shrub cover is present to provide food and cover; this is particularly important in riparian areas where thick shrub cover is found adjacent to drainage ways (arroyos); livestock water facilities should be placed in upland areas to discourage congregation of livestock and over-use in riparian areas
Plant Shrubs: especially around agricultural and riparian areas where needed
Set-back Succession: *Chaining* and *Drum-chopping* can rejuvenate shrub cover where is has grown too tall
Water Developments for Wildlife: catchment ponds, windmills, spring developments, and guzzlers can benefit crissal thrashers
Wildlife or Fish Survey: point counts are used to estimate population trends

Greg Lavaty

Dickcissel

General information

Dickcissels are songbirds that occur primarily in native grasslands and savanna in the central one-third of the U.S. Relatively large open areas of grasses, forbs, and scattered shrubs are favored. Dickcissels use agricultural areas heavily during winter in Central America where they may form huge flocks. Nests are placed above ground in tall grasses, forbs, or shrubs.

James W. Arterburn

Habitat requirements

Diet: insects and grass seeds are eaten year-round; agricultural crops are eaten more during migration and on wintering grounds
Water: water obtained from food
Cover: early successional areas with a mixture of grasses and forbs and scattered shrubs; grain fields frequented during winter

Wildlife management practices:

Control Nonnative Invasive Vegetation: when nonnative invasive species begin to compete with native vegetation and reduce habitat quality for dickcissel
Delay Crop Harvest: delayed hay harvest in areas with insufficient native grassland will allow initial nests to hatch and hatchlings to leave nests prior to harvest
Field Borders: to increase usable space around crop fields
Leave Crop Unharvested: will provide additional food during migration
Livestock Management: should prevent overgrazing to maintain a minimum grass/forb height of 12 – 18 inches
Plant Native Grasses and Forbs: in relatively large open areas where there is insufficient groundcover; forb component is important
Set-back Succession: *Prescribed Fire* is recommended to maintain grasslands and other early successional areas; *Herbicide Applications* may be used to kill undesirable plants and adjust species composition in early successional areas; *Chainsawing*, *Dozer-clearing*, and *Root-plowing* may be used to reduce forested cover and increase early successional cover
Soil Conservation Agriculture: may provide additional food during migration
Wildlife or Fish Survey: point-count surveys can be used to monitor dickcissel abundance