

THE HEAT IS ON

Species feeling the effects of climate change



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Gunnison Sage-grouse

Centrocercus minimus

Region:
Southwest

Area affected:
Colorado

Climatic change:
Drought, Fire

Impact:
Habitat Loss

ABOUT THIS SPECIES

The Gunnison sage-grouse was not recognized as a separate species from the larger greater sage-grouse until 2000. Its historical range included southwest Colorado, northern New Mexico, eastern Utah and northeastern Arizona. That range has since been reduced by an estimated 93%, and the species is now restricted to a core population in the Gunnison Basin population in west-central Colorado, plus seven disconnected and fragmented satellite populations. Each of these populations depends on high-quality sagebrush habitat for protection from predators, thermal cover in cooler months and a reliable winter food source. Highly vulnerable to the loss and fragmentation of this habitat and the impacts of climate change, the Gunnison sage-grouse was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2014.

DESCRIPTION OF IMPACT

Loss of high-quality sagebrush habitat is the biggest threat to Gunnison sage-grouse. Development, infrastructure construction, agriculture and grazing, and other human-driven activities have sharply reduced the extent and quality of sagebrush-steppe ecosystems. Climate change is contributing to that loss. Drier and hotter conditions are reducing the wetter areas critical to sage-grouse survival, while also contributing to invasive species spread and intensifying wildfires that further degrade this important habitat. As a result, the remaining Gunnison sage-grouse populations may be starting to disappear. The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Department has not counted any birds in the Dove Creek satellite population in the past six years and none in the Cerro Summit/ Cimarron/Sims Mesa satellite populations for the last two years.

References

NatureServe Explorer. 2022. *Centrocercus minimus*. https://explorer.natureserve.org/Taxon/ELEMENT_GLOBAL.2.100905/Centrocercus_minimus

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2019. 5-Year Review for Gunnison Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*). https://ecos.fws.gov/docs/tess/species_nonpublish/2765.pdf

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2022. Species Profile for Gunnison sage-grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*). <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6040>



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