

and nesting sites and for winter cover and this was provided when grazing by buffalo ceased. Also, the species obtained a considerable amount of its food from cropped fields. Thus, the ungrazed grasses and scattered tracts of cultivation that characterized the western prairies from 1880 to about 1900 provided ideal habitat and the species increased rapidly. However, it was found that the Prairie Chicken would not survive in any area if more than 60% of the grassland was converted to cultivated land.⁶ This is what happened in the Prairie Provinces between 1900 and 1920 and resulted in the disappearance of the species.

It is ironic that the Greater Prairie Chicken at first prospered from an expanding agriculture, which made available new resources and led to its establishment in vast regions of the Prairie Provinces. Unfortunately, the further development of cereal farming and cattle ranching eliminated the tall grass vegetation on which the species had depended and led to its disappearance.

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WESTERN KINGBIRD KILLS HOUSE SPARROW

TONY LANG,
65 Bobolink Bay, Regina, Sask.,
S4S 4K2

On May 17, 1976, Eric Lang observed a Western Kingbird kill a House Sparrow in what may have been a territory dispute.

The sparrows, having established a territory on Cardinal Crescent in Regina, were prepared to defend it and did so when a pair of kingbirds arrived. Eric observed the two sparrows pestering the kingbirds in a group of trees and the male sparrow drove one of the kingbirds away. It chased the kingbird for about 300 yards at which point the kingbird wheeled around, seized the sparrow by the neck with its bill and after a short struggle let it fall lifeless to the ground. At that time the kingbird's mate chased the female sparrow away and the territory was theirs. Eric was about to collect the sparrow for examination to determine how it had been killed when a small dog trotted up and collected it for himself.

Bent lists the Western Kingbird as a spirited bird having an intolerance towards intruders on its domain, like the Eastern Kingbird.¹ He also writes of it as slightly more tolerant of large raptors, occasionally living in harmony with Swainson's Hawks, Ballock's Orioles, Mourning Doves, Yellow Warblers and even House Sparrows. Baird et al agree with Bent, describing the species as almost an exact counterpart of the Eastern Kingbird in defence of its nest.²

I can only assume that these were the actions of thoroughly fed up kingbirds in an attempt to claim the territory.

¹A. C. BENT. *Life histories of North American flycatchers, larks, swallows and their allies*. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

²BAIRD, BREWER and RIDGWAY. 1905 *North American land birds*. Vol. III. Little, Brown, and Company.

