

## PREFACE

This book had its genesis in 1994, when the Council of the Association of Field Ornithologists and the staff of the George M. Sutton Avian Research Center recognized the need to convene a conference on the ecology, status, and conservation of grassland birds in the Western Hemisphere. This two-day conference, convened in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in October 1995, reflected the deep concern held by many avian biologists that populations of many grassland bird species are declining throughout the Western Hemisphere. Generous support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Association of Field Ornithologists, the Sutton Avian Research Center, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation made it possible to invite a broad international contingent, especially from South America. Steve Sherrod and the Sutton Avian Research Center staff facilitated conference arrangements and field trips for this productive meeting.

The Council of the Association of Field Ornithologists, notably presidents Greg Butcher, Elissa Landre, and Charles Duncan, provided leadership and support throughout this process. The commitment of the AFO council to both the conference and the publication of this volume is warmly and gratefully acknowledged. We also thank Steve Lewis and the Office of Migratory Bird Management of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for their financial support of this volume. The Center for Biological Conservation of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, especially Christopher Leahy, and the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board provided logistical support and encouragement to Vickery and Herkert, respectively.

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This volume is dedicated to John A. Wiens, whose research on grassland and shrubsteppe birds has had a profound influence not only on both of us but on countless other ecologists of many different disciplines. John's ecological perspicacity and intellectual brilliance continue to inspire and serve as a model. This volume is also dedicated to our children and their millions of cohorts throughout this hemisphere, that they may all have the opportunity to admire prairie-chickens and buntings, or rheas, canasteros, and seedeaters, in wonder, joy, and we hope, curiosity.

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