

Eastern Meadowlark

Sturnella magna



Status: **Threatened**

Threats:

- ◆ Incidental mortality from agricultural operations (mowing of hay during breeding period)
- ◆ Loss and degradation of grassland habitat on both the breeding and wintering grounds



Photo: USFWS

Description:

- ◆ Stocky, medium-sized songbird 23-28 cm in length
- ◆ Member of the blackbird family
- ◆ Body is brown with black streaks; bright yellow underparts with a black "V" on the breast
- ◆ Short tail has white outer feathers seen during flight
- ◆ Bill is long and pointed
- ◆ Males sing; song is varied and consists of plaintive flute-like whistles

Biology:

- ◆ Breeding occurs between May and July; builds nest on the ground, hidden in long dense grass
- ◆ Lays 4-5 eggs in a cup nest woven with dead grasses, plant stems and strips of bark
- ◆ Forages on the ground or in low vegetation by probing with its bill
- ◆ Mainly eats insects, seeds and berries; in winter, often feed in flocks on plant seeds, waste grain and berries
- ◆ Males sing from elevated perches such as large boulders, fence posts, shrubs and tall plant stalks to attract females and defend territories from other males

Habitat:

- ◆ Found in older hay fields, grasslands and wet fields
- ◆ Historically found in native grasslands and prairies
- ◆ Territory typically 5 acres in size
- ◆ Migrates to southern United States and Mexico in November

Species at Risk
STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

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Eastern Meadowlark on Your Property? **Here's What You Can Do:**

- ◆ **Don't disturb nests, young or adults.** Be respectful and observe from a distance. If you see an Eastern Meadowlark on someone else's property, tell them that a Threatened species lives there!
- ◆ **Please keep your cats and dogs indoors or on a leash.** Cats are particularly hard on ground nesting birds like the Eastern Meadowlark.
- ◆ **Consider timing and frequency of mowing hayfields and grasslands to benefit Eastern Meadowlarks.** For example, delay mowing until mid-July to allow young to fledge.
- ◆ **Appreciate insects!** Insects like grasshoppers and crickets 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 an Eastern Meadowlark close by?** Submit your sighting to the Natural Heritage Information Centre at 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 an Eastern Meadowlark 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.

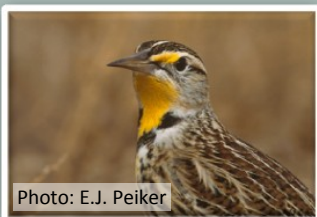


Photo: E.J. Peiker



Photo: Alastair Rae



Juvenile
Photo: Alan D. Wilson

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.