

PASSERINES MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Raised by Working Group July - October 2000

Forest Passerines

- Towers (crosses all species)
- Atmospheric deposition (mercury, acid rain, etc.)
- Need for outreach re the importance of small woodlots
- Forest practices
- Habitat fragmentation, sprawl
- Predation (house cats, cowbirds)

Shrubland Passerines

- None of the shrub passerines have large area requirements - need to emphasize the value that forest practices can have maintaining populations of these birds
- Habitat loss and alteration
- Potential to work with utility companies re powerline corridors, pipelines, etc. (Pesticide Control Board training seminars)
- Need to prioritize species
- Link the habitat requirements of priority species with other shrub wildlife (New England cottontail, black racer)

Wetland Passerines

- Incremental loss and degradation of wetlands, especially freshwater wetlands
- Impacts to riparian habitat, especially buffers in coastal areas and along rivers and streams
- Increase in invasive plant species in wetlands

Passerines Issues and Concerns

- Recreational use of wetlands (jet skis, ATVs)
- Contaminants that alter wetland composition (pesticides for mosquito control)
- Wetland fluctuations and water level manipulations
- Forestry practices that alter habitat and enhance habitat for competitors (rusty blackbirds)
- “Nuisance” situations (red-winged blackbirds in sweet corn, problems at airports)
- Need outreach to promote awareness and understanding

Grassland Passerines

- Integrating goals and objectives developed for other species (deer, for example) with passerine goals and objectives
- Timing of various agricultural activities (mowing, haying, etc.)
- Levels of mortality due to free-ranging feral and domestic cats
- Downeast Maine is extremely important for upland sandpipers and vesper sparrows; need to continue outreach efforts with the blueberry industry
- Timing and dosage of herbicides used in the blueberry industry; herbicides can be detrimental to some grassland birds
- Impacts to the use of herbicides and insecticides (regarding salmon) could affect grassland birds
- Are there fields on industrial forest lands that could be managed as fields rather than allowed to revert to forests?
- Habitat improvements at airports; important grassland complex at Wells Barren, Kennebunk Plains, and Sanford Airport (bird conservation program at Bradley International Airport in Connecticut as a possible model)
- Widening of roads and highways and the potential loss of grasslands, also timing of roadside mowing.

Passerines Issues and Concerns

- Don't want to encourage grassland habitats along roads, nothing but a "death trap"
- Interface with Maine Cooperative Extension providing advice through NRCS on dairy farming/mowing impacts and timing
- Outreach with private landowners that have grasslands on their properties, are interested in wildlife, and want to keep the brush down but are not interested in hay. Stress that timing is critical (public service announcements, Best Management Practices - Mass Audubon has three example documents on its website: farmland, large open lands, small open lands).
- Changing face of the agriculture industry: larger scale, more chemically intensive, technology that allows hay to be cut earlier, regardless of weather, and more often
- Habitat configurations are important: larger areas are better than a series of smaller areas, some species require hundreds of acres
- Need to promote the positive aspects of birding/ecotourism without the potential negative impacts
- Need outreach materials on attracting birds (pros and cons), viewing birds - how? where?
- Is there adequate habitat on the landscape, or do we need more?

Swallows

- Persistence and population levels in Maine are linked to what happens on the wintering grounds (pesticide applications)
- Public acceptance of cliff swallows has been a problem in the past
- Bank swallows - timing of active mining during the breeding season
- Snag retention and persistence of natural cavities
- Barn swallows - management options for reversing population declines
- Need for outreach - farmers, DOT personnel, foresters, gravel miners