

Climate threatens birds, says new bird report

March 16 2010

Climate changes will have an increasingly disruptive effect on bird species in all habitats, with oceanic and Hawaiian birds in greatest peril, according to a new report on the state of birds released March 11 by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

"The State of the Birds: 2010 Report on Climate Change" follows a comprehensive report issued last year showing that nearly one-third of the nation's 800 [bird species](#) are endangered, threatened or in significant decline.

The report -- a collaboration of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and experts from the nation's leading conservation and educational organizations -- was developed in part by scientists from Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The report is the first nationwide assessment of the vulnerability of nearly 800 bird species to climate change, based on numerous factors.

"For well over a century, migratory birds have faced stresses such as commercial hunting, loss of forests, the use of DDT and other pesticides, a loss of wetlands and other key habitat, the introduction of invasive species and other impacts of human development," Salazar said. "Now they are facing a new threat -- climate change -- that could dramatically alter their habitat and [food supply](#) and push many species toward [extinction](#)."

"Birds are excellent indicators of the health of our environment, and right now they are telling us an important story about climate change,"

added Kenneth Rosenberg, director of conservation science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Key findings from the new report include:

- Oceanic birds are among the most vulnerable species because they don't raise many young each year; they face challenges from a rapidly changing marine ecosystem; and they nest on islands that may be flooded as sea levels rise. All 67 oceanic bird species, such as petrels and albatrosses, are among the most vulnerable birds to climate change.
- Hawaiian birds such as endangered species Puaiohi and 'Akiapōlā'au already face multiple threats and are increasingly challenged by mosquito-borne diseases and [invasive species](#) as climate change alters their native habitats.
- Birds in coastal, arctic/alpine and grassland habitats, as well as those on Caribbean and Pacific Islands show intermediate levels of vulnerability; most birds in aridlands, wetlands and forests show relatively low vulnerability to climate change.

For bird species that are already of conservation concern, such as the golden-cheeked warbler, whooping crane and spectacled eider, the added vulnerability to climate change may hasten declines or prevent recovery. The report identified such common bird species as the American oystercatcher, common nighthawk and northern pintail as species likely to become conservation concern as a result of climate change.

The report offers solutions that illustrate how, by working together, organizations and individuals can have a demonstrable positive impact on birds in the United States. Specifically, the report indicates that the way lands are managed can mitigate [climate change](#) and help [birds](#) adapt to changing conditions. For example, conserving carbon-rich forests and

wetlands and creating incentives to avoid deforestation can reduce emissions and provide invaluable wildlife habitat.

The report is part of the U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative, a collaboration between federal and state wildlife agencies, and scientific and conservation organizations including the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Provided by Cornell University

Citation: Climate threatens birds, says new bird report (2010, March 16) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-03-climate-threatens-birds-bird.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.