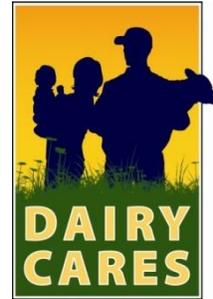


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Dairy Cares Newsletter

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Dairies' efforts to save tricolored blackbirds featured in new online video documentary

In addition to being the top milk producers in the country, California dairy families are also leading the way in sustainability, environmental stewardship and resource conservation.

Dairy families have been working collaboratively to protect the Golden State's endemic tricolored blackbird population. Once numbering in the millions, the tricolored blackbird population has been on the decline in recent decades. While the bird's population has fluctuated over the years, experts attribute loss of the bird's natural habitat, such as wetlands and native grasslands, food sources and the state's crippling drought as causes for the species' decline.



California dairy families worked with conservation groups to save an estimated 67,000 tricolored blackbirds in the 2015 nesting season. See a short documentary [here](#).

These developments have resulted in the bird nesting in winter forage fields on dairies, attracted by an inviting combination of cover and food that unfortunately coincides with springtime crop harvest. Exacerbating the situation, tricolored blackbirds tend to cluster in small areas in very great numbers. Tens of thousands of birds – a significant portion of the state's population – may build their nests on a single farm or even a single field.

To help protect tricolored blackbirds, Audubon California, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Cares, Sustainable Conservation and Western United Dairymen launched a project to find a sustainable solution for managing nesting colonies on farms, with the goal of increasing the statewide population. The group was awarded a \$2.1 million Regional Conservation Partnership

Program (RCPP) grant through the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. The project also focuses on habitat restoration and enhancement projects aimed at attracting the birds away from dairy silage fields, instead, encouraging them to nest on existing or to-be-developed wetlands or private lands specifically intended to provide habitat for tricolored blackbirds.

In its first nesting season of working together, an estimated 67,000 tricolored blackbirds were saved through the collaborative efforts of the RCPP group and California dairy farmers. Through funding provided by the [California Dairy Research Foundation](#), these efforts are detailed in a recently released video titled, "Protecting California's Tricolored Blackbird." The video is available [here](#).

California dairy families remain committed to protecting the environment and species around their farms, while continuing to produce safe, affordable and nutritious milk for millions of consumers.

Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care. Our members include Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Cattlemen's Association, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area Council, Dairy Institute of California, GHD Services, Inc., Harris Construction, Hilmar Cheese Co., HP Hood, Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O'Lakes, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Western United Dairymen, Yosemite Farm Credit and others. For information, visit our web site or call 916-441-3318.