

**Red-winged Blackbird***Agelaius phoeniceus*

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

**Conservation Status***Heritage**Agency*

G Rank: G5

USFWS/NOAA:

BLM:

AA:

S Rank: S4B

SOA: Species of Greatest Conservation Need

USFS:

IUCN: Least Concern

Final Rank		
Conservation category: <b>II. Red</b>		
II = high status and either high biological vulnerability or high action need		
<u>Category</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Score</u>
Status:	-20 to 20	6
Biological:	-50 to 50	-24
Action:	-40 to 40	16
<b>Higher numerical scores denote greater concern</b>		

**Status** - variables measure the trend in a taxon's population status or distribution. Higher status scores denote taxa with known declining trends. Status scores range from -20 (increasing) to 20 (decreasing).

**Score***Population Trend (-10 to 10)*

6

BBS data shows an insignificant annual decline of 2.4% from 1980 to 2007 in Alaska ( $P=0.73$ ,  $n=9$ ,  $c=3$ ). BBS data in the Continental US and Canada demonstrated a significant decline of -0.9% annually between 1980 and 2007 ( $p=0.00$ ,  $n=3592$ ,  $c=2$ ; Matsuoka and Pardieck 2009).

*Distribution Trend (-10 to 10)*

0

Is capable of adapting from marsh nesting habitat to upland pastures, hay fields, and grain fields. This has resulted in increases where agriculture has occurred (Graber and Graber 1963, Weatherhead and Bider 1979).

Status Total:

6

**Biological** - variables measure aspects of a taxon's distribution, abundance and life history. Higher biological scores suggest greater vulnerability to extirpation. Biological scores range from -50 (least vulnerable) to 50 (most vulnerable).

**Score***Population Size (-10 to 10)*

-10

52,977 (Rich et al. 2004).

*Range Size (-10 to 10)*

-2

Breeds in east central, west central, and Southeast Alaska. Winters in extreme Southeast Alaska (Yasukawa and Searcy 1995). Winter most restricted at 62,000 km<sup>2</sup> calculated in ARCMAP.

*Population Concentration (-10 to 10)*

0

Gregarious; travels in large flocks, except during the breeding season. Large winter roosts may consist of a few birds up to millions (Yasukawa and Searcy 1995).

*Reproductive Potential*Age of First Reproduction (-5 to 5)

-3

Breed 2nd year (Holcomb 1974, Orians and Beletsky 1989).

Number of Young (-5 to 5)

1

Mean clutch size in Alaska 4.3 (McGuire 1986). Only 3.8% of breeding females produce a second brood (Orians and Beletsky, pers. comm. In Yasukawa and Searcy 1995).

### *Ecological Specialization*

#### Dietary (-5 to 5)

-5

During nonbreeding season, eats plant matter, including corn, weeds, sorghum, tree seeds, and sometimes insects (Dolbeer et al. 1978). During breeding season, eats primarily animal matter (insects), but percentage depends on date, sex, and availability of agricultural fields (Yasukawa and Searcy 1995). Eats mayflies, moths, beetles, caterpillars, grubs, and mollusks, etc. Also eats some fruit (NatureServe 2007b).

#### Habitat (-5 to 5)

-5

Breeds in a variety of wetland, including freshwater and saltwater marshes and rice paddies, and upland habitats, including sedge meadows and crop fields. Also occurs in riparian areas and in open patches of forests (Nero 1984, Orians and Beletsky 1989, Searcy and Yasukawa 1995). Roosts during breeding season in dense cover primarily in wetlands (Meanley 1965, Weatherhead and Bider 1979). Large winter roosts occur in dense cover within wetlands, deciduous thickets, and coniferous stands (Meanley 1965). Usually nests near water, in cattails, rushes, sedges; occasionally in shrubs or trees (NatureServe 2007b). In Southeast Alaska, found in freshwater marshes and in sedges by beaver ponds (Johnson 2003).

Biological Total: -24

**Action** - variables measure current state of knowledge or extent of conservation efforts directed toward a given taxon. Higher action scores denote greater information needs due of lack of knowledge or conservation action. Action scores range from -40 (lower needs) to 40 (greater needs).

**Score**

#### *Management Needs (-10 to 10)*

2

Managed and protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

#### *Monitoring Needs (-10 to 10)*

2

BBS data too small of sample size to adequately estimate population trend.

#### *Research Needs (-10 to 10)*

2

Severe drought may reduce reproductive success (Brenner 1966). Local breeding population dependent on insect biomass (Brenner 1968). Pesticides are toxic (Schafer et al. 1973) and may reduce food supply for nestlings (Powell 1984). Predation is the most important factor regulating reproductive success (Searcy and Yasukawa 1995). Elsewhere managed to limit populations. An amendment to the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act allows farmers in U. S. to kill Red-winged Blackbirds that threaten crops (Yasukawa and Searcy 1995). A study in Alaska during 1981 and 1982 found that hatching success and fledgling success were much higher in Alaska compared to elsewhere. This was attributed to lack of predation, low interspecific competition, abundant food, and good weather (McGuire 1986).

#### *Survey Needs (-10 to 10)*

10

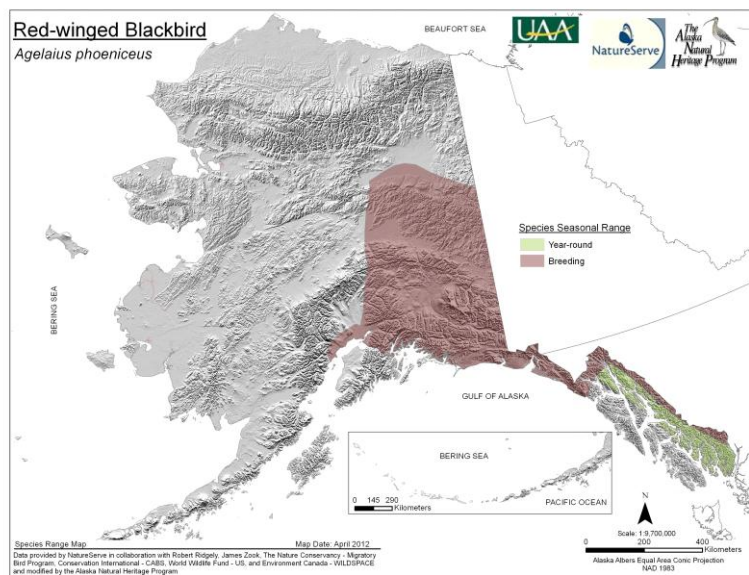
Breeding biology studied in disjunct eastern interior population (McGuire 1983). Distribution not adequately captured by CBC (National Audubon Society 2002), BBS (USGS 2006), or ALMS (USGS 2008a). Habitat associations documented during general bird survey in Southeast (Gibson and MacDonald 1975).

Action Total: 16

**Supplemental Information** - variables do not receive numerical scores. Instead, they that are used to sort taxa to answer specific biological or managerial questions.

<b>Harvest:</b>	Not substantial
<b>Seasonal Occurrence:</b>	Year-round
<b>Taxonomic Significance:</b>	Monotypic species
<b>% Global Range in Alaska:</b>	<10%
<b>% Global Population in Alaska:</b>	<25%
<b>Peripheral:</b>	No

### **Range Map**



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For details on the development of the ASRS and criteria, please see: Gotthardt, T. A., K. M. Walton, and T. L. Fields. 2012. Setting Conservation Priorities for Alaska's Wildlife Action Plan. Alaska Natural Heritage Program, University of Alaska Anchorage, AK.