

## Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Fact Sheet



**Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)** The distinctive song of the western meadowlark signaled the arrival of spring to Oregon residents for many years. In 1927, the western meadowlark was selected as our State Bird by Oregon's school children and confirmed by Governor I. L. Patterson. It appealed to the children because of its bright colors, cheerful song and because it was a common sight in meadows, pastures and grasslands throughout the state. The meadowlark is a striking robin-sized bird with a streaked brown back, bright yellow belly, and distinct v-shaped patch on its chest.

### **Where does western meadowlark live?**

The meadowlark lives in grasslands, oak savannas, and pastures in the valleys of western Oregon and in sagebrush shrub-steppe throughout eastern Oregon. It is still very common in eastern Oregon, but it has dramatically declined in western Oregon particularly in the Willamette Valley. The Oregon Conservation Strategy highlights grasslands and sagebrush as habitats that need our help.

### **What conservation issues affect western meadowlark?**

Much of the Willamette, Umpqua and Rogue Valleys were once patchwork quilts of wet and dry prairies and oak savannas. Urban and rural development, intensive cultivation and fire suppression have resulted in the loss of much of these prairie habitats. As the acres of grasslands started to shrink, so did the numbers of the western meadowlark and other grassland-dependent bird species.

### **How can Oregonians help the meadowlark?**

- Maintain grasslands, oak savannas, pastures and sagebrush shrub-steppe.
- Restore and manage grasslands and oak savannas by controlling invasive species, mowing, using controlled grazing, prescribed burning, and or removing conifers from historic savannas.
- Maintain these features: summer grass height of 12 in. to 36 in., 3-6 percent bare ground, and a few scattered singing perches (for example, trees, shrubs or fence posts).
- Plant native bunchgrasses and wildflowers.
- Focus habitat work on areas of at least 10-15 acres.
- If you know meadowlarks are nesting, minimize disturbance caused by machinery, people and pets between April 15 and July 15 when birds are actively breeding.

### **Did you know?**

The meadowlark's nest is made of grass and sometimes has a roof and tunnel entrance. During the non-breeding season, meadowlarks form flocks ranging in size from a few birds to over 100.

*the* OREGON  
CONSERVATION  
STRATEGY

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