

BOBOLINK

Dolichonyx oryzivorus



Physical characteristics



Males have a black back, white abdomen and rump, and yellow nape, whereas females are buff-coloured with fine dark brown streaking on their back and flanks.

Bobolink
nest



Female
bobolink



Diet



The bobolink eats insects (lepidopterans and orthopterans), some of which are crop pests, and seeds. Nestlings, however, feed only on insects.

Habitat



Hayfields are the bobolink's preferred habitat. It breeds in grasslands, natural meadows, and pastures. It nests on the ground and is faithful to its nesting site.



Periods of vulnerability



- The nesting period (egg-laying, incubation, rearing of young) extends from May to mid-July.
- Bobolink eggs hatch between mid-June and early July.
- Nestlings can't fly very well until approximately mid-July.
- Family groups gather around mid-August to begin their southward migration.

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Threats



- Early and frequent haying, which represents a leading cause of mortality.
- Reduced habitat availability due to the conversion of hayfields and pastures to field crop monocultures.
- Further habitat loss due to agricultural land being abandoned and reverting back to forest.
- Risk of poisoning due to ingestion of pesticide-covered seeds.

Sustainable practices



- Delaying hay cutting until July 15, or leaving parts of hayfields undisturbed until this date, is considered one of the most beneficial practices.
- If a nest is spotted, maintain a protective buffer around it (100 m or so) and avoid approaching the nest before July 15.
- When cutting hay, work from the inside of the field outward so that birds can fly away and won't get trapped.
- Preserve prairies:
 - Maintain them for 4 to 5 years before recultivation.
 - Rotate them so that recultivated prairies sit next to new or old prairies.
- Reduce farm machinery speed to no more than 10 km/h.
- Install a flushing bar at a height of 10 cm to avoid colliding with young birds that aren't yet capable of flying away.
- Rotate livestock whenever possible to avoid overgrazing, especially in areas where bobolinks are present.

- As of 2023, **threatened** species listed on Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*
- Recovery strategy for the bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) in Canada: www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/recovery-strategies/bobolink-proposed-2022.html

Sources

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