



**State of the Birds  
Summary  
September 2009**

The State of the Birds (a NABCI subcommittee) members are working on a new 2010 report. The goal is to release the report in March just prior to the 2010 North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March. The goal is to score bird species for vulnerability to climate change and group species within habitat biomes throughout the United States. The subcommittee is made up of representatives of USFWS, National Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, American Bird Conservancy, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, The Nature Conservancy, US Geological Survey, US Forest Service, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation as well as the all of the bird initiatives.

**2009 Report**

At the 2009 American Ornithologist Meeting held in Philadelphia, many of the State of the Birds team members participated in a symposium **BIRDS AS INDICATORS OF THE STATUS OF NORTH AMERICAN HABITATS: SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**. The team presented the concept of wild bird indicators applied throughout the world and in 2009 State of the Birds reports. Birds have been accepted as an important measure of environmental health. Birds make good habitat indicators for several reasons:

- 1) A lot is known about the habitat requirements of birds.
- 2) Birds are adapted to a wide variety of habitats.
- 3) Birds are easy to identify and count.
- 4) Vegetation sampling can be complicated, and the biological significance of differences can be difficult to interpret.
- 5) People like birds and care about their fate.

The team presented report findings that assessed the health of six major habitat biomes. This included the bird population indicators based on the best available monitoring data for groups of species. Because reliable long-term trend data were not available to create bird population indicators for all U.S. habitats, the Team also used the proportion of species of conservation concern in each habitat as a separate indicator of health or threats to that habitat.

Over 750 articles were generated after the 2009 Report was released. The report has been cited in numerous Congressional hearings. In the 2010 appropriations process, the Senate Appropriations Committee added \$3 million over the President's Request for endangered Hawaiian bird conservation.

## **2010 Report—Climate Change**

A modified Partners-in-Flight scoring system is being used to score all species on 6 characteristics. Vulnerability scores of bird species will help identify which birds are most vulnerable to climate change. The data from the Christmas Bird Count, Breeding Bird Survey, Waterfowl Breeding Population Survey and other sources will be used in addition to the scores to evaluate the status and trends. Vulnerability scores will be aggregated by habitat type to reflect birds by habitat overall susceptibility to climate change. Birds limited to one habitat are more vulnerable than a bird that is a generalized.

Indicator or representative birds will be used to represent what could happen in that habitat group when climate change is an issue. Bird distribution maps and bar charts will be presented in the report. A glossary of terms is also being created.

## **Report Layout and Production**

The suggested layout for State of the Birds Climate Change report is similar to the layout, look and feel as the 2009 State of the Birds report. It will contain:

### **Introduction**

#### **Executive summary**

**Habitat sections** (Aridlands, Grasslands, Forests, Arctic & Alpine, Wetlands (Waterfowl and Marshlands), Coasts, Oceans, Islands, Urban Birds, Upland Game Birds

In each habitat section:

**Habitat Introduction** – this includes definition of the habitat.

Bird graph of indicator birds/photos

**Birds in Trouble** - birds that may be especially susceptible to climate change in that habitat.

**Birds doing well** – are birds adapting to climate change/examples of some changes.

**Beyond our border** – this section will include how climate change impacts U.S. birds beyond our borders.

**Major Threats and Challenges** - to birds concerning climate change.

**What you can do** – this is a list of basic actions. More detail will be explained in the Action Section: What You Can Do

**What you can do Section**– This section will include land managers/general public/policy makers actions and projects that can be accomplished by conservation organizations, agencies, and policy makers.

**Call out boxes** - are call outs of case studies of birds that have already been impacted by climate change.

**New Team Members added:** Dan Petit NFWF, Frank Thompson U.S. Forest Service.

Two future meetings planned for October as the team finalizes scores, conducts analyses and begins writing the report.

**Future Years**

The Subcommittee plans on prepare reports on an annual basis that focus of issues and habitats important to migratory birds. It is expected that every 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> year we will produce a report in the same context as the 2009 report.

[www.stateofthebirds.org](http://www.stateofthebirds.org)

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