

**PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF SPECIES ON THE APPENDICES OF THE  
CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES  
OF WILD ANIMALS (CMS)**

- A. PROPOSAL:** Inclusion of the Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) on Appendix II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
- B. PROPONENT:** Government of Bolivia
- C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT:**

**1. Taxon**

- |            |                       |   |   |
|------------|-----------------------|---|---|
| <b>1.1</b> | <b>Classis</b>        | : | Aves  |
| <b>1.2</b> | <b>Ordo</b>           | : | Passeriiformes  |
| <b>1.3</b> | <b>Familia</b>        | : | Icteridae   |
| <b>1.4</b> | <b>Species</b>        | : | <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>                          |
| <b>1.5</b> | <b>Common name(s)</b> | : | Bobolink (EN)<br>Charlatán (SP)<br>Goglu des rés (FR) |

**2. Biological data**

**2.1 Distribution**

*Dolichonyx oryzivorus* is a long distance migratory bird species. Its breeding range lies across the central-northern region of North America in Canada and the United States, and it hibernates in the central-southern region of South America. Its estimated breeding range is 3,880,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

In Canada the breeding areas are found in the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. In the United States this species nests in the north-eastern, north-central and north-western states, and more dispersedly in the west and south end of its range. Isolated breeding populations can be found in the middle of the state of Washington, the north-east of Nevada, the north of Utah, the east of Arizona, Kansas and the north-centre of Kentucky.

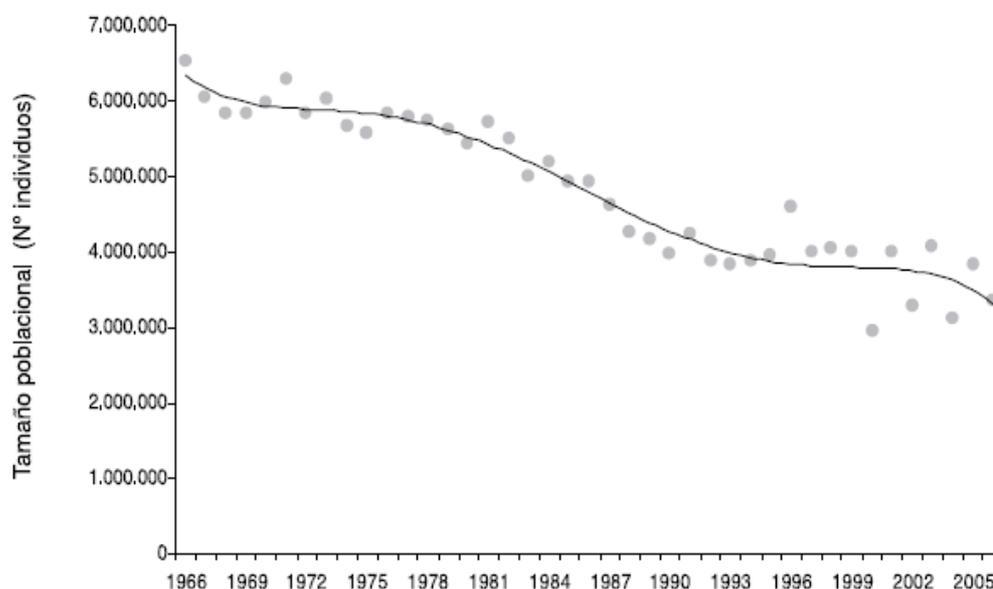
It migrates across the east coast of Central America, the Caribbean islands and the north of South America, towards non-breeding areas (wintering areas) in Bolivia, Paraguay, south-east Brazil and north Argentina. Records exist as well from the west Andes along the coast of Peru and the north of Chile.

**2.2 Population**

The population size for this species is estimated at 11,000,000 individuals. The vast majority is found in the breeding grounds in the United States (approximately 80 per cent), and in

Canada (around 20 per cent). According to a study (COSEWIC 2010), the population that nests in Canada represents approximately 900,000 pairs or 1,800,000 individuals.

The population tendency of the species is negative. Since the 60s, the population of *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* has been on the decrease (see Fig. 1) and has continued declining to today. According to Butcher *et al.* (2007), the species is suffering a moderate annual decline of 1.78 per cent within its range of reproductive distribution. Moreover, according to Berlanga *et al.* (2010), the population has seen a decrease of no less than 52 per cent in its population since the 1960s.



