



Montana Audubon

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Montana Birds Movements Reveal Global Warming Threat, Says New Report

(HELENA, MONTANA) — “Audubon’s findings released today make clear that Montana is witnessing ecological disruption as a result of global warming. We’re running an unplanned and uncontrolled experiment on birds, other wildlife, their habitats and ours, and we need bold actions to put us on the path to solving this crisis” declared Steve Hoffman, Montana Audubon’s Executive Director.

“Montanans – many of whom are making smart energy choices at home - are looking for solutions at the federal, state and local levels. With our renewable energy potential, Montana is poised to be part of the global warming solution *and* protect birds and our environment. We look forward to our congressional delegation working with new leadership in Washington to move us toward a clean energy economy. The more we delay, the harder it will be for our country to address our collective energy, economic and climate change challenges and to prevent the worst impacts from global warming.” states Montana Audubon’s Director of Bird Conservation, Amy Cilimburg.

MORE INFORMATION

A report released today by the National Audubon Society documents a trend of northward and inland movement of North American birds over the past 40 years. The report provides new and powerful evidence that global warming is already having a serious impact on natural systems.

The impacts, based on analyses of citizen-gathered data from the past 40 years of Audubon’s Christmas Bird Count (CBC) reveal that several bird species in Montana are moving in a manner consistent with this trend. For example, the Cedar Waxwing’s “center of abundance” has moved 190 miles to the north, while the Spruce Grouse has moved 316 miles, the Northern Pintail has moved 90 miles, and the Northern Flicker has moved 192 miles, all to the north.

The strengths of this study are the efforts of citizen volunteers for the last 40 years. “In fact many of the Christmas Bird Count leaders and volunteers have been active for decades and this work demonstrates the incredible value of local efforts both to keep track of our wonderful bird life, but also to actively protect our local birding hotspots” notes Dan Casey, regional editor of the Montana counts and a bird expert with American Bird Conservancy.

Larry Weeks, the leader and compiler for the Missoula Christmas Bird Count for the past nine years, notes that “We’ve been seeing a good number of Northern Flickers lately, one of the species in Montana showing significant northward movement according to this report. This report shows clearly that citizen volunteers can contribute mightily to science and conservation by getting out and counting birds.”

"This new report shows the incredible value of local birders who participate in volunteer efforts to count birds and who work to protect our the birds' habitats and Important Bird Areas" notes John Parker, the organizer of the Bozeman Christmas Bird Count for the past 15 years."

The national findings show that 58 percent of the 305 species that winter on the continent shifted significantly north since 1968, some by hundreds of miles. Movement was detected among species of every type, including more than 70 percent of highly adaptable forest and feeder birds. Only 38 percent of grassland species mirrored the trend, reflecting the constraints of their severely-depleted habitat and suggesting that they now face a double threat from the combined stresses of habitat loss and climate adaptation.

Population shifts among individual species are common, fluctuate, and can have many causes. However, Audubon scientists said the ongoing trend of movement by some 177 species—closely correlated to long-term winter temperature increases—revealed an undeniable link to the changing climate.

Audubon scientists say habitats already under siege from development, energy production and agricultural expansion and other human uses will require enhanced protection and restoration to sustain bird populations and provide ecological benefits essential to human health, economic prosperity and quality of life.

The report comes as President Obama and Congressional leaders are calling for swift action to move the U.S. toward a clean energy economy. After years of relative inaction at the national level in the U.S, Congress and the Obama administration are poised to move forward with comprehensive global warming and energy legislation in 2009.

Montana-specific information, bird photos and more can be found at <http://mtaudubon.org/issues/global/birdclimate.html>. The National report, additional state-specific information, bird photos, and multimedia can be found both at and at Audubon.org.

Montana Audubon is also urging citizens to take action by signing a national petition demanding aggressive federal policy action at mtaudubon.org or birdsandclimate.org.

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Montana Audubon's mission is to promote the appreciation, knowledge, and conservation of native birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Founded in 1976, Montana Audubon has built effective programs in public policy, education, and bird conservation to serve its members and Montana's nine community-based Audubon Chapters