

Melanocorypha yeltoniensis -- (Forster, 1767)

ANIMALIA -- CHORDATA -- AVES -- PASSERIFORMES -- ALAUDIDAE

Common names: Black Lark;

European Red List Assessment

European Red List Status

CR -- Critically Endangered, (IUCN version 3.1)

Assessment Information

Year published:	2015
Date assessed:	2015-03-31
Assessor(s):	BirdLife International
Reviewer(s):	Symes, A.
Compiler(s):	Ashpole, J., Burfield, I., Ieronymidou, C., Pople, R., Wheatley, H. & Wright, L.

Assessment Rationale

European regional assessment: Critically Endangered (CR)

EU27 regional assessment: Not Evaluated (NE)

This species has undergone an extremely rapid population decline in Europe and the remaining population is extremely small. It therefore qualifies as Critically Endangered (A2abc+3bc+4abc; C1).

It does not breed in the EU27 and the species is Not Evaluated (NE) for the EU27 region as winter (non-breeding season) data were not available.

Occurrence

Countries/Territories of Occurrence

Native:

Armenia; Azerbaijan; Georgia; Moldova; Russian Federation; Turkey; Ukraine

Vagrant:

Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Finland; Germany; Greece; Italy; Malta; Poland; Sweden

Population

The European population is estimated at 50-100 pairs, which equates to 100-200 mature individuals. The species does not occur in the EU27. For details of national estimates, see [Supplementary PDF](#).

Trend

In Europe the population size is estimated to be decreasing by 80% or more in 11.4 years (three generations) and by 25% or more in 3.8 years (one generation). For details of national estimates, see [Supplementary PDF](#).

Habitats and Ecology

This species frequents dry grassland dominated by Artemisia plants within the southern steppe sub-zone (lying between the typical steppe zone and the semi-desert zone in south Russia) and semi-desert zone. It avoids dense high grasses, preferring to nest in mosaics of short grass with low Artemisia shrubs and solonchaks (salt pans) ideally with water nearby (Tucker and Heath 1994). The breeding season begins in late-March and ends in August, but starts a month later in the north than the south. The male performs a spectacular aerial display to attract a mate. Females build the nest in a depression in the ground, usually under a tuft of grass or plant. It is made from Artemisia or grass and lined with finer grass. Clutch size is typically four or five, however can be between two and eight eggs. The diet consists principally of invertebrates and seeds. Reports differ as to whether more seeds or invertebrates are consumed during the summer, however in the winter it is known to feed exclusively on seeds, digging through the snow to reach them (Alström 2004). The species is a partial migrant with some individuals remaining in nomadic flocks through the winter. Others migrate W or WSW in September and October. Western birds winter in the Ukraine and south-east European Russia (Hagemeijer and Blair 1997).

Habitats & Altitude		
Habitat (level 1 - level 2)	Importance	Occurrence
Grassland - Temperate	major	breeding
Grassland - Temperate	major	non-breeding
Altitude	Occasional altitudinal limits	

Threats

The species is threatened by the loss of steppe to cultivation and livestock farming (Alström 2004). Livestock also pose a threat through trampling (Tucker and Heath 1994).

Threats & Impacts					
Threat (level 1)	Threat (level 2)	Impact and Stresses			
Agriculture & aquaculture	Annual & perennial non-timber crops (scale unknown/unrecorded)	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Unknown	Unknown
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem conversion; Ecosystem degradation			
Agriculture & aquaculture	Livestock farming & ranching (scale unknown/unrecorded)	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Unknown	Unknown
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem degradation; Species mortality			

Conservation

Conservation Actions Underway

Bern Convention Appendix II. The destruction of remaining grassland habitat by cultivation or overgrazing has been prevented in some areas of eastern Europe, but these areas will take some years to regenerate (Tucker and Heath 1994).

Conservation Actions Proposed

Dry grassland areas need to be protected both through nature reserves and with the aid of broader land-use policies (Tucker and Heath 1994).

Bibliography

- Alström, P. 2004. Black Lark (*Melanocorypha yeltoniensis*). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., Sargatal, J., Christie, D.A. and de Juana, E. (eds.) 2014. *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <http://www.hbw.com/node/57655> on 21 January 2015).
- Hagemeijer, W.J.M. and Blair, M.J. 1997. *The EBCC Atlas of European Breeding Birds: Their Distribution and Abundance*. T & A D Poyser, London.
- Tucker, G.M. and Heath, M.F. 1994. *Birds in Europe: their conservation status*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International (BirdLife Conservation Series no. 3).

Map (see overleaf)

European Regional Assessment



Melanocorypha yeltoniensis

Range

- Extant (breeding)
- Extant (non breeding)
- Extant (resident)

Citation:
BirdLife International (2015)
European Red List of Birds



Map created 05/12/2015

