

Manitoba Species at Risk

Sprague's Pipit

Anthus spragueii



Christian Artuso



Habitat



Diet



Federally
Threatened

Sprague's Pipit Range Map



* Range map based on potential range.

The Sprague's Pipit is a provincially and federally threatened songbird, which nests in native grasslands across the southern portion of the Prairie Provinces. With approximately 60-80% of the world's Sprague's Pipit breeding population being found in Canada, conservation and stewardship for this species is of high priority.

Over the past 40 years, 80% of the Sprague's Pipit population has been lost. This is largely due to the conversion and degradation of native grasslands.

Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)

- Retain moderately large blocks of un-fragmented, native grassland
- Convert cultivated land to perennial cover
- Reduce or remove woody vegetation in native or tame grasslands through burning, grazing, mowing, or manual removal
- Control invasive species through herbicide use, hand-clearing or other techniques like bio-control
- Graze using a sustainable management plan
- Delay haying of grasslands until mid July, to avoid nesting season
- Reduce pesticide use

Co-benefiting Species: The BMPs listed for this species may also benefit Baird's Sparrows and Chestnut-collared Longspurs.

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More about the Sprague's Pipit

Description

Sprague's Pipit is a medium sized (15-17 cm long), cryptically coloured songbird and is commonly lumped into the category of a "Little Brown Job" (LBJ) due to the difficulty in distinguishing it from other small brown songbird species. Both males and females are similar in appearance.

Habitat

Sprague's Pipit prefers to nest in open native grasslands of intermediate height and density, with moderate litter accumulation. They are rarely found in cultivated lands. As a ground nester, Sprague's Pipit avoids areas with even moderate shrub cover, as this drastically increases the likelihood of predation. Preferred habitats occur where grazing, fire or other activities have reduced woody vegetation.

Threats

Habitat loss is the primary cause of population decline in this species. Additional threats include intensive grazing, haying, habitat fragmentation, and encroachment of woody growth. The use of pesticides to control grasshopper populations may also impact Sprague's Pipit, particularly during its breeding season.

Outlook

Although native grassland habitat may be limited, the potential to rehabilitate and maintain suitable habitat is high. If threats are adequately addressed, recovery of the species is considered feasible.

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

Territorial males have the longest flight display of all birds, which is known to last up to 3 hours!

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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