

Saving Southern Maryland's Grassland Birds through Bird-friendly Mowing

A Collaborative Project of

Farmers Feeding Southern Maryland
Historic Sotterley, Inc.
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust

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Newsletter #1 – April

LAUNCH OF “BIRD-FRIENDLY MOWING” PROJECT KICKS OFF IN HOLLYWOOD, MD



Photo credit: Bill Hubick

Dear Friend:

We want to thank you for your interest and support for this project to save Southern Maryland's grassland birds, one hayfield at a time. For your information, we have enclosed a copy of the Project Plan, as well as the details of the Bird Count Protocol, and an article about the project that just appeared in the newsletter of the Southern Maryland Audubon Society.

We are particularly grateful to four nonprofit organizations who have agreed to form a collaborative to oversee this initiative. They include Farmers Feeding Southern Maryland, Southern Maryland Audubon Society, Historic Sotterley Inc., and the Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust. In addition, we have formed a

“Working Group” of knowledgeable individuals who are contributing their expertise and advice to this regional experiment.

This month, we begin the process of observing bird activity in our test hayfield, a process that will continue through June and possibly into July, depending on our ability to recruit a corps of volunteers to conduct the weekly point counts. (By the way, if you think you would like to participate in the point count process, contact David a.s.a.p. - he’s looking for help!) In early May, the first test mowing is scheduled on a portion of the field, to be followed by an additional cut around Memorial Day.

We are hopeful this demonstration project will help answer a key question: Can breeding populations of threatened grassland bird be assisted by modest changes in hay mowing schedules instead of expecting hay farmers to sacrifice the entire spring crop?

We look forward to sending out updates periodically. The hay is greening up, the birds are exploring breeding territories, and we should have more to report after the early May cut. Thanks again.

Sincerely,

Co-coordinators:

David Moulton

Joe Goldsmith

BJ Bowling

Attachments: Project Plan

Point Count Protocol

Article from *The Osprey*, May 2021 issue