



Grassland: Pasture

Description

Pastures are agricultural grasslands used for grazing livestock. They are simpler structurally (shorter grass) and have fewer plant species than prairie or idle/old fields. Exotic plant species that are more resistant to impacts from heavy grazing generally have displaced the native plants, except on some dry sites where native species may hold on due to the higher moisture demand of most exotics.

General Condition of Feature

Most of the pasture in the Western Upper Peninsula is considered to be in fair or good condition as wildlife habitat (~85%). Much of the remaining pasture is considered degraded.

Associated Natural Communities

N/A – no native natural communities

Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need

INSECTS

spatterdock damner (*Aeshna mutata*)
tawny crescent (*Phyciodes batesii*)

AMPHIBIANS

northern leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*)

REPTILES

blue racer (*Coluber constrictor foxii*)
western fox snake (*Elaphe vulpina*)
eastern hognose snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*)
smooth green snake (*Liochlorophis vernalis*)
Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*)

BIRDS

Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*)
Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)
Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*)
Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)
Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)

BIRDS cont.

American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*)
Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)
Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*)
Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*)
Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*)
Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)
Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*)
Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)
Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*)
Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

MAMMALS

red bat (*Lasiurus borealis*)
hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*)
eastern pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus subflavus*)
least weasel (*Mustela nivalis*)

Associated Threats

MODIFICATION OF NATURAL PROCESSES

- Grazing and mowing patterns: Farm abandonment results in succession to forested landscape features. Overgrazing to very short stubble heights degrades the value of the feature to wildlife.
- Altered fire regime: A lack of fire leads to succession to shrub and forested feature types.
- Altered hydrologic regimes
- Fragmentation

HABITAT CONVERSION

- Industrial, residential, and recreational development

POLLUTION

- Pesticides and herbicides

EDUCATION

- Social attitudes

Conservation Actions Needed [Threats addressed]

LAND, WATER, & SPECIES MANAGEMENT

- Encourage agriculture practices that reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides. [Pesticides and herbicides]
- Encourage rotational grazing to increase value to wildlife. [Grazing and mowing patterns]
- Manage to approximate natural disturbance regimes using managed fire, grazing and mowing, prescribed fire, and restoration of water flow patterns. [Grazing and mowing patterns; Altered fire regime; Altered hydrologic regimes]
- Develop mowing guidelines to minimize seasonal habitat loss for wildlife. [Grazing and mowing patterns]

LAW & POLICY

- Work with municipalities to promote planning and zoning insuring adequate protection for pasture or their conversion to features that have greater value to wildlife. Discourage parcelization and reduction in patch size of existing pasture. [Fragmentation; Industrial, residential, and recreational development]

ECONOMIC & OTHER INCENTIVES

- Encourage maintenance of pasture features through private land conservation initiatives (CRP, CREP, etc.). Provide sustainable agriculture strategy training to help keep family farms afloat. [Grazing and mowing patterns; Fragmentation; Industrial, residential, and recreational development; Social attitudes]

Research and Survey Needs

- Assess the impact of soil compaction on vegetative and wildlife diversity.
- Study the effects of timing and intensity of grazing and pasture management on the value to wildlife of these systems. Are there other variables associated with grazing and pasture management that affect their value to wildlife? Economically realistic alternatives to high impact grazing practices are needed.
- Determine the impacts of invasive plant and animal species.
- Evaluate the relationship between the species of livestock being pastured to the value to wildlife of the land in use.

Monitoring

- Track species composition changes in pastures.
- Analyze county agriculture statistics to determine changes in the types of livestock being pastured and livestock densities.