



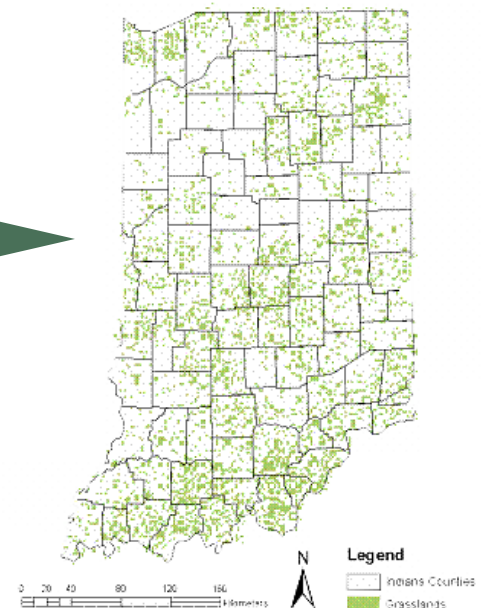
FARM BILL GRASSLANDS HABITAT SUMMARY



Grasslands within the Farm Bill programs are defined as those developed in a predominately agricultural landscape to promote soil and water conservation and wildlife habitat values.



Over 15% of Indiana is in grasslands, constituting prairies and reclaimed mine lands. Those areas are primarily in southern, central and extreme northern parts of the state. Grasslands comprise more than 5,800 miles² or 3.7 million acres.



Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan

Representative Species of Farm Bill Program Grasslands

The habitat guild for Farm Bill Program Grasslands is represented by several species. These representative species “paint a reasonable mental picture” of this habitat type.

Northern Bobwhite



Pictured: *Northern Bobwhite*

Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in Farm Bill Program Grasslands

SGCN are animal species whose populations are rare, declining or vulnerable.

Henslow's Sparrow



Pictured: *Henslow's Sparrow* | **Photo credit:** Dominic Sherony

Threats to Farm Bill Program Grasslands

- Habitat fragmentation
- Agricultural/forestry practices
- Habitat degradation
- Successional change
- Commercial or residential development (sprawl)
- Counterproductive financial incentives or decisions
- Residual contamination (persistent toxins)
- Invasive/non-native species
- Mining/acidification
- Nonpoint source pollution (sedimentation and nutrients)

High-Priority Conservation Actions for Farm Bill Program Grasslands

Habitat restoration on public lands

- Encourage the use of Farm Bill programs to restore former agricultural lands.
- Land-use planning
- Promote the use of Farm Bill programs for grassland to the benefit of grassland-dependent SGCN.

Habitat restoration incentives (financial)

- Target sign-ups to encourage larger fields or areas with existing grasslands in order to benefit area sensitive species such as Henslow's sparrows.

Cooperative land management agreements (conservation easements)

- Investigate the benefits of Farm Bill program grasslands for grassland-dependent SGCN and provide technical assistance to other public/private programs supporting cooperative land management agreements for the conservation of grasslands.

Restrict public access and disturbance

- Develop and promote implementation of BMPs that limit disturbance to nesting grassland birds (SGCN), especially on public conservation lands.

Succession control (fire, mowing)

- Periodically (3-5 years) burn or mow portions of Farm Bill program grassland used by Henslow's sparrows in order to maintain late successional grasslands habitat.
- Or Develop succession management BMPs for Farm Bill program grasslands to ameliorate benefits to grassland SGCN, especially Henslow's sparrows.

Habitat protection through regulation

- Provide technical assistance to establish protective mowing seasons for Henslow's sparrows.

Habitat restoration through regulation

- Require the use of Farm Bill grassland programs to benefit SGCN on agricultural endeavors conducted by state agencies or receiving public funds.
- Provide technical assistance to state agencies involved in habitat mitigation relative to Farm Bill type grassland programs to restore grasslands to benefit SGCN.

Habitat protection incentives (financial)

- Support Farm Bill programs that convert row-crop areas to early successional grasslands to benefit SGCN, especially Henslow's sparrow.

Adaptive Management

- Modify survey and monitoring, research and other conservation actions and activities in response to new information to improve habitat conservation efficiency for SGCN.

Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan

Threats to SGCN in Farm Bill Program Grasslands

- Habitat loss (breeding range)
- Habitat loss (feeding/foraging areas)
- Predators (native or domesticated)
- Viable reproductive population size or availability
- Invasive/non-native species
- Bioaccumulation of contaminants
- High sensitivity to pollution
- Unintentional take/direct mortality (e.g., vehicle collisions, power line collisions, by catch, harvesting equipment, land preparation machinery)
- Dependence on irregular resources (cyclical annual variations) (e.g., food, water, habitat limited due to annual variations in availability)
- Degradation of movement/migration routes

High-Priority Conservation Actions for SGCN in Farm Bill Program Grasslands

Protection of migration routes

- Promote the use of Farm Bill grassland programs to provide migratory habitat for SGCN.

Public education to reduce human disturbance

- Develop a technical assistance program to maximize public awareness of the value of undisturbed Farm Bill program lands to nesting birds and other SGCN.

Exotic/invasive species control

- Support programs to identify and control the adverse impacts of exotic, invasive plant and animal species on grassland SGCN in Farm Bill program grasslands.

Habitat protection

- Determine habitat needs and limiting factors for SGCN using Farm Bill program grassland.
- Support retention and maintenance (management activities) of Farm Bill program grasslands to ameliorate benefits to grassland dependent SGCN.

Threats reduction

- Investigate threats to grassland-dependent SGCN in Farm Bill program grasslands and support science-based adjustments to conservation practices to the benefit of SGCN.

Native predator control

- Investigate the impact of predation on grassland dependent SGCN in Farm Bill program grassland habitat, especially in linear/corridor conservation practice sites that may serve as population sinks.

Limiting contact with pollutants/contaminants

- Investigate the impacts of pollutants/contaminants on grassland SGCN and other wildlife using Farm Bill program conservation practice sites and investigate the movement of pollutants/contaminants through such sites.

Adaptive Management

- Modify survey and monitoring, research and other conservation actions and activities in response to new information to improve conservation efficiency for SGCN.

