

**BIRD COMMUNITIES OF RESTORED PRAIRIES AND OLD-FIELD HABITATS IN AGRICULTURAL AND URBAN AREAS OF WINONA COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

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*Abstract:* Native prairie and savannah habitats in southeastern Minnesota have been mostly eliminated by agriculture and urbanization. Resource management agencies and private landowners have idled former agricultural land and planted prairie vegetation on some sites to restore native plant and animal communities. The goal of this study was to survey bird communities in small, restored prairies and old-field habitats in agricultural and urban areas of Winona County, MN. Six sites (two in 2008 and 2009, four in 2009 only) were surveyed five times each during summer (June-August). Perched or flushed birds along triplicate transects were identified and tallied to determine bird community structure and density. Nearly 1000 birds representing 27 species were observed during surveys, averaging 11 species/site (range = 7-19 species/site). Six generalist species (American Goldfinch, Red-winged Blackbird, Song Sparrow, Indigo Bunting, Chipping Sparrow, House Sparrow) were present at four or more sites, and represented >64% of all birds tallied. Species that associate with grassland habitats (Bobolink, Dickcissel, Field Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Ring-necked Pheasant) represented only 8% of birds sighted and were found at only one or two sites each. Bird densities at most sites ranged from 13-17 birds/hectare. Bird community diversity indices were similar at all sites, but bird community structure differed significantly (all Bray-Curtis similarity values <0.6) among all sites. Summer bird communities in grasslands of SE MN appear to be highly variable and dominated by generalist species, although grassland specialists were present in the larger (>3 hectares) sites surveyed.