

## Bird Habitat Management at Benedict Farm Park

Farms often provide important bird habitat, and Benedict Farm is no exception. When the Town of Montgomery acquired this farm, it commissioned several wildlife and habitat studies that focused on plant and animal species that exist in the park, including threatened and endangered species and those of special conservation concern. The resulting studies were used to craft a park management and conservation plan. Of the park's 102 acres, 18 acres are devoted to active recreation purposes, while the remaining 84 acres are devoted to passive uses, conservation, and wildlife management. Even natural areas require management, and the habitat management requirements of the park restrict human use and access to portions of the park during certain times of year.

Benedict Farm provides valuable habitat for several bird species including, but not limited to, grassland-breeding birds. Grassland-breeding birds rely on large contiguous areas of grassland for nesting and other habitat purposes. Many of these bird species have declined in population over the past several decades. As a group, grassland birds have experienced greater and more widespread population decline than other groups, so it is important to preserve and protect grassland bird habitat. Of course, each grassland-nesting bird species has a specific set of habitat requirements, calling for the land to be managed appropriately in order to maintain the identified habitat. The park provides suitable habitat for each of the following bird species:



**Sedge Wren:** Listed as a threatened bird species in New York State, the sedge wren has been observed on the site. It is a highly transient bird that is not loyal to the same nesting sites or locales from year to year. The sedge meadow in the center of the site has been identified as potentially suitable habitat, and at the direction of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, this area is protected from any disturbance by a generous buffer area. In order to eliminate brush and shrubs, the meadow and buffer area will be brush-hogged every third year, between September 1 and April 15.

**Bobolink:** A ground-nesting grassland bird of old fields and meadows, requiring large areas of grassland for suitable nesting habitat. The Bobolink has been observed in meadows near the Wallkill River.



**Eastern Bluebird:** New York's state bird. Look for bluebird nest boxes mounted on poles at the perimeter of the park's upland fields, placed by the Town of Montgomery Conservation Advisory Council.



**Eastern Meadowlark**  
A shy ground-nesting grassland bird.

**Willow Flycatcher**  
An insect-eater, breeds in thickets near marshland areas.



**Red-winged Blackbird**  
A common resident of tall marshlands.