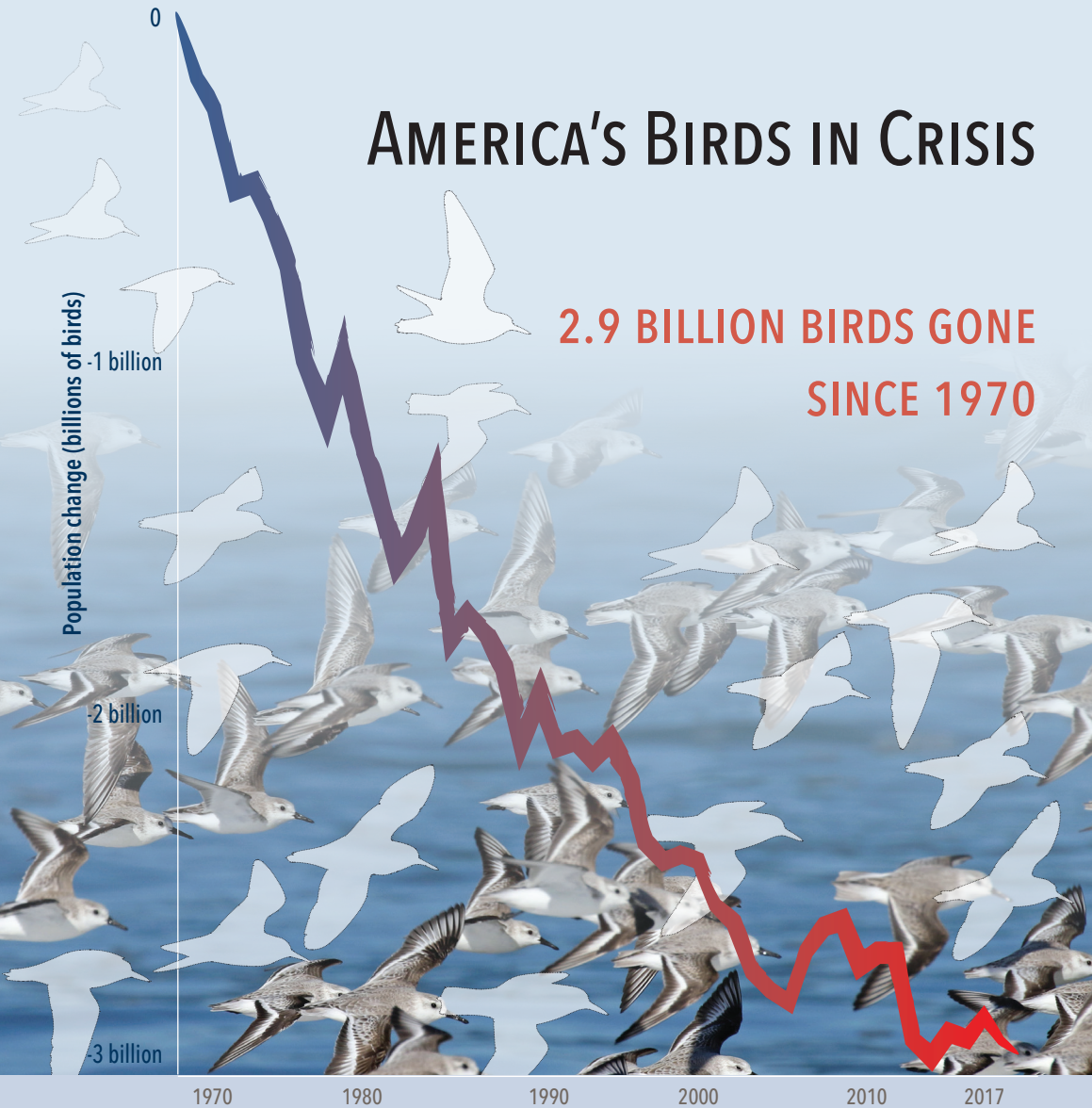


# THE STATE OF THE BIRDS 2019

# UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## AMERICA'S BIRDS IN CRISIS

2.9 BILLION BIRDS GONE  
SINCE 1970



**Nearly 30% of our birds have disappeared in the last 50 years:** New research published in the journal *Science* shows massive losses among U.S. bird populations—with steep declines in every habitat.

## BUT CONSERVATION WORKS!

RECOVERY IS  
POSSIBLE  
WHEN WE  
INVEST IN BIRDS

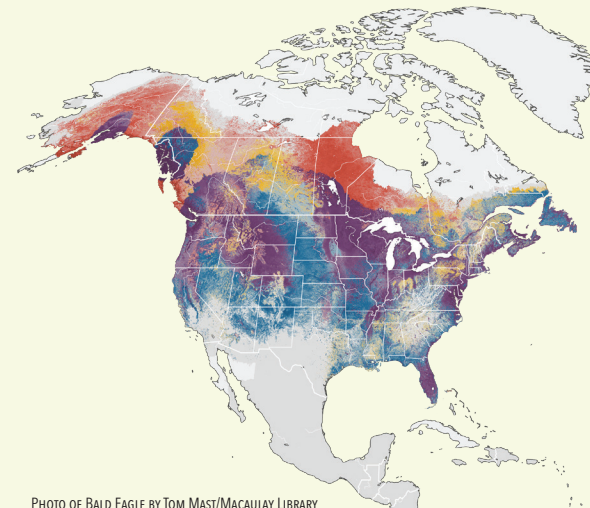
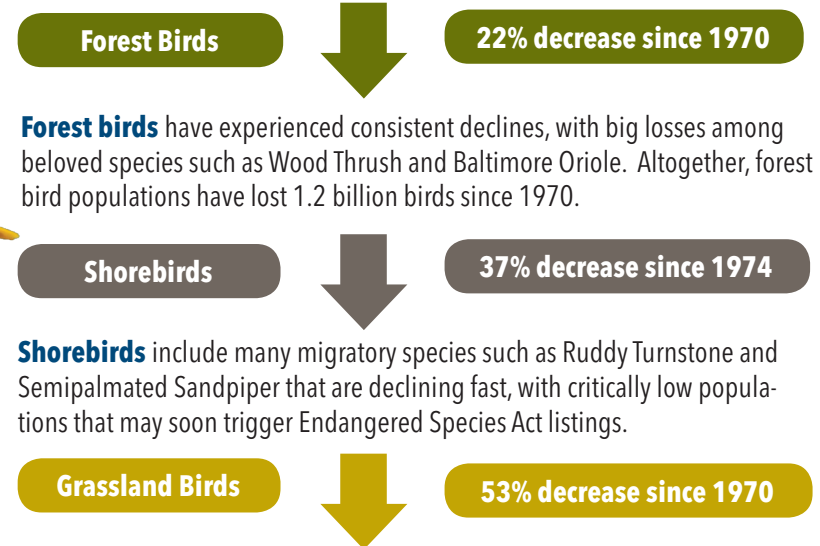
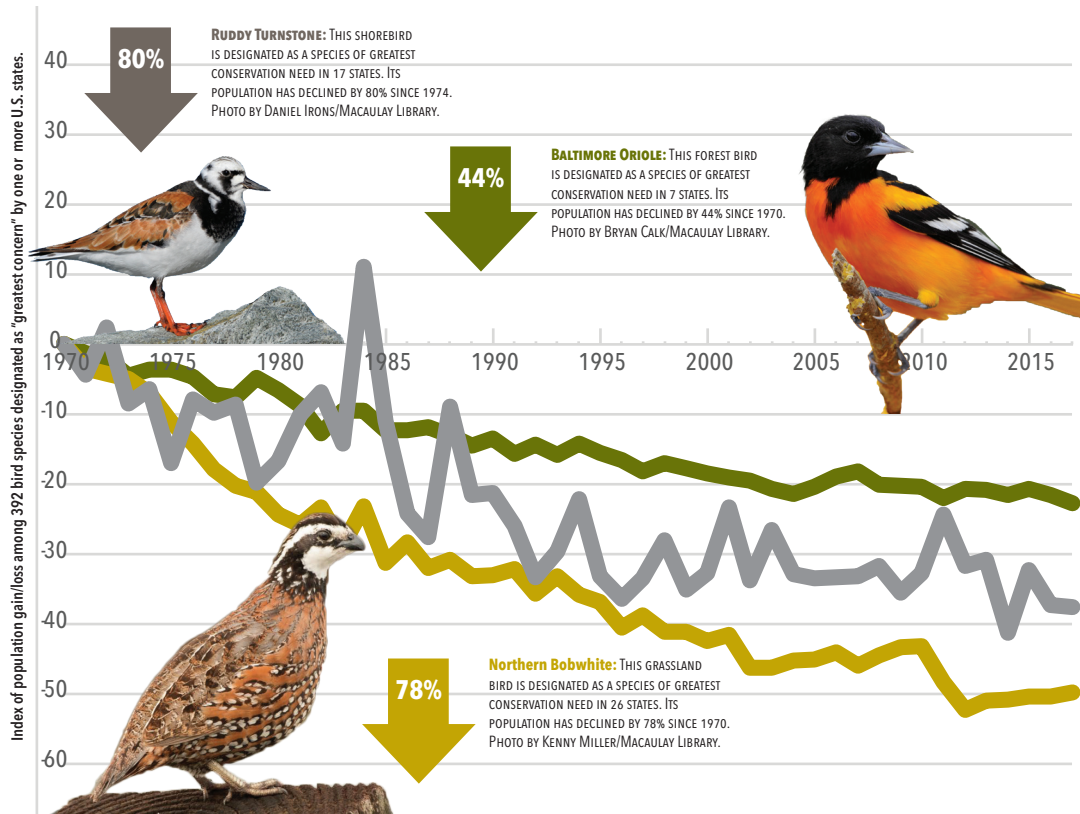


PHOTO OF BALD EAGLE BY TOM MAST/MACAULAY LIBRARY

**Our national bird, an icon of wildlife recovery:** In 1970 only a few hundred Bald Eagle pairs remained in the lower 48 states. Federal and state protections sparked a remarkable recovery. The Bald Eagle was delisted as an Endangered Species in 2007, and today 30,000+ eagle pairs live in the U.S.A.

# AMERICA'S BIRDS ARE IN STEEP DECLINE



**Forest birds** have experienced consistent declines, with big losses among beloved species such as Wood Thrush and Baltimore Oriole. Altogether, forest bird populations have lost 1.2 billion birds since 1970.

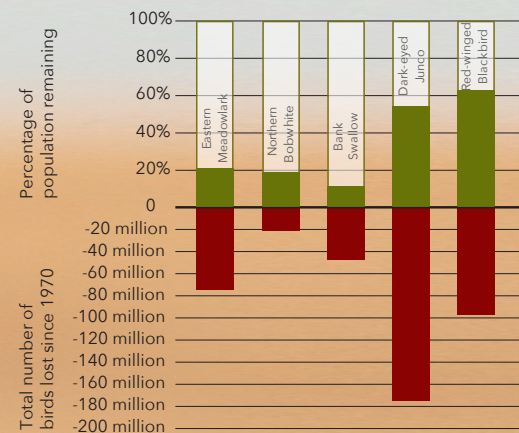
**Shorebirds** include many migratory species such as Ruddy Turnstone and Semipalmated Sandpiper that are declining fast, with critically low populations that may soon trigger Endangered Species Act listings.

**Grassland birds** have suffered the steepest losses, with a population decline of 700 million birds. Some of the biggest declines are among birds beloved by birdwatchers and hunters alike, such as Northern Bobwhite.

## BIG LOSSES AMONG SOME OF OUR MOST BELOVED BIRDS

The pervasive declines among American birdlife spread well beyond the rare and threatened species; it is a crisis for almost all birds everywhere. Just 15 species of "common birds" (species that were once abundant, such as meadowlarks, juncos, blackbirds, and swallows) account for more than two-thirds of the total loss in native bird populations. Our common birds are now suffering population losses in the tens of millions—similar to the decline of the Passenger Pigeon.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK  
BY ALAN SCHMIERER/  
MACAULAY LIBRARY



HOW MUCH REMAINS

NUMBER OF BIRDS LOST

ABOVE RIGHT: BANK SWALLOW BY  
NATHAN DUBROW/MACAULAY LIBRARY  
RIGHT: DARK-EYED JUNCO  
BY EVAN LIPTON/MACAULAY LIBRARY





# FUNDING FOR STATE WILDLIFE PROGRAMS AND JOINT VENTURES IS CONSERVATION MONEY WELL-SPENT

## CONSERVATION WORKS!

When we invest in conservation, we see wildlife population increases and endangered species recovery. Additional funding will allow states to replicate conservation successes across thousands of other species of greatest conservation need.

### WESTERN STATES:

*5.6 million acres of sage-grouse habitat conserved on private lands*

- Steep population declines put Greater Sage-Grouse on the brink of ESA listing
- The Sage Grouse Initiative (a USDA Natural Resources Working Lands for Wildlife program) and the Intermountain West Joint Venture led the restoration of millions of acres of sage-grouse habitat across 11 western states, thanks to collaborations between federal and state agencies and more than 1,100 private ranchers
- ESA listing avoided in 2015, saving local economies from California to the Dakotas up to \$5 billion in annual costs, according to Western Energy Alliance

**Additional support would address the conservation needs of hundreds of other sage-brush wildlife species.**

### GREAT LAKES:

*Endangered Kirtland's Warbler population soars by 1,100%*

- One of first birds to be listed by ESA in 1973; down to last 150 breeding pairs
- State and federal agencies partnered to implement a recovery program that restores jack-pine habitat and controls nest parasitism
- Population grew to 2,500+ breeding pairs in Michigan, with Kirtland's Warblers now expanding into Wisconsin and Ontario; successfully met delisting criteria

**Additional support would continue state-led conservation work for Kirtland's Warblers after delisting, so they don't decline again.**

### APPALACHIA:

*200 landowners become Cerulean Warbler champions*

- With populations down more than 70%, this warbler is fast headed toward ESA consideration
- The Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture launched a sustainable forest management program to improve warbler habitat and forest health
- 200+ private landowners enrolled in the program to restore warbler habitat on thousands of acres of forestlands

**Additional support would enable more private landowners to enroll and stop warbler declines in Appalachia.**

### COLORADO & NEBRASKA:

*1,000+ Mountain Plover nests saved*

- Plovers nest in farm fields, where eggs are at risk of being plowed under, or on ranching lands
- Mountain Plover declared a priority bird species for the Playa Lakes Joint Venture; several hundred landowners joined the program to find and flag nests, allowing farmers and ranchers to work their land without disrupting breeding plovers
- ESA listing avoided; landowners became birding tour-leaders for Mountain Plover Festival in Karval, Colorado that has generated \$75,000 for local economy

**Additional support would scale up this pilot program throughout the Mountain Plover's range.**

### TEXAS:

*Turkeys worth \$42 million to Lone Star State economy*

- America's classic game bird was nearly extinct in North America 100 years ago
- Federal and nonprofit partners worked with state agencies on stocking and reintroduction programs; today Texas has the largest turkey population in the U.S. (600,000+ turkeys)
- Turkeys generate \$42 million in economic activity every year in Texas, and \$1.8 billion nationwide

**Additional support would enable Texas and three related Joint Ventures to duplicate this success for Northern Bobwhite quail, another classic game bird trending toward extinction.**

### HAWAII:

*Endangered Palila population stabilized*

- Almost two-thirds of native Hawaiian forest bird species, including the Palila, are listed under the Endangered Species Act
- A coalition of federal, state, and private partners have restored 6,500 acres of forest to protect crucial Palila habitat
- Invasive species control and habitat management are keeping Palila and other Hawaiian forest bird species alive for now

**Additional support would sustain programs essential to preventing extinctions on Hawaii.**

### EASTERN STATES:

*A total turnaround—American Oystercatchers up 23%*

- 10 years ago, oystercatcher populations were plummeting along East Coast; ESA listing would have impacted coastline communities, including some of America's favorite beaches
- Instead, the USFWS Northeast Division of Migratory Birds and 13 state agencies coordinated a conservation strategy with 16 states that reversed oystercatcher declines; population now up +20%
- Benefits beyond birds include improved fish nursery habitat and cleaner public beaches

**Additional support would build on the oystercatcher success, funding the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative to avert ESA listings for 15 other declining shorebirds.**

### ALASKA:

*Hunting tradition revived for Emperor Geese*

- Unique goose species found only in Alaska and Russian Far East, but 50% population decline halted hunting in the 1980s
- Populations rebounded after federal and state agencies partner with native groups on Emperor Goose conservation program
- Population more than doubled by 2018; regulated sport and tribal traditional hunting reinstated

**Additional support for state and tribal agencies would enable continued recovery for Emperor Geese.**

GREATER SAGE-GROUSE BY GERRIT VYN

MOUNTAIN PLOVER BY OSCAR WILHELMY/MACAULAY LIBRARY

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER BY STEVE GETTLE/MINDEN PICTURES

CERULEAN WARBLER BY WILLIE MCCHALE/MACAULAY LIBRARY

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER BY ALIX D'ENTREMONT/MACAULAY LIBRARY

WILD TURKEY BY BRENDAN KLICK/MACAULAY LIBRARY

PALILA BY JOSHUA RUDOLPH/MACAULAY LIBRARY

EMPEROR GOOSE BY ANDREW SPENCER/MACAULAY LIBRARY



## REMARKABLE RECOVERIES

Waterfowl serve as a model for how habitat protection and restoration can reverse bird declines.

Waterfowl



56 % increase since 1970



WOOD DUCK BY LINDA RUDOLPH/MACAULAY LIBRARY

**Waterfowl** are one of America's best wildlife success stories, thanks to federal investments such as the Duck Stamp and North American Wetlands Conservation Act that powered waterfowl conservation efforts.

Raptors show what a big difference states can make in species protection.

Raptors



200% increase since 1970



COOPER'S HAWK BY JOHN BRUIN/MACAULAY LIBRARY

**Hawks, eagles and other birds of prey** buck the general trend of declining birds thanks to bans on harmful pollutants such as DDT, as well as strong federal and state protections from shooting.

## STATE WILDLIFE AGENCIES ARE READY TO ACT AND SAVE OUR BIRDS, BUT OUR STATES CAN'T DO IT ALONE. PARTNERSHIPS ARE KEY.

### State Wildlife Action Plans

America's state and territorial fish and wildlife agencies have identified more than 12,000 species of greatest conservation need—including wildlife at risk of becoming endangered. Each state has developed a State Wildlife Action Plan, a science-based action plan to turn around declining populations.

- 56 fish and wildlife agencies (every state, territory, and the District of Columbia) have written action plans for every species of greatest conservation need, including 400+ bird species.
- Each plan includes voluntary, non-regulatory measures that are proven to prevent Endangered Species Act listings.
- Currently, our State Wildlife Action Plans receive less than 5% of the required funding needed for successful implementation.



COMMON NIGHTHAWK POPULATIONS HAVE DROPPED BY MORE THAN 50% OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS. PHOTO BY ALEX LAMOREAUX/MACAULAY LIBRARY

### Number of states in which each species is designated a species of greatest conservation concern

**Common Nighthawk** 27 states

Population loss since 1970: 26 million birds

**Eastern Meadowlark** 26 states

Population loss since 1970: 74 million birds

**American Woodcock** 29 states

Population loss since 1970: 1.7 million birds

**Black Tern** 29 states

Population loss since 1970: 3 million birds

**Short-eared Owl** 36 states

Population loss since 1970: 600,000 birds

0 10 20 30 40

### Migratory Bird Joint Ventures

With crucial funding through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and locally driven management authority, states are partnering with federal agencies, nonprofit groups, corporations, and tribes on Migratory Bird Joint Ventures—regional conservation collaboratives with a track record of innovative, effective conservation models.

- More than 20 Migratory Bird Joint Ventures have restored and conserved 27 million acres of habitat in the Lower 48 States and Alaska.
- Joint Ventures use a strategic business-planning model that emphasizes cost efficiency and voluntary, proactive conservation.
- Joint Ventures are a powerful conservation multiplier, growing every federal \$1 into more than \$30 in matching conservation funds.



# THE ANSWERS TO AMERICA'S BIRD CRISIS

Habitat loss is the leading driver of bird declines, which means bird declines are an indicator of much bigger environmental issues on the land. For example, damage to bird habitats also impacts drinking water quality. Federal and state governments can empower a triumphant recovery—for birds and landscapes—with actions that attack the roots of the problem.



## The Cornerstones of Successful Conservation Policy

Three cornerstone conservation acts—the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Act, and the Conservation Title of the Farm Bill—are the key drivers of conservation action for birds. All require a stronger commitment to future funding.

## The Proposal by the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Wildlife

In 2016, a panel of business and conservation experts—chaired by former Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal and Bass Pro Shops founder John Morris—studied the wildlife crisis and recommended that \$1.3 billion in existing federal revenue be redirected to State Wildlife Action Plans annually, with no cost impacts to taxpayers, consumers, or businesses.

## A No-Net-Loss Grasslands Policy

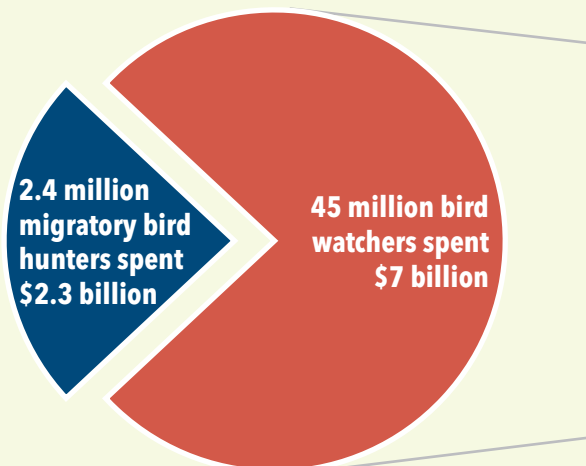
Modeled after George H. W. Bush's famous No-Net-Loss Wetlands policy, a similar grasslands policy would protect prairie, help declining grassland birds, and ensure the availability of grazing lands for ranching. In 2014, the U.S.A. lost more prairie acres than the Amazon lost rainforest. A No-Net-Loss Grasslands Policy would also protect the grassy buffer lands along waterways that provide natural filtration and protect drinking water quality.

## Strategies to Minimize Direct Bird Kills

NABCI partners have developed strategies to reduce the anthropogenic (or human-caused) threats to birds beyond habitat loss, with proposals for addressing feral cat colonies on public lands, reducing collisions through bird-friendly building codes, and transitioning to green energy through bird-friendly wind and solar energy development.

Left: Horned Lark by Gerrit Vyn. Horned Larks are listed as a species of greatest conservation concern in 10 states, and their populations have dropped by 182 million since 1970, leaving only 31% remaining.

**BIRDS  
ARE  
BIG  
BUSINESS!**



**Binoculars and spotting scopes**

**Cameras**

**Bird Feeders and Nest Boxes**

**Wild Bird Food Sales**

Source: USFWS 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation



The U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative is a forum of government agencies, non-government organizations, and bird initiatives helping partners across the continent meet their common bird conservation objectives.