



Audubon Science

BIRDS AND AGRICULTURE



STEVE MASLOWSKI/SEWMS



DAVE MENKE/USFWS

Wildlife on agricultural land

The largest use for private lands throughout the United States is agriculture. The agricultural community manages cropland, pastureland and rangeland on 930 million acres, more than 40 percent of the total US land area. These privately owned “working lands” are a major component of the American landscape. Land-use and management decisions made by farmers and ranchers have a direct impact on environmental quality and the well being of American wildlife. Audubon aims to improve habitat on working lands via its Birds and Agriculture program.

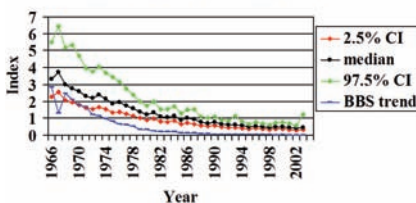
Citizen Scientists and others have tracked dramatic declines since the 1950s in populations of several bird species on agricultural landscapes. For example, over the past 35 years, Henslow’s Sparrow has declined by 96%, Short-eared Owl by 80%, Loggerhead Shrike by 77% and Northern Bobwhite by 68%. Wildlife biologists attribute some of these declines to changes in agricultural and land use practices prompted by shifts in federal agricultural policy. Fortunately agricultural activities may also be modified in practical ways to restore those same populations.

“The Birds and Agriculture Program will focus upon increasing the agricultural community’s awareness of how it can support bird populations and habitats as it produces food and fiber.”

Tess Present, National Audubon Society

Rusty Blackbird

Composite Index, counts 66-103, all birds
(core range - includes BCRs where Area Importance >1)



PROMOTING A CULTURE OF CONSERVATION BY CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE

AUDUBON SCIENCE PROGRAMS >> IBAS >> WATCHLIST >> BIRDS & AGRICULTURE >> AUDUBON AT HOME >> CITIZEN SCIENCE >> COASTAL BIRD CONSERVATION >> SEABIRD RESTORATION >> INTERNATIONAL

GOALS

- Establish the science of “birds as indicators” of the environmental health of agricultural lands.
- Document the impact of wildlife-friendly conservation farming practices on bird populations.
- Identify and advocate agricultural management practices that will support sustainable bird populations.

FUTURE

- Influence just how agriculture can influence and maintain the populations and diversity of wildlife.
- Engage a broad cross-section of the agricultural and conservation communities.
- Identify agricultural production practices that will support self-sustaining populations of birds.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Offer your time and skills.
- Make a donation.

Vision

The objectives of Audubon’s Birds and Agriculture Program include:

- To explore the scientific basis for using “birds as indicators” of environmental health on working lands.
- On working lands, document the impact of agricultural production systems and conservation practices on bird populations.
- To identify agricultural management practices that will support sustainable bird populations and integrate them into practical production systems.
- To work with the agricultural community to adopt agricultural management practices and production systems that support sustainable bird populations.
- To build public awareness of how birds can be barometers of ecosystem health.

New production technologies and conservation-oriented, federal farm programs will increase opportunities for farmers to adopt production practices that support sustainable populations of birds and other wildlife. In addition, recent legislation is fostering opportunities for organizations, such as National Audubon, to create conservation partnerships with federal agencies and agricultural entities.

To maintain bird populations and wildlife diversity on agricultural landscapes, Audubon has initiated its new Birds and Agriculture Program in which we will work with the agricultural community to identify and implement production systems that conserve wildlife habitats on working lands.

How

Our Birds and Agriculture Program will engage a broad cross-section of the agricultural and conservation communities. First, it will catalyze creation of new knowledge about the impacts of agricultural production practices on bird populations. Second, it will demonstrate how agricultural production systems and conservation programs can be integrated to make working lands more hospitable to birds and, finally, the Birds and Agriculture Program will focus upon increasing the agricultural community’s awareness of how it can support bird populations and habitats as it produces food and fiber.

