

PRIORITY BIRD SPECIES at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

Bobolink pair
Photo: Lynn Cleveland/Audubon Photography Awards



Northern Bobwhite pair
Photo: Gordon Warrick/Audubon



The National Audubon Society protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow.

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center focuses on conservation of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem and the birds that rely on it.

“Grasslands in particular posted the biggest losses, with more than 700 million breeding individuals lost across 31 species since 1970, a more than 50 percent decline.”

- from **Decline of the North American Avifauna** report, Oct. 2019.

Protecting Grassland Birds & Habitat

PRIORITY SPECIES AND CRITERIA

Staff of Audubon Great Plains and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center looked at several local, state, and federal lists and bird conservation plans and – aligning with Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center’s habitat management plan to manage for prairie biodiversity – derived the following list of 14 priority bird species. (Table 1)

For an overview on how priority species were scored and chosen, please see Table 2 on the reverse side of this document.

TABLE 1. Priority Bird Species for Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

Common Name	Scientific Name	Seasonality	Link to More Info.
Northern Bobwhite	<i>Colinus virginianus</i>	Year-round Resident	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/northern-bobwhite
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>	Year-round Resident	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/northern-harrier
Bell’s Vireo	<i>Vireo bellii</i>	Breeding (Apr - Sept)	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/bells-vireo
Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	Breeding (Apr - Sept)	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/loggerhead-shrike
Eastern Bluebird	<i>Sialia sialis</i>	Year-round Resident	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/eastern-bluebird
Sprague’s Pipit	<i>Anthus spragueii</i>	Migratory Stopover (Mar & Oct)	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/spragues-pipit
Grasshopper Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	Breeding (Apr - Oct)	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/grasshopper-sparrow
Harris’s Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia querula</i>	Non-breeding (Nov - Apr)	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/harriss-sparrow
Henslow’s Sparrow	<i>Centronyx henslowii</i>	Breeding (May - Sept)	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/henslows-sparrow
Bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	Breeding (May - Sept)	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/bobolink
Eastern Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella magna</i>	Breeding (Apr - Oct)	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/eastern-meadowlark
Western Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	Breeding (Apr - Oct)	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/western-meadowlark
Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>	Breeding (May - Sept)	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/yellow-warbler
Dickcissel	<i>Spiza americana</i>	Breeding (Apr - Oct)	audubon.org/field-guide/bird/dickcissel

Rowe Sanctuary and Spring Creek Prairie Priority Bird Species

Introduction

Hundreds of bird species depend on habitat at both Rowe Sanctuary and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center during one or more periods of their life cycle. Several of these species require prioritization in conservation efforts because they have small population sizes, important or sizeable populations within a particular area, small or diminishing ranges, or they are experiencing threats and/or declining population trends at the global, regional, or local level. Therefore, a priority species is of particular management concern since it may be threatened in terms of the species' long-term survival. Species may also be considered if they hold recreational or cultural value. The priority species list is intended to act as a working document and assist in planning efforts, conducting on-the-ground activities, and development of best management practices at both sanctuaries. For instance, the priority list can help land managers identify potential land-use changes that could be made to improve priority bird habitat. It also may be used as an educational tool to assist with programming, decision-making and policy work with stakeholders, and coordination with private landowners to build a more resilient and bird-friendly landscape within Nebraska.

Selection process

The strategy behind the priority species selection process was to generate a list of regionally important species based on uniformly applied biological criteria. We developed a score-based approach for selecting priority bird species that are at risk on continental and/or regional scales and occur with some regularity at Audubon centers in Nebraska during the breeding season, non-breeding season, or both. This system ranks species based on inclusion on National Audubon Society's Priority Birds List, Nebraska Game and Parks (NGPC) Natural Legacy Plan Tier I and Tier II species list, cultural importance within the region, occurrence at each sanctuary, and habitat management goals (i.e., species that rely on management of grassland or riverine habitat).

There are 5 contributing factors to the priority species scores, as follows:

- Inclusion on National Audubon Society's priority birds report (1 point):**
https://nas-national-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/prioritybirdsreport_final.pdf
- Inclusion as a Nebraska Game and Parks Natural Legacy Plan Tier I species (2 points)**
- Inclusion as a Nebraska Game and Parks Natural Legacy Plan Tier II species (1 point)**
- Management Priority (1 point):** Species common at center properties that are representative of a specific habitat type, thus serving as indicators for specific habitat management priorities.
- Charismatic Species (1 point):** Species of local concern or interest, or those that present opportunities for partnerships with other organizations (Game species, urban species, and well-known species).

Spring Creek Prairie Priority Bird Species	Habitat	NAS Priority Bird	NGPC Tier I Species	NGPC Tier II Species	High Abundance at SCP	Benefits from Management	Charismatic/ Socially Important
Eastern Meadowlark	GR			X	X	X	X
Northern Harrier	GR	X			X	X	
Bobolink	GR	X			X	X	X
Grasshopper Sparrow	GR				X	X	X
Sprague's Pipit	GR	X	X		X	X	
Northern Bobwhite	GR	X			X	X	X
Eastern Bluebird	OS				X	X	X
Harris's Sparrow	RS				X	X	X
Loggerhead Shrike	GR		X				X
Bell's Vireo	RS	X			X	X	
Yellow Warbler	RS	X			X		X
Western Meadowlark	GR	X			X	X	X
Dickcissel	GR				X	X	X
Henslow's Sparrow	GR		X		X	X	X

Habitat: GR=Grassland ; OS=Oak Savanna ; RS=Riparian Shrubland

Benefits from Management: Species that visit any time of the year that most benefit from active management such as keeping water in the river, sandbars clear of vegetation, woodlands clear of eastern red cedar to encourage native shrub coverage, and grasslands grassy & treeless.

High Abundance: Average number of birds reported on all eBird checklists within Spring Creek Prairie Hotspot and/or Lancaster County within the last 5 years is greater than 0.5. This metric includes checklists that did not report the species and provides a measure of how commonly a species is reported relative to other species in the region.

Charismatic: Species of local concern or interest, or those that present opportunities for partnerships with other organizations (Game species, urban species, and well-known species).