

# The State of the Birds: New Hampshire

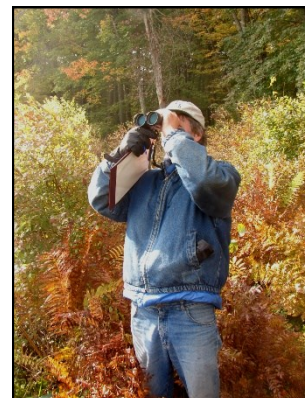


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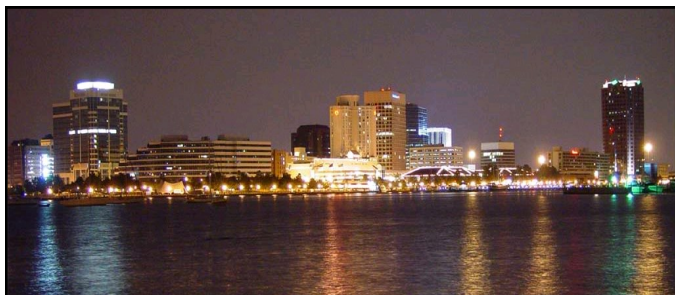
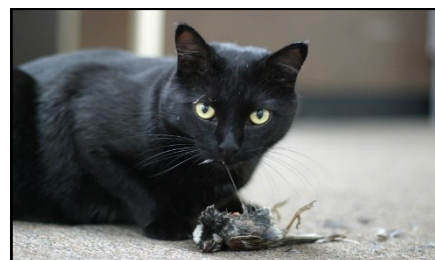
## Top Ten Things **YOU** can do to Help Conserve New Hampshire's Birds

Bird populations are in trouble, both in New Hampshire and throughout the world. Written in 2010, the "State of the New Hampshire's Birds" report outlines a number of conservation strategies that can improve bird habitats and otherwise benefit the New Hampshire's bird populations. With concern for bird populations rising in light of even more data on the declines, New Hampshire Audubon is in the process of revising our original "State of the Birds Conservation Guide" ([available at http://www.nh Audubon.org/the-state-of-the-birds/](http://www.nh Audubon.org/the-state-of-the-birds/)). There are numerous things that individuals and communities can do that benefit our bird populations, and if everyone made a few simple changes to their lives in this manner, the cumulative impact would equal that of a project implemented at the state level. The list below focuses on such actions, including everything from where your coffee is grown to town planning. We hope you can help in whatever ways you can!

1) **Help collect data!** Everyone from NH Audubon and NH Fish and Game to local land trusts and conservation commissions rely to some degree on information gathered by volunteer "citizen scientists." You don't need to be an expert birder to help us learn more about New Hampshire's birds: it can be as simple as watching the swallow nests on your barn or counting birds at your feeders. For more complicated projects, there is often training available. For more information on bird survey volunteer opportunities with NH Audubon, contact the Conservation Department (603-224-9909).



2) **Keep your cat indoors!** Domestic cats are among the most significant threats to wild bird populations in much of the United States. Even well-fed cats and those with bells can and will kill birds. And then there are feral cats and semi-feral cat "colonies." Some studies estimate that hundreds of millions of birds are killed by cats each year. For more information visit <https://abcbirds.org/threat/cats-and-other-invasives/>.



3) **Reduce risks from lights and windows!** Another important source of mortality is collisions with buildings and windows. Birds can get disoriented by lighted windows at night or confused by reflections during the day. Several cities have now begun to undertake "lights out" programs (for example the Fatal Light Awareness Program (<https://flap.org/>)). Additional information, including things you can do at home to minimize such collisions in your own yard, can be found at <https://abcbirds.org/threat/bird-strikes/>.

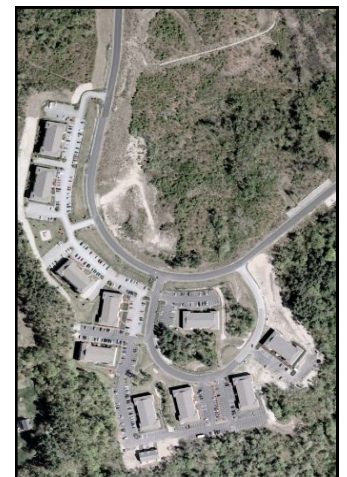
4) **Avoid use of pesticides or products that were grown with pesticides!** DDT is the classic example of a pesticide that had detrimental effects on birds, but its banning does not mean the threat has gone away. A whole new class of insecticides known as neonicotinoids are now found almost everywhere, and there increasing evidence that they too can harm birds. Sometimes the effects are direct in the form of mortality, but pesticides also reduce food supplies for birds that eat insects. You can help minimize these potential threats by buying organic and/or local produce, advocating for accurate agricultural labeling, and not using such chemicals in your own environment. More information is available at: <https://abcbirds.org/threat/pesticides/>.

- 5) **Buy bird-friendly coffee!** Biologists have known for a long time that “shade grown” coffee provides important habitat for birds in the tropics, including species that migrate south from New Hampshire. Such coffee plantations maintain natural tree canopies that more closely resemble an undisturbed tropical forest. In contrast, most intensive coffee production removes the canopy and relies on extensive inputs of pesticides (see above) and fertilizers. The Smithsonian Institution has recently taken the lead in developing a “bird friendly” certification program, information on where to find bird-friendly coffee is at: <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/where-buy-bird-friendly-coffee>



- 6) **Create a bird friendly yard!** Whether you have a tiny backyard or a big one, you can landscape for birds and other wildlife. Plant bushes, trees and other plants that provide food, protection from predators, and resting spots during migration; provide nesting spots in cavities and dense shrubbery, leave leaf litter and brushy corners where birds can feed and hide. The National Wildlife Federation has a certification program and more information at: <https://www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/Certify>. There’s also information at: [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=nrcs143\\_023574](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=nrcs143_023574), and the UNH Cooperative Extension has a sheet on NH’s Native Trees, Shrubs, and Vines with Wildlife Value at: <https://extension.unh.edu/resource/new-hampshire%E2%80%99s-native-trees-shrubs-and-vines-wildlife-value-chart>. As a bonus, native plantings also support pollinators, another group of increasing conservation concern!
- 7) **Manage land for wildlife!** If you own relatively extensive acreage, there are things you can do to enhance its value to birds. This could be through timber harvest, field mowing, or creation of openings depending on the habitats present, the area involved, and your goals for the land. When managing land, it is also increasingly important to consider what’s happening on adjacent lands and those in the surrounding landscape, since birds certainly don’t pay attention to property lines. Advice and guidance on management can be obtained from state or county Cooperative Extension offices (<https://extension.unh.edu/programs/wildlife>).

- 8) **Advocate for Smart Growth!** Every new road and cul-de-sac is a potentially fragmenting feature for New Hampshire’s forests, and risks introducing non-native predators and plants into previously natural areas. At the same time, protected areas need to consider additional ecological concepts such as connectivity and parcel size and shape: a long thin strip of open space along a road is far less useful to wildlife than a circle or rectangle of the same area. New Hampshire Audubon’s Conservation Department has worked with several communities to address habitat needs in local land use planning policies. Regional Planning Commissions also can be a source of assistance.



- 9) **Help conserve bird habitat!** Hand-in-hand with municipal planning is a clear need to set aside habitat in perpetuity. This can involve supporting local land protection efforts, contributing to state or local land trusts, or placing a conservation easement on your own property. As with municipal planning, it is increasingly important to consider the landscape in which you’re operating and think about how your actions contribute to effective conservation on the larger scale, and most land trusts are well-versed in helping with these sorts of decisions.

- 10) **Advocate for strong environmental policy!** While individual actions are great, sometimes we still need a top-down approach to make critical changes happen. Laws like the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act apply everywhere, and yet would not have been possible without strong support from concerned citizens. Make your voice heard! Write, call, or email your representatives at all levels of government and urge them to support strong and sensible policies and regulations. Don’t let long-standing and effective laws be weakened. Such advocacy can allow be applied to businesses, as evidenced by increasing adoption of plastic bans at restaurants and retailers.



Magnolia Warbler © Len Medlock

**For more information on bird conservation in NH, contact**  
NH Audubon, 84 Silk Farm Road, Concord, NH 03301  
(603) 224-9909, [www.nhaidubon.org](http://www.nhaidubon.org)

**To make an online donation in support of bird conservation:**  
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