

MONTANA AUDUBON

ECOLOGICAL DISRUPTION IN MOTION

A Warning from the Birds
February 2009

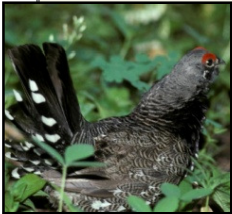


The long-term threats of global climate change—though widely accepted as real—continue to be mistakenly perceived as far off in both time and locale. But new analyses by Audubon scientists reveal that 40 years of avian habitat shifts add up to a very different message: Ecological disruptions caused by climate change have been happening across North America for decades and are having a measurable and visible impact on familiar bird species.

For nearly 60% of species that winter in North America, their center of abundance has moved northward or inland, with climate playing a likely role in shifts that can exceed hundreds of miles. Though implications for individual species can appear benign, the long-term environmental disruptions they portend are serious for birds, for other wildlife and for people.

Visit mtaudubon.org and birdsandclimate.org to learn more about our findings and to join Audubon's campaign to curb global warming and shape a better future for birds and all life on Earth. Changes can be seen among the birds of Montana. Global Climate Change is happening now. What happens tomorrow is up to us.

MONTANA BIRDS SHOW THE SIGNS



SPRUCE GROUSE

This forest bird has moved ~316 miles north. Based on Christmas Bird Count surveys, its population in Montana has decreased ~90% in 40 years, though it has not declined precipitously across the continent. Forest birds show the most northward movement associated with the warmer winters. However, as these birds move north, they may be at increased risk from unusually cold winters or harsh storms.

NORTHERN PINTAIL

This duck has shifted ~90 miles north in the last four decades. Although it is now more commonly found during Montana's winter, its population overall has significantly decreased. Climate change brings warmer summers, drying our crucial potholes and wetlands for breeding waterfowl.



CEDAR WAXWING

This forest and feeder bird has moved almost 190 miles north, and appears to be increasing both in Montana and across the continental US over the last 40 years. Flocks of waxwings are commonly found across Montana, feeding on mountain ash berries or crab apple fruits.

RED-TAILED HAWK

The center of abundance for this raptor has shifted 82 miles to the north, increasing in the winter both in Montana and nationally. Again sudden harsh winter spells could make winter feeding and survival challenging. Will this raptor out-compete other raptors, resulting in their decline?



NORTHERN FLICKER

This forest woodpecker, often seen around towns, has shifted ~192 miles north. Montana Christmas Bird Counts have noticed this trend, and we are clearly part of the shift. Although apparently increasing in Montana, populations appear to be either stable or slightly decreasing nationally. Efforts to preserve nesting snags for these and other woodpeckers are helpful.

Montana Birds and Climate in a Nutshell



Unless we slow the pace of climate change, our wildlife faces increasing threats, including rising temperatures, food scarcity, and habitat degradation, with populations of many species projected to decline to dangerously low levels. Birds and other wildlife will face habitat loss via causes such as more frequent or severe wildfires, flooding and droughts, invasive species, and loss of snow. The timing of birds' migration, reproduction, breeding, nesting, and hatching are all highly adapted to match specific local conditions. Since climate change will affect different species differently, bird behavior may no longer be in sync with their food sources and other habitat needs.

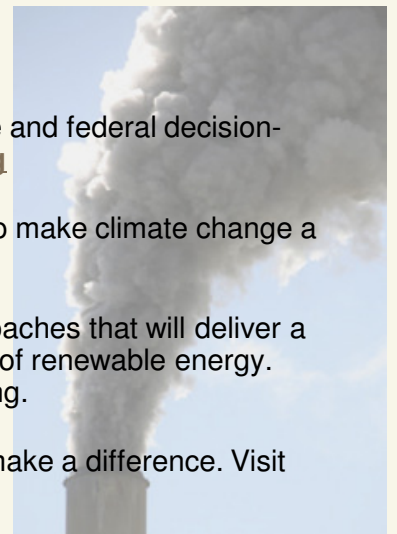
Help Montana Birds and Habitat in a Shifting Climate

- Become a citizen scientist. By taking part in Audubon's Christmas Bird Count or February's Great Backyard Bird Count you can provide scientists with the data they need to monitor the impacts of global warming and other environmental threats on birds. See <http://mtaudubon.org/birds/citizen.html>.
- Support conservation initiatives that protect and restore essential bird habitat. Montana Audubon's Important Bird Areas program is building a statewide network of conservation stewards. Volunteer to get involved in your community. Learn more at <http://mtaudubon.org/birds/areas.html>.



Join Us to Help Solve Global Warming

- Join **Montana Audubon's Armchair Activist's** program and urge our state and federal decision-makers to reduce greenhouse gas pollutants. Join at <http://mtaudubon.org>
- Join National Audubon Society's activist team and urge our policy-makers to make climate change a top priority by signing our petition at birdsandclimate.org.
- Stay informed, write letters to leaders, and voice your support for new approaches that will deliver a clean energy future through increased energy efficiency and expanded use of renewable energy. Demand aggressive and farsighted actions necessary to curb global warming.
- Streamline your own energy profile. There are many things you can do to make a difference. Visit Audubon.org for ideas.



These times are defined by both increased urgency and new hope. The enormity of our economic situation is being realized at the same time that our energy systems and climate need fixing. We can fix both. Please join us in taking action in this new era of environmental engagement and cooperation.

