



2016 Landbird Monitoring Niobrara National Scenic River



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Merlins were detected at the Niobrara National Scenic River for the first time during the 2016 surveys. This skillful bird hunter catches small birds in midair.

Overview

The Niobrara National Scenic River is a crossroads where many animal and plant species coexist. This area is unique in that six major ecosystems converge including northern boreal forest, western forest, eastern deciduous forest, tallgrass prairie, mixed-grass prairie, and shortgrass prairie. The central reach of the Niobrara River serves as an east-west avian corridor. As a result, the Niobrara Valley supports an exceptional biological diversity of birds.

The Northern Great Plains Inventory and Monitoring Network (NGPN) developed a long-term bird monitoring protocol jointly with Bird Conservancy of the Rockies (formerly Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory) and three other Inventory and Monitoring Networks (Sonoran Desert, Chihuahuan Desert, and Southern Plains). The 2016 breeding season was the third year of surveys for Niobrara National Scenic River.

Bird Conservancy surveyed 14 grids and 110 points in 2016. A total of 1,878 birds representing 81 species were recorded at Niobrara National Scenic River.

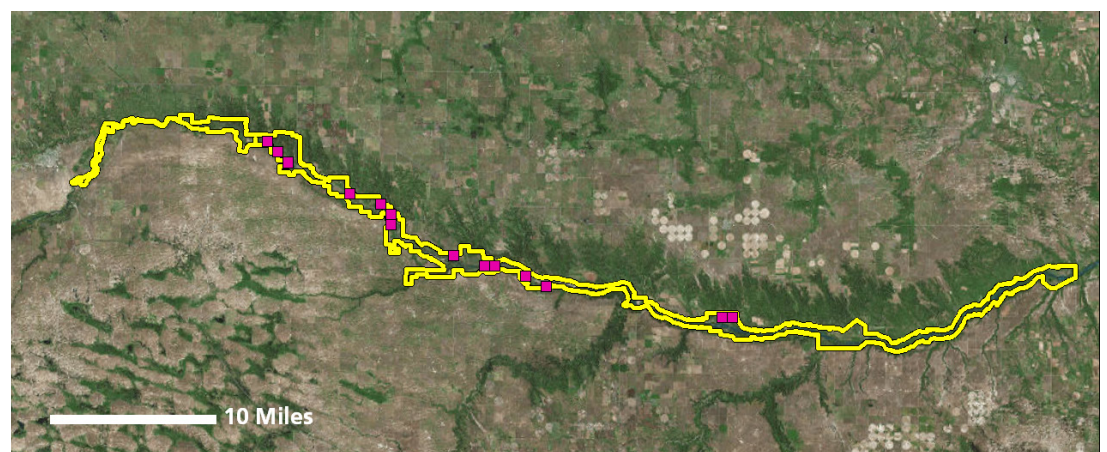
Highlights

The most common species detected was the mourning dove with 8% of the species composition. Other common birds included the grasshopper sparrow (7%), field sparrow (6%), and American crow (6%). Species that were detected for the first time since monitoring began included the black-billed magpie, mallard, merlin, purple martin, vesper sparrow, yellow-throated vireo, and the non-native house finch.

Interesting Fact

The merlin is a skillful bird hunter that will typically catch small birds in midair during high speed attacks. Merlin pairs have been documented teaming up to hunt waxwings—one flushes the flock while the other takes advantage of the confusion. Common prey include the horned lark, house sparrow, waxwings and the dickcissel.

Locations of the 14 grids surveyed at Niobrara National Scenic River during the 2016 field season (solid purple squares).



Results of bird surveys at Niobrara National Scenic River

* **Names of species of Importance are bold.** These were determined using priority lists from Partners in Flight and the State of Nebraska.

Common Name	2015	2016
American Crow	136	107
American Goldfinch	85	69
American Kestrel	12	7
American Redstart	22	18
American Robin	39	33
Bald Eagle*	2	5
Baltimore Oriole	1	2
Bank Swallow*	3	2
Barn Swallow	10	54
Bell's Vireo*	26	3
Belted Kingfisher*	3	2
Black-and-white Warbler*	9	11
Black-billed Cuckoo*	3	0
Black-billed Magpie	0	1
Black-capped Chickadee	50	56
Black-headed Grosbeak	5	6
Blue Grosbeak	28	14
Blue Jay	22	19
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	4	3
Bobolink*	3	1
Brewer's Blackbird*	4	0
Brown Creeper*	2	0
Brown Thrasher	5	4
Brown-headed Cowbird	91	102
Bullock's Oriole*	1	0
Canada Goose	1	2
Cedar Waxwing	30	6
Chimney Swift*	1	0
Chipping Sparrow	112	70
Cliff Swallow	0	10
Common Grackle	21	6
Common Nighthawk*	9	8
Common Yellowthroat	30	12
Cooper's Hawk	1	0
Dickcissel	62	34
Downy Woodpecker	23	7
Eastern Bluebird	47	46
Eastern Kingbird	34	24
Eastern Phoebe	3	4
Eastern Wood-Pewee	16	22
European Starling	5	1
Field Sparrow	137	115
Grasshopper Sparrow*	110	123
Gray Catbird	1	1
Great Blue Heron	3	1
Great Crested Flycatcher	67	48

Common Name	2015	2016
Great Horned Owl	1	0
Hairy Woodpecker	13	8
Horned Lark*	3	14
House Finch	0	1
House Wren	155	62
Indigo Bunting	57	19
Killdeer	3	0
Lark Sparrow*	95	81
Lazuli Bunting	2	5
Mallard	0	1
Merlin*	0	1
Mourning Dove	200	153
Northern Bobwhite*	25	25
Northern Cardinal	38	13
Northern Flicker*	21	9
N. Rough-winged Swallow	39	8
Orchard Oriole	38	12
Ovenbird	41	35
Prairie Falcon*	1	0
Purple Martin	0	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	3	3
Red-breasted Nuthatch	7	13
Red-eyed Vireo	77	26
Red-headed Woodpecker*	34	11
Red-tailed Hawk	8	6
Red-winged Blackbird	37	25
Scarlet Tanager	5	1
Sharp-tailed Grouse*	2	2
Song Sparrow	2	2
Spotted Towhee	121	74
Tree Swallow	4	5
Turkey Vulture	11	11
Upland Sandpiper	52	37
Vesper Sparrow	0	3
Warbling Vireo	3	4
Western Kingbird*	2	4
Western Meadowlark*	52	58
Western Wood-Pewee	5	3
White-breasted Nuthatch	39	26
Wild Turkey*	7	4
Yellow Warbler	18	16
Yellow-billed Cuckoo*	4	15
Yellow-breasted Chat*	105	21
Yellow-headed Blackbird	1	0
Yellow-throated Vireo*	0	1

Protocol Contact

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For more bird data

Visit the Rocky Mountain
Avian Data Center online:
<http://adc.birdconservancy.org>

Northern Great Plains Network

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Network Parks: Agate Fossil Beds NM • Badlands NP • Devils Tower NM • Fort Laramie NHS • Fort Union Trading Post NHS • Jewel Cave NM • Knife River Indian Villages NHS • Missouri NRR • Mount Rushmore NM • Niobrara NSR • Scotts Bluff NM • Theodore Roosevelt NP • Wind Cave NP