

Fort Riley's Species at Risk

Not only is Fort Riley home to the Big Red One, it is also home to four species that have been identified as Species at Risk. A partnership initiated in 2001 among DoD, NatureServe, and the network of State Natural Heritage Programs identified more than 500 species at risk. This information has been invaluable in identifying and prioritizing potential conservation actions on or near DoD installations; since the conservation of such species can make it unnecessary to list them as endangered or threatened. The four species that can be found on Fort Riley are as follows:

Texas Horned Lizard

Phrynosoma cornutum

The Texas horned lizard is a flattened, wide bodied lizard with numerous spines protruding throughout the body. The two longest spines are directly located behind the head and are specific to the species *cornutum*. They are uncommon to rare on Fort Riley, and are likely only found in localized areas. Their preferred habitat are areas with little vegetation, well drained slopes, gravelly ridges, road cuts and other eroded areas. They primarily feed on harvester ants (~70%) and other insects. They are unique in that when threatened or disturbed they can squirt blood from the corner of each eye. They are a Federal Species of Concern and listed as Threatened in the states of TX and OK.



Regal Fritillary *Speyeria idalia*

Although the Regal Fritillary has declined or disappeared from more than half of its historical range, they can be found in good numbers on Fort Riley. The drop in numbers can be attributed to loss of prairie, use of biocides and frequent prescribed burning. Females lay several hundred to a thousand eggs usually within a few centimeters of the caterpillar's main food source, violets (*Viola sp.*). The caterpillars hatch in late summer/fall and overwinter unfed, becoming active again in the spring. Management practices conducive for the Regal Fritillary are patch burning, burning as little as needed and limited use of biocides. The Regal Fritillary is a Federal Species of Concern.



Henslow's Sparrow *Ammodramus henslowii*

The Henslow's sparrow is a small sparrow of the tallgrass prairie, that is olive drab color in color. The Henslow's sparrow has been confirmed to breed at Fort Riley and is considered common in areas with appropriate habitat. Their preferred habitat are grasslands with a well developed litter layer built up. They prefer to nest in areas that have not been burned for several years. Their nest are very difficult for predators and brood parasitic species, such as cowbirds, to locate. The species is shy and secretive, and its unmusical, two syllable call makes it difficult to locate in tallgrass. Its population numbers have declined steadily over the past few decades, largely because of the loss of quality grassland habitat.



Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus*

Rusty Blackbird is one of North America's most rapidly declining species. The population has plunged an Estimated 85-99 percent over the past forty years. They inhabit wooded swamps, breed in the boreal Forest and winter in the eastern U.S. They are uncommon on Fort Riley but can be observed in the winter months along riparian corridors in small flocks that are many times associated with other flocks of blackbirds.

