

USE OF CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM LAND
BY GRASSLAND NESTING PASSERINES AND UPLAND
NESTING GAMEBIRDS

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By

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ABSTRACT

Geaumont, Benjamin Aaron, M.S., Program of Natural Resources Management, College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies, North Dakota State University, May 2006. Use of Conservation Reserve Program Land by Grassland Nesting Passerines and Upland Nesting Gamebirds. Major Professor: Dr. Carolyn Grygiel.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) was originally intended to improve soil and water quality as well as limit the production of excess crops. The establishment of thousands of hectares of wildlife habitat has been a secondary benefit of CRP. Numerous species of grassland nesting passerines and upland nesting gamebirds have utilized CRP grasslands to one extent or another. Benefits that include nesting habitat and winter cover have been provided to several bird species throughout the Midwest by CRP grasslands. As a result of these benefits, a number of grassland nesting passerines and upland nesting gamebirds have experienced population increases.

Vegetation characteristics are one important criterion that influences bird use of CRP grasslands. CRP grasslands are often established either with non-native cool-season grasses and legumes or with native warm-season grasses. The vegetation characteristics of each planting may differ, therefore influencing bird use of such habitats. Disturbance and field age can impact the vegetation characteristics of CRP grasslands and, as a result, will likely affect bird use of these areas.

CRP grasslands vary widely in size and location. Many bird species have been found to be habitat-area sensitive; therefore, the size of CRP grassland blocks may influence use by some bird species. Overall, CRP grasslands are providing benefits for numerous bird species. Vegetation characteristics and habitat area are two major factors that influence the benefits that CRP grasslands are providing for grassland nesting passerines and upland nesting gamebirds.