

Birds and Bees: Information, contacts, and resources

Compiled by Roy Thornton, shivaree18@gmail.com

Grassland Birds

“North American Grassland Birds: An Unfolding Conservation Crisis?”

[https://wildlife.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2193/0022-541X\(2005\)069%3C0001:NAGBAU%3E2.0.CO;2](https://wildlife.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2193/0022-541X(2005)069%3C0001:NAGBAU%3E2.0.CO;2)

Losses of birds and how to help: <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/bring-birds-back/>

NYS DEC Habitat, Conservation Unit

Possible contact for evaluation of habitat management plans:

Marcelo del Puerto, CWB[®], Habitat Conservation Unit
Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Marine Resources
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233
518 402-8907, 518 402-8925, marcelo.delpuerto@dec.ny.gov

NYS DEC “Best Management Practices for Grassland Birds”

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/86582.html>

Audubon NY, Managing habitat for grassland birds:

<https://ny.audubon.org/conservation/managing-habitat-grassland-birds>

Copy of part of the web page:

- “Maintain enough habitat and connect "open-space" – Grassland birds need relatively large fields (20 acres and larger, depending on the species and the landscape). A small grassland patch surrounded by open space, even if the surrounding fields are not grasslands, is better for grassland birds than a grassland surrounded by trees.
- Clean up fence lines – Although hedgerows provide important habitat for some wildlife, along with other benefits such as erosion control and wind and snow breaks, even small trees and shrubs pose problems for grassland birds. A line of brush or trees delineates the edge of a

grassland habitat patch to birds that prefer large grasslands for breeding. Also, hedgerows and brush lines attract weasels, raccoons, skunks, foxes, crows, and more—all species that eat grassland bird eggs and nestlings. Reducing the woody corridors that intrude into or border grasslands helps young grassland birds to survive.

- Control shrubs and woody vegetation in the field – Abandoned fields make good grassland bird habitat, but only for a few years. Once shrubs and saplings are established the habitat quickly becomes unsuitable for grassland birds, and bringing it back into good condition becomes more difficult and more expensive. If a field is large enough to be used by grassland birds, a regular plan of mowing, haying, or grazing is important to keep it as grassland, but timing is crucial. Mowing each patch every 2 or 3 years, or a rotating fraction (1/3 or 1/2 of the patch) each year, is preferable to mowing annually.
- Time mowing and hay-cutting to allow young grassland birds to escape – nests, eggs, and flightless young of ground-nesting grassland birds are obviously vulnerable to the tractor wheels and mowing equipment. The following mowing/haying dates are ranked in order of value to breeding grassland birds from highest to lowest:
After 20 August only.
Once before 20 May, and once after 20 August. The following options will allow only limited successful breeding:
Once before 1 June. After 20 July only.”

NYSDEC and Audubon NY:

*A Plan for Conserving Grassland Birds in New York:
Final Report to the New York State Department of Environmental
Conservation under contract #C005137, 2008*

https://ny.audubon.org/sites/default/files/conservation_plan_for_grassland_birds_in_ny.compressed.pdf

NYSDEC Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar, NY

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1835.html>

Education, outdoor activities, three 17-acre plots managed for grassland birds, gardens near the visitor center are managed for pollinators.

Draft Unit Management Plan

https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/5riversplan.pdf (This has been approved.)

Audubon Society of the Capital Region (ASCR)

<https://www.capitalregionaudubon.org> (home page)

https://www.capitalregionaudubon.org/batnick_park_grassland.php

In the past (2014) ASCR assisted with signage and conducted workshops. Perhaps they could become involved again. Conservation and Advocacy group headed by Eric Latini, Conservation@CapitalRegionAudubon.org

USDA National Resources Conservation Service, Schoharie Service Center

<https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?service=page/ServiceCenterSummary&stateCode=36&cnty=093>

Southeast Area, 108 HOLIDAY WAY, SCHOHARIE, NY 12157
(518) 295-8600, (855) 477-8525 fax

Contact: Dianna Stanton, District Conservationist,
(518) 271-1740, (855) 477-8525 fax,
Dianna.Stanton@ny.usda.gov

Some of their programs might be helpful to Niskayuna in establishing and maintaining habitats for grassland birds and pollinators. This office has a wildflower planter for rent at \$12 per acre. The planter is towable by a tractor with 60 horsepower or more.

EPA fact sheet on revegetating landfills:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-08/documents/revegetating_fact_sheet.pdf

Cornell Cooperative Extension, "Enhancing Pastures for Grassland Bird Habitat," Jim Ochtorski, November 2005

https://www.nyfoa.org/application/files/1214/7948/6118/PasturesGrassland_Bird_2MB.pdf

Describes the need for helping grassland birds many of which are in trouble.

Provides guidance for farmers to manage pastures for grassland birds. The guidance also applies to non-farm land.

Friends of the Washington County IBA (Important Bird Area)

<http://www.ibafriends.org> One of their volunteers might be willing to look over and assess the capped landfill and review the plan.

Friends of the Washington County Grasslands IBA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to protect endangered Short-eared Owls and other at-risk birds of the Washington County Grasslands Important Bird Area and conserve their habitat.

Grassland Bird Trust of Washington County

<https://www.grasslandbirdtrust.org>

Grassland Bird Trust (GBT) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit land trust conserving critical habitat for endangered, threatened and rapidly declining grassland birds. We've conserved over 250 acres of prime habitat in the heart of the Washington County Grasslands Important Bird Area (IBA) since our founding in 2010.

Wildlife Habitat Council: <https://www.wildlifehc.org>, Consulting, certification

Pollinators

Ernst Seeds

A source of seed mixes, planting guides, further information on pollinators, and a link to the Xerces Society:

<https://www.ernstseed.com>

They work with the Xerces Society to develop seed mixes tailored to the Northeast for pollinators and other wildlife habitats:

<http://www.ernstseed.com/seed-mixes/>

Xerces Society

Key program areas are: pollinator conservation, endangered species conservation, and reducing pesticide use and impacts.

<https://www.xerces.org>

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County
Executive director Sarah Pechar, 518-372-1622, contact
schenectady@cornell.edu, educational programs, gardening with native
plants, website <http://cceschenectady.org>

University of Connecticut Information on Pollinators
[https://portal.ct.gov/CAES/Publications/Publications/Pollinator-
Information](https://portal.ct.gov/CAES/Publications/Publications/Pollinator-Information)

Mowing Schedule for pollinator habitat:
<https://clear.uconn.edu/tools/habitats/docs/ProperTimingtoMow.pdf>

Copied from the web page:

- “In native plant meadows managed for pollinators, the best practice is to mow after the first frost in the fall, or before plant growth begins in late winter or early spring.
- Another strategy is to mow only one- third to one-half the habitat each time on a rotational schedule.
- Mowing a path through a meadow can provide safe access for walking and observing wildlife activity.”

USDA National Resources Conservation Service, Schoharie Service Center
[https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?service=page/ServiceCenter
Summary&stateCode=36&cnty=093](https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?service=page/ServiceCenterSummary&stateCode=36&cnty=093)

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USDA NRCS website concerning pollinator habitat:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/plantmaterials/technical/publications/?cid=stelprdb1044847>

North American Pollinator Protection Campaign

<https://www.pollinator.org> A resource for information and programs relating to enhancing pollinator habitat.

(Internet search terms such as grassland birds or pollinator habitat yield much information.)