

APPENDIX C
CT DEEP RARE,
THREATENED, OR
SPECIAL CONCERN
SPECIES LETTER



March 4, 2020

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NDDB DETERMINATION NUMBER: 202001414 corrected

Project: Airport Master Plan Update for FAA; Tweed Airport, 155 Burr Street in New Haven, CT

Expiration: February 18, 2022

I have reviewed Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDB) maps and files regarding this project. According to our records, there are State-listed species (RCSA Sec. 26-306) documented within the proposed project area.

Grassland Birds

State Endangered birds horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) and grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), State Threatened Eastern meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*), State Species of Special Concern Savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) and bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) occur within Tweed-New Haven Airport. Please comply with any pre-existing mitigation plans prepared to protect grassland birds for your property.

The horned lark, grasshopper sparrow, Savannah sparrow, bobolink and eastern meadowlark are considered to be grassland-obligate birds. They require open fields to breed, nest and forage in. Habitats preferred by these species include large grasslands, agricultural fields, and airports.

The following general recommendations are useful for managing grassland birds at airports:

- Ground nesting birds found nesting at airfields should not pose a threat to aircraft because of their small size and low direct flight; in addition, managing for these species by leaving some areas un-mowed during the summer can help discourage large flocking birds that prefer fields of very short grass, such as gulls, crows, and Canada geese, and are more likely to damage aircraft.
- Restrict mowing during the breeding season on portions of airfield not directly adjacent to runways and taxiways.
- Maintain 50-foot mowed strips along taxiways and runways throughout the breeding season to discourage birds from nesting in these areas. Short grasses along runways can also help reduce insect populations that can cause problems to aircraft. Other mowed strips, such as along roadways, are used by upland sandpipers and other birds for feeding.
- Observe and mark locations of nesting birds and avoid mowing those areas until birds have fledged. This may be achieved by grounds maintenance personnel.
- Burning grasslands at airfields can be used as a management tool to benefit nesting birds. Taxiways and access roads at airports provide ideal firebreaks.

- The breeding season for these birds is approximately from late April through August. It is during this period that they are most susceptible to disturbances in their feeding and nesting habitat.

During project activities, the following recommendations will help protect grassland birds:

- Land disturbance activities including digging, ground clearing, heavy machinery driving staging, or ground trampling that will occur more than 100 feet into a grassland parcel or cut across parcels of grassland in a way that fragments grassland habitat patches should be done when grassland birds are not breeding. Breeding primarily takes place between **April 15- August 15**. Conducting land disturbance activities outside of the breeding season will avoid impact to the individuals.
- Any upland grassed areas that may be disturbed, should be reseeded using an FAA-approved mix of warm season grass species including:
 - Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)- “Aldous” or “Cimarron”
 - Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)- “Niagra”
 - Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*)- “Rumsey”
 - Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) -“Blackwell”, “Shelter”, or “Cave in Rock”
 - Bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*) -“Quickstand”
 - Seed mix ratios are variable, however for Connecticut a minimum of 60% little bluestem is preferred. Big bluestem is an acceptable alternative to little bluestem for the dominant species in the chosen mix. When one of the bluestems is the dominant species the other grass species listed may be mixed in any ratio desired. Of these species, Bermudagrass is the least favored and should be used in the lowest percentage.

If schedules for planned work must occur during the breeding season apply the following protection measures to minimize impact to state listed birds:

- The proposed construction staging area and associated vehicles and equipment should be restricted to existing paved areas as much as possible.
- Beginning April 1- through duration of project: All grassy areas within a 50 foot buffer of planned work remain continuously mowed as short as possible to avoid attracting nesting birds into work zones.
- If vehicle access is required to cross grassy areas outside of work zones, designated paths and areas should be marked and kept mowed beginning April 1. Do not drive outside of designated work areas into grassy habitat, nesting birds will be crushed.
- Identify locations on the property where grassland habitat will remain unmowed between April 15- August 30 to mitigate for lost habitat during construction. These areas must provide adequate conditions for upland grassland habitat. Provide a map detailing these grassland mitigation areas to Shannon Kearney (Shannon.kearney@ct.gov).
- Any upland grassed areas that may be disturbed during the course of the project, should be reseeded using an FAA-approved mix of warm season grass species as described above.

This is determination is valid for two years.

Natural Diversity Data Base information includes all information regarding critical biological resources available to us at the time of the request. This information is a compilation of data collected over the years by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Bureau of Natural Resources and cooperating units of DEEP, independent conservation groups, and the scientific community. This information is not necessarily the result of comprehensive or site-specific field investigations. Consultations with the NDDDB should not be substituted for on-site surveys required for environmental assessments. Current research projects and new contributors continue to identify additional populations of species and locations of habitats of concern, as well as, enhance existing data. Such new information is incorporated in the NDDDB as it becomes available.

Please contact me if you have any questions (shannon.kearney@ct.gov). Thank you for consulting with the Natural Diversity Data Base and continuing to work with us to protect State-listed species.

Sincerely,

/s/ Shannon B. Kearney
Wildlife Biologist