



The Heath Hen



Heath hens became extinct on Martha's Vineyard in 1933. They were very similar to the prairie chicken above. They had a funny dance, a silly call and 2 large, orange air sacs near their neck. There are many reasons that the heath hen became extinct. One cause was habitat fragmentation.

- Can we find evidence of the Heath Hens' habitats today?
 - Are these habitats healthy with lots of diverse plants and animals?
 - Are these habitats large and protected?
1. Listen to The Heath Hen song. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-230c11DgQ&feature=youtu.be>) What are its 2 habitats? Let's check them out!
 2. Find a Frost Bottom.
 - Find Gate 19 in the State Forest, on the Edgartown/West Tisbury Rd.
 - Walk North on the bike path. On your right is a frost bottom – see how the ground is scooped? Do you see or hear any animals?
 - Continue walking North until you something amazing. What is it? Who is it? Check out the nearby sign for more information.
 - Take a picture or make a drawing of your discovery in the frost bottom habitat.

3. Find a Sandplain Grass land.

- Katama has one of the largest and rarest in the world. The Farm Institute borders part of it.
- Look for a large rock with a metal plaque from The Nature Conservancy, close to the bike path. It says *The Bamford Preserve – preserving and restoring Vineyard grasslands*.
- Use a piece of paper and a crayon to take a rubbing of this important plaque.
- Do you see any other animals in this habitat?

4. **Optional Writing** Please reflect. What animals did you see? How would you predict this habitat will change with the seasons? Are these habitats currently fragmented?

Practice The Heath Hen Song. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-230c11DgQ&feature=youtu.be>) and sing it to your family. Maybe even share it! #heathhensong

Oh, the heath hen lives in the forest
where the deep, deep frost bottoms are.
She loves to rest and nest and play
and he really likes to display.

They also live in the grasslands,
the sandplain grasslands of Katama

The heath hen lives in the forest
where the deep, deep frost bottoms are.

It's sad what happened to the Heath Hen
But we can't just sit and cry.
We can help the heath hen's friends
like the moth and the butterfly.

We can protect their homes,
connecting habitat stepping stones.

It's sad what happened to the heath hen,
but we can't just sit and cry.

To learn more:

Habitat Stepping Stones <https://reduceyourfootprint.com.au/projects/habitat-stepping-stones/>

Felix Neck Wildlife Sanctuary <https://www.massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/wildlife-sanctuaries/felix-neck>

Polly Hill Arboretum <http://www.pollyhillarboretum.org/>

Frost Bottom, State Forest



Photo by Mark Lovewell, *Vineyard Gazette*



Sandplain grass land, Katama



Photo www.mbl.edu/ecosystems/faculty/neill/sandplain-grasslands-and-shrublands/

