

Talon Winery Hosts Successful Henslow's Sparrow Nesting

The [Henslow's Sparrow](#) (HESP) is one of those local grassland birds that gets birders excited. They're rare—a watch list bird rating a 14 on the [NABCI](#) conservation concern score index (any bird at 13 or higher is considered "most at risk of extinction without significant conservation actions to reverse declines and reduce threats"). Every season, when the first HESPs are reported in the area, birders make sure to check the location within a week to guarantee they can mark the species off their annual checklists; you can never be sure that you'll see another during the summer. So when CKAS got birding reports in the second week of June of "at least eight" singing in the fields at Talon Winery, we took notice.

CKAS representatives quickly informed Talon Winery of the species' presence on their property—the winery had already started haying fields—and the managers immediately agreed to refrain from mowing the patch of land where the birds had been seen and heard. CKAS secured stakes and marked off the patch, estimating Talon set aside between four and seven acres.

We were able to keep the area from being mowed until the first week of August. We believe that there were two to three pairs of Henslow's in the area that was preserved. The first juvenile was observed interacting with an adult on July 6th, and two juveniles were observed on July 11 proving early successful nesting. An adult was also observed on July 10th carrying a fecal sac, indicating continuing nesting. On July 29th three individual juvenile birds were observed, with possible additional juvenile birds that were briefly observed showing weak flight and subsequently disappearing into the tall grasses.

Our efforts in saving even a small patch of suitable habitat paid off with at least a couple of successful nests and multiple juvenile birds. Hopefully we can repeat this effort next year and others will be inspired to do the same.

CKAS is greatly appreciative that Talon has given these rare birds a chance. Many birders were able to get out to see these special birds as they popped up to perch on the tall weeds and hear their simple high-pitched whistles, buzzed '*tzelick*' song, or sharp '*TSIP*' alarm calls.

Check out the following link to see some of the photos and video taken of these special birds over the course of the summer.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lang-photoshare/albums/72157715975293603>