



## ADVOCACY GUIDE FOR NEW YORK

How to use your voice to help birds in a changing climate



## About the National Audubon Society

Audubon's mission is to protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow. For more than a century, Audubon has built a legacy of conservation success by mobilizing the strength of its network of members, chapters, Audubon centers, state offices, and dedicated professional staff who connect people with nature and empower them to protect it. A potent combination of science, education, and policy expertise merges in efforts ranging from protection and restoration of local habitats to the implementation of policies that safeguard birds, other wildlife, and the resources that sustain us all—in the U.S. and across the Americas.

## About Audubon New York

As a leading state program of the National Audubon Society, Audubon New York (Audubon NY) leads our network of 50,000 members, 27 local Audubon chapters, seven sanctuaries and nature centers, and our thousands of annual visitors, volunteers, and partners throughout the state. Audubon achieves its mission to protect birds and their habitats by connecting our vast and powerful network along the migratory flyways of the Americas through science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation programs.

let's do this! “It's time to give back to  
the birds you love.”





## SECTION 1

# Introduction

## How To Use This Guide

The Audubon Advocacy Guide is a resource for helping you share your passion for birds and convey the need to protect them in a changing climate. As an Audubon advocate, you are joining a community working together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help support more resilient bird populations, making real and lasting change—for birds, for ourselves, and for future generations. These efforts can be local, right here in New York, or helping on a larger scale!

This project isn't just about building a better world for birds; it's about building a better world for us all. To do this, we need a diverse group of Audubon volunteers to create a groundswell of support for birds. This starts with conversations between you and your friends, family, colleagues, community, and even elected officials.

Whether you came to this project as a nature lover, concerned American, or someone who wants to leave a better world for your children and grandchildren, we have activities and actions that will inspire you to make a difference. Whatever actions you're willing to take to protect the birds we all love, this guide is here to help.



This guide offers ways to give back to the birds you love.



## What's in This Guide

In this guide, you will find information on:

- 7 Audubon's Climate Initiative
- 11 Birds impacted in New York
- 15 What you can do to protect birds
- 21 Building healthy, resilient bird populations and communities
- 27 Tips for communicating about birds and climate change
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## Why Audubon is Working on Climate Change

In 2014, we released the Birds and Climate Change Report to examine the impacts of climate change on birds. The severity of the threat—half the regularly occurring North American birds are at risk—convinced us that we have to act today to preserve and protect our beloved birds and their habitats. Most notably, we expect to see a change in their current habitat and therefore a change in their ranges—specifically, the report shows that climate change threatens birds by shifting or shrinking their climatic ranges. Yet actions we take today can preserve and protect birds and their habitats.

It's important to remember you don't have to be an expert to be an advocate. Audubon's team is available to answer the tough questions for you. **As advocates, you are the voice of hope that will inspire other people to help birds survive our changing climate.**



## What You'll Do as an Audubon Ambassador

By being an advocate, you are joining thousands of Audubon members who are helping to drive real action to reduce the emissions causing global warming and protect the places birds need most. It is only through our large, collective voice that we can truly protect birds and solve the challenge of climate change.

We'll ask you to help in three primary ways:

- **Be the messenger:** Many people are interested in birds. When you share your love of birds, whether through your online network or with friends and family you see every day, you're sharing positive information and inspiring solutions that other people can use.
- **Be an advocate:** Take your conversations further. Become a resource for others by hosting presentations, talking to your elected officials, and encouraging your community to take actions to protect birds.
- **Be the solution:** Audubon works to protect birds where they live now and where they will be as their ranges shift. You can join in by encouraging people to create a bird-friendly backyard (and sharing it with others through photographs and social media), volunteering to remove invasive plant species, or improving habitat at an Important Bird Area.



## Online Resources

Audubon's website has a wealth of digital tools and resources to support you as we work to grow this amazing community of people who care about our birds and environment.

For more information about birds and climate change, visit [climate.audubon.org](http://climate.audubon.org) to learn which birds are threatened and how their ranges and habitats will be impacted.

For the latest news and updates on our climate programs, check out [audubon.org/climate](http://audubon.org/climate). To stay up-to-date on New York's climate initiatives and programs, visit [ny.audubon.org](http://ny.audubon.org) and follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

To connect with other Audubon advocates and find more in-depth information on actions you can take to protect birds, head to [works.audubon.org](http://works.audubon.org).







## SECTION 2

# Birds and Climate Change

In 2014, Audubon released a groundbreaking study detailing the impacts of climate change on 588 North American birds. Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report is a comprehensive study that analyzes the shifts in birds' ranges as temperatures rise. The report found that climate change is the greatest threat to our birds, and its effects are already happening—which increases the urgency of our efforts to reduce carbon pollution and protect the places that North American birds need to thrive.

Why are bird ranges so important? Every bird has a set of environmental conditions that enable it to thrive, and climate governs all of these conditions. If it is too hot, too cold, too dry, or too wet, birds cannot thrive. In the last 50 years, more than 60 percent of wintering North American bird species have shifted their winter range northward. Soon, they may have nowhere left to go.



Did you know that only nine species of birds have gone extinct in the past four centuries? Now, because of climate change, 314 are imperiled.





Although temperatures have ebbed and flowed historically, scientists agree average global temperatures are rising—and at a rapid rate.

Research shows that even if we act swiftly to limit carbon pollution, temperatures will continue to rise between 2.7 and 8.6 degrees F through 2100. Those amounts might not seem drastic, but even small changes can have significant impacts on birds, who are finely attuned to a set of climatic conditions.

**Audubon’s research focuses on which birds are most sensitive to climate change and where those changes are most likely to occur. With that understanding, Audubon can *target conservation efforts* to ensure birds have the best chance at survival in the future.**

### By the Numbers

**588**

North American bird species are included in the current study.

**314**

species are predicted to lose more than 50 percent of their current climatic range by 2080.

**188**

climate-threatened birds (of the 314 species) face losing more than half of their current climatic range by 2080.

**126**

climate-endangered birds are projected to lose more than 50 percent of their current climatic range by 2050.

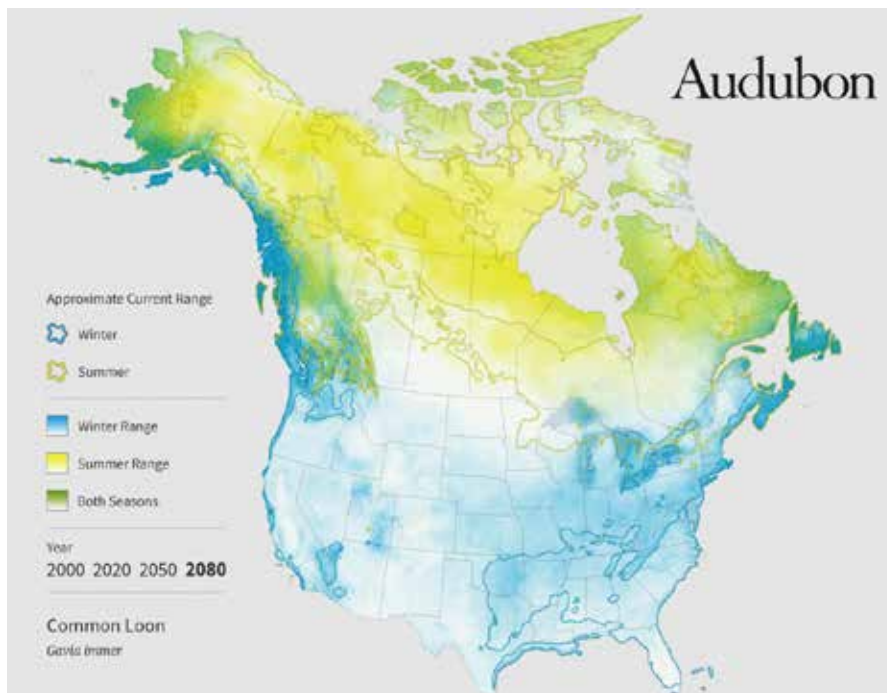
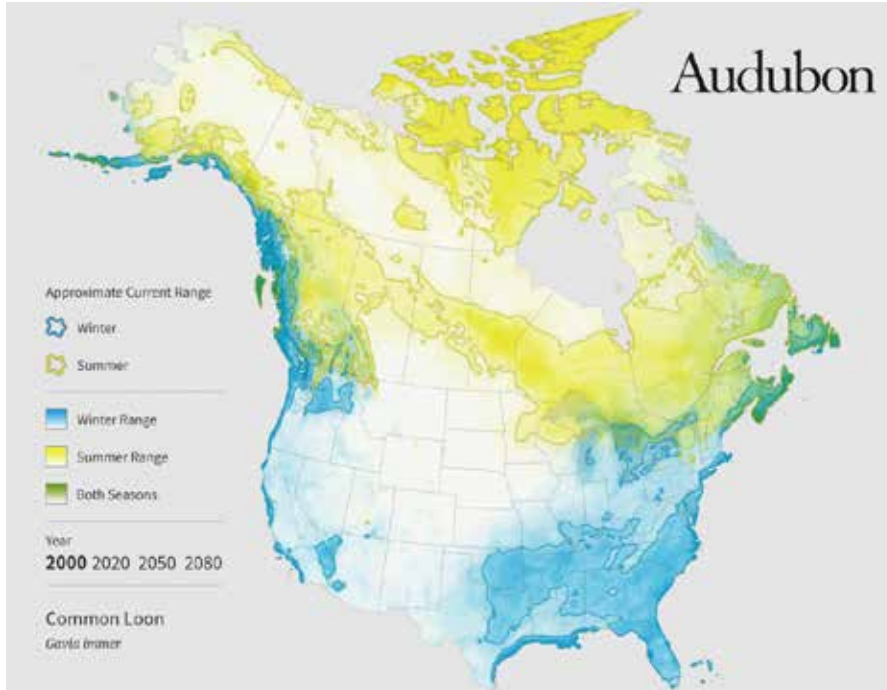
Audubon’s Birds and Climate Change Report is only the first step in Audubon’s effort to protect birds and combat the effects of climate change. Audubon’s scientists are already incorporating additional data to generate more robust projections and provide a better understanding of the impact of global warming on birds.

This level of understanding would not have been possible without the help of people like you. Citizen science data are at the core of our climate study. Data from Audubon’s Christmas Bird Count, the North American Breeding Bird Survey, and the U.S. Geological Survey defined the ranges where bird species now occur. Audubon scientists paired that bird data with climate data from leading U.S. and Canadian climatologists, including the U.S. National Climatic Data Center. Then, using internationally recognized greenhouse gas emissions scenarios, scientists mapped where each bird’s climatic range may be found in the future as the climate changes. These maps serve as a guide to how each bird’s current range could expand, contract, or shift across three future time periods.



## Species Spotlight: Common Loon

This study is our roadmap for future conservation efforts. Details about methodology and individual species maps can be found online at [climate.audubon.org](https://climate.audubon.org).









## SECTION 3

# Birds in New York Affected by Climate Change

As a leading state program of the National Audubon Society, Audubon New York (Audubon NY) oversees our network of 50,000 members, 27 local Audubon chapters, seven sanctuaries and nature centers, and our thousands of annual visitors, volunteers, and partners throughout the state. Audubon achieves its mission to protect birds and their habitats by connecting our vast and powerful network along the migratory flyways of the Americas through science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation programs.

Species rely on finding suitable environmental conditions during all phases of their annual cycles. Disruptions can have devastating effects. Now, more than ever, we have a responsibility to be the voice of the birds and aggressively combat the urgent threat of climate change head-on by protecting the places that birds need to thrive and survive and by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We encourage people to learn about and protect birds and their habitats through our conservation strategies: [Working Lands](#), [Bird-Friendly Communities](#), [Coasts](#), [Water](#), and [Climate](#). Learn more about us at [ny.audubon.org](http://ny.audubon.org).



Our Birds and Climate Change Report  
would not have been possible  
without the help of people like you.





Based on Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report, below is a sample of the more than 100 bird species at risk in New York due to shrinking and shifting ranges.



## American Oystercatcher

### Fun fact

True to its name, the American Oystercatcher specializes in feeding on bivalves (oysters, clams, and mussels) and uses its brightly colored bill to catch them.

Climate models forecast that oystercatchers may become more common along Long Island in the winter, signaling that the health of our beaches and salt marshes will be increasingly important to their future survival.

### How Audubon helps

Every year, Audubon NY volunteers go to the beaches of New York and talk to visitors about our incredible but fragile coastal habitats and shorebirds. The effort is part of our Be A Good Egg Program, which raises awareness about the need to provide safe places for shorebirds to feed, rest, and raise their families. Visit: [ny.audubon.org/landing/be-good-egg](http://ny.audubon.org/landing/be-good-egg)



## Baltimore Oriole

### Fun fact

One of the most brilliantly colored songbirds in the east, this bird is flaming orange and black, sharing the heraldic colors of the coat of arms of 17th-century Lord Baltimore.

This bird is typically not found in the Adirondacks, but climate will likely change that. With increased temperatures, Baltimore Orioles will search for suitable breeding habitat in higher elevations.

### How Audubon helps

Create resilient landscapes for birds by transforming your lawn and backyard with native plants. By doing so, you'll provide resident and migratory birds with the essential insects, fruit, seeds, and shelter they need year-round, while also helping them adapt and survive in a changing climate. To see which plants are best, check our online database: [audubon.org/native-plants](http://audubon.org/native-plants).

Population change percentages are from the U.S. Geological Survey's Breeding Bird Surveys, 1966 to 2014.

For detailed maps of each bird's predicted loss of summer or winter range, visit [climate.audubon.org/geographical-search/new-york](http://climate.audubon.org/geographical-search/new-york). And for a list of Frequently Asked Questions about the report, visit [climate.audubon.org/article/audubon-report-glance](http://climate.audubon.org/article/audubon-report-glance).



## White-Breasted Nuthatch

### Fun fact

White-breasted Nuthatches typically build their nests in natural tree cavities or abandoned woodpecker holes.

Audubon's climate model forecasts a 78 percent loss of current summer range by 2080, with substantial range shift northward.

### How Audubon helps

Through Climate Watch, our newest citizen science engagement program, volunteers can collect real-time data to test Audubon's predictions and enhance future bird and climate science modeling. Help make climate change more local, immediate, and compelling by documenting bluebird and nuthatch populations in January or June surveys. Visit: [audubon.org/news/climate-watch-pilot-program](https://audubon.org/news/climate-watch-pilot-program)



## Common Loon

### Fun fact

The Common Loon is one of the most recognizable waterbirds in North America, with its dark red eyes and enchanting call. A breeder in freshwater wetlands in upstate New York, and the northern U.S. and Canada, it spends its winters along the Atlantic coast, including Long Island.

By 2080, Audubon science forecasts a loss of over half its current summer range and 75 percent of its current winter range. While the loon may be able to shift northward, New York will likely lose these summer residents by the century's end.

### How Audubon helps

To give the loon a chance, we need to protect water quality, reduce acid rain, and limit its exposure to lead and mercury. Advocating for clean energy and climate policies and further protecting Important Bird Areas are pivotal to sustain this threatened bird. Visit: [ny.audubon.org/conservation/important-bird-areas](https://ny.audubon.org/conservation/important-bird-areas)







## SECTION 4

# What You Can Do

There are many different actions you can take to advocate for birds, whether at home, on your computer, or even better, in person. Your actions will help build healthy, climate-resilient bird populations and mobilize a groundswell of support for birds. You don't have to take all of these steps, but can choose which ones work for you and even bring along a family member or friend!



Where birds thrive, people prosper.



## Have Conversations

Remember that conversations don't just happen over coffee (or a good glass of wine). They happen all the time! Think of all the opportunities you have to strike up a conversation about birds, climate change, and how people can get involved—during family dinner, at a party, after church, on the sidelines at your kid's game, at book club, or at your neighborhood block party.



## Share Birds and Climate News Online

Post articles on your social media profiles about climate legislation, the benefits of growing native plants and the new birds you've seen because of it, share photos of your volunteer efforts to clean up a local shoreline, or post updates on the impact of climate change on birds. This non-confrontational method is a nice way to educate your friends about the relationship between birds and climate change.



## Contribute to Local Birding Forums, Neighborhood Blogs, or Group Email Lists

Post relevant news and events and chime in when birds or climate change come up. Speak up and be proud of your passion for birds and your choice to help them survive global warming.



## Give a Presentation

If you enjoy public speaking, consider presenting on birds and climate change to your garden club, bird club, neighborhood association, local library, or civic club. It could be a few slides in a larger presentation on another topic, or the entire presentation. These groups are always eager for guest speakers on a variety of topics. In addition, you can invite them to help you at a local volunteer opportunity!





## Do Outreach at a Local Festival

Does your bird or garden group have a table at a local festival or fair? Consider adding materials about climate-threatened birds or put on your “You are what hope looks like to a bird; ask me why” button. Chat people up, let them know easy ways to help birds now, and encourage them to sign up with their email address for more information.



## Organize an Event

If you enjoy organizing events, bird-themed events like a neighborhood Birds & Beer evening, Important Bird Area or local park cleanups, community planting events, art shows, or community festivals are all great ways to raise awareness and bring new people into the Audubon action network.









## Write a Letter to the Editor

Write a brief letter to the editor of your local newspaper about why it's important to you to protect climate-threatened birds, or write a letter in support of proposed policies such as increasing funding for habitat conservation, energy efficiency, and expanding responsibly sited clean energy. See Section 7 of this guide for examples.



