Heartland Inventory and Monitoring Network



Bird Monitoring at Homestead National Monument of America

Importance: An important component of the park ecosystem

Birds intrigue and excite visitors, having become an important part of park interpretive programs. Beyond the pleasure that birds provide, they are a significant component of park ecosystems. Their high metabolism and position in the food web make them indicators of change in an ecosystem – the canary in the mine, so to speak. Preserving habitat for the wellbeing of bird populations preserves entire ecosystems for the benefit of all species.

Long Term Monitoring: Assessing change

The Heartland Inventory and Monitoring Network monitors changes in bird community composition and bird abundance to determine the health of the community. Network staff accomplishes this by surveying seasonal



and year-round resident birds in the monument during the breeding season. Homestead NM of America has two distinct habitat types – restored prairie and woodland. Scientists use surveys to assess which species occupy these habitats over time with consideration to management actions. The 2009 survey provides baseline data on populations and breeding habitat of birds in the monument.

Status and Trends: A reference point for evaluating management actions

Scientists recorded 47 bird species in 2009, 43 of which reside within the park. They recorded nine species of continental importance, or species for which resource managers should take conservation actions. These species have declined across the continent because of habitat loss. Two species, Dickcissel (*Spiza Americana*) and Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus*



Song Sparrow, a habitat generalist, seen here in grass and forb plant litter.

savannarum) rely on grasslands as their only habitat-type, and three species, Barred Owl (Strix varia), Worm-eating Warbler (Helmitheros vermivorus) and Yellow-throated Vireo (Vireo flavifrons), are dependent on mature forest. Most of the other species are habitat generalists. Additionally, scientists have found that:

- 1. The nine species of continental importance indicate quality grassland and forest habitat occurs in the monument.
- 2. Current efforts to restore and maintain the prairie and woodlands should provide a diversity of habitats necessary to support species of continental importance and bird diversity.

Heartland Network Inventory and Monitoring Program of the National Park Service. Visit www1.nature.nps.gov/im/units/htln/index.htm.

> ... protecting the habitat of our heritage



¹ Peitz, D. G. 2010. Bird community monitoring at Homestead National Monument of America, Nebraska: 2009 status report. Natural Resource Data Series NPS/HTLN/NRDS--2010/046. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado.