

WHY CONSERVE GRASSLANDS?

Tallgrass prairie and savanna once covered 90 million hectares across central Canada and the United States - an area almost equal to the size of Ontario. Today, *less than one percent* of the original grassland habitat remains. Prairie and savanna are among the world's rarest and most endangered habitats.

The Rice Lake Plains provides a rare opportunity to protect and restore large areas of this ecologically vulnerable habitat, while preserving its incredible cultural history.

Prairie and savanna habitats are scattered throughout the Rice Lake Plains and Ganaraska area on the eastern end of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Here, partners are working together to protect and restore these remnants.

The Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative partners are collaborating on field studies, land management and public outreach, and are working alongside private landowners to protect critical wildlife habitat. Cooperative conservation projects include prescribed burns, native seed harvesting, and invasive species control.

The 2009 State of the Birds Report by U.S. conservation groups reported dramatic declines in grassland birds due to alarming degradation of their habitat. This project and the ongoing conservation work across the Rice Lake Plains are essential towards helping to reverse that trend.

You can help by reporting your sightings of these birds. If possible, take a photo and email it with the location information.



RICE LAKE PLAINS VISION

The partners of the Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative share a vision of healthy prairie and savanna habitats amid a vibrant rural landscape.

This vision is possible thanks to ongoing habitat management by private landowners and inspirational conservation efforts at sites such as the Alderville First Nations Black Oak Savanna and the Red Cloud Cemetery Prairie.

We, the partners, are dedicated to being good neighbours in this community, and to investing in long-term management of the Rice Lake Plains on the Oak Ridges Moraine.

For more information or to report bird sightings, please contact:

Nature Conservancy of Canada
705-761-6466 or 905-862-2642
Todd.Farrell@natureconservancy.ca
www.natureconservancy.ca/rlpji

AT-RISK BIRDS OF THE RICE LAKE PLAINS

COMMON NIGHTHAWK



National Status: *Threatened*
Provincial Status (Ontario): *Special Concern*

Photos by Bill Hubick

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER



National Status: *Threatened*
Provincial Status (Ontario): *Special Concern*
International Union for Conservation of Nature: *Near Threatened*

Photos by Henry McLin

REPORT SIGHTINGS OF THESE BIRDS TO THE CONTACT ON THE BACK OF THIS BROCHURE



Celeste Ramsay



Bill Hubick

COMMON NIGHTHAWK

APPEARANCE

- 22-24 cm with a 53-57 cm wingspan
- easiest to identify at dusk and dawn
- long, pointed, bent wings with a white patch near the tip visible in flight
- large-headed bird with a small bill and large mouth
- well camouflaged with black, brown and gray colouring

RANGE

During breeding season, Yukon to Labrador, southward to California on the west coast and Florida on the east, and down through Central America. During winter it can be found in South America.

SIMILAR SPECIES

The Common Nighthawk is similar to the **Whip-poor-will** in appearance (pictured right). The best way to distinguish the two is by their calls. The Whip-poor-will gets its name from the sound of its call. The emphasis is placed on the first and third syllables with a tremolo in the second.

BEHAVIOUR AND SOUND

- nests on bare sand or gravel in open areas
- erratic, aerial insect foraging behaviour results in bat-like flight
- excellent aerial divers
- most active at dawn and dusk
- distinctive call is a short, harsh *peent*, somewhat similar to the call of a woodcock
- elaborate courtship ritual involves males diving steeply; a loud booming sound is produced during upward recovery just metres from the ground
- this booming sound is also used to deter intruders, including humans



Whip-poor-will by Euclid vanderKroew



Bill Hubick



Bill Hubick

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER

APPEARANCE

- 19-23 cm with a 40-45 cm wingspan
- striking red head, black back, black wings with a white band, white belly and rump
- distinctive white patches on inner, underside of wings, visible in flight

BEHAVIOUR AND SOUND

- returns to Ontario beginning mid-May
- breeds in open woodlands, on woodland edges and in oak savannahs
- less likely than other woodpeckers to drill for food - often fly to ground to capture insects or captures them in mid-air
- known to wedge insects in cracks of wood as a means of storing food for later consumption
- call is a sharp, loud *tchur*

RANGE

In Canada during summer only, mostly confined to Manitoba and Ontario but range as far as Saskatchewan and Quebec. Also found throughout central and eastern United States, year-round in southern states.