

## **Long-billed Curlew Survey Packet: Montana 2019: Helena Valley**

Thank you so much for volunteering your time to search for hidden Long-billed Curlews!

**\*\*\*Survey between April 15<sup>th</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup> and please return your data to Birds and Beasleys by June 6<sup>th</sup>!\*\*\***

If you need to work on Curlew identification before you head out to the field visit Montana Audubon's webpage at <http://mtaudubon.org/birds-science/long-billed-curlew-initiative/>. There you can find a link to the Curlew's call and much more. Also visit Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *All about birds* page: [http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Long-billed\\_Curlew/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Long-billed_Curlew/id).

The Long-billed Curlew is an icon of the American prairie and intermountain grassland basins. It is a relatively large, conspicuous, ancient lineage of shorebird found in short to moderate height grasslands. The Montana Bird Conservation Partnership (MBCP) has identified the curlew as a flagship species, one likely to resonate with the public and those on working lands, garnering support for conservation action. It is declining across its range, but in Montana, healthy populations remain. Our state supports about 20% of the U.S population, and reports about 25% of Breeding Bird Survey Records during the summer.

We are working with many Montana partners to learn more about Curlews and protect the grasslands and agricultural lands they depend on for breeding.

Based on an assessment of curlew abundance, threats to the habitat, and opportunities to influence management, partners within the MBCP determined the Mission Valley and nearby grasslands was the ideal first focal area.\*\*\*

\*\*\* Your efforts have already show that the Helena Valley is a second great focal area for this project. We had a very successful meeting in March bringing in diverse partners to discuss the idea.

Your efforts again this year will allow this work to continue being supported and the continued collection of Curlew presence data will allow Montana Natural Heritage program to enhance accuracy of its distribution model adding to the state database. This year, to mix things up we are adding a check-box for Sandhill cranes seen at each of the survey stops – please fill this out if you see any while surveying for curlews!

Last year 45 of you scoped 57 curlew sightings within the Helena Valley on 17 different routes. This year we will have 26 routes, with 9 being added this year and one being retired from last year due to bad access.

**In this volunteer packet you will find**

- 1) A Long-billed Curlew survey protocol sheet
- 2) An overview map of your route overlaid with curlew habitat suitability (yellow to red gradient- red being the most suitable)

- 3) A close up view of your route with road names (hopefully) visible \*\*\*Please use this map to mark the locations of each of your stops as exactly as possible\*\*\*
- 4) Route Latitude and Longitude locations for each survey stop along a route
- 5) A data collection “cheat sheet

### **Below is the route description**

These routes have been chosen to cover areas predicted to be of high value to Long-billed Curlews based on Montana Natural Heritage Project Species modeling data. – These values can be seen when looking at the map with a yellow to red color gradation. The darker the area, the more likely the area is to be of high value to curlews.

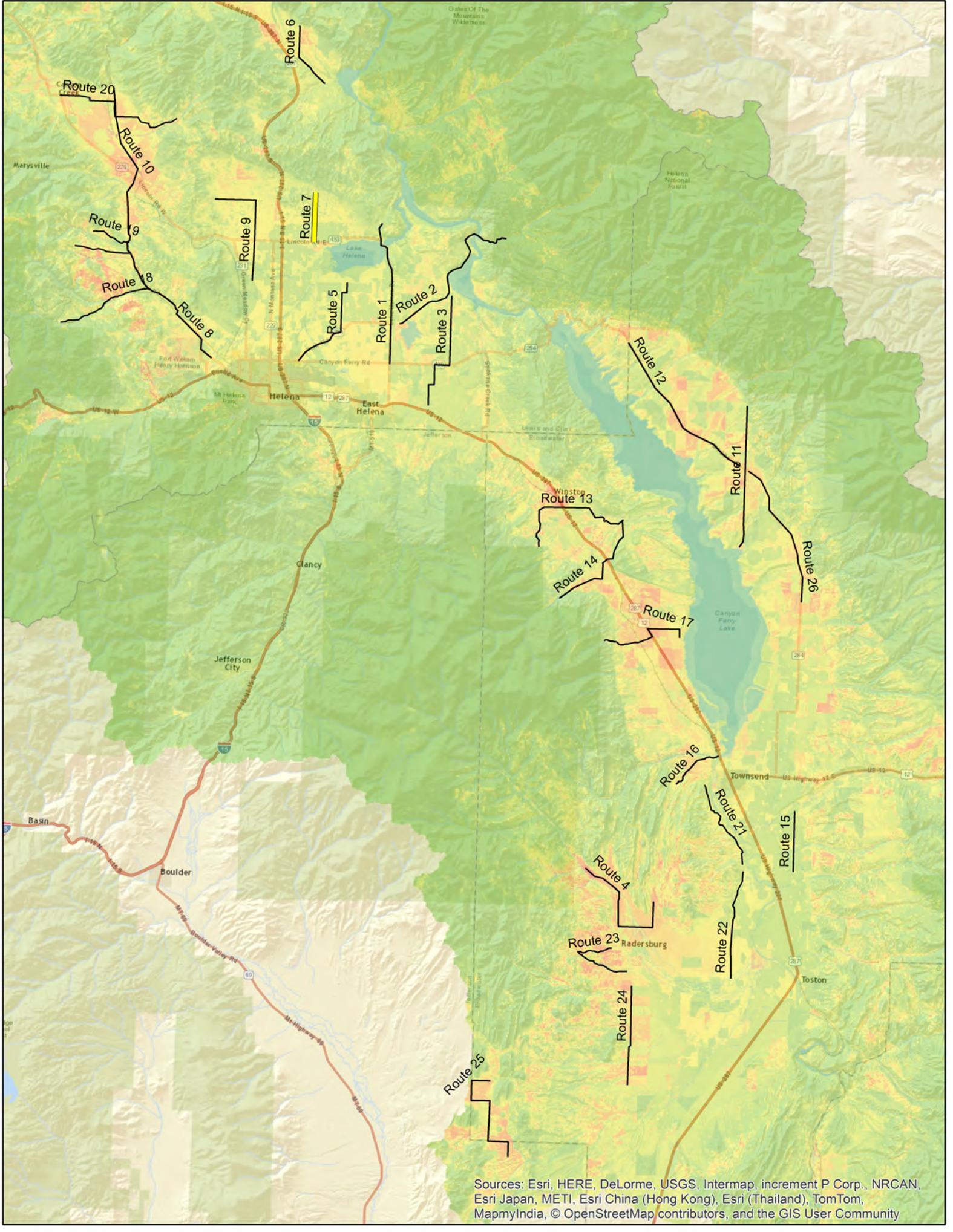
All routes should be over 5 miles to facilitate the ability to survey between 10 and 15 locations along the road. **Please survey 6 sites minimum with ½ mile between stops.** Roads were not chosen with regards to accessibility, so if you should come to a section of the road that is private, or unpassable, terminate the survey. It can be a very good idea to drive the length that you are hoping to survey before starting, to verify that the minimum 10 locations (~1/2 mile apart) can be accessed. I apologize if the route is sub-par, we are still just trying to verify!

