



# DWR Henslow's Sparrow Acoustic Survey Protocols

Wildlife Information and Environmental Services

Henslow's Sparrows (*Centronyx henslowii*) are listed Threatened in Virginia. Anyone proposing to band or otherwise handle one of these animals must be issued a Scientific Collections Permit by DWR. Please see [www.dwr.virginia.gov/permits](http://www.dwr.virginia.gov/permits) for additional information. Permits are not necessary for acoustic-only surveys.

Henslow's Sparrow is a cryptic species most often detected by its vocalizations. During the breeding season, territorial birds give a short, simple high-pitched song. This inconspicuous vocalization can be easily overlooked when it is masked by ambient noise or otherwise missed if distances between the observer and the singing bird are too great.



## Surveyor Qualifications:

Documentation of the following qualifications by any proposed surveyor should be provided to DWR for review and approval ahead of performing surveys:

- 1) able to identify the species by sight and by sound
- 2) have prior field experience with the species
- 3) able to hear high frequencies in order to detect high-pitched calls

## Survey Window:

Henslow's Sparrow surveys should be conducted between May 15 and June 30.

## Survey Protocols:

Surveys should be performed at least twice during the survey window to increase the probability of detecting birds that are present. Surveys at each site should be conducted 7-21 days apart. Surveys should not be conducted during rain or when wind speeds are greater than 7 mph. Surveys should take place between sunrise and 10 a.m. on a given day. Although males may sing at night, diurnal surveys ensure that observers can look for visual cues of the species' presence, rather than conducting surveys solely by ear.

The survey area should encompass all suitable habitats for the species at a site. It is estimated that an appropriate detection radius (by ear) for singing Henslow's Sparrow is less than 100 meters. Therefore, surveys should take place along parallel transects placed no more than 200 meters apart, with points placed along the transects at no greater than 200 meter intervals. At each of these points, the surveyor(s) should stop for duration of 5 minutes. All Henslow's Sparrows detected by sight and/or sound during this time should be recorded. Call playback should be used in order to improve the probability of detection.

Playback should consist of periods of the male's primary advertising song alternating with silent periods. A recommended sequence is a one minute silent period, and four alternating 30-sec song and 30-sec silent periods. Observers should also look for and listen for Henslow's Sparrows while traveling between points and transects and record any individuals detected.

An mp3 playback file is available upon request.