

Bird Conservation

What is conservation, and how can I help conserve birds?

Why Birds?

Consider for a moment what the world would be like without birds. Beyond their beautiful colors and songs, birds provide important ecosystem services that benefit humans. They pollinate flowers, spread seeds, control pests, and prevent the spread of disease. Because they are sensitive to pollution, birds also serve as important **bioindicators**, helping scientists to assess the health of the environment. In fact, the health of our planet—and our own well-being—depends on healthy bird populations.

A Brief History of Bird Conservation

Conservation is the act of protecting a natural resource from waste, loss, or destruction. Soil, water, trees, and wildlife are a few examples of resources to conserve.

One of the first bird conservation organizations in the United States was the Massachusetts Audubon Society, founded in 1896 when a group of concerned women, led by Minna Hall and Harriet Hemenway, came together to protect waterbirds like egrets and herons from the women's hat industry. In 1905, the National Audubon Society was founded, and since then, the number of nationwide chapters continues to grow.

In 1900, another early conservationist, Frank Chapman, proposed a new tradition to replace the traditional Christmas "Side Hunt" (a competition to shoot birds and mammals) and started the Christmas Bird Count, now the longest-running **community science** project in the world. As part of this project, groups of everyday bird lovers gather in defined locations to count birds and report their sightings to a scientific database every December.



Did you know? Feathers were a popular decoration for women's hats in the 19th century.

Threats to Birds

Birds face numerous threats across the globe that have caused serious declines in their numbers. Some of the major human-caused threats impacting birds worldwide include:

Habitat Loss

The biggest threat to birds is habitat loss. When natural habitats are destroyed for farming or development, it may no longer be able to provide the food, water, shelter, and space to raise young that wildlife need for survival. Every day, wildlife has less space to call home.



Agriculture is necessary for human survival but destroys vital habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Invasive Species

Invasive species, which don't naturally occur in an area, compete with native wildlife. When invasive plants overtake an area, they crowd out native plants and reduce the food and habitat available to wildlife. Invasive animals compete with native species for those same resources.



Invasive plants like kudzu suffocate native species that birds and other wildlife need, often causing ecological and economic harm.

Cats

Free-roaming cats cause billions of bird deaths around the world each year, as well as the deaths of other wild animals.

Pesticides

Weed-killers and insecticides not only reduce the available food supply for birds, they also poison our soil and water and build up in the food web.

Window Collisions

Clear glass and reflective surfaces confuse birds, making it difficult for them to determine where safe flyways exist.

Light Pollution

Bright city lights confuse birds migrating at night, causing them to crash into windows or land in poor habitat.

No Caterpillars, No Birds

Without native plants, birds cannot survive. Native plants like oak trees and goldenrod support the life cycles of leaf-eating caterpillars and other insects, which even seed-eating birds rely on to raise their chicks. Non-native plants, in contrast, support few local insect species, if any, reducing the food available to birds and other wildlife.



Did you know? To raise one nest of chicks, parents must feed them up to 9,000 caterpillars.

As a bird conservation organization, Birds Georgia builds places where birds and people thrive through three important areas of work:

- **Conservation:** restoring habitat to create healthy ecosystems, monitoring bird populations, and reducing threats to birds
- **Community Engagement:** providing opportunities for people to enjoy the beauty of the birds and access healthy green spaces
- **Education:** equipping people with knowledge and tools to appreciate birds and take action to conserve them

It Takes a Flock

No one person can do everything to help birds. Together, our efforts as individuals can add up to major positive impacts. Consider some simple actions you can take to conserve and reduce threats to birds:

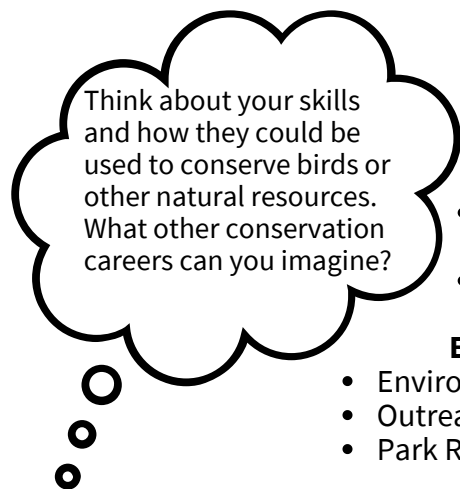
- Improving bird habitat by planting native plants (and removing invasive plants)
- Maintaining a bird feeder or bath
- Reducing light pollution during migration periods by keeping outdoor lights off at night
- Keeping pets on a leash or supervising them outdoors
- Installing simple treatments, like decals or screens, to windows that cause problems for birds



Everyone can help birds! As **community scientists**, regular people provide valuable bird data for science just by observing birds and reporting their sightings to the public eBird database at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Scientists can't be everywhere, so the checklists submitted by birders all over the world provide an enormous amount of information about birds that can be used to conserve them.

Careers in Conservation

We often think of scientists as people with white coats in a laboratory—but many exciting science careers take place outside the science lab, including bird conservation. And conservation work depends on people in a number of fields beyond science. Consider these exciting career possibilities:



Science

- Biologist
- Refuge Manager
- Biomedical Researcher

Art

- Wildlife Artist or Photographer
- Writer or Journalist
- Content Creator

Technology

- Computer Programmer
- Data Analyst
- Program Developer

Law

- Environmental Attorney
- Policymaker

Engineering

- Environmental Engineer
- Public Utilities Operator

Math

- Finance Manager
- Data Analyst
- Applied Ecologist

Education

- Environmental Educator
- Outreach Director
- Park Ranger

Business

- Executive Director
- Development Manager
- Finance Manager

How could you put your skills and interests to use in a career helping birds?
