

# New England Grassland Ambassador Bird ID Sheet

## Priority Species

### Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)



**Description:** 7 inches long. Breeding males have a bold gold crown, black underside with a white/silver back, and black legs and beak. Females, non-breeding males, and recently fledged young are a buffy pale yellow with minimal breast streaking, a heavily striped back, and pink legs and beak.

**Song:** Warbling and bubbly, robotic; resembles the Star Wars character “R2D2”.

**Breeding Behavior:** Males fly like a wind-up toy while singing, circling their territory during display flights. During courtship males “chase” females around as if playing tag. Rarely nest within 50 meters of a field’s edge.

**Status:** Medium priority Species of Greatest Conservation need in Vermont.

### Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)



**Description:** 5 inches long. Both sexes have yellow “eyebrows” with faint rings around the eyes. Bellies are white, marked with heavy, crisp dark streaks. Their back ranges from rufous to brown with vertical black streaks.

**Song:** Series of short, high pitched buzzes, ending with a longer, lower pitched buzz.

**Breeding Behavior:** Both sexes display by fluttering slightly above the grass while singing. Nests primarily in grasslands and meadows. After forming a pair, the male follows closely behind the female while foraging.

### Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*)



**Description:** 9 inches long. Breeding adults have bright yellow breasts with a black V-shaped “necklace”. Face is white and yellow with heavy black eye lines. White outer tail feathers are visible during flight. Their back is barred black and brown.

**Song:** Flute-like “spring of the year”.

**Breeding Behavior:** Males sing from prominent perches, such as fence posts or power lines.

**Status:** High priority Species of Greatest Conservation need in Vermont.

# Grassland Bird Look-a-likes

## Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)



**Description:** 8 inches long. Overall much darker and more heavily marked than Bobolinks. Breeding males are all black with a red and yellow patch on each shoulder. Females, non-mating males, and recently fledged young are dark brown with heavy breast streakings.

**Song:** A rhaspy “con-ka-reeeee”.

**Breeding behavior:** Primarily nests in tall wetland grasses. Occasionally nests in wet sections of hay pastures. Nests are built woven into the vegetation several feet above the ground.

## Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*)



**Description:** 6 inches long. Gray “eyebrow”, compared to Savannah Sparrow’s yellow. Breast streaks are more blurred than Savannah Sparrow. Overall brown and gray. Larger with a heavier body than Savannah Sparrows.

**Song:** Long series of trills and notes ending with a longer trill.

**Breeding behavior:** Generalist which nests in many habitats, including grasslands.

# Other Grassland Birds

## Northern Harrier (*Circus hudsonius*)

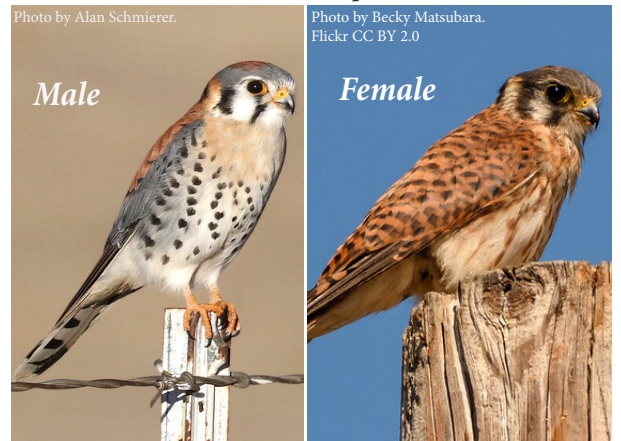


**Description:** 20 inches long. Males are pale gray with a clean white underside and black wingtips. Females are darker overall with a dirtier brown underside. White rump prominent while in flight in both sexes.

**Behavior:** Nests on the ground in open, treeless areas ranging from marshes to meadows. Primarily utilize hayfields to hunt rodents. Seen flying low and deliberately over the ground.

**Status:** High priority Species of Greatest Conservation need in Vermont.

## American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)



**Description:** 10 inches long. Males have a rusty brown back with blue-gray wings; female’s wings are rusty brown. Two bold black marks on their face appear to form a mask. The underside of the stomach and wings is a pale rusty brown.

**Behavior:** Frequently hover while foraging. Nests in tree cavities and frequently in nest boxes and abandoned farm buildings overlooking fields.

**Status:** High priority Species of Greatest Conservation need in Vermont.