

Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow



Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow Fast Facts

- Listed as endangered in 1967
- Relies on marl prairie habitat
- Non-migratory – extremely limited range
- Requires drier conditions for nesting February – August (mostly April-May)

Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow. Photo: NPS/Lori Oberhofer

ISSUE SUMMARY

- Historic modification of the sparrow's habitat has pushed them to the brink of extinction.
- Now, with sea level rise and changing hydrology, the bird faces even more threats.
- This has been made apparent with this year's unseasonably wet winter, compounded by runoff from the Everglades Agricultural Area, loading Miccosukee WCA 3A upstream from the sparrows with more water than the system can currently assimilate.
- High water in Miccosukee WCA 3A harms tribal lands and access to their culturally significant tree islands.
- In normal years, specific water control structures are closed in winter to retain water in 3A and dry out sparrow nesting habitat to the south.
- However, this year structures were opened from October 2023 to April 2024 in an attempt to alleviate high water levels and tribal impacts.
- This harms the sparrow's nesting habitat and unfortunately did not measurably reduce elevated water levels.

TAKEAWAY

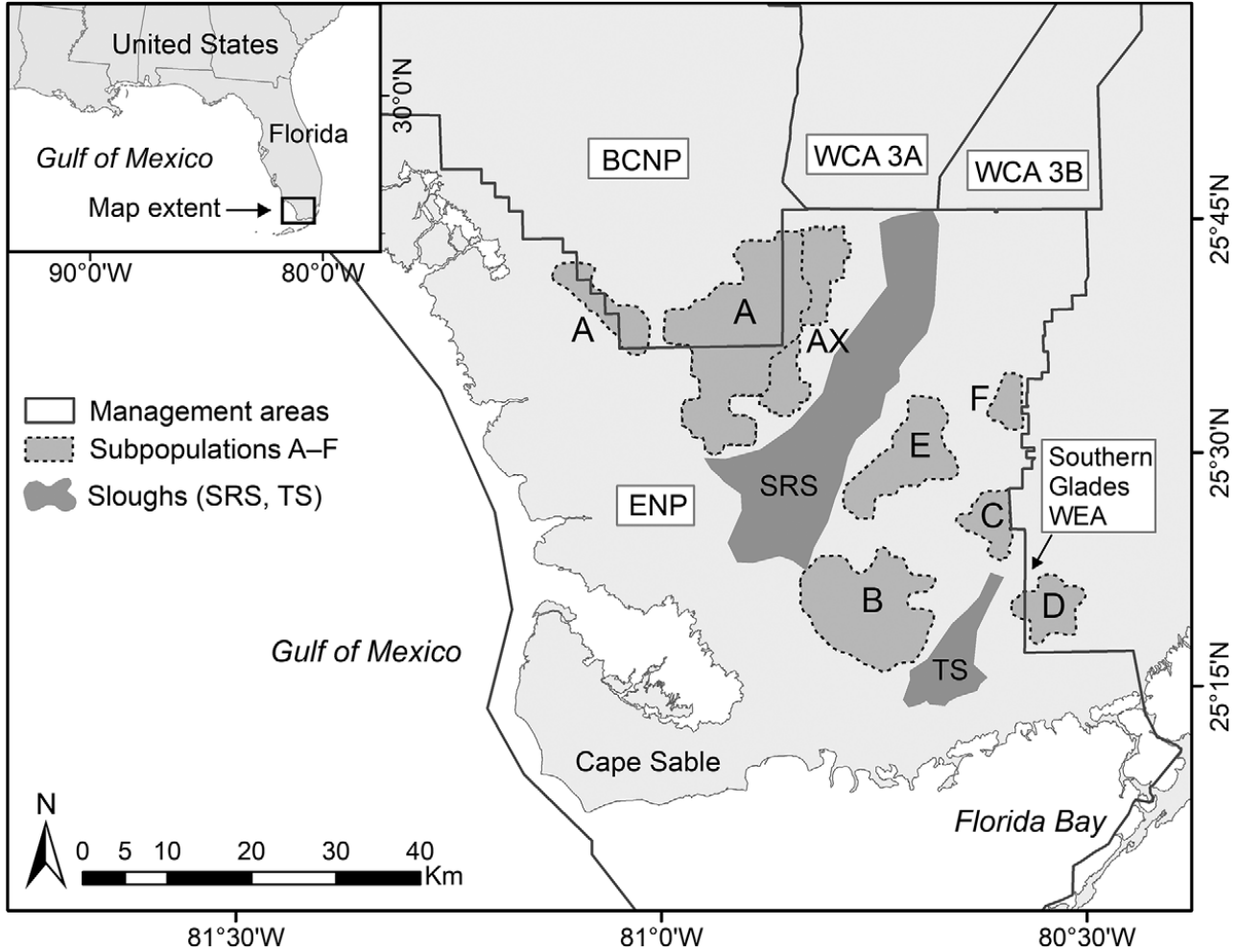
Blaming the sparrow for high water is inaccurate and a distraction.

The real problem? We have too few pathways to move water south to where it is needed.

The solution? CEPP

Map of Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow Subpopulations

Benscoter, Allison & Romañach, Stephanie. (2022).
 Endangered Cape Sable seaside sparrow science: actions towards recovery through landscape-scale
 ecosystem restoration. *Endangered Species Research*. 49. 10.3354/esr01212.



Water control structures located along the Tamiami Trail have historically remained closed so as to protect sparrow nesting habitat in subpopulation A.

Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow. Photo: NPS/Lori Oberhofer



WHAT'S NEXT?

- We must accelerate the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) Operational Planning & Multi-Year Deviation – concurrent processes to address conveyance constraints.
- We need ongoing scientific research, monitoring, modeling, and coordination among stakeholders.
- We need a long-term management strategy and recovery plan for the Sparrow, including immediate habitat management for marl prairie in Everglades National Park.
- We must start moving forward earnestly with the development of a captive breeding program and release strategy.



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