
A concentration of Mountain Plovers *Charadrius montanus* in San Luis Potosí, Mexico

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The Mountain Plover *Charadrius montanus*, which breeds in the shortgrass prairie mainly east of the Rocky Mountains in the U.S.A., is known to winter in south-western U.S.A. and northern Mexico, often in medium-sized to large concentrations in open grasslands and farmland. However, there have been few published records of flocks of this species in Mexico. The species is

now listed by BirdLife International as Vulnerable¹, following information published in Knopf & Miller³, suggesting that there was a 63% decline in numbers between 1966 and 1991. Thus, Wege & Long⁷ stated that "priority sites need to be identified in Mexico for wintering *C. montanus*". Previously, *C. montanus* has been recorded in San Luis Potosí by Mellink⁵, with small

numbers seen in farmland at Las Joyas (22°06'N 101°44'W, c.2,120 m). Here we report on a sighting of a concentration of this species in the El Manantial prairie-dog town, near San Vicente, northernmost San Luis Potosí, on 21 December 1994.

El Manantial is the last remaining colony of the threatened (and endemic) Mexican Prairie-dog *Cynomys mexicanus* in San Luis Potosí⁴, and is at the southernmost end of the distribution of this genus². It covers roughly 392 ha of grassland amid an extensive creosote-bush *Larrea tridentata* plain, in the privately owned Rancho Santa Ana, at c.24°08'N 100°57'W, and 1,750 m above sea-level.

While walking a transect of the prairie-dog town in order to make a rapid assessment of the prairie-dog population, we counted at least 33 *C. montanus*. We estimate that we were only able to detect plovers in 30-50% of the area of the prairie-dog town, and, if evenly distributed, the true number of birds present could have been 60-100 individuals.

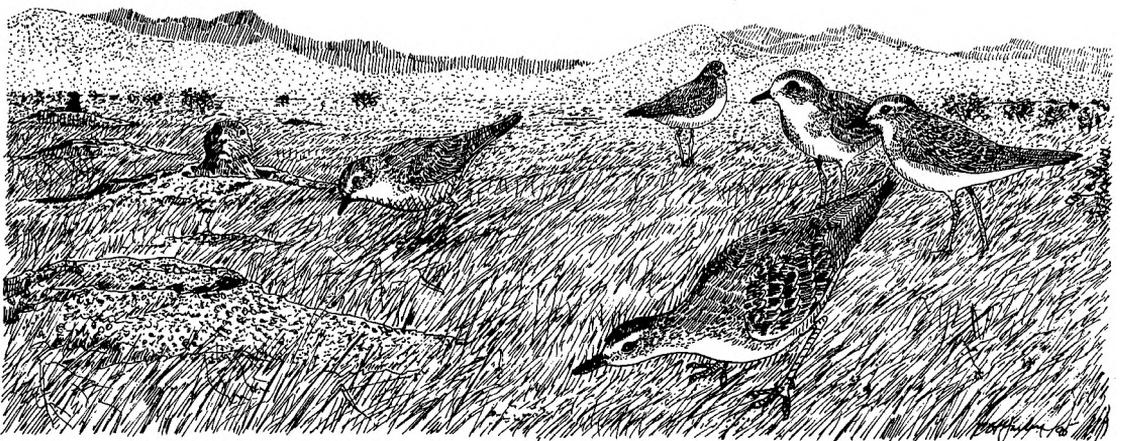
We do not know if the same individuals are present at this locality all winter, or even each year. However, we suggest that El Manantial warrants further study as it may be a priority area for the conservation of this species, as well as for *Cynomys mexicanus*. Furthermore, this area is within the range and habitat of the endangered Worthen's Sparrow *Spizella wortheni*^{1,6}, and further study may show it to be present, at least during part of the year.

References

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