Note also that the start of the route is labeled for you. Please start as close to this exact location as possible and survey every half mile. Feel free to alter stop locations very slightly to find a safe place to stop. That is of the utmost importance throughout the survey! **Note: The earlier a route is run, the less traffic out on the roads.** Please follow the direction of the route as closely as possible. That being said, the exact ending location of your survey may vary depending on how many locations you choose to survey. **Please note on the close-up map your stop locations.**

**Route 7:**\*Note this route is very short and could potentially be paired with another. It has only 6 stops.\* Starts just after the intersection of Collins Dr. and Lincoln Rd. Follow Collins Dr. north. The habitat is good but it is pretty developed.



I hope you have a great time in the field. Keep those bird lists, and enjoy the Sandhill Cranes I hope you will see in passing. Feel free to take a friend, any age, any skill, and show them how cool these birds really are! Take a lot of pictures, even selfies will do, and please feel free to call any time at 406.210.9449.-Amy



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, increment P Corp., NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

| Stop  | Route | Latitude | Longitude  | Distance | Description  |
|-------|-------|----------|------------|----------|--|
| R7 P1 | R7    | 46.70579 | -111.97858 | 0.5      | 100m from intersection - pull out on right - green electric box and fire hydrant on R                      |
| R7 P2 | R7    | 46.71404 | -111.97849 | 0.5      | 50m past #5729 on R - go to telephone poll and concrete sewer thing on R                                   |
| R7 P3 | R7    | 46.72084 | -111.97857 | 0.5      | Rd crosses irrigation ditch - then stop at intersection with Wooten Rd on L                                |
| R7 P4 | R7    | 46.72802 | -111.97834 | 0.5      | Pass Fantasy Rd on R - 100m past stop at large wooden fence post on left (other posts are metal)           |
| R7 P5 | R7    | 46.73526 | -111.97819 | 0.5      | Pass Tea Rd on R and large barn - stop at silver metal gate on R, last gate before fence begins again on R |
| R7 P6 | R7    | 46.74067 | -111.97784 | 0.5      | Stop at intersection with Snowdrift Rd   |

# Route 7





## Long-billed Curlew Data Collection Cheat Sheet

**NOTE: At each survey stop there are 7 pieces of information to record!**

1. **Stop number**; stop is 1 – 15.
2. **Start time at each stop**
3. **Record your stop location** on the provided **road map!**
4. **Record the count quality** at each stop (*see box below*)
5. **Record the dominant land use** (*see box below*) at each stop,
6. **Record all curlews – each bird only one time!** For each bird:
  - **Record how you detected the bird** (*see box below*)
  - **Record the approximate distance (meters) to each curlew or group of curlews.** A distance is required for all curlew observations except Flyovers (marked as F).
  - **Record the total number of birds**
  - **Record the dominant land use** for each *curlew or group of curlews*
7. **Record number of Sandhill Cranes**

### Addition Information

- **Record curlews** that flush on arrival at a stop and make note that they flushed
- **Record curlews seen *between points or before/after*** the 5 minute count, add to the closest stop with detail (where found, distance, how detected, land use).
- Feel free to write down any other birds you see and can identify at each stop and I can send that information in to the Montana Natural Heritage Program – **Please do not eBird your curlew and bird sightings during this organized survey.**
- Give us as much detail as you can for each point and overall survey effort!

### Sample Data for one stop:

**STOP 1:** start time: \_\_6:35\_\_ Marked map: (yes) Lat: 44 . 59815 long - 114 . \_69844 Way point? \_no\_  
**Curlews:** **NO YES** (circle one). If yes, numbers of curlews, distance to each individual or group, if flyover only, and how detected (Visual, Call, Both), and dominant cover (if you can): R, C, S O.

1 pair. 50 meters, north side of road. Detected via V - visual. Pecking around in R (rangeland).

1 individual – Flyover – 300 meters

If YES, **Count Quality:** Excellent (Medium) Low (*circle one*). Breezy but no big gusts. Two cars drove by during stop.

Sand Hill Cranes – Y/N? Number? **2**

**Count Quality:** Excellent, medium or poor depending on noise, traffic, temperature, wind, weather, etc., and how it affects your ability to detect birds

**Dominant Land Use:** R-range, C-crop, S-sagebrush steppe, O-other (describe)

**Curlew Detection Type:** V- visual, C-call, B-both, F- flyover only