

Mockingbird population declining in Texas

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The population of the official Texas state bird -- the mockingbird -- is in sharp decline, experts say.

The National Audubon Society released a study showing that mockingbird populations have declined by 18 percent over the past 40 years, The Austin American-Statesman reported Sunday.

Greg Butcher, the study's author, said suburbanization and sprawl have cost the birds a substantial amount of their natural habitat. He suggested Texas homeowners plant berry-producing shrubs in their yards to help bring the bird back.

The study noted 20 other bird species common to the area whose populations are in decline. None, however, are in immediate danger of extinction, the newspaper said.

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