**Figure 1.** Population tendency for the Bobolink, *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (Sauer *et al.* 2004).

### 2.3 Habitat

Originally *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* nested in tall grass prairies; today it uses hayfields and mixed grasslands. In addition, it uses wet meadows, graminoid peat bogs and abandoned fields dominated by high grass and remaining virgin prairie, reed beds and irrigated lands in arid zones. In natural short grass prairies such as in Saskatchewan and Alberta, the species is much less abundant and it is also not frequent in row crops like corn or soy.

During the post-nesting period the species uses grasslands near the breeding areas as well as freshwater and coastal swamps where it seeks shelter until the pre-basic moult ends. During the migration it uses rice-fields and small grain fields, grazing lands and marshlands, freshwater and saltwater swamps. It uses the same kind of habitat in its wintering areas.

### 2.4 Migrations

The transequatorial migration of *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* covers a round-trip distance of 20,000km and is one of the longest annual migrations of a bird belonging to the Western Hemisphere Passeriformes. It migrates in large flocks of several thousand individuals.

Migration starts at the end of July and beginning of August, congregating for some weeks in coastal areas and freshwater swamps where they complete their pre-basic moult. Afterwards they continue their migration in large flocks towards south, arriving in the wintering grounds in October-November in Paraguay and Brazil, and in December-January in the North of Argentina. In March-April they begin the return journey and start arriving in the breeding areas in May.

### **3. Threat data**

It is believed that the decline in the population of *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* is mainly the result of the mortality caused by agricultural activity and habitat loss along its range in the breeding, migration and wintering grounds.

#### **3.1 Direct threats**

Among the direct threats hunting and pesticide poisoning stand out, given that the species is usually considered an agricultural plague for crops, especially rice fields.

#### **3.2 Habitat destruction**

One of the main causes of the decline that the species is suffering is the habitat loss due to the expanding agricultural industry, especially in the breeding grounds in North America, but also in South America.

#### **3.3 Indirect threats**

One of the indirect threats is mortality caused by the consumption of agrochemicals through feeding from crops, as it has been documented in rice fields in Argentina for example.

#### **3.4 Threats connected especially with migrations**

The majority of threats occur in the breeding and wintering grounds. Nevertheless, during the migration season large flocks stop to feed and rest on crops, which results in the species being considered a pest (which leads to direct hunting and poisoning). Besides, the inappropriate use of pesticides results in a high mortality. The loss of habitat such as natural grasslands is also a key threat along their migration paths.

#### **3.5 National and international utilization**

Reports exist that the species is utilized as food in the Caribbean (Jamaica), and it could be a threat in other places along its migratory routes as well. In South America the species is sold as a pet in a cage.

### **4. Protection status and needs**

#### **4.1 National protection status**

The species is not protected in Bolivia. Canada has considered the species as threatened since 2010 while in Argentina the species is not considered as threatened at the national level.

#### 4.2 International protection status

Despite the decline of the population, it is not protected at a global level given its large range and big population size.

#### 4.3 Additional protection needs

- Conservation of the natural habitat
- Good management practices in agricultural areas
- Control in the use of pesticides on crops
- Control of the hunting
- Awareness-raising on the fact that the species is not a plague
- Study on current size of the population and its tendency

### 5. **Range States<sup>1</sup>**

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA; ARGENTINA; Bahamas; Barbados; Belize; BOLIVIA; Brazil; Canada; Colombia; CHILE; COSTA RICA; CUBA; Dominica; Dominican Republic; ECUADOR; FRANCE (French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, St Barthelemy, St Martin and St Pierre and Miquelon); Guatemala; Guyana; Haiti; HONDURAS; Jamaica; Mexico; Nicaragua; PANAMA; PARAGUAY; PERU; St Kitts and Nevis; St Lucia; NETHERLANDS (Aruba, Curaçao and the Netherlands Antilles); St Vincent and the Grenadines; Suriname; Trinidad and Tobago; UNITED KINGDOM (Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Montserrat and the British Virgin Islands), United States of America (Puerto Rico and the American Virgin Islands); and Venezuela

### 6. **Comments from Range States**

### 7. **Additional remarks**

### 8. **References**

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<sup>1</sup> CMS Parties in capitals.

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