

## The Concord Airport Grasslands Important Bird Area

The New Hampshire Important Bird Area Program is part of a national and international effort to identify areas that provide critical habitat to birds during some stage of their annual cycle. In New Hampshire the program is a partnership of the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, and the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. IBAs are identified based on strict scientific criteria, including 1) the presence of threatened or endangered species, 2) other species and habitats of conservation concern, and 3) areas where birds congregate during breeding, migration, or winter. It is hoped that recognition of IBAs can help guide future conservation and research efforts at areas that meet these criteria.

The Concord Airport Grasslands meet categories 1-2 of the IBA criteria, as follows:

1) Endangered and threatened species

Grasshopper Sparrow (state threatened) – In recent years, 9-12 pairs of Grasshopper Sparrows have been documented at the Concord Airport. This represents from 50-75% of the statewide population in any given year, and as such the area is critical for the species in New Hampshire. Grassland management at the airport appears to be combatable with the sparrows' continued presence, and ongoing management related to restoration of the Karner blue butterfly may even create new habitat for sparrows as well.



2) Other species and habitats of conservation concern

The grasslands at the Concord Airport also support several other grassland birds of state and regional conservation concern. Most abundant of these is the Vesper Sparrow, with 10-15 pairs per year. Two or three pairs of Eastern Meadowlarks and Horned Larks also use the fields here. Because of the nature of the habitat (shorter and sparser grasses, more heaths), the area is not suitable for another grassland species of concern: the Bobolink.

For the purposes of the NH IBA Program, the Concord Airport Grasslands IBA is defined as all grassland areas within the airport perimeter fence, adjacent habitat outside the fence at the southern end of the airport, and grassland areas at the National Guard Base at the north end of the airport.

For more information on the New Hampshire Important Bird Area Program, contact:

Pam Hunt  
Audubon Society of New Hampshire  
3 Silk Farm Road  
Concord, NH 03301

(603) 224-9909 extension 328

email: [phunt@nhaudubon.org](mailto:phunt@nhaudubon.org)



More details on the IBA Program are also available on the N.H. Audubon web site.