

Cultural Grassland

State Rank: SNR - Not ranked



Cultural Grassland - hayfield with mixed grasses and forbs. Photo: Joanne Singfield, NHESP.

Description: Cultural Grasslands as a classification unit are intended to include grasslands that are cultivated or the results of cultivation dominated by non-native, agricultural grasses, maintained for pasture or hayfields; some airport grasslands and cemeteries with planted grasses would be included in the type. Cultural Grasslands occur in all areas of the state on a variety of soils, and surroundings reflect the regional variations. Most Cultural Grasslands are mowed at least annually to maintain the grassland stage.

Cultural Grasslands are dominated by non-native grasses maintained for pasture or hayfields. Grassland birds are the primary conservation interest in Cultural Grasslands.

Characteristic Species: Cultural Grasslands are dominated by planted, non-native grasses such as timothy, orchard grass, smooth brome, and redtop.

Differentiating from Related Communities: Cultural Grasslands are dominated by non-native grasses grown and maintained for agricultural or cultural purposes. Sandplain Grasslands - Inland Variant and Sandplain Grasslands are dominated by native grasses, often the distinctive little bluestem. Sandplain Heathlands and Sandplain Heathlands - Inland Variant are dominated by native shrubs and look shrubbier than grasslands with a shrub layer comprised of scrub oak, black huckleberry, and/or lowbush blueberry which may be dominant.

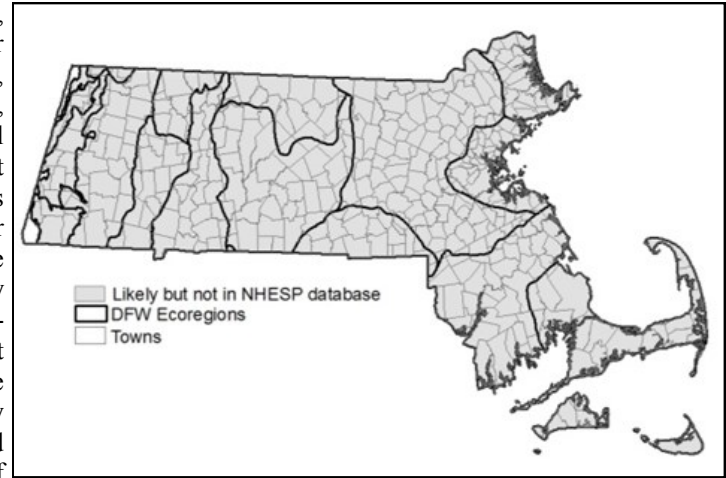


Timothy, plant and flower. Photos: Ohio State Weed Lab, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org.

Habitat for Associated Fauna:

Location in the state and size of the grassland strongly affect the species that inhabit a Cultural Grassland. Abandoned

agricultural land, including former pastures, hay fields, and crop fields, provide ephemeral grassland habitat. Most abandoned pastures and crop fields occur on mesic soils, and are dominated by introduced, cool-season grasses that typically provide habitat for relatively common and widespread species of wildlife, including the American Woodcock, for which recently-abandoned pastures provide ideal nesting habitat. Hayfields may attract grassland birds, but depending on the mowing schedule, may be population sinks if mowed before young birds are fledged and can escape. Bobolinks prefer hayfield length taller grass and Eastern Meadowlarks use pasture length short grass. Other grassland



birds include Killdeer and Horned Larks. To support species of conservation interest, the Cultural Grassland should be large enough for their nesting requirements. Many of those species require at least 10 acres for a nesting pair.

Examples with Public Access:

Not tracked by NHESP.



Cultural Grassland, recently mowed hayfield. Photo: Jacob Kubel, NHESP.



Lightly grazed pasture with mixed species. Photo: Jacob Kubel, NHESP.

