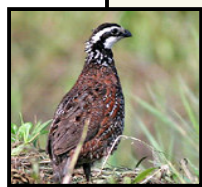


COMMON BIRDS IN DECLINE

*A State of the Birds Report
Summer 2007*

Many of our most common and beloved birds are experiencing precipitous population declines. Analyzing forty years of bird population data, Audubon has identified our nation's most vulnerable common birds. The data were collected by citizen scientists for Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, combined, for the first time, with Breeding Bird Survey data from the U.S. Geological Survey. Additional analyses focused on state level trends. Some mirror the national picture, while others reveal local and regional differences. The birds below are suffering serious population declines in Arkansas. Along with their national *Common Birds in Decline* list mates, they showcase the need for vigilance in protecting local habitats and the health of our environment. Working together, we can make a difference. Visit <http://stateofthebirds.audubon.org/CBID> for the national findings.

ARKANSAS'S VULNERABLE COMMON BIRDS



NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*)

The familiar "bob-whoit" call is not heard in Arkansas as often as it was just a few decades ago. The disappearance of suitable habitat, due to large-scale agriculture, intensive pine-plantation forestry, development, and use of non-native cool season grasses, is the most dominant threat to the long-term survival of these popular gamebirds.



EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*)

Like many grassland birds, meadowlarks are threatened by changing agricultural practices, including monoculture farming and early season mowing. Development of open fields for housing is also contributing to habitat loss. Federal farm bill programs like the Conservation Reserve Program provide much needed habitat for grassland species in Arkansas.



FIELD SPARROW (*Spizella pusilla*)

Typically found in abandoned fields amid scattered shrubs and trees, this sparrow is dependent on successional habitat that by definition is ephemeral. In addition, agriculture, forestry and urban development are all taking a toll on its breeding and nesting sites.



LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

Often seen perched on wires in open country throughout Arkansas, the shrike is dependent on grassy fields with scattered shrubs and trees. The loss of this habitat due to development and the intensification of agriculture are key threats. Shrikes are beneficial because they eat pest species such as rodents and grasshoppers.



Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*)

This golden songbird sings from wooded swamps, river bottoms, and sloughs across the state. Their populations have declined significantly in Arkansas due to loss of bottomland hardwood forests, changes to hydrology caused by stream channelization, and removal of dead trees that provide nest cavities.

Percent Decline
Since 1967

70%

67%

77%

92%

85%



ARKANSAS HABITATS AT RISK

Arkansas's forests, fields, wetlands, and waters host an abundance of birds, from the oak-hickory forests of the Ozarks to the prairie remnants of the Delta. However, Arkansas's critical bird habitats face a number of threats. Forest habitat is being degraded by fragmentation and lack of natural disturbances like fire; fire suppression allows shade-tolerant trees and shrubs to fill up the understory, making many forests too dense for birds like the Northern Bobwhite. Stream channelization alters flood regimes, which affects the health of trees that birds like the Prothonotary Warbler rely on for nesting. Meanwhile, populations of open country birds such as the Eastern Meadowlark, Field Sparrow and Loggerhead Shrike are dropping due to the intensification of urban and agricultural development on open grasslands.



WHAT AUDUBON ARKANSAS IS DOING

Arkansans care deeply about birds and their habitat. With 90% of Arkansas in private ownership, Audubon knows it takes public-private partnerships to effectively conserve birds. Audubon Arkansas is working with its partner organizations and individuals across the state to monitor bird populations, restore habitat, and promote sound stewardship on the ground. Through the Arkansas Quail Committee and the Grand Prairie Working Lands Initiative, Audubon Arkansas is restoring habitat and promoting habitat management practices for birds that rely on early successional habitats.

Through the Wetland Reserve Program, Private Stewardship Grant, and Waterbirds on Working Lands Initiative, Audubon is also restoring habitat and promoting best management practices for waterbirds with farmers and other land managers. Audubon's Important Bird Areas program is identifying critical bird habitat in the state. Additionally, Audubon is working directly with state chapters and partners to promote the conservation of these areas.



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Arkansans can help keep our common birds common in a variety of ways. Arkansans can support active forest management, including prescribed burns, to meet specific bird habitat requirements on government and private lands. Arkansans also can enroll in federal farm bill conservation programs that keep marginal cropland idle and support millions of acres of good bird habitat. We also can help stop the use and spread of non-native grasses and invasive plant species. By protecting wetlands and riparian areas we not only provide habitat for birds but improve the quality of our state's water.

Volunteers play a critical role in helping Audubon determine bird population trends by taking part in bird monitoring projects. Participating in the Christmas Bird Count, the Great Backyard Bird Count, and entering bird observations into eBird are all important ways ordinary citizens help ornithologists track bird populations.

Audubon Arkansas was founded as the 25th state office of the National Audubon Society in 2001 through a seed grant from the Winthrop Rockefeller Charitable Trust. Audubon's vision is a state where the love and respect for nature is a cultural legacy. Our vision is a state where communities are engaged in responsible stewardship, protecting and conserving our native environment for future generations. This leads naturally to our mission to inspire and lead environmental education, resource management, habitat restoration, bird conservation and enlightened advocacy.