

Native Vegetation Advantage: Wildlife Habitat

Native grasses and forbs provide cover.

A wide range of vertebrate and invertebrate wildlife use native vegetation for cover.^{1,2,3,4,5} The general bunch grass structure, which provides an interspersion of bare ground and space for unrestricted movement underneath and overhead canopy for concealment, provides preferable brood habitat for ground nesting species and protection for many other birds and small mammals.⁶ The erect stems of the tall grass species and many forbs provide elevated perching sites, important for breeding activity of many grassland bird species.



Seeds, leaves, and plant parts provide food.



Insects, mammals and birds all consume one part or another of native vegetation. Insect abundance and diversity is commonly greater in native vegetation than non-native,^{3,4} making native vegetation more attractive to other insect-eating wildlife, particularly fledglings and broods of precocial birds, also providing habitat for beneficial predatory insects. Pollinators have been shown to select a greater number of native plants than non-native.⁷ A Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency study, when looking at the overall nutrition of seeds of 26 common food plants of wildlife, including agriculture crops, food plot species and native plants, identified 6 of the top 10 plants as native while the bottom five were dominated by non-native seeds.⁸

Native vegetation provides material and structure for nesting and bedding.

Residual leaf material provides nesting and bedding material for many species of wildlife; deer and other mammals commonly bed in native vegetation. The bunchgrass structure and diversity of vegetation height and plant composition is attractive to many species of wildlife for nesting or bedding.⁶



References

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