Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*)

Pennsylvania Endangered
State Rank: S1B (critically imperiled) Global Rank: G5 (secure)

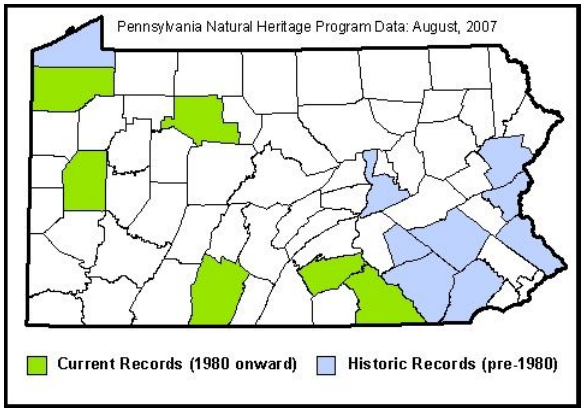
Identification

The sedge wren, formerly known as the short-billed marsh wren, can best be distinguished from other wrens by its relatively small size. It's only 4 ½ inches high and has a 6-inch wingspan, streaked crown and back, faint buffy eye stripes, and a short tail which is often held upright.

Photo Credit: Lang Elliot, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Biology-Natural History

In summer, sedge wrens are found from southern Saskatchewan and Minnesota across the Great Lake States to the east. They winter along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, down into Mexico. Sedge wrens arrive in Pennsylvania in April and May, and migrate south to brackish coastal marshes from August to October. Among the last birds to nest in the state, sedge wrens may be found nesting here as late as August. They nest in wetland areas; a typical clutch of six or seven white eggs is laid in a globular nest built up to two feet off the ground. Young hatch in 12 to 14 days, and leave the nest at two weeks of age. Two broods can be produced each year.

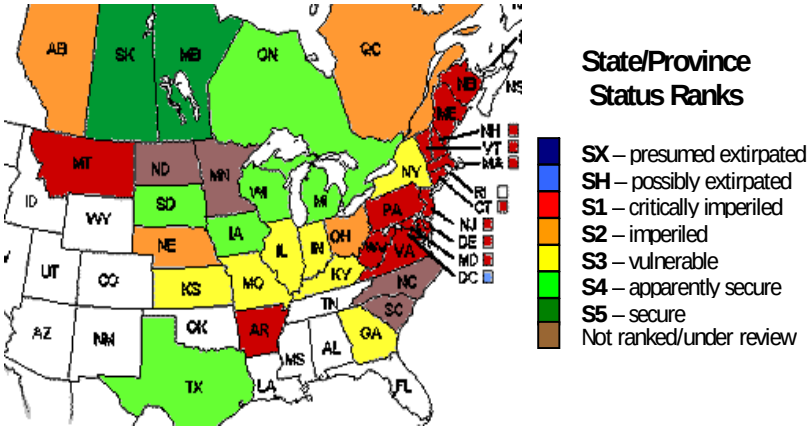


Habitat

For nesting, sedge wrens require damp meadows and marshes where sedges and grasses are interspersed with small shrubs. They apparently don't do well in cattail marshes.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe (August 2007)



Reasons for being Endangered

Sedge wrens are rare throughout their range. They used to be found nesting in scattered locations across Pennsylvania. Over the past several decades, however, they have disappeared from many former haunts, and numbers have dropped significantly in others. The loss of habitat and changing agricultural practices are thought to be responsible for this decline.

Management Programs

The specific locations where sedge wrens currently nest in the state need to be determined and then, where feasible, protected.

References:

- NatureServe. 2007. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.2. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available http://www.natureserve.org/explorer. (Accessed: August 21, 2007).

PNHP
Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program

Fact Sheet adapted from: Felbaum, Mitchell, et al. Endangered and Threatened Species of Pennsylvania. Harrisburg, PA: Wild Resource Conservation Fund, 1995.