



# Audubon CONNECTICUT

## 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.

Nearly 60% of species that winter in North America have moved northward or inland, with climate playing a likely role in shifts that can exceed hundreds of miles. Changes can be seen among the birds of Connecticut. Though implications for particular species may be benign, these changes suggest that climate change is already having an impact on our ecosystems. Climate change may also be more serious for some species that are not captured by this study and the Christmas Bird Count because they do not winter in our area. These include coastal species and those that are adapted to a high elevation habitats. The long-term environmental disruptions all these changes portend are serious for birds, other wildlife and for people alike.

Visit [www.audubon.org/climatebirds](http://www.audubon.org/climatebirds) to learn more on findings and to join Audubon's campaign to curb global warming and shape a better future for birds and all life on Earth. Global Climate Change is happening now. What happens tomorrow is up to us.



### **NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*)

This duck that depends on open water habitats in the winter has moved 91 miles north. While its winter population in Connecticut has increased 61% in 40 years, it has declined nationally by 62%. This is one of several species of freshwater ducks found in Connecticut that have been able to winter farther north with warmer temperatures.



### **NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*)

This familiar backyard bird has increased on Christmas Bird Counts in Connecticut by over 415% over the past 40 years while it has declined continentally by 22% over the same period. This species was once a rare find in the state, but is now a widespread and common year-round resident.



### **TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*)

These large scavengers have moved nearly 60 miles northward over the last 40 years, while growing in population in Connecticut by over 80,000% over that same period. They are increasingly joined by their close relatives the Black Vulture, a species that is more southerly in its distribution, but is now being found with regularity in Connecticut.



### **AMERICAN ROBIN** (*Turdus migratorius*)

American Robins are generally thought to be a harbinger of spring, but these birds are an increasingly common winter resident in our state. Robins are among those Connecticut species with the greatest northward shift in their center of population on the Christmas Bird Count. This species, which has moved northward over 200 miles in the past 40 years, has increased in numbers by over 3,000% on Christmas Bird Counts.

## Help Connecticut Birds and Habitat in a Shifting Climate



- Support conservation initiatives that protect and restore essential bird habitat. Audubon Connecticut's Important Bird Areas program is building a statewide network of conservation stewards. Volunteer to get involved in your community. Contact Connecticut IBA Coordinator, Chris Field for additional details, [cfield@audubon.org](mailto:cfield@audubon.org)
- Saltmarsh birds are especially at risk from changes caused by global warming and sea level rise. Connecticut hosts a significant populations of the globally vulnerable Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows, among those North American species most threatened by climate change. To join Audubon's efforts to monitor and inventory salt marsh birds, contact Connecticut IBA Coordinator Chris Field for additional info, [cfield@audubon.org](mailto:cfield@audubon.org)
- Become a citizen scientist! By taking part in Audubon's Christmas Bird Count in December, Great Backyard Bird Count in February, or Summer Bird Count in June, you can provide scientists with the data they need to monitor the impacts of global warming and other environmental threats on birds. Go to [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org) for information on how to participate.

## Join the Fight Against Global Warming



- Join Audubon Connecticut's advocacy network to get the latest on issues affecting birds, other wildlife and their habitats – including global warming and adaptation. Sign up online at [AudubonActCT-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AudubonActCT-subscribe@yahoogroups.com), or contact Sandy Breslin, Director of Governmental Affairs for details, [sbreslin@audubon.org](mailto:sbreslin@audubon.org).
- Join National Audubon's activist team and urge our policy-makers to make climate change a top priority by signing our petition at [www.birdsandclimate.org](http://www.birdsandclimate.org).
- Stay informed, write letters to your leaders and voice your support for new approaches 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](http://Audubon.org) for ideas.
- Sign up for CTCleanEnergyOptions. <http://www.ctcleanenergyoptions.com/>