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## One-Third of U.S. Bird Species Endangered, Survey Finds

By [CORNELIA DEAN](#)

Habitat destruction, pollution and other problems have left nearly a third of the nation's 800 bird species endangered, threatened or in serious decline, according to a study issued on Thursday.

Described as the most comprehensive survey of American bird life, the report, "[The U.S. State of the Birds.](#)" analyzed changes in the bird population over the last 40 years. "This report should be a call to action," Interior Secretary [Ken Salazar](#) said at a news conference in Washington.

Citing surveys by government agencies, conservation organizations and citizen volunteers, the report said that the population of grassland birds had declined by 40 percent and birds in arid lands by 30 percent. It estimated that 39 percent of bird species that depend on American coastal waters were in decline.

Many forest birds are threatened by urban sprawl, logging, wildfires and "a barrage of exotic forest pests and disease," the study said.

In Hawaii, the home of more than a third of American bird species, the situation is particularly grim, the report said. Most of that state's bird species are in danger.

[Climate change](#) will make things worse, and work is urgently needed to prevent "a global tragedy" of bird loss, the report added.

But there was also an upbeat side to the news conference. The [study](#) found that herons, egrets, ducks and other birds that benefit from wetlands conservation were rebounding. Findings like this "show us that conservation can really work," Mr. Salazar said.

Other speakers agreed. The report's gloomy assessment makes it "a key document," said John Hoskins of the United States North American Bird Conservation Initiative, an umbrella group for public and private efforts. But its data also show that "when agencies, organizations and individual citizens work together to conserve precious resources, some really good things

[nytimes.com/2009/03/.../20bird.html?...](http://nytimes.com/2009/03/.../20bird.html?...)

and individual citizens work together to conserve precious resources, some really good things happen,” Mr. Hoskins said.

The report draws on data collected by the federal [Fish and Wildlife Service](#) and the [United States Geological Survey](#), organizations like the American Bird Conservancy and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and volunteer participants in the Christmas Bird Count of the National Audubon Society.

John Fitzpatrick, the director of the Cornell laboratory, which also oversees citizen bird-counting, said that a wealth of data gathered in such volunteer efforts had helped scientists make major strides in assessing the health of bird populations and in drawing more general conclusions about the environment.

Beyond taking part in counting efforts, the report urged ordinary citizens to assist conservation by drinking shade-grown coffee (coffee-growing in the shade helps preserve the winter habitat of species like warblers), donating unused binoculars for distribution to biologists in the tropics, reducing pesticide use, landscaping with native plants and keeping pet cats indoors.

“Education is urgently needed to make the public aware of the toll of pet cats,” Darin Schroeder of the American Bird Conservancy said at the news conference.

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