



EMILY CARD

MS Thesis Candidate
Conservation Biology, Grassland Birds
St. Clair, MI

STUDENT PROFILE

Emily grew up in southeastern Michigan, where she cultivated a love for the natural world while exploring the woods behind her house and the beaches of the Great Lakes with her sisters. She attended Michigan State University as an undergraduate student and graduated with a degree in Zoology. After graduation, she worked as a wildlife technician on a variety of conservation-related projects focusing on herpetofauna, prairie dogs, and grassland and marsh birds. In her free time she loves to bird, hike, camp, knit, and listen to true crime podcasts.

PROJECT PROFILE

Grassland birds are one of the most imperiled avian groups in North America. Over the past half-century, grassland birds have experienced consistent and rapid population declines due to habitat loss. Approximately 90% of migratory grassland bird species that breed on North America's Great Plains spend the winter in the Chihuahuan Desert. However, the encroachment of woody plants into grasslands degrades and changes suitable habitat into desert shrublands, contributing to the decline of grassland bird species. To evaluate how grassland birds respond to habitat restoration efforts, Emily will be conducting grassland bird and vegetation surveys on ranches in the Trans-Pecos region of Texas that contain plots treated with herbicide to remove woody plants and untreated plots. The objectives of her project are to 1) evaluate grassland bird-habitat relationships in treated and untreated plots, and 2) assess how treatment for woody plant removal influences the structures of vegetation and bird communities. This information will help researchers and landowners understand if woody plant removal is an effective way to restore grassland ecosystems and grassland bird assemblages. In addition, Emily will be helping to implement a program that will utilize citizen scientists to monitor birds on private properties in the Trans-Pecos region. This project will inform landowners about the species of birds that occupy their properties throughout the year.

