

Chippawa Grassland Bird Habitat Management Plan

With the drastic decline of grassland habitat and grassland bird populations throughout southern Ontario, there is an essential need to protect and enhance existing grasslands. The primary purpose of the Chippawa Grassland Bird Habitat Management Plan is to enhance existing grasslands on Niagara Parks property to support grassland dependent bird species.



Goals of the Chippawa Grassland Bird Habitat Management Plan:

- to protect and enhance grassland bird habitat in Niagara, encouraging an increase in breeding grassland birds. This plan will utilize a diverse mixture of native grasses and wildflowers to provide a variety of plant structure (heights) to support grassland birds while out-competing undesirable species;
- identify a long-term management plan for maintaining the grasslands as a healthy and sustainable grassland habitat; and
- support other species such as pollinators, reptiles, and amphibians.

Existing Threats to Grasslands and Grassland Dependent Birds

The primary threat to grassland bird species is the loss of habitat and decreased habitat quality. Habitat loss can be attributed to:

- Residential and commercial development;
- incompatible agricultural practices;
- establishment of invasive/non-native species; and
- maintenance practices.



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NPC recognizes an opportunity to restore up to 50 hectares of fallow fields adjacent to NPC's 400-hectare Legends on the Niagara Golf complex, an Audubon International certified course.

The Chippawa Battlefield and South Plain provide a high potential for developing grassland habitat for the following reasons:

①

Current land use, existing vegetation, and minimal tree cover reduces the amount of preparation required

②

A large area which can accommodate the size required for grassland bird habitat

③

The size of the area also provides a high amount of essential 'interior' grassland habitat

④

The close proximity to ponds, creeks and rivers providing sources of water



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The process for grassland restoration includes:

- removal of existing invasive species to reduce competition;
- mowing of hedgerows to reduce the presence of non-native species and provide burn breaks for prescribed burns;
- prescribed burning to reduce biomass and return nutrients into the soil;
- planting of cover crop such as soya beans to further impede unwanted species;
- application of herbicide to remove remaining invasive species (if required);
- tilling of soil to provide a suitable seed bed (as required);
- planting of native grassland seeds (grasses and wildflowers); and
- long-term monitoring and prescribed burns every 2-3 years.

Project Example: Niagara Parks Centennial Lilac Garden Restoration



Site Preparation: Prescribed Burn (above)

Planting of Soya Bean Cover Crop