## Contact Elected Officials

Email your legislator or set up a meeting with your city official encouraging them to support solutions that address climate change and protect birds. See Section 7 of this guide for examples.

Invite elected officials to Audubon chapter and other bird events, and invite them to tour local parks and Important Bird Areas with an expert birder. Getting them out of the office to see the beauty of the natural areas that need protection is rewarding for everyone!



## Plug into our Local Programming

- Sign up for Audubon New York's emails to stay on top of all our programs and free events! Find signup information at [ny.audubon.org](https://ny.audubon.org).
- Like Audubon New York on Facebook (@AudubonNewYork) and follow us on Twitter (@AudubonNY) or Instagram (@audubon\_ny).
- Volunteers are an essential part of our Audubon centers' success. The perfect volunteer job may be waiting for you at the Constitution Marsh Audubon Center & Sanctuary (Garrison), Montezuma Audubon Center (Savannah), Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center (Oyster Bay), Prospect Park Audubon Center (Brooklyn), RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary (Catskill), Buttercup Farm Sanctuary (Stanfordville), or Rheinstrom Hill Audubon Sanctuary & Center (Hillsdale). Visit: [ny.audubon.org/about-us/centers-sanctuaries-chapters](https://ny.audubon.org/about-us/centers-sanctuaries-chapters).
- Join a chapter near you! Local Audubon chapters enable Audubon members and others to meet and share an appreciation of their common interests, creating a culture of conservation in their community through education and advocacy focusing on the conservation and restoration of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Visit: [ny.audubon.org/about-us/centers-sanctuaries-chapters](https://ny.audubon.org/about-us/centers-sanctuaries-chapters)
- Watch for Audubon New York Action Alerts and invitations from Audubon staff to meet with elected officials. Visit our website to sign up today: [ny.audubon.org](https://ny.audubon.org)
- Give presentations on how to build bird-friendly communities, and the impact of climate change on birds.







## SECTION 5

# Building Healthy, Resilient Bird Populations and Communities

There are many ways you can help birds thrive and survive in your community, and we hope you'll invite your friends and family to join you! Your efforts will do double-duty: You will help birds and inspire more people to act, demonstrating the strong support for birds and climate-friendly and environmentally sustainable programs and policies that benefit local communities.



New York is our home, and  
we must act to preserve and protect  
the Empire State we know and love.



## Conservation Actions



**Plants for Birds** is a nationwide Audubon initiative mobilizing people to grow 1 million native plants for birds in their yards and communities. The goal of this program is to create valuable habitat for birds and to help them adapt to the effects of a changing climate.

- Check out native plants that work for your area at [audubon.org/plantsforbirds](https://audubon.org/plantsforbirds).
- Plant native plants at home, at the kids' schools, at churches, in your neighborhood park or local green space, or with community partners like Habitat for Humanity. Learn more at [audubon.org/plantsforbirds](https://audubon.org/plantsforbirds) and be sure to put up an Audubon sign!
- Work with your city or local government to pass a resolution or ordinance encouraging the use of native plants, providing shelter and food for our feathered friends.



**Become a Coastal Volunteer** and be the voice for birds in our critically important coastal habitats on Long Island and Lake Ontario. Our work in these areas is aimed at protecting coastal birds and habitats from ongoing and emerging threats related to human disturbance, predators, loss of habitat, and climate change, and building local community support for bird conservation. To learn more, visit: [ny.audubon.org/conservation/seas-shores](https://ny.audubon.org/conservation/seas-shores)

- Attend local marine resource meetings, city council meetings, etc.
- Write letters to elected officials or join staff to meet with decision makers.
- Leverage media and social media to educate the public about nesting shorebirds, their critical habitat along our coasts, and how to share the shore with birds.
- Volunteer to be a beach steward with Audubon's Be a Good Egg Program.
- Participate in surveying migrating shorebirds to better document key stopover habitat.
- Participate in community outreach at appropriate festivals and events.
- Target outreach to conventional and unconventional audiences; form relationships with community stakeholders.



Help us save **Important Bird Areas** (IBAs). The Important Bird Area program—part of an international effort in 130 countries—identifies, monitors, and protects habitats critical to the success of bird populations. Across New York, more than 130 IBAs have been recognized as significant places for birds to survive and thrive.

New York's IBAs are identified through a rigorous scientific process by leading avian experts. Each recognized IBA meets one of three criteria: a place where birds congregate in large numbers at one time; a place for species that are at-risk; or a place that supports groups of birds representing certain habitats such as forests, wetlands, grasslands, and shrublands.

Through the Adopt an IBA initiative, a local group (such as an Audubon chapter, local land trust, bird club, school group, etc.) adopts an IBA and energizes others to get involved at the site in an environmentally sensitive way. Involvement can include organizing an education program, monitoring effort, clean-up day, or habitat improvement project. Adopting an IBA can help conserve, restore, and protect the site and raise awareness of the importance of the IBA at a local level. To learn more, visit: [ny.audubon.org/conservation/adopt-iba](https://ny.audubon.org/conservation/adopt-iba)

Have your family and friends sign up to receive Audubon Action Alerts ([action.audubon.org](https://action.audubon.org)) to hear about important ways you can make your voice heard with decision-makers.





## Citizen Science Opportunities

Counting and documenting where birds are now and how they are responding to changes in climate and habitat is essential to protecting them. You can help Audubon and partner scientists track birds through several opportunities outlined below. You can find more information on these activities online and look out for upcoming emails about these programs.

