



State of Canada's Birds: First-ever Report Shows Dramatic Changes in Bird Populations

June 27, 2012 (Ottawa) Canada's bird populations have been heavily influenced by human activity, in ways that have helped some species and hindered others, according to a first-of-its-kind national report on the state of Canada's birds.

The State of Canada's Birds report draws on 40 years of data – from professionals and citizen scientists – to present an overview of how Canada's birds are faring. It summarizes the status of Canada's bird populations for eight regions, including the boreal forest, prairies, Arctic and oceans. This scientific report also identifies the most significant conservation opportunities for Canadians to ensure healthy bird populations and healthy ecosystems.

The report finds that there are fewer birds now than in the seventies – on average, Canadian bird populations have declined by 12%. However, some species are doing well, while others are declining. Overall, more species are decreasing (44% of species in Canada) than increasing (33%). Some groups have severely declined, including grassland birds, migratory shorebirds and aerial insectivores (birds that catch insects in flight). These groups have all decreased by more than 40%, on average, and some individual species in these groups have decreased by more than 90%.

Other species have increased as a result of successful conservation efforts. The ban on pesticides in the 1970s has helped raptors like the Peregrine Falcon, Osprey and Bald Eagle recover. Effective management of wetlands and hunting has aided waterfowl (ducks and geese).

Birds are an indicator of ecosystem health. Changes in bird populations signal changes in the ecosystems we depend on for vital environmental services such as food, clean air and water.

The State of Canada's Birds report is a collaborative effort of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative in Canada (NABCI-Canada), whose members include federal, territorial and provincial governments, conservation non-government organizations (NGOs), and private sector organizations.

The State of Canada's Birds is available online at www.stateofcanadasbirds.org.

Summary of Report Findings

The report highlights several changes in Canadian bird populations since 1970. These include:

- On average, Canadian breeding bird populations have decreased 12% since 1970, the year effective monitoring began for most species.

- Of all Canadian bird species, 44% have declined, 33% have increased and 23% have shown little overall change.
- Grassland birds, including longspurs, meadowlarks, Sprague's pipit, Greater Sage-Grouse and others, are in decline due largely to a loss of habitat.
- Aerial insectivores – swallows, flycatchers and other birds that catch insects in flight – are declining more steeply than any other group of birds, but the causes of the decline are unknown.
- Shorebirds have declined by almost half overall, while Arctic shorebirds in particular, including the endangered Red Knot, have declined by 60%.
- Increasing raptor populations, such as the peregrine falcon, point to the success of direct conservation actions, including pesticide controls.
- Waterfowl populations have increased in part due to successful management of hunting and wetlands.
- Conserving Canada's birds requires concerted efforts by all sectors of society, including individuals, corporations, non-government organizations and governments, both in Canada and internationally. The North American Bird Conservation Initiative is working to help achieve this cooperation.
- New and ongoing efforts and resources will ensure continued success for groups such as waterfowl and raptors and help to reverse the trends in groups such as grassland birds and aerial insectivores.

Comments

"*The State of Canada's Birds* report is a measurable indicator of how well we are fulfilling our shared responsibility as stewards of our nation's wildlife and wilderness areas. Clearly there is much we can do to ensure we have healthy ecosystems for years to come, and this report provides a path to do so."

Ian Davidson, Executive Director, Nature Canada

"This report would not have been possible without the citizen science programs offered by Bird Studies Canada and our partners. We're extremely grateful to the thousands of volunteers who support critical bird research and conservation."

Dr. George Finney, President, Bird Studies Canada

"This report illustrates that direct conservation efforts can have a positive impact. Nevertheless, many threats to wetlands and upland habitats remain, so it is important that focus on these

important habitats is maintained to ensure waterfowl populations continue to thrive and populations of other bird groups can be conserved."

Dave Howerter, National manager for Ducks Unlimited Canada's Institute for Wetland and Waterfowl Research.

"The findings of *The State of Canada's Birds* report clearly demonstrate the immediate need to maintain, and in some areas increase, the diversity of wildlife habitat across Canada. Without habitat, there is no wildlife... it's that simple."

L.G. "Len" Ugarenko, President/Président, Wildlife Habitat Canada

"It's excellent to see the recognition for the integral role that cattle producers can play in maintaining a healthy habitat for birds. Cattle producers are proud stewards of the land and take great care in their grazing management that contributes to healthy rangelands, pastures and watersheds, providing a natural habitat in which birds, wildlife, insects and native plants can thrive alongside cattle."

Fawn Jackson, Environmental Affairs Manager, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association

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