

Bobolink (BOBO)

Dolichonyx oryzivorus

Description

Bobolinks are small songbirds (15–20 cm long) with sharp, conical bills. Breeding male Bobolinks are mostly black, with a white back and rump, and yellow nape. Females and nonbreeding males have brownish-yellow underparts, olive-brown upperparts with brown streaks, and bold brown stripes on the crown of their heads.

Known and potential breeding habitat

Bobolinks breed in open grasslands, meadows, and overgrown fields. After the breeding season, they may be found in coastal areas and marshes where they complete their molt before migrating. In Newfoundland, breeding observations have been made from 14 May to 18 August. Probable breeding evidence has been recorded near Great Codroy and Fermeuse. This species is most likely found in SW Newfoundland.

Detection Tips

Habitat

During breeding season, Bobolinks are most likely to be found in open fields and meadows, preferring areas with a mixture of grasses and sedges. They are also common in farmed fields, especially hayfields

Vocalization

Males give long, bubbling and rambling songs, consisting of 25-50 notes, and lasting approximately 3.5 seconds. Each male has two songs that contain a mixture of high- and low-pitched notes. They are often described as sounding like a robot.

Both males and females use short “chuk” calls to communicate year round.

Behaviour

In the spring, male Bobolinks can be seen flying over open fields while singing to attract females and establish territories. Unless performing these “song flights”, Bobolinks typically stay hidden among grasses and shrubs, feeding on the ground or perching on vegetation while feeding

Photo By: Jared Clarke



Open/Meadow



COSEWIC Ranking:
Threatened

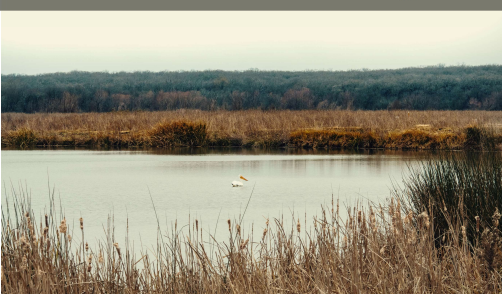


NL Designation:
Vulnerable



Blackbirds

Photo By: Gabriel Tovar on Unsplash





on seeds

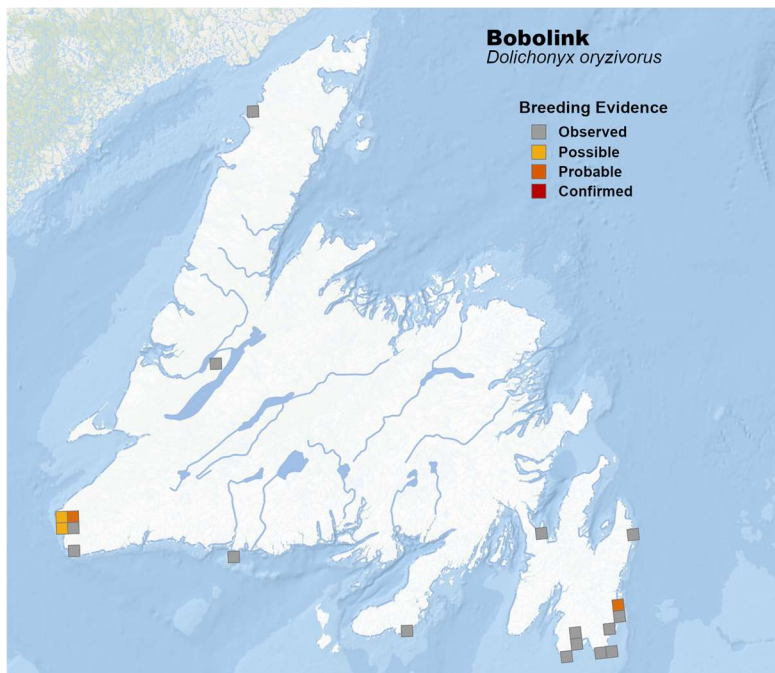
Nesting

In the spring, females arrive on the breeding grounds 4-8 days after the male and make a nest by creating a shallow depression on the ground in open fields and meadows. They use dead grass and woody stems to create a coarse outer nest wall, then line the inner wall with grasses and sedges. Females build the nest over 1-2 days and lay a clutch of 3-7 eggs which they incubate for 11-14 days, with the male visiting periodically towards the end of the incubation period. Both parents feed the chicks once they have hatched. When the young leave the nest, they are still unable to fly and hide in thick vegetation.

Breeding Evidence

The most likely breeding evidence seen for Bobolinks will be observations of individuals in a suitable nesting habitat (H), pair in a suitable nesting habitat (P), singing males (S), courtship display (D), carrying of nesting material (NB), a nest containing eggs (NE), adult entering/leaving a nest site (AE), adult carrying food for young (CF), and recently fledged young (FY). Family groups stay within the same meadow for around 26 days after the young leave the nest, with adults still feeding their young.

Female Bobolink.
Photo By: Jared Clarke



Bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) were detected in 20 squares in Newfoundland during the past ten years (2011–2021). Breeding was not confirmed in any area but was probable in 2 of these squares.