- Become a Be a Good Egg volunteer and educate and engage beach visitors to change their behaviors in ways that reduce threats to nesting and resting shorebirds.
- Monitor migrating shorebirds during the spring and fall migrations to better document numbers of birds using important stopover sites.
- Join the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (December annually).
- Participate in Hummingbirds at Home. ([hummingbirdsathome.org](http://hummingbirdsathome.org))
- Sign up for Climate Watch, a bird count in January and June annually.
- Join the Great Backyard Bird Count (in February annually).
- Download Audubon's award-winning bird guide and have 821 North American birds at your fingertips. ([audubon.org/apps](http://audubon.org/apps))
- Submit your bird sightings through eBird anytime and anywhere.
- Chapters across New York are engaged in fun and important citizen science and other conservation efforts, including, but not limited to the opportunities mentioned above. Contact your local chapter and find out what projects they have going on. [ny.audubon.org/about-us/centers-sanctuaries-chapters](http://ny.audubon.org/about-us/centers-sanctuaries-chapters)



## Support Audubon New York's Policy Priorities

Watch for email Action Alerts and share with others. Let your decision makers know that these issues are important to you because you love birds.

- Ensure funding of the New York State Environmental Protection fund, to protect and develop trail and local parks projects, outdoor recreation opportunities, and working farms and forests essential to New York's wildlife, outdoor economy, quality of life, and health.
- Protect and strengthen New York's clean energy policies, including programs that support the Clean Energy Standard—New York's goal to rely on 50 percent clean energy by 2030.
- Promote responsibly sited alternative energy sources such as wind power, transmission infrastructure, and biofuel developments in New York State.
- Advocate for the New York Congressional Delegation to support and call for passage of comprehensive legislation to combat climate change, reduce dependency on fossil fuels, reduce carbon dioxide emissions, and provide resources to protect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats from a changing climate.
- Promote emission reductions through carbon sequestration from forest protection and management.
- Promote climate-resilient landscapes and green and ecological infrastructure.
- Ensure that future versions of New York's Open Space Conservation Plan incorporate Audubon's bird science/stronghold data and prioritize habitat protection strategies to help sustain species in an uncertain climate future.
- Prevent the unnecessary increase of fossil fuel transportation and export through our towns, cities, and coastal ports.
- Safeguard coastline and estuary health against new and ongoing threats such as pesticides, coal, oil transport, coastal erosion, etc.
- Advocate that local governments and citizens reduce their carbon footprints and dependence on non-renewable fossil fuels by utilizing many existing conservation methods, including recycling, mass transit, local food sources, green building codes, renewable energy sources, and energy efficient products.
- Encourage local communities to Adopt the Climate Smart Communities Pledge, through NYSDEC's Climate Smart Communities Program.
- Take the Climate Pledge at [ny.audubon.org/climatepledge](https://ny.audubon.org/climatepledge).







## SECTION 6

# Tips for Communicating About Birds and Climate Change

Now that we've identified different ways you can advocate for birds, in this section you'll find helpful tips on how to communicate with fellow bird lovers about birds and climate change. This includes how to start a conversation and a few key phrases to avoid.

Let's get started.



We all have a duty to protect and be good stewards of the Earth. It's time to give back to the birds we love.



## Let's Talk C.L.I.M.A.T.E.

How do you start a conversation about birds and climate change, and what do you say next? Follow the C.L.I.M.A.T.E. method for a successful conversation.

### C

#### Come Together

People digest new information on climate change through lenses of personal experience, knowledge, and social context. We believe climate change is a bird issue that transcends political stances, values, and other differences. Successful conversations begin when you identify and appeal to each person's values. Put yourself in his/her shoes to figure out how to make a connection based on your mutual love of birds.

- Ask someone what he or she loves about birds.
- Ask them to describe a positive or hopeful moment they've experienced with birds or nature.
- Learn how and why others do what they do.
- Try to understand their beliefs and values. Include everyone.

### L

#### Listen

Start every conversation by listening to the people with whom you're speaking. Allow them to give their opinions on birds and climate change. Listen to the questions they ask. Then make answering their questions and concerns the first priority, so they'll be open to hearing what you have to say.

### I

#### Introduce

Emphasize that you care about taking action on climate because you love birds and want to see them thrive. This will set the tone for a positive conversation. You are not trying to stir up controversy; you're simply relating information about something you love and feel passionately about. Share stories from your experiences to help frame why you value birds in your life and why we should all work together to ensure their survival.

### M

#### Make It Real

Using personal, local stories of effects you have seen due to climate change is one of the best ways to make climate change real. Maybe you are seeing fewer of the birds you love during migration season, or maybe you are seeing the birds you love stay in your backyard for longer than normal because seasonality is changing. Sharing what motivated you to advocate on birds' behalf can help cultivate a feeling of trust between you and someone else.

You can also use this opportunity to highlight the science behind Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report. Use Audubon as a trusted source of information to relay the years of research that inform your concern.

Remember, this program is a positive, proactive effort to engage more people who love birds to help them adapt to a changing climate.

**A****Address Concerns**

People have been inundated with climate change messages focused on despair and gloom for years. Focus on solutions addressing the climate change issues and explain how anyone can help birds thrive. When you focus on solution-oriented messages, you avoid making your audience feel emotionally numb to the conversation.

Here are some examples of positive messaging:

- Wood Thrushes, hummingbirds, and many other species benefit from native plants. By adding just a few native trees or shrubs to your yard, you're providing food for baby birds and cutting carbon emissions at the same time. Your contribution is simple, but your personal impact is two-fold!

**T****Take Action**

Congratulations! You've had a successful conversation, and you've compelled someone new to share his or her cares and concerns. You're almost to the finish line, and they're ready to take action. The first step is simple: We want everyone to create a demand for solutions locally, from growing native plants in their yard to asking community officials what they are doing to protect birds. We need a groundswell of support to this threat, and we need people to know that solutions exist.

**E****Exit with Grace**

Your conversation is coming to a close. What can you do now? Offer more resources. You don't have to be an expert on climate science or its impact on birds. Your role is to inspire others to educate themselves on this crucial issue. Thank them for taking the time to speak with you and remind them you're there for further discussions.

**Rinse and Repeat**

Repeat this method with every concern raised. Make sure to start at the listening stage to ensure you're answering their specific questions and allowing your audience to feel their side is being heard. If someone shares a doubtful anecdote or story of their own, really listen to that fear and uncertainty and try to understand why they've formed that opinion on climate change or on birds.

We've included message tips in our FAQ section starting on page 43. These will help you relate the science in a way that is accurate and concise.

Try sharing information about a local climate-threatened bird, like the Bald Eagle. This symbol of our nation experienced widespread population declines in the 20th century, largely as a result of pesticides. Their populations have been recovering thanks to the ban on DDT and successful reintroduction programs that began in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. However, according to Audubon's climate model, this fish-eating bird is projected to have only 26 percent of its current summer climate range remaining by 2080, and will likely not be as common in New York unless we act now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



## Key Phrases and Terms to Avoid When Talking About Climate Change

When talking to bird lovers about climate change, the conversation should always focus on protecting birds and preserving their habitats. Mentioning the specific number of birds threatened is helpful and important. However, balance future predictions with reference to the present impact.

Phrases to Use	Terms to Avoid	Explanation
Birds are already experiencing the effects.	Scientists tell us...	Personal stories are nearly always more effective in conversations about climate change. Share the personal impacts of climate change you are seeing in your yard and community.
Small changes in temperatures are hurting birds.	Temperatures have climbed 1.4 degrees over the past 100 years.	This seemingly small change in temperature is hard to conceptualize.
Bird habitats are shifting and shrinking.	By 2080, bird ranges will decrease by xx percent.	Some may question specific predictions far into the future, but will be more persuaded by impacts that are happening now.
We have a shared responsibility to protect birds / Birds are in danger, and we have a moral duty to protect them.	The Common Loon could lose 75% of its current winter range by 2080.	Similarly, a broader, hopeful message will be more resonant than a specific prediction.



## Motivating Bird Lovers to Act

When motivating fellow bird lovers to act, the focus should stay in the present and talk about the impact on birds today. It's critical to emphasize the local impacts that you seen in your own yard, and how the birds you see every day are threatened by climate change.

Phrases to Use	Terms to Avoid	Explanation
Preserve and protect the (state/city/ community) I love	Extreme impacts / results are horrifying	Positive, hopeful messages will resonate more than doom and gloom messaging.
Good stewards of all creation	Humans are solely to blame for climate change.	Some may disagree with the exact amount of climate change caused by humans, but the vast majority of Audubon members agree humans are partly, if not mostly, to blame.
A healthy and thriving planet for our children and grandchildren / future generations	If we don't act, the Earth will be unable to support life as we know it.	Doom and gloom messages paralyze members' motivation and can cause skepticism.

## Communicating with Skeptics

In conversations about birds and climate change with skeptics, it's important not to dwell on the degree to which humans are causing climate change and instead emphasize the importance of improving the environment. Additionally, Audubon is a trusted source. Rather than start a detailed discussion of the science, emphasize what Audubon research has found about birds and their habitats.

Phrases to Use	Terms to Avoid	Explanation
No matter the amount of human impact, we should preserve and protect our environment.	Humans alone are causing climate change.	There is a strong sense among climate skeptics that natural cycles are the cause of climate change. Focus on the fact that even if our contribution is little, it is too much. We should all do our part to protect the Earth.





## Additional Tips for Communicating About Birds and Climate Change

*Based on message and engagement testing by Audubon's Climate Initiative*

Climate change threatens more than 300 species of birds in North America and thousands more worldwide. To tackle this threat, Audubon's network is taking action through conservation, science, public engagement, and grassroots advocacy. We believe, and have confirmed through talking with our members, that taking action on climate change is not a partisan issue. People from all across the political spectrum, all across the country and beyond need to come together to protect the birds we love and the habitats they depend on.





**Here are quick highlights from Audubon’s research about how to communicate effectively and inclusively about the issue of climate change.**

- **Make it about birds:** Climate change can seem like an overwhelmingly complex and abstract issue. But we don’t need to tell the whole story of climate change with elaborate temperature graphs or atmospheric data. Tell people that climate change affects beloved species, like the Bald Eagle, Wood Thrush, or the Eastern Whip-poor-will, and tap into their love for these birds. Put birds front and center in the text and photos you use when talking about this issue.
- **Make it local and personal:** Climate change isn’t a faraway problem—its effects are happening right now in your backyard. Tell the story through local birds that are climate-threatened. For example, in New York, you can tell people about the American Oystercatcher; in Minnesota, talk about the Common Loon; or in Maryland, talk about the Baltimore Oriole.
- **Make it hopeful:** Positive messages, such as protecting the birds we love for future generations, tend to resonate better than focusing on doom and gloom. You can tell people, “You are what hope looks like to a bird.” The ideas of responsibility or moral duty also resonate well with many people.
- **Tell people what they can do to help:** Offer simple, concrete actions like growing native plants in your yard, emailing elected officials about renewable energy, or talking to friends and family about climate change. Many Audubon supporters we’ve contacted are ready and willing to take action on this issue—keeping in mind that some people might prefer to sign an online petition, while others might prefer to build a nest box for a climate-threatened bird.
- **Most people don’t need all the scientific details:** Many people don’t need to know all the details of Audubon’s climate science to care about the issue and get involved. Again, know your audience: When talking to Christmas Bird Count veterans, you may want to talk about exact percentages of range loss by the year 2080. When talking to other audiences, you can say things like, “Climate change threatens more than 100 bird species in the Empire State, and their ranges are likely to shift and shrink in the coming decades.” People can find more details from Audubon’s Birds and Climate Change Report at [climate.audubon.org](https://climate.audubon.org).
- **No need to agree exactly about the causes of warming:** Many Audubon members we’ve talked with who identify as conservative or independent were less concerned with discussing exactly how much of the changing climate is caused by human activity. What matters most is that birds we all care about are at risk, and we can take action to help them.
- **No need for extremes:** It’s often better to avoid extreme language, such as “severely” or “disastrous,” in describing the climate threat to birds. While the problem is serious and we need to communicate this, we’ve found that not everyone responds well to dire adjectives and adverbs.
- **Switch it up:** Feel free to use variations like “our changing climate” or “a warming world” along with “climate change” and “global warming.”





## SECTION 7

# Taking the Extra Step

Contacting your elected officials or speaking out publicly for action on climate are two of the most significant steps you can take to make a difference for birds. When you speak out, you create a demand for change in your community and this growing demand will have a significant impact. To help, we have provided samples below to get you started. This includes a call script for speaking with legislators and their offices, a sample op-ed and letter to the editor to submit to your local paper or news website, and sample social media posts.



Change happens one conversation at a time.



**Sample call script for calls to legislator offices:**

Hello (x legislator or staffer), I'm one of your constituents.

I'm calling to urge you to support clean energy solutions (or insert specific legislation).

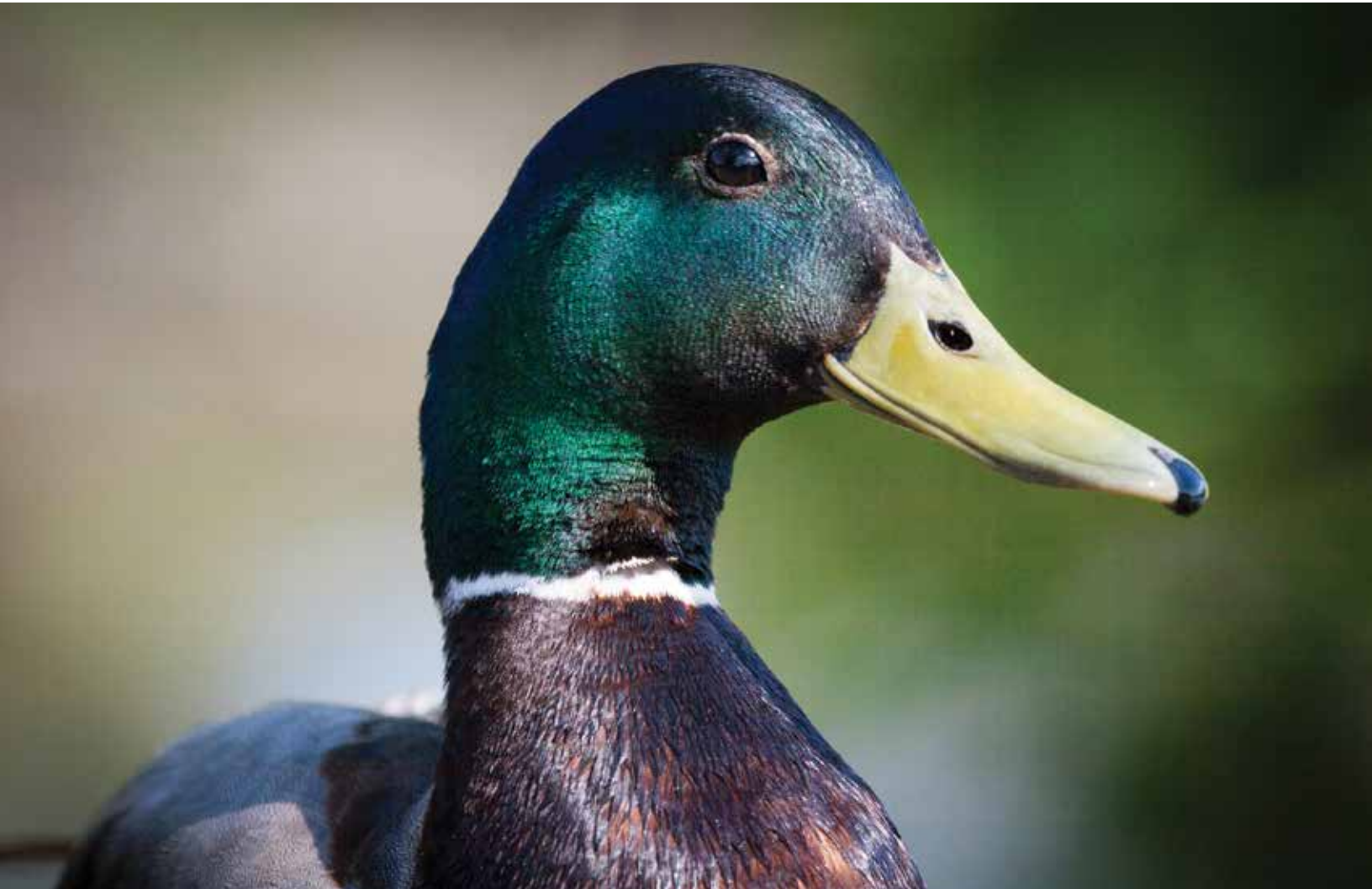
I'm a member of the National Audubon Society and we are calling on our elected leaders to take action on climate change to protect birds and people alike.

It is clear our climate is changing, and we need our elected leaders to take action to address it.

Passing (policy x/clean energy solutions) is critically important to me.

I want our state to be a leader on clean energy solutions and our economy to benefit by being diversified.

Thank you for your time and consideration.







## Sample Op-ed

**Note:** Op-eds (short for “opposite the editorial page”) offer a chance to express your point of view on an issue relevant to your community. They appear in a newspaper’s or website’s opinion section along with editorials by the newspaper’s editors. You can find instructions for submitting your op-ed on the opinion page of the paper, online (typically in the “opinion” section of the paper’s site), or by calling the newspaper and asking for the opinion editor or desk. Usually, op-eds are between 500 and 800 words, but check with your paper for any special requirements.

### Example text:

As a conservationist and advocate for our state’s wildlife, I have seen firsthand the impacts of climate change in New York. Our summers are getting warmer by the year, and [insert story about personal impacts seen]. It is clear the Earth is getting warmer, and it’s also clear that there are steps we all can take to preserve and protect our planet and the creatures that inhabit it.

The National Audubon Society, an organization I am a member of that works to protect birds and their habitats, spent several years studying the impact of climate change on birds. They found that 314 North American birds could face extinction if global warming continues at its current pace. The good news is that it’s not too late to change course, and we all can take actions that will reduce the amount of emissions in our air and help protect our environment.

One of the easiest actions we all can take is to make our yards bird-friendly using native plants. Not only will this provide food and shelter for wildlife, it will also help lessen water usage in our state.

It is also critical that our state legislators support common-sense environmental legislation. This includes continuing to prioritize renewable energy in New York. Our state’s clean energy standard requires that 50 percent of New York’s electricity come from renewable energy sources such as solar and wind by 2030, with a progressive phase-in schedule starting in 2017. By focusing on low carbon energy sources, the Clean Energy Standard will bring investment, economic development, and jobs to New York, while reducing air pollution and carbon emissions, the main cause of climate change.

We should also do all that we can to develop solar energy in New York, another way to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and help birds. New Yorkers can install solar panels on their roof or subscribe to community solar plants and receive credits on their power bill. Our state legislators should do all that they can to continue to increase the availability of solar power in our state.

Lastly, we should look at other ways to reduce the amount of carbon emissions, including strengthening the state’s cap and trade program and expanding it beyond power utilities to include the transportation sector. This is a proven method to reduce emissions while ensuring our economy continues to grow by balancing the tax on emissions with a tax cut in other areas, like the sales tax.

The futures of birds, other wildlife, and of people in a warming world are intertwined. When birds and wildlife thrive, we all thrive.



## Sample Letter to the Editor

**Note:** Letters to the editor are a chance for you to contribute to community conversation in your local newspaper. You can write in response to a specific article (if so, reference the article date and headline in your submission), or you can offer a new way of looking at an issue or idea. You can find instructions for submitting your letter on the opinion page of the paper, online (typically in the “opinion” section of the paper’s site), or by calling the newspaper and asking for the opinion editor or desk. Usually, letters to the editor should be no longer than 250 words.

### Example text:

As a conservationist and advocate for our state’s wildlife, I have seen firsthand the impacts of climate change in New York. It is clear the Earth is getting warmer, with extreme weather becoming ever more present, and it’s also clear that there are steps we can take to protect our planet and our wildlife.

The National Audubon Society, an organization I’m a member of that works to protect birds and their habitats, studied the impact of climate change on North American birds and found that 314 birds could face extinction if global warming continues at its current pace. The good news is that it’s not too late, and we all can take actions to reduce carbon emissions and protect our environment.

As more birds alter their ranges to cope with a warming climate, availability of native plants becomes even more critical. One of the easiest actions we can take to help birds now and into the future is to make our yards bird-friendly using native plants. This helps birds by providing needed food, shelter, and habitat, and it also helps lessen water usage. Additionally, switching off non-essential indoor and outdoor lighting helps reduce household carbon footprints and electric bills, while cutting down on light pollution that can disorient birds.

Our state legislators can also take action now by passing policies that reduce emissions and conserve important bird habitat. While New York State has been on the cutting edge of efforts to address climate change, the state remains extremely vulnerable to its impacts, such as hurricanes and sea-level rise. Our state needs to do more to combat this threat by aggressively developing renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency. These efforts, coupled with increased protection and enhancement of important bird areas and other essential habitats, will help preserve healthy wildlife populations now and into the future.



### Social media posts

One of the easiest ways you can share information and take an action to protect birds from climate change is to periodically share posts from Audubon's Facebook page. Below are a few examples of how you can share Audubon's material. But the most effective posts will come from your own voice, so follow Audubon's social media pages and share the climate content that speaks to you.

#### Examples:

- This beautiful Willet needs our help to adapt to a changing climate. Join me to support Audubon New York's and the National Audubon Society's work to protect bird habitats across our country. (share Audubon or Audubon New York post of climate-threatened bird)
- Native plants are a beautiful way to support wildlife and save on your water bill. Check out this full listing of native plants for your area from the National Audubon Society.
- I love birds and want to do all that I can to protect birds and people alike. This bird migration season, it's important to understand the impact of climate change on North American birds. (share the Birds and Climate Change Report link, [climate.audubon.org](https://climate.audubon.org))







## SECTION 8

# FAQs

Climate change and its effects on our birds are complex issues. It's okay if you don't have the answer to every question someone asks. To assist you, we've provided a list of common questions you may encounter.

## Answering Climate Science Concerns

Many people don't talk about climate change because they're worried they don't know enough climate science to answer tough questions on why it's happening.

The good news? We're focused on what birds need in our changing climate, not on its causes or history. So when someone asks about climate science concerns, you can have a simple answer ready:



“We may not agree on why climate change is happening or how much humans are to blame, but birds are going to have a hard time adapting no matter the cause.”





### **How are birds and climate connected?**

- Birds, like people and all living things, can only live within certain ranges of temperature, precipitation, and seasonal change.
- If it's too hot, too cold, too wet, or too dry, birds can't survive, just like a person can't live in Antarctica without sufficient equipment and supplies. Even a small change in temperature can have a big impact on birds.

### **Won't birds just shift where they breed and rest in winter?**

- Climate conditions also affect birds' food supplies, habitats, predators, and competitors.
- As the climate changes, birds may lose the ability to survive in a place altogether. They may lose food supplies or habitat and be overwhelmed by their new predators.

### **Why does Audubon now say climate change is the biggest threat to birds when habitat fragmentation due to development was the biggest threat before?**

- Habitat fragmentation and loss is still one of the biggest threats to many bird species. Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report shows that its effects will amplify as global temperatures rise.
- As birds move to find suitable climates, the specialized habitats they need in their extended or new areas may not be there due to development.
- We must work to protect the habitats we know are important now and learn which ones may be important to birds in the future.

### **Why is Audubon putting so much effort into climate change?**

- During the last four centuries, only nine North American birds have gone extinct.
- Audubon's new report shows 314 species could face severe declines or extinction by 2080. That's half of the bird species that regularly occur in North America.
- If we work together, we can reduce the impact on birds.

[illegible]



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**Row 3:** Man speaking, Hugh Simmons; Black-throated Blue Warbler, Will Stuart

**Bottom row:** Willet, Jeff Nadler

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