

Identifying strategies to improve biodiversity stewardship in agro-ecosystems within the Kespukwitk Priority Place

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The Kespukwitk (Southwest Nova Scotia) Priority Place is one of the most biodiverse areas in the province, supporting 94% of Nova Scotia's terrestrial species at risk (SAR), illustrating the need for conservation action in this region. Within the Kespukwitk Priority Place, agro-ecosystems have been identified as one of the 11 target ecosystems subject to a collaborative, conservation project. Agro-ecosystems include not only cultivated grasslands and croplands but also the surrounding habitats such as riparian zones, wetlands, and woodland. A wide range of SAR can be found in agro-ecosystems, ranging from Bobolink and Monarch Butterflies that directly use farmland features, to Bank Swallows and Wood Turtles that can be found in surrounding habitats. CARP uses SAR surveys and existing SAR records to identify farms for targeted outreach. Landowners with SAR or appropriate habitat are offered a customized Agricultural Biodiversity Conservation (ABC) plan, that outlines how their farm is supporting SAR and recommends beneficial management practices (BMPs) that could improve biodiversity and SAR habitat on the farm property. Currently, CARP is implementing priority strategy BMPs to protect SAR that were identified through a series of collaborative workshops and conservation planning processes. Over the last three years, through the process of building relationships via ABC plans and SAR surveys, CARP has worked with over 34 landowners to implement 38 priority strategies on farmland. Future steps include continued SAR monitoring, relationship building with existing and new landowners, and developing a monitoring plan to evaluate the short-term effects of newly implemented BMPs on SAR.

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