

# STATE Of The Birds

## Documenting Changes in Massachusetts' Birdlife



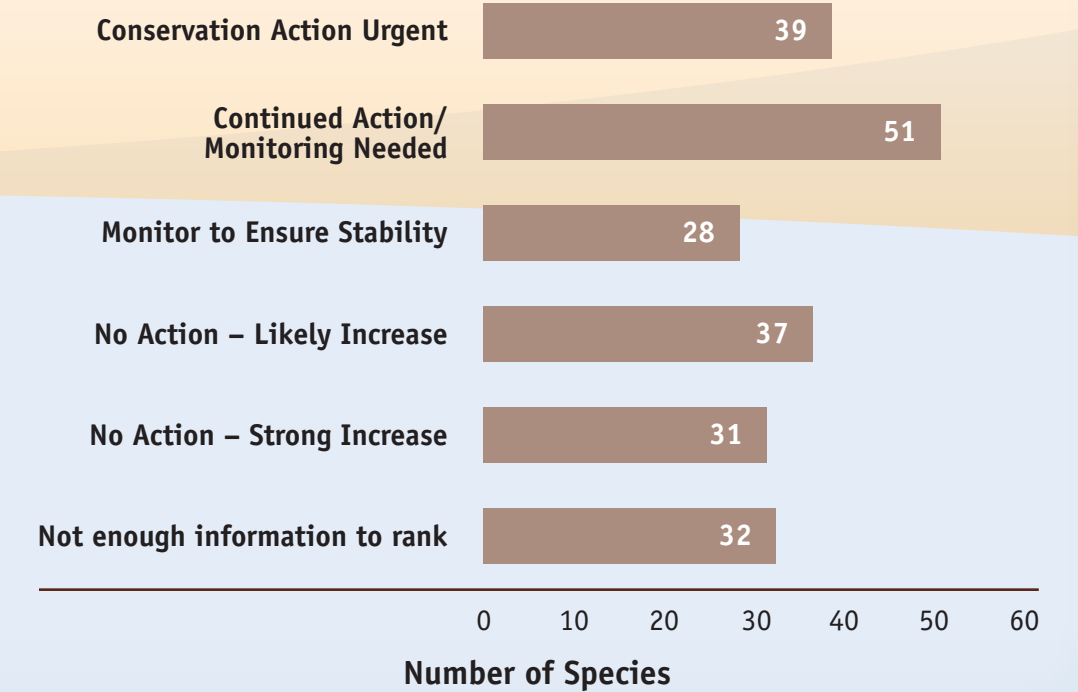
American Kestrel

The birdlife of Massachusetts is exceptionally rich, containing both a great diversity of species and several populations of global significance. Thanks to a long history of bird and habitat conservation and some of the earliest and strongest environmental protection laws in the country, the citizens of the Commonwealth continue to enjoy the reassuring sounds of warblers and thrushes in our forests, masses of waterbirds along our shores, and eagles soaring overhead.

The goal of the State of the Birds report is to create a comprehensive inventory of the status of all of our breeding and wintering bird species, thereby laying the foundation for a re-evaluation of the Commonwealth's bird conservation strategy. The report is based on several science-based surveys and captures the stories of increasing and decreasing birds of the Bay State, as well as making clear just how quickly changes in bird populations can take place. It examines how birds are faring within the various habitats present in the state as well as within groups defined by their behavior (e.g., ground-nesting birds). This poster highlights some of the key findings contained in the report and shows the current patterns of land use in the Commonwealth.

### CONSERVATION STATUS OF OUR BREEDING BIRD SPECIES

Using information from the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas (Mass Audubon), the USGS Breeding Bird Survey, National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, and other species-specific surveys from sources such as MassWildlife, we assessed the conservation status of each of the Commonwealth's breeding birds. Almost 20% (39) of the breeding birds of the state are urgently in need of conservation action, and an additional 23% (51) must continue to benefit from current conservation actions or may need conservation attention in the coming years.



**493** Bird species officially recorded in Massachusetts

**223** Breeding bird species

**183** Wintering bird species

With the return and maturing of our **Forests**, birds that depend on this habitat such as the *Pileated Woodpecker* are becoming more common.

The value of protecting **Wilderness Lakes** and reservoirs is seen in the growth of our state's Common Loon and *Bald Eagle* populations.

**Long-Distance Migratory Birds** such as the *Wilson's Warbler* now have to contend not only with the natural hazards of flying thousands of miles to reach nesting and wintering areas, but also with human-caused hazards such as pollution and high-rise buildings.

Many **Ground-Nesting Birds**, such as the *Eastern Whip-poor-will*, are decreasing, possibly due to the recent increase in mammalian predators.



Far from being the sterile environments many people imagine, **Our Cities** provide abundant food and nesting habitat for *Peregrine Falcons* and many other fascinating birds.

In late summer and fall, some beaches and tidal flats harbor thousands of sandpipers and plovers of many species. Despite significant concentrations, the populations of many of these **Migratory Shorebirds** are decreasing.

The *Eastern Meadowlark* and many other birds of **Agricultural Habitats** (e.g., grasslands and shrublands) are declining sharply.

Many Massachusetts wetlands have been lost through development, perhaps explaining why **Freshwater Marsh** specialists such as the *Pied-billed Grebe*, *American Bittern*, and Sora have become rarer.

Many bird species, such as the Osprey, Wood Duck, and *Eastern Bluebird* owe their dramatic recent increases to the efforts of **Citizen Conservationists**.

**Our Suburbs** are increasingly rich in birdlife, including species such as the *Northern Cardinal* and Tufted Titmouse that have recently arrived from the South.

One of the most alarming trends emerging from long-term surveys is the gradual but steady **Decline of Common Birds** such as the *American Kestrel*, *Northern Flicker*, and even *Blue Jay*.

The striking recovery of the globally rare *Piping Plover* has been accomplished through **Intensive Ecological Management** and strict protection of its habitat, without which it would surely decline again.



### What you can do...

- Learn about birds in your neighborhood ([massaudubon.org/Birds\\_and\\_Birding](http://massaudubon.org/Birds_and_Birding)).
- Support local efforts to protect and create grassland and shrubland habitat.
- Provide bird habitat on your property: landscape using native plants that provide food, shelter, and nesting sites; avoid the use of pesticides; and keep cats indoors.
- Become a member of Mass Audubon and volunteer to assist with habitat management, bird species monitoring, and other conservation projects.
- Go Birding!

For the complete *State of the Birds* report, species-specific information, and additional results visit [www.massaudubon.org/StateoftheBirds](http://www.massaudubon.org/StateoftheBirds)



Image credits: Peregrine Falcon, Northern Cardinal, and Eastern Bluebird, Eduardo del Solar; Mixed flock of shorebirds and Piping Plovers, ©Jim Fenton, jfenton@natureandwings.com; Eastern Meadowlark, John Galluzzo; Blue Jay, Pileated Woodpecker, and Wilson's Warbler, John Harrison; American Bittern, William Lawless; American Kestrel and Bald Eagle, Jerry Liguori; Eastern Whip-poor-will, Sandy Selesky; Map of Massachusetts, James DeNormandie, Mass Audubon.