

# Bobolink

*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*



Status: **Threatened**



## Threats:

- ◆ Incidental mortality from agricultural operations (mowing of hay during breeding period)
- ◆ Habitat loss and fragmentation
- ◆ Pesticide exposure and bird control at wintering roosts

## Description:

- ◆ Medium-sized songbird 15-21 cm in length
- ◆ Member of the blackbird family
- ◆ Females are tan coloured with dark stripes on the crown and back
- ◆ In breeding season, males are black with bold white patterns on their back and a patch of yellow at the back of the neck; after breeding, males look similar to females
- ◆ Is the only songbird that is solid black below and largely white above

## Biology:

- ◆ Builds nest on the ground, hidden in long dense grass
- ◆ Lays 3-7 greyish eggs speckled with reddish brown
- ◆ Spends much of their time on the ground feeding on insects and seeds
- ◆ Males attract mates and defend territories by singing a bubbling musical song
- ◆ Are considered a pest of grain crops along their migration route and in their wintering ground

## Habitat:

- ◆ Is distributed across Ontario south of the boreal forest
- ◆ Historically found in mixed grass prairies and meadows
- ◆ Now found in fields larger than 3 ha with 50-80% grass cover; hayfields at least 5 years old
- ◆ Migrates to Argentina; one of the longest migrations of any North American songbird

Species at Risk  
STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

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### Bobolink on Your Property? *Here's What You Can Do:*

- ◆ **Don't disturb nests, young or adults.** Be respectful and observe from a distance.
- ◆ **Please keep your cats and dogs indoors or on a leash.** Cats are particularly hard on ground nesting birds like the Bobolink.
- ◆ **Consider timing and frequency of mowing hayfields and grasslands to benefit Bobolink.** For example, delay mowing until mid-July to allow young to fledge.
- ◆ **Appreciate insects!** Insects like grasshoppers and beetles are an important component of the ecosystem, becoming food for a wide variety of birds and other animals.
- ◆ **Support sustainable agricultural practices.** Look for farms that have an Environmental Farm Plan.
- ◆ **See or hear a Bobolink close by?** Submit your sighting to the Natural Heritage Information Centre at [nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/species/species\\_report.cfm](http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/species/species_report.cfm). Photographs with specific locations or mapping coordinates are always helpful.
- ◆ **Contact the Ministry of Natural Resources.** If you find a Bobolink or a nest on your property, you may be eligible for stewardship programs that support the protection and recovery of species at risk and their habitats. Contact the MNR for more information.
- ◆ **Learn More.** Check out the Species at Risk section on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at [www.mnr.gov.on.ca](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca).



Female  
Photo: Ted Krug



Male  
Photo: Ted Krug

### Ontario's *Endangered Species Act*

Ontario's *Endangered Species Act, 2007* came into force on June 30, 2008, making Ontario a North American leader in the protection of species at risk and their habitats.

Compared to Ontario's previous Act, written in 1971, the new ESA 2007 provides:

- ◆ Science-based assessment of species' status
- ◆ Automatic protection of a species and its habitat once it's listed as endangered or threatened
- ◆ Broader protection for species at risk and their habitats
- ◆ Greater support for volunteer stewardship efforts of private landowners, resource users, and conservation organizations
- ◆ A commitment to recovery of species through recovery planning
- ◆ Greater accountability, including government reporting requirements

Ontario is home to more than 30,000 species, most of which have stable populations.

However, more than 180 species in Ontario, 34 of which are found in Parry Sound-Muskoka, are currently considered "at risk" because of threats like:

- ◆ Habitat loss
- ◆ Global changes in insect populations
- ◆ Pollution
- ◆ Invasive species
- ◆ Climate change
- ◆ Over-harvesting
- ◆ Road mortality



Learn more about Species at Risk on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at [www.mnr.gov.on.ca](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca).