## **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 <u>Supplementary PDF</u>.

**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 (leve	el 1 - level 2)	Imp	ortance	Occurrence			
Grassland - Temperate		major		breeding			
Grassland - Temperate				non-breeding			
Altitude		Occasional al	titudinal 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** 

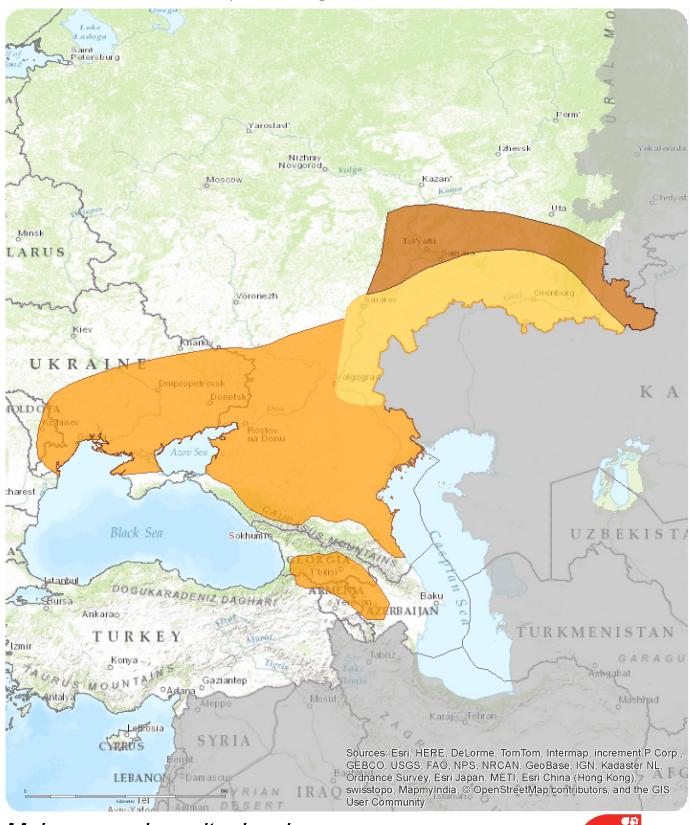
Alström, P. 2004. Black Lark (*Melanocorypha yeltoniensis*). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., Sargatal, J., Christie, D.A. and de Juana, E. (eds.) 2014. *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from http://www.hbw.com/node/57655 on 21 January 2015).

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



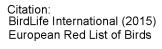
# Melanocorypha yeltoniensis

# Range

Extant (breeding)

Extant (non breeding)

Extant (resident)

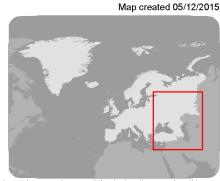












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