



Bird Monitoring at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve

Importance: *Important component of ecosystems*

Birds intrigue and excite visitors, having become an important part of interpretive programs in the National Park Service. Beyond the pleasure that birds provide, they are an important component of ecosystems. Their high metabolism and position in the food web make them indicators of change in an ecosystem – the canary in the coal mine, so to speak. Maintaining habitat for the wellbeing of bird populations conserves entire ecosystems for the benefit of all species.

Long Term Monitoring: *Assessing change*¹

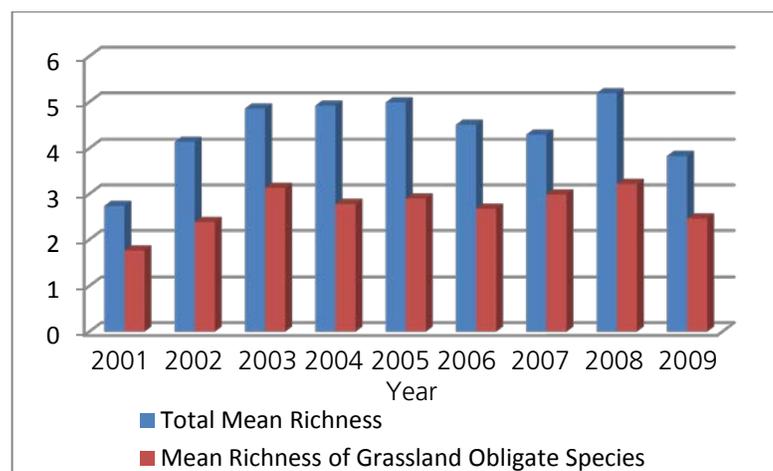
The Heartland Inventory and Monitoring Network initiated breeding bird surveys in 2001 to provide plot-specific, habitat-specific, and Preserve-wide information on bird community composition and species abundance. Network staff determined the health of bird communities through calculations of species richness and diversity. Scientists also characterized the habitat available using several measurements of the physical environment and vegetation types. Now the scientists can use breeding bird surveys and simple vegetation measurements to assess habitat integrity changes over time with consideration to management actions.



Eastern Meadowlark (Sturnella magna) is a grassland obligate species, a species dependent on grassland habitat.

Status and Trends: *Habitat variables and community structure*

Scientists found 97 bird species on the Preserve since 2001. Thirteen of these breeding bird populations belong to a class of broadly declining species that are of continental concern. Twelve species depend solely on grasslands, a habitat in decline throughout the continent, for breeding habitat. Additionally, scientists found:



Total richness of all breeding bird species compared to total richness of grassland obligate, breeding bird species, during surveys in years 2001–2009.

1. Current grassland and riparian management should continue to provide diversity of habitats to meet requirements of 13 breeding species of continental importance and 12 breeding species classified as grassland obligates.
2. Although most of the Preserve is upland prairie, riparian woodland and other habitats contribute to breeding bird species diversity.

Heartland Inventory and Monitoring Network of the National Park Service. Visit <http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/htln/index.cfm>.

*...protecting the habitat
of our heritage*



¹ Peitz, D. G. 2011. *Bird community monitoring at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Kansas: 2001- 2010 status report*. Natural Resource Data Series NPS/HTLN/NRDS—2011/165. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado.