

Grassland Birds Need Our Help



Grassland birds are adversely affected by habitat loss, vulnerable to human disturbances, and in need of intervention if we are to reverse these declines. Bobolinks, Savannah sparrows, Eastern meadowlarks and other ground-nesting grassland birds rely on undisturbed fields during nesting season to provide them with food and protection from predators.

Ag Allies Supports Grassland Birds & Farmers Across Maine

In Maine, hayfields are often cut at least once during the grassland bird nesting timeframe. This cutting during the nesting period results in total nestling mortality.

Ground-nesting birds build their nests directly on the ground, hidden in the high grass.

This nesting strategy helps protect them from their natural predators, but also makes them extremely vulnerable to destruction by mowing operations during this critical period.



Savannah sparrow nestlings, pc M McGowan

The **Ag Allies Program** collaborates with landowners and farmers across Maine to make best-fit management changes that balance the needs of both birds and farmers.

Program services include:

- Technical Assistance
- Outreach Assistance
- Incentive Payments

Ag Allies

Making Room for Grassland Birds in Maine



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Maine's Grassland Birds



BOBOLINKS

The males' song is reminiscent of R2D2 of Star Wars! Perched on a blade of grass or branch, breeding males are striking, described as wearing a tuxedo backwards. Look for the straw-colored patch on the head. Females are buff and brown, with a pointed, pinkish bill and dark eyeline. *pc L Suomi-Lecker*



SAVANNAH SPARROWS

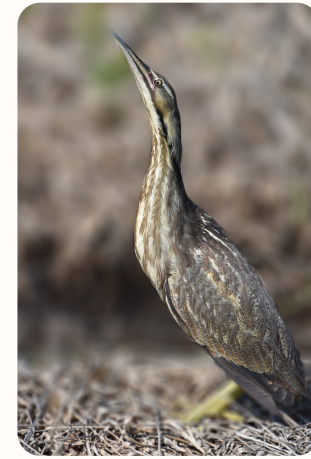
Note the short tail, small head, and the telltale yellow stripe over the eye. Streaks on the breast may converge to form a spot. Listen for a thin, high-pitched "tsss" call. *pc L Suomi-Lecker, J Brockway*



EASTERN MEADOWLARKS

Documented in only a few Ag Allies fields so far, meadowlarks have suffered stunning declines across their range. Note brilliant yellow underparts and black V on the breast. Males have a flute-like song. *pc K Greene, M Taylor*

AMERICAN BITTERN



Unlikely to be seen, this stealthy marsh bird sometimes nests in upland grasslands. If spotted, bitterns often stand still and look straight up at the sky, sometimes swaying like grass. *pc L Suomi-Lecker*

NORTHERN HARRIER



This slim, long-tailed hawk glides low over the grass, sporting a white patch at the base of its tail. Up close it has an owlish face. The gray and white males are smaller than the brown females. Like bitterns, harriers nest in both grasslands and marshes. *pc L Suomi-Lecker, M. Taylor*