

The Grassland and Grouse Project

2006 Bird Survey

Introduction

As a component of the Grassland and Grouse Project, Cross Conservation Area staff and volunteers feel it is important to conduct a bird survey on the remaining native grass patches. The survey is to be used as a snap shot indicating bird species using the sites. In accordance to the Migratory Bird Act, bird surveys also assist in avoiding the disturbance of any nests when mowing specific sites as a technique to reduce the invasion of Smooth brome.

Methods

The native grassland sites surveyed were previously identified in the summer of 2005 with transects set for monitoring vegetation. Thirteen areas were surveyed from eleven sites. A stake was placed approximately in the centre of each survey site. The stakes were randomly set near the vegetation transects. Stakes were placed with visual and hearing advantages in mind. Each stake was marked with a GPS. Due to the distribution of the native grassland in site 4C, three separate survey locations were staked.

Bird surveys were conducted between 6:00 am and 9:00 am when birds are vocally active. Surveyors entered each site on foot, walking to the survey stake. A 5 minute interlude of silence was taken prior to beginning each survey. Site descriptions were drawn on the survey sheet during this break. Surveys were conducted in a 15 minute block.

The survey area was defined with a 100m radius from the survey stake. The surveyor visually judged this distance. All birds heard and seen within the survey area were recorded on the survey sheet.

Results

The most common species found using the native grassland patches were the Clay-coloured sparrow and the Savannah sparrow. From these species, pairs were observed with the male singing suggesting they may be nesting on or near the site. There was no indication of specific species of concern using the sites.

The following tables display the results from the sites surveyed.

Site	1A
Date (m/d/y)	6/6/06
Time (am)	7:15 - 7:30
Observer	Lisa Flaman

Weather	Clear
Wind	Calm
Birds using the site	2 Clay-coloured sparrow 2 Savannah sparrow
Birds flying through	
Comments	High bird activity surrounding the site. Dugout SW of the site.

Site	1B
Date (m/d/y)	6/6/06
Time (am)	6:40 - 6:55
Observer	Lisa Flaman
Weather	Clear, 9.5°C
Wind	Calm
Birds using the site	2 Clay-coloured sparrow 3 Savannah sparrow (1 pair)
Birds flying through	1 Brewer's blackbird
Comments	

Site	1C
Date (m/d/y)	6/6/06
Time (am)	7:50 - 8:05
Observer	Lisa Flaman
Weather	Clear
Wind	Calm
Birds using the site	1 Clay-coloured sparrow 1 Savannah sparrow
Birds flying through	
Comments	Very high bird activity in and around the beaver ponds located approximately 600m south of the survey stake. Actual survey site - very quiet.

Site	2T
Date (m/d/y)	6/30/06
Time (am)	7:35 - 7:50
Observer	Lisa Flaman
Weather	Clear, 15°C
Wind	Calm
Birds using the site	1 Clay-colored sparrow 2 American tree swallow 1 Vesper sparrow
Birds flying through	3 Brewer's Blackbird

Comments	Mow site. Site already mowed on SW side approximately 20m into survey area. American tree swallows look to be using the Blue bird box on the fence to the west. Fence running N-S approximately 25m east with Blue bird box.
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Site	4A
Date (m/d/y)	6/6/06
Time (am)	7:52 - 8:07
Observer	John Bregar
Weather	Clear
Wind	Calm
Birds using the site	4 Clay-coloured sparrow (2 pairs) 3 Savannah sparrow (1 pair)
Birds flying through	1 American goldfinch
Comments	Mow Site. 3 Richardson's ground squirrels.

Site	4B
Date (m/d/y)	6/6/06
Time (am)	8:25 - 8:40
Observer	Lisa Flaman
Weather	Clear 13°C
Wind	Light
Birds using the site	2 Clay-coloured sparrow 1 Savannah sparrow
Birds flying through	2 American goldfinch 2 American tree swallow 1 American robin 1 Cedar waxwing 1 Brewer's blackbird 1 Mourning dove
Comments	Pine creek south of the site approximately 400 m had very high bird activity along creek and in south forest.

Site	4C - Northeast
Date (m/d/y)	6/7/06
Time (am)	6:20 - 6:35
Observer	John Bregar
Weather	Partly cloudy, 8°C
Wind	Calm to very light
Birds using the site	2 Clay-coloured sparrow 2 Savannah sparrow
Birds flying through	

Comments	Mow site. Survey site reduced to a 75m radius from the stake.
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Site	4C - middle
Date (m/d/y)	6/7/06
Time (am)	6:43 - 6:58
Observer	John Bregar
Weather	Partly cloudy to mostly clear, 9°C
Wind	Clam to very light
Birds using the site	3 Clay-coloured sparrow 1 Vesper sparrow 1 House wren (in the Aspen stand)
Birds flying through	1 Grey catbird 3 Cedar waxwing 1 Barn swallow
Comments	Mow site.

Site	4C - Southwest
Date (m/d/y)	6/7/06
Time (am)	7:12 - 7:27
Observer	John Bregar
Weather	Mostly clear, 11°C
Wind	Clam to very light
Birds using the site	3 Savannah sparrow 1 Vesper sparrow
Birds flying through	2 American tree swallow 3 Barn swallow 2 Eastern kingbird
Comments	Mow site.

Site	4D
Date (m/d/y)	6/6/06
Time (am)	6:49 - 7:04
Observer	John Bregar
Weather	Clear, 9.5°C
Wind	Calm to very light
Birds using the site	1 Vesper sparrow
Birds flying through	1 Clay-coloured sparrow 1 American tree swallow
Comments	

Site	4E
Date (m/d/y)	6/6/06
Time (am)	7:15 - 7:30
Observer	John Bregar

Weather	Clear
Wind	Calm
Birds using the site	5 Clay-coloured sparrow
Birds flying through	1 Red-winged blackbird 1 Least flycatcher
Comments	

Site	4T
Date (m/d/y)	6/6/06
Time (am)	8:19 - 8:34
Observer	John Bregar
Weather	Clear, 13°C
Wind	Light
Birds using the site	3 Clay-coloured sparrow
Birds flying through	1 Savannah sparrow 1 American robin
Comments	3 White-tailed deer

Site	5A
Date (m/d/y)	6/7/06
Time (am)	8:07 - 8:22
Observer	John Bregar
Weather	Mostly clear, 13°C
Wind	7-12 km/h from the South
Birds using the site	2 Savannah sparrow 1 Vesper sparrow
Birds flying through	
Comments	

Discussion

The bird survey provided an indication of the species utilizing the native grassland at the Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area. This survey does not reflect all the species that may be occupying the sites as it was completed only once in the spring.

Recommendations

Three sites are to be mowed this summer, in 2006. Mowing is conducted to mitigate the invasion of Smooth brome on the native grassland patches and is done prior to the grass

going to seed. This important management technique is done along the edge of the brome front surrounding the native patch.

It is recommended that prior to mowing someone sweeps the area to be disturbed in search of nesting birds. This can be done using a long pole or stick approximately 5 feet in length, sweeping the grass in front while walking. It can be assumed that any birds flushed may be nesting.

Acknowledgements

A special thanks to John Bregar, Cross Conservation Area volunteer, for organizing, participating and contributing knowledge to the grassland bird survey. Appreciation also presented to Cross Conservation Area staff.