

The Horned Lark is a rare breeder, but a common wintering bird in the Hudson River Valley.

Conservation Status

This bird is listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need and is state-listed Threatened in New York. Breeding Bird Survey data indicate a severe decline in New York's population in the last four decades. NYS Breeding Bird Atlas data also indicate a state-wide reduction in its distribution in the past twenty years, and already low populations in the Hudson River Valley fell even further.

Identification

The male has small black "horns" and a black line under his eye extending from bill to "cheek." It has a yellow to white face, a pale throat, dull brown upperparts with a black breast band, and a dark tail with white outer tail feathers. The female is similar to the male, but has slightly duller-plumaged.



Ideal American Kestrel habitat contains open fields with scattered perches.

Habitat

This species is found in open, treeless habitats, including cropland, herbaceous fencerows, road rights-of-way, pastures, recently cut hayfields, athletic fields, cemeteries, and airfields. It avoids wooded areas. In the winter it is found in similar habitats and concentrates along roadsides when the ground is snow-covered.

Food

This bird eats mainly grass and weed seeds, in addition to insects during the breeding season. It prefers to forage in exposed agricultural fields and short vegetation, but during heavy snow cover, feeds in fields and places where manure and waste grain are spread. Feeds mainly from the ground.

Nesting

The nest is a shallow depression in the ground often paved with pebbles on the rim. It usually nests on bare ground, including plowed or fall-planted fields. The female constructs the nest,, which is placed in the open or next to a tuft of grass, a rock, or clump of sod.

Threats

- Destruction of nests due to early mowing or haying.
- Conversion of habitat to non-habitat by development or changes in agriculture practices.

Management Recommendations

- Use burning, mowing, or grazing to maintain short, sparse vegetation and to reduce woody species.
- When pest management is required, use only rapidly degrading chemicals of low toxicity to non-target organisms and apply at the lowest application rates possible.
- Avoid disturbance of suitable habitat (e.g., mowing) during the breeding season, April 15 to August 15.



Grassland habitat in NY

This management summary was adapted from DeGraff and Yamasaki 2001, Dinkins et al. 2003 and NatureServe 2008.

For additional information, see the following reference:

Beason, R. C. 1995. Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the *Birds of North America Online*: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bnaproxy.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/195>

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Dinkins, M. F., A. L. Zimmerman, J. A. Dechant, B. D. Parkin, D. H. Johnson, L. D. Igl, C. M. Goldade, and B. R. Euliss. 2003. *Effects of Management Practices on Grassland Birds: Horned Lark*. Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, Jamestown, ND. Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center Online. <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/literatr/grasbird/hola/hola.htm> (

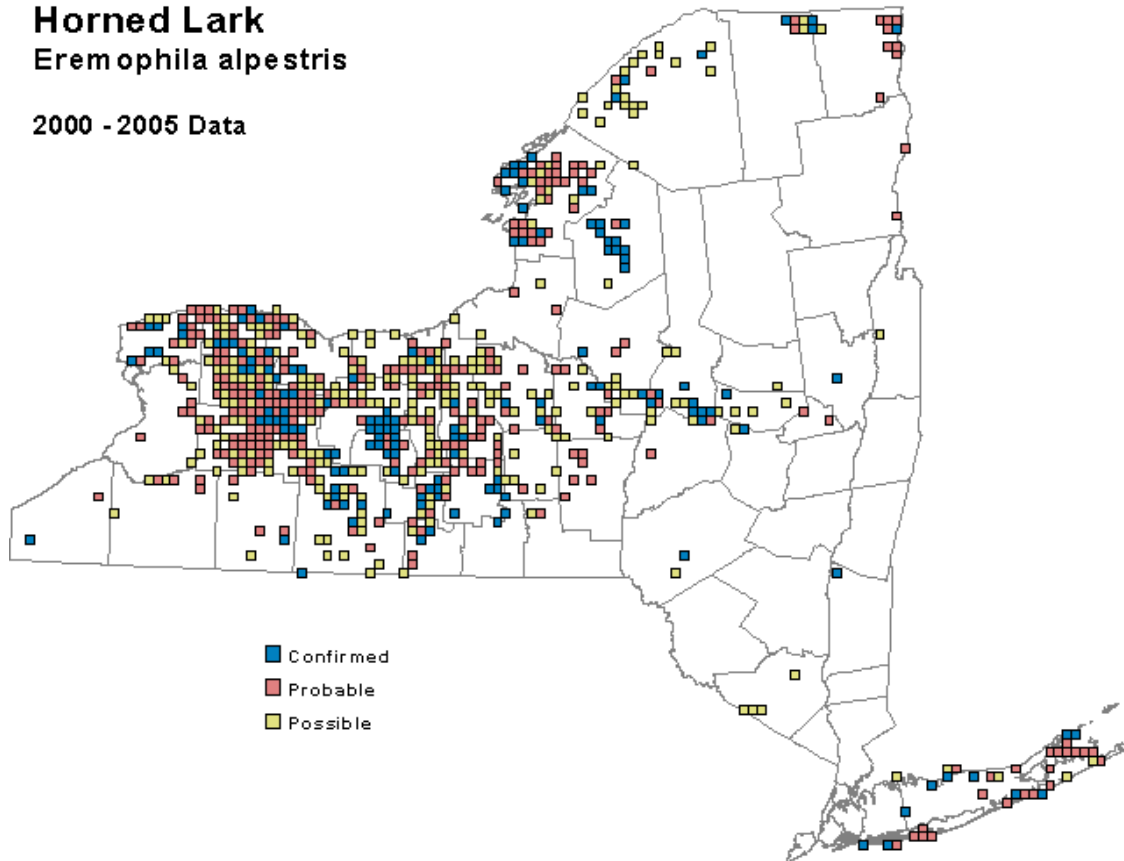
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NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

2000 - 2005 Data



Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

1980 - 1985 Data

