

# BOBOLINK

*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*



## Physical characteristics



Males have a black back, white abdomen and rump, and yellow nape, whereas females are buff-coloured with fine dark brown streaking on their back and flanks.

Bobolink  
nest



Female  
bobolink



## Diet



The bobolink eats insects (lepidopterans and orthopterans), some of which are crop pests, and seeds. Nestlings, however, feed only on insects.

## Habitat



Hayfields are the bobolink's preferred habitat. It breeds in grasslands, natural meadows, and pastures. It nests on the ground and is faithful to its nesting site.



## Periods of vulnerability



- The nesting period (egg-laying, incubation, rearing of young) extends from May to mid-July.
- Bobolink eggs hatch between mid-June and early July.
- Nestlings can't fly very well until approximately mid-July.
- Family groups gather around mid-August to begin their southward migration.

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## Threats



- Early and frequent haying, which represents a leading cause of mortality.
- Reduced habitat availability due to the conversion of hayfields and pastures to field crop monocultures.
- Further habitat loss due to agricultural land being abandoned and reverting back to forest.
- Risk of poisoning due to ingestion of pesticide-covered seeds.

## Sustainable practices



- Delaying hay cutting until July 15, or leaving parts of hayfields undisturbed until this date, is considered one of the most beneficial practices.
- If a nest is spotted, maintain a protective buffer around it (100 m or so) and avoid approaching the nest before July 15.
- When cutting hay, work from the inside of the field outward so that birds can fly away and won't get trapped.
- Preserve prairies:
  - Maintain them for 4 to 5 years before recultivation.
  - Rotate them so that recultivated prairies sit next to new or old prairies.
- Reduce farm machinery speed to no more than 10 km/h.
- Install a flushing bar at a height of 10 cm to avoid colliding with young birds that aren't yet capable of flying away.
- Rotate livestock whenever possible to avoid overgrazing, especially in areas where bobolinks are present.

- As of 2023, **threatened** species listed on Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*
- Recovery strategy for the bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) in Canada: [www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/recovery-strategies/bobolink-proposed-2022.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/recovery-strategies/bobolink-proposed-2022.html)

## Sources

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