

# North Dike Grassland Habitat

DCR DIVISION OF WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION

## Watershed Protection and Habitat Management, Meeting Two Goals

### No Woody Vegetation

The North and South Dikes are dams made up of earth and stone to fortify the shoreline of the Wachusett Reservoir.

DCR keeps it clear to comply with the updated Federal guidelines for dam safety which do not allow for woody plants and trees to grow on earthen berms, or dikes.

This creates large open areas suitable for the development of grassland habitats. Grasslands are critical for a variety of species that depend on open lands, including meadowlarks, bobolinks, kestrels, and a variety of pollinating insects.

This expanse of open land is managed for routine inspections of the dam and infrastructure as well as for wildlife species of concern. Critical structural areas and slopes are mowed regularly, while habitat areas are allowed to grow to during the nesting season.

### Grassland Birding

Some grassland birds are easy to recognize by size, markings, songs, and tendency to perch and fly in view above the grass.

#### Tree and Barn Swallows:

Scan the air above the open water and grass for swallows catching insects mid-flight and listen for their sweet chirping calls.

#### Bobolinks:

Known for their unique hovering and low flights over grasslands. Look for male display flights of rapidly flapping wings while hovering and listen for a long burbling song ending with sharp metallic notes.

#### Eastern Meadowlarks:

Listen for flute-like songs and look for the bright yellow-breasted males showing off their black V necks from posts or taller plants, or a flash of white tail feathers upon flight from the grass.

#### American Kestrel:

This small falcon, also known as a sparrow hawk, hunts over grassy areas. Scan fence posts, the tree line and telephone poles. Listen for the shrill *killy-killy-killy* call to be alerted to when they are near.

### Growing Wild for Pollinators

The wildflowers and grasses along the North Dike provide vital food and shelter to a variety of pollinator species.

This grassland habitat management demonstrates how watershed lands provide habitat for important species.

The DCR Division of Water Supply Protection strives to balance the protection of drinking water quality while being a steward for a vast range of species, fulfilling the mission to preserve, protect and enhance these vital resources.

#### Eastern Meadowlark

Meadowlarks are a colorful relative of the blackbird family that eat mostly insects, seeds and fruits.



#### Female or Nonbreeding Male Bobolink

Can be identified by buff color with dark brown streaks on back, dark eye line, brown stripes on crown, and pink bill.



#### Breeding Male Bobolink

Breeding plumage is distinctive black body, white on back and rump with a straw colored patch on back of head.



Monarch Butterfly Caterpillars feed on milkweed plants, while blooming flowers provide nectar for adult butterflies.



#### Honeybee

The fuzzy, hairy bodies help foragers collect pollen.

