



## SOME GOOD REASONS FOR PROTECTING BOBOLINKS

~ Bobolinks are beautiful and interesting birds that use pastures and fields with tall grasses for nesting and raising young. Many pairs will nest in the same area and share feeding and care of young.

**~ Some Bobolinks may return to the same site where they were raised. However, the presence of Bobolinks on a given site in repeated years is not evidence to support that they are thriving or having success breeding and producing fledglings on the site.**

~ Bobolinks have the longest migration of birds in the blackbird family. They winter in parts of South America and breed in north-central and eastern U.S. and southern Canada. Long-distance migration takes a toll.

~ Bobolinks are not protected on their wintering grounds and are subject to unregulated killing there.

~ During the nesting season, Bobolinks feed predominantly on insects and other invertebrates, including ticks, and help keep the populations of insects under control. Seeds of weeds and other plants are eaten more in fall and winter.

**~ Bobolinks, like other grassland birds, are declining in population in New England and other states. One of the major causes of this decline is early and more frequent haycropping, which results in 90- 100% mortality of all young.**

~ If eggs and/or young of Bobolinks are destroyed in a season, the parent birds are not able to re-nest because they have already used too much physical energy.

~ Bobolinks are a natural part of a healthy grassland ecosystem. Delayed mowing not only prevents outright killing of the majority of Bobolinks and other wildlife but also increases overall biological richness and biodiversity of the entire grassland.

~ Bobolinks and other migratory birds, and their nests and eggs, are protected under Federal law. Our town can do its part to uphold this important regulation.

~ In Hubbardston and surrounding towns there are hundreds of acres of privately-owned grasslands and hayfields that are not managed for wildlife protection. Grassland bird survival is becoming dependent on safe havens on public land or on private non-profit properties (see reverse).

**We have an opportunity to offer our small public 40+ acres as a place of protection for Bobolinks and other birds. Please support a delayed-mowing plan for the Mt. Jefferson Conservation Area.**

**THANK YOU.**

## WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING TO PROTECT GRASSLAND BIRDS IN MASSACHUSETTS

- ~ Many private land trusts and towns use environmentally-sound and bird-friendly methods for managing fields and grasslands by setting delayed mowing dates.
- ~ MassAudubon designates late mowing of fields, with dates ranging from mid-July through August, as determined by individual Sanctuary managers.
- ~ MassWildlife manages most large upland grasslands with provisions for mowing after July 15<sup>th</sup>, in order to protect grassland birds as well as game species that use tall grass during the breeding season—turkeys, deer, rabbits, etc.
- ~ Trustees of Reservations sets mowing dates of July 15<sup>th</sup> or later on its grasslands properties; many fields are cut after July 31<sup>st</sup>.
- ~ The Department of Conservation and Recreation/ Division of Watershed Protection is working diligently to streamline and improve grassland mowing practices in the Ware River and Quabbin Watersheds. The intent is to protect grassland birds, turtles, and other wildlife, and rare plants. DCR is currently undertaking a Natural Resources Inventory of all of its grasslands and shrublands. \*

**\*DCR holds a Conservation Restriction on the Mt. Jefferson Conservation Area and has no objection to delayed mowing to protect wildlife.**

- ~ The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages one its largest grasslands—the Ft. River Division in Hadley-- to retain the meadows for grassland birds. This includes delaying mowing until after July 15 to accommodate first nest attempts. The Service is also in the process of restoring three former agricultural fields to grassland habitats.
- ~ The NHESP ornithologist for the state, Andrew Vitz, is working with a task force of various agency representatives to develop *An Action Plan for the Conservation of State-listed Obligate Grassland Birds in Massachusetts*. The intention of this plan is to pool the knowledge, resources and management ability of grassland stakeholders in the Commonwealth to initially assess and prioritize conservation needs of grassland birds in the State, and then use these pooled resources to effectively realize specific targeted conservation goals. Although the initial focus of this report is on three MESA-listed species, **the greater goal is to eventually develop plans for all grassland-obligate bird species in the State [including Bobolinks ]**.  
<http://www.env.state.ma.us/mepa/mepadocs/2013/052213em/pn/11.pdf>



**In Hubbardston, let's be part of the solution for helping the birds.**