

National Audubon report claims two-thirds of North American birds at risk due to climate change

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Like the collective motions of bird flocks, the patterns result from the concerted interactions of many individual particles without a central coordinator. Credit: CC0 Public Domain

A team of researchers working for the National Audubon Society has found evidence that suggests approximately two-thirds of North

American breeding birds are at risk of extinction from climate change over the next century. The group has published the results of their analysis in *Conservation Science and Practice*.

Last month, scientists released evidence of a massive decrease in [bird populations](#) in North America over the past half-century—as much as one-third of all birds (approximately 3 billion) have disappeared since the 1970s—most from [loss of habitat](#), pesticides, collisions with man-made structures and feral housecats. Now, it appears that the future looks even worse for remaining birds, and this time, the culprit is [climate change](#).

Prior research has shown that climate change is going to create environmental impacts around the globe, from rising oceans to loss of forests and growing deserts. It will also create challenges for birds. Springtimes will be warmer, making nests too hot for eggs, many areas will experience drought, there will be more fires that kill wildlife and more destructive storms and floods that knock nests out of trees. To make predictions about how climate change is likely to impact birds over the next century, the researchers used climate models to analyze data on 604 [bird species](#) (from 70 sources) that live in North America.

The researchers report that simulations run from the [climate models](#) showed 389 species to be at risk of extinction by 2100 if the world warms by three degrees—approximately two-thirds of the number of birds now in existence. They also report that the simulations showed 97 percent of birds being impacted by climate change in one way or another. They further report that areas up north will experience the biggest losses—all of the arctic breeding birds will likely disappear if the planet continues to heat at its present rate and almost all of the birds that live in boreal forests.

The researchers acknowledge that there is still a lot of uncertainty about

which birds, if any, will adapt to the changing conditions; thus, it is not clear how close the simulations will be to reality.

More information: www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees

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