

## 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 population 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 demonstrated a northward or inland movement of their center of abundance, with climate playing a likely role in shifts that in some cases exceed hundreds of miles. Changes can be seen among the birds of New York. Though implications for individual species can appear benign, the long-term environmental disruptions they portend are serious for birds, for other wildlife and people alike.

Visit [www.audubon.org/bird/bacc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/bacc) to learn more about the 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.

## NEW YORK BIRDS SHOW THE SIGNS



### **PINE GROSBEAK** (*Pinicola enucleator*)

The center of abundance of this woodland and feeder bird has moved 148 miles north. While its national population has declined 27% in 40 years, in New York, where it is at the southern part of its range, it has declined 86% over the same time period. In general, woodland and feeder birds show the most northward movement, as they have been able to move farther north into existing forest habitats with the warmer winters. However, as these birds move north, they may be at increased risk from unusually cold winters or more severe storms.



### **EASTERN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia sialis*)

This bird of fields, meadows, and open woodlands is the state bird of New York. Its center of abundance has moved 115 miles north in the past 40 years. Over that same time period, its national population has increased, but its population in New York has increased even faster. Currently its center of winter abundance is south of New York, which may help explain why it is increasing disproportionately here as it moves northward.



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

One of the most common birds in the USA, this species has moved 206 miles north over the past 40 years. In that same time, its population has increased across the nation and even faster in New York. Research has shown this species to be sensitive to snow depth, avoiding areas with deep snow, which may help explain why most of the wintering population of this common bird of suburbs and forests is south of New York but moving northward.



### **RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes carolinus*)

This non-migratory, year-round resident bird has shifted northward 60 miles over the past 40 years, consistent with many other woodland birds that frequent bird feeders. Over that time its population has increased significantly nationwide, but even faster in New York. An abundance of trees should accommodate even more northward movement of this species, but it may be at increased risk from winter storms and unusually cold weather.

## Help New York Birds and Habitat in a Shifting Climate



- Contact your local Audubon chapter or center to learn how you can get involved in conservation projects, attend field trips and programs, and become a volunteer.
- Check out “*Mission: Migration*” – Audubon New York’s educational computer game for kids and parents alike. Learn what birds need as they migrate by visiting [ny.audubon.org](http://ny.audubon.org)
- Learn what you can do to help birds with the Audubon At Home program’s Birds to Help guide. Located on the Audubon at Home section of Audubon’s website, these fact sheets can help you and your family make a difference for birds and wildlife in your own backyard.
- Support conservation initiatives that protect and restore essential bird habitat. Audubon New York’s Important Bird Areas program is building a statewide network of conservation stewards. Volunteer to get involved at an IBA in your community.
- Become a citizen scientist. By taking part in Audubon’s Christmas Bird Count or the Great Backyard Bird Count in February, you can provide scientists with the data they need to monitor the impacts of global warming and other environmental threats to birds. **Only with your help are continental-scale monitoring efforts possible.**

## Join the Fight Against Global Warming



- Join Audubon New York and other conservation advocates for Earth Day Lobby Day in Albany, NY, on May 5<sup>th</sup>. Sign up with our action network at [www.audubonaction.org](http://www.audubonaction.org) to receive alerts and invitations about this and other ways you can make your voice heard on important policy issues.
- Join Audubon’s activist team and urge our policy-makers to make climate change a top priority by signing our petition at [birdsandclimate.org](http://birdsandclimate.org).
- Stay informed, write letters to your federal, state and local elected officials, and voice your support for new approaches that 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, and help our bird species adapt to a changing climate.
- Streamline your own energy profile. There are many things you can do to make a difference. Visit [www.Audubon.org](http://www.Audubon.org) for ideas.