

# Staging a Comeback for Meadowlarks

At the request of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, VCE is producing the state's official recovery plan for the threatened Eastern Meadowlark—and will lead the monitoring effort to track progress.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's annual North American Breeding Bird Survey indicates that Vermont is now losing 8.7% of its remaining Eastern Meadowlark population, already decimated from historic highs, every year. In February of 2022, the Eastern Meadowlark was officially designated as a threatened species in the state, meaning it's likely to become endangered without timely intervention.

Successful conservation of any species depends on a robust understanding of its resource preferences, range and distribution, breeding behaviors, and other factors. But because Eastern Meadowlarks' preferred grassland habitat makes them difficult to observe, they've likely been underrepresented in traditional survey work and datasets. To begin addressing the situation, VCE has recently been conducting field surveys dedicated solely to Eastern Meadowlarks, more than doubling the number of meadowlark records in the Vermont eBird database.

Now, because of VCE's expertise in ornithology and conservation and our volunteer network's unequalled capacity to monitor meadowlarks statewide, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has contracted with us to produce the state's official Eastern Meadowlark Recovery Plan. Among key elements will be finding and protecting previously unreported breeding sites and enlisting the help of property owners who have breeding birds on their land. We also need to learn more about these birds' relatively unknown migration patterns, which will allow for a whole-lifecycle approach to conservation that may extend beyond our borders.



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR'S ANNUAL NORTH AMERICAN BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

