

Manitoba Species at Risk

Baird's Sparrow

Ammodramus bairdii



Christian Artuso



Habitat



Diet



Provincially
Endangered

Baird's Sparrow Range Map



* Range map based on potential range.

Baird's Sparrow is a small grassland sparrow that is known to be elusive and is most often recognized by its distinct tinkling song. It is listed provincially as Endangered and federally as Special Concern.

The presence of Baird's Sparrows are thought to be an indication of healthy grassland habitat. Loss and degradation of its habitat has dramatically reduced populations from historic levels which have declined approximately 77% since the 1960s. With 60% of this species breeding in Canada, it is critical that measures be taken to ensure their long-term survival.

Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)

- Retain blocks of native grassland (>1/4 section)
- Convert cultivated land to perennial cover
- Reduce or remove woody vegetation in native or tame grasslands through burning, grazing, mowing or manual removal
- Graze using a sustainable management plan
- Delay haying until after early July, to avoid nesting season
- Control invasive species through herbicide use, hand-clearing or other techniques like bio-control
- Reduce pesticide use

Bonus Species: These BMPs also benefit Sprague's Pipit and Chestnut-collared Longspur.

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More about the Baird's Sparrow

Description

A small (12 cm long) grassland sparrow whose distinguishing markings include “moustache” marks on its yellowish-ochre face and a necklace of thin streaks.

Habitat

Restricted to grasslands of the Northern Great Plains, Baird's Sparrows do not inhabit lands where woody vegetation has grown excessively. They prefer to inhabit native prairies, although may be found in hay fields and pastures that possess a sufficient amount of native grasses. In addition, remnants of previous year's growth is crucial for nest construction and camouflage.

Threats

The greatest threats to Baird's Sparrow are habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation. Additional threats include time of haying, over grazing, invasive species (such as smooth brome, leafy spurge and yellow sweet clover) and pesticides such as Furadan, a cholinesterase inhibitor used to control grasshoppers, which is thought to reduce reproductive success.

Outlook

Long-term population declines and ongoing threats to its habitat have caused the recent change of Baird's Sparrow's federal status from Not at Risk to Special Concern. Continued study of this elusive species and implementation of better management are essential for this species' recovery.

Producer Benefits

The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is a voluntary, confidential, self-assessment process, enabling farm managers to develop an action plan to address agri-environmental assets and risks in their operation. Completion of an EFP may qualify you for funding to implement BMPs on your land. For more information or to register, contact your local Manitoba Agriculture office.

Beyond the species benefits, BMPs can help your operation through:

- Access to on-farm programs and incentives
- Meet emerging market demands for sustainable sourcing
- Increased agricultural sustainability
- Greater resilience to events such as insect outbreaks, floods and droughts
- Better pest control and management
- Improved water quality, quantity and erosion control
- Improved pasture and forage

For more information regarding beneficial management practices on your land, please contact Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation or the organizations listed below.

FUN FACT

Baird's Sparrow often eludes predators (and human watchers) by running on the ground, rather than flying away!

Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation

www.mhhc.mb.ca

Conservation Data Centre

www.manitoba.ca/sd/cdc

Manitoba Agriculture

www.manitoba.ca/agriculture

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