



Grassland Birds of New Hampshire

eBook, photos, sounds, drawings and text by

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LOW RESOLUTION SAMPLE PAGES ONLY

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Materials, used with permission, from **EnjoyBirds**, from **Graminoids**, from **Atlas of Breeding Birds in New Hampshire**, edited by Carol Foss, 1994. Help with the text from Jim Oehler, NH Fish & Game, and the contribution of field recordings to EnjoyBirds of Grasshopper Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper and Sedge Wren recorded by Janice Johnson are gratefully acknowledged.

The birds are split into **habitat groups (I-IV)**, based on seasonal use of dry or wet grasslands and of adjacent habitats. Rarity is roughly indicated (unofficially, per breeding bird survey): **Abundant, Common, Uncommon, Rare, Very Rare**. Only those species declining become state-listed.

I. Birds which utilize NH grasslands primarily in migration or winter:

American Pipit, *Anthus rubescens*

Typically a bird of tundra, rocky open short-grass places;

Common, in winter in grassy valleys, breeds in small numbers on Mt.

Washington.

ID: Non-descript, gray-brown, thin bill, white outer tail feathers as it flies.

Lapland Longspur, *Calcarius lapponicus*

Typically a bird of tundra, rocky open places;

Very rare NH.

ID: Long-wing, stout bill, one white outer tail feather, rufous wing bar and nape.



Snow Bunting, *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Open snow-covered grasslands; **Common**, “jump” down weeds to eat seeds (*Amaranthus* spp.)

ID: Conspicuous white wing patch; mostly white, often flocks of hundreds (Jan-Feb)

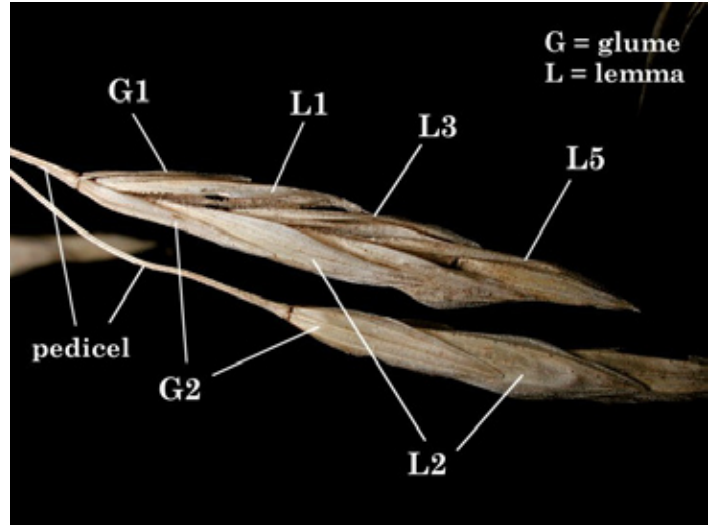


Is it a Grass, or a Sedge or a Rush?

All grasses are actually in the family **Poaceae**:



Dune Grass
Ammophila breviligulata



Smooth Brome
Bromus inermis

People mistakenly call many sedges (**Cyperaceae**) grasses:



Tussock Sedge
Carex stricta, wetlands



Yellow Nut-sedge (Chufa)
Cyperus esculentus, uplands



Pointed Broom Sedge
Carex scoparia, uplands

People mistakenly call many rushes (**Juncaceae**) grasses:



Lesser Poverty Rush (Path Rush)
Juncus tenuis, uplands



Knotty-leaf Rush
Juncus accuminatus, wetlands



Is it a Sedge, the family Cyperaceae?

In this family, common name is not always a good guide to botanical relationships, so better to learn and use the Genus names:

Carex -- true sedges - a large, complex genus of several hundred wetland species, a few upland ones.

Scirpus -- bulrushes (NOT Bull-rushes!) with other common names like wool-grass; a dozen common species in all, mostly preferring damper soils.

Eriophorum -- cotton-grasses - wetlands: confined to actual quaking bogs.

Cyperus -- flat sedges, a few species, upland and wetlands.

Plus a few other genera we will not cover here (*Rhynchospora*, *Bulbostylis*, *Fimbri-stylis*, etc.)

The genus **Carex** - unique structures:



Note that in this species the male flowers form a special spike at the top, and most of the lower spikes are all females. One female flower is magnified below, with its subtending bract (at right end).



Where the male and female florets are grouped becomes a major ID focus in keying out and learning this huge group. For our purposes, we will merely show one common dry field **Carex** species of New Hampshire.

Carex scoparia, Pointed Broom Sedge



Males & females within the same spike; female florets with flat, WINGED perigynium, fairly distinct for this species.



Managing Grasslands for breeding bird habitat:

This topic was covered in the seminar quite fully by Jim Oehler, NH Fish and Game Dept. A comprehensive review and plan to cope with declining habitats throughout the state is approaching final preparation. Stay tuned to [their web site](#) for documents helping with these issues.

Possibly the most effective single tool is to prevent machine mowing during the May - July nesting period, thus sparing nests, eggs, adults and young. However, for farms financially depending on the quality of hay, a single late summer mowing reduces both the quantity and quality of the hay, depending on the field actually involved.

Invasive Plant Species

Much work has been done, mostly state by state, on identifying and managing invasive plant species. The subject is huge and complex. Perhaps the most useful website we can recommend is managed by [The Nature Conservancy](#): It contains a wealth of PDF files on the worst species, the best management practices for control or elimination, the safe and effective handling of herbicides, the decision-making process in methods for managing natural lands, and the monitoring and tracking of programs to control invasive plants. MIST is preparing a photographic e-book of all the most common vascular New England plants, and invasives will certainly be covered.

About this PDF document

This was prepared and offered as a combined “slide-show” and a “handout” to participants at the July 9, 2005 Seminar in Lyme, NH, on managing grassland habitats. It was conceived and organized by Ginger Wallis, and sponsored by [New England Wild Flower Society](#) and the Wellborn Ecology Fund. All materials used in its preparation, and the final copyrights are reserved by Martin C. Michener and MIST Software Associates, Inc.

For more information:

More technical guides are also available. “**Flora of the Northeast**” by Dennis Magee, U. Mass Press has excellent technical keys to all plants. I have also written an e-book as a companion to Magee’s book, profusely illustrated with the 47 commonest grassland species with close-up photographs and an illustrated glossary, available on CD-ROM from MIST:

Graminoids - guide to some common grasses, sedges and rushes of Northeastern USA, ISBN 0-9728035-2-1.

For the latest news, and ordering information, please visit this link:

www.EnjoyBirds.com