



Audubon ARKANSAS

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 Arkansas. 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 birdsandclimate.audubon.org 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.

ARKANSAS BIRDS SHOW THE SIGNS



NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*)

The familiar “bob-whoit” call is not heard in Arkansas as often as it was just a few decades ago. It has decreased in the state 98% in 40 years, a trend reflected nationally, and moved north 85 miles. This popular gamebird depends on open grassy and shrubby areas. The disappearance of suitable habitat, due to large-scale agriculture, intensive pine-plantation forestry, development, and use of non-native cool season grasses, threatens to restrict this bird's ability to recover and move further north.



NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

This traditionally southern bird has moved nearly 60 miles north due to warming winters and the rising popularity of backyard feeders. While its population in Arkansas has decreased 41% over 40 years, its decline nationally has been far less; a result expected if global warming plays a role in the shift. Feeder birds in general show the most northward movement. However, as these birds move north, they may be at increased risk from unusually cold winters or harsh storms.



HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*)

With a northward shift of nearly 35 miles, this species has become significantly more common in Arkansas over the last 40 years. Its rise and spread north into Arkansas is faster than the national trend. The increase in House Wrens may be a bad sign for the Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*), a species that is losing ground as it competes with House Wrens for nest sites.



GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*)

The symbol of the National Audubon Society has shown a dramatic increase in the state over 40 years. The significant increase in wintering populations in Arkansas is reflected in a nationwide movement of 110 miles north. However, their continued ability to thrive further north may be hampered by the extent of ice. Rapid spread and population growth also puts them in increasing conflict with aquaculture.

Help Arkansas Birds and Habitat in a Shifting Climate



- Private landowners can enroll in federal farm bill and other conservation programs that keep marginal cropland idle and support millions of acres of good bird habitat
- Support conservation initiatives that protect and restore essential bird habitat. Audubon Arkansas's Important Bird Areas program is building a statewide network of conservation stewards. Volunteer to get involved in your community.
- Become a citizen scientist. By taking part in Audubon's Christmas Bird Count in December, 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 on birds

Join the Fight Against Global Warming



- Audubon Arkansas' Policy Department works for the development of water and energy policy that protect birds and all wildlife.
- Say no to the development of new coal-fired power plants that spew green house gases and pollutants such as carbon dioxide and mercury. Say yes to clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar, which create jobs and economic development.
- Join Audubon's activist team and urge our policy-makers to make climate change a top priority by signing our petition at birdsandclimate.org.
- To stay informed on Audubon's general policy work in Arkansas and nationally and learn sign-up for Audubon Action Alerts at audubonaction.org/audubon/home.html.
- Stay informed, write letters to your leaders, 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.
- Streamline your own energy profile. There are many things you can do to make a difference. Visit Audubon.org for ideas.