

# Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* breeding abundance and habitat use in the Eastern Rainwater Basin, Nebraska

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The Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* is a common shorebird that breeds throughout much of North America. The most recent estimate of the total population of Killdeer is 1 million individuals, but this estimate is supported by few quantitative studies. We used distance sampling to survey Killdeer in the agricultural ecosystem of the Eastern Rainwater Basin, Nebraska. Our results show that as many as 100,000 Killdeer may breed in the Eastern Rainwater Basin. The region we surveyed covers a very small portion of the Killdeer's overall breeding range, suggesting that the Killdeer population is likely >1 million birds. We also evaluated habitat use in the heavily modified Eastern Rainwater Basin. Our results show that Killdeer primarily occupy row crop agricultural fields and prefer fields planted to soybeans the previous growing season over those that had been planted to corn in the previous season. Our results highlight the need to further assess Killdeer population size and trends throughout the species' range, and also evaluate localized and range-wide threats to the species' long-term survival while the species is common.