

# THE STATE OF THE BIRDS 2011



*America's public lands and waters- our forests, rivers, oceans, national parks, monuments, and wilderness areas – are vital to birds. More than 1000 species, many of which are declining due to numerous environmental challenges, rely on our public lands and waters for nesting, wintering and migratory stopover habitat in the United States and its territories.*

Nearly one-third of U.S. lands and all of our oceans are publicly owned, in 6,000 State Park units, 1,600 Marine Protected Areas, 550 National Wildlife Refuges, 150 National Forests, 394 National Park units, more than 245 million acres in the National System of Public Lands (BLM), 30 million acres of Department of Defense lands, and 3.5 million square miles of ocean.

- **Aridlands**

Public lands are very important for the conservation of aridland species; more than half of U.S. aridlands are publicly owned yet many aridland birds continue to decline. Public lands are critically important for species such as Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Sage Sparrow, and Le Conte's Thrasher, with over 75% of their U.S. distribution on public lands.

- **Oceans and Coasts**

All U.S. marine waters are publicly owned and are home to 86 ocean bird species and 173 coastal species. Declining seabird and shorebird populations indicate changes or stress in these ecosystems and in some populations the effects are severe. Publicly owned islands support more than half of the entire global nesting population of 16 seabird species. The entire global populations of Saltmarsh and Seaside sparrows are dependent on healthy U.S. coastal saltmarshes.

- **Forests**

Forests are critical to the long-term health of bird populations, and public lands are often the largest blocks of unfragmented forest in many regions. Public forests are crucial for the recovery of endangered species, such as the Kirtland's Warbler which has 97 percent of its U.S. distribution on public lands.

- **Arctic and Alpine**

Public lands support 86 percent of arctic and alpine bird distribution -- higher than for birds dependent on any other habitat. Ninety percent of boreal forest, alpine, and arctic breeding bird species in Alaska rely on public lands for habitat, including 34 breeding shorebird species of high conservation concern.

- **Islands**

Public lands are essential to save species that are in danger of extinction in Hawaii, Puerto Rico and other U.S. islands. Among declining Hawaiian forest birds on Kauai, such as Puaiohi and Anianiau, about 78 percent of them rely on state land and four endangered species in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands are entirely dependent on federal lands.

- **Wetlands**

All of the nation's 40 waterfowl species and many other wetland-associated bird species depend on

the network of National Wildlife Refuges and other publicly protected wetlands during all or part of their life cycle. Protection and successful management of public wetlands has resulted in remarkable recovery of waterfowl and water bird populations.

– **Grasslands**

Grassland birds are among our nation’s fastest declining species, yet only a small amount – 13 percent -- of grassland is publicly owned and an even smaller percentage is managed primarily for conservation. Most of these public grasslands are open to energy development, grazing, and other activities that may degrade habitat for birds.

***The 2011 Report provides the nation’s first assessment of the distribution of birds on public lands***

Advanced computing techniques were used to analyze bird distribution data from the eBird citizen-science project and the USGS Gap Analysis Program’s Protected Areas Database of the U.S. (PAD-US version 1.1), to determine the percentage of each species’ distribution on U.S. public lands. Species restricted to a single primary habitat, as defined in the 2009 State of the Birds report, were the focus of this year’s report.

***Sound management of our public lands is essential to adequately protect birds and other wildlife – as well as preserve many of our nation’s most spectacular landscapes for future generations. There is encouraging evidence that targeted conservation efforts are already making a difference:***

Proven conservation successes, such as our nation’s tremendous investment in protection of wetlands, demonstrate tremendous promise for the future of birds if management efforts can be amplified in all habitats.

Effective management of habitats and birds on our public lands and waters is essential to prevent the extinction of entire suites of island species, to buffer forest and aridland species from urban development and agriculture, to provide vital resources for severely declining ocean birds.

Public agencies face the challenge of balancing our nation’s needs for resource extraction, energy development, recreation, and other land uses with the urgent need to ensure the conservation of birds and other wildlife in all habitats.

***The state of our birds is a measurable indicator of how well we are doing as stewards of our environment, and the signal is clear. Greater bird conