

The State of the Birds: New Hampshire



Photo © Jason Lambert

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

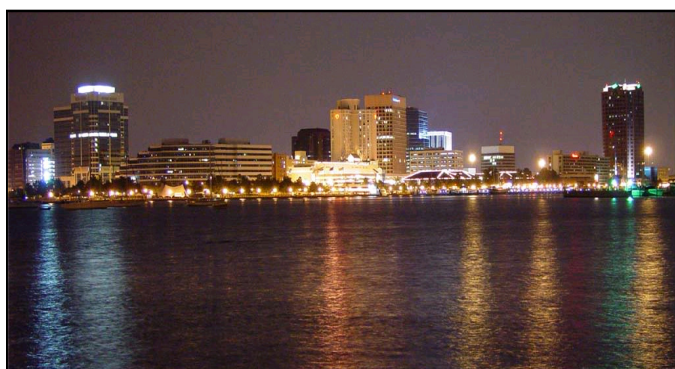
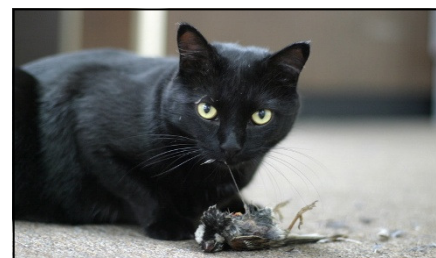
The "State of the New Hampshire's Birds" report outlines a number of conservation strategies that can improve bird habitats and otherwise benefit the New Hampshire's bird populations. Many of these strategies are very broadly defined and tied to strategies in the NH Wildlife Action Plan, and thus are not actions that concerned citizens can implement in their daily lives. See the full report for more details on these strategies and how they relate to different bird habitats.

However, there are numerous things that individuals and communities can do to further the same goal. 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 <http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/index.html>.



- 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 during peak migration seasons, efforts which have the added benefit of reducing energy use. As an example, look at Boston's Lights Out program at <http://www.cityofboston.gov/EnvironmentalAndEnergy/LightsOutBoston.asp> and the FLAP program: http://www.flap.org/flap_home.htm. Additional information, including things you can do at home to minimize such collisions in your own yard, can be found at <http://www.abcbirds.org/conservationissues/threats/collisions.html>.

The "State of New Hampshire's Birds" report was produced by NH Audubon under contract with the NH Fish and Game Department. A full copy of the report, as well as supplementary information, is available at: <http://www.wildnh.com/birds>



Photo © Pamela Hunt

- 4) **Avoid use of pesticides or products that were grown with pesticides!** Although the long-term effects of pesticides – both here and abroad – are not fully known, experience has shown that some are very harmful to birds (DDT is the classic example, but as recently as 1996 thousands of Swainson’s Hawks were killed by the pesticide monocrotophos in Argentina). They 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: <http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/pesticides/index.html>.
- 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, more detail on which can be found at: <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/MigratoryBirds/Coffee/default.cfm>.
- 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: <http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Outdoor-Activities/Garden-for-Wildlife.aspx>. There’s also information at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Feature/backyard/wildhab.html>, and the UNH Cooperative Extension has a sheet on NH’s Native Trees, Shrubs, and Vines with Wildlife Value at: http://extension.unh.edu/resources/resource/427/New_Hampshire's_Native_Trees,_Shrubs,_and_Vines_with_Wildlife_Value.
- 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 (<http://extension.unh.edu/Wildlife/Wildlife.htm>).



- 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) **Support bird research and monitoring!** We still lack basic information about many of New Hampshire’s bird species. For dozens of species, there are not even sufficient data to determine distribution or population trends, while for many declining species, the specific threats are still poorly understood. New or expanded monitoring and research programs are the only way to fill these critical holes in our understanding of these species of interest. In addition to your own participation in citizen science projects (Item #1), you can encourage foundations, donors, and government agencies to fund monitoring and research of all our bird species.

For more information on bird conservation in New Hampshire, contact

NH Audubon
84 Silk Farm Road
Concord, NH 03301

(603) 224-9909
www.nhaudubon.org

or the



NH Fish and Game Department
11 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03301

(603) 271-2461
www.wildnh.com



Support New Hampshire Audubon’s Bird Conservation Work

We need your help and support to continue this valuable work.



☐ I’d like to make a contribution to the NH Conservation Department of:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Phone _____

Email _____

State _____ Zip _____

Payment is by: ☐ Check enclosed. Make check payable to NHA. ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Am. Ex.

Signature _____

Card # _____ Expiration Date _____

Return this form with payment to: New Hampshire Audubon, Membership Department, 84 Silk Farm Road, Concord, NH 03301-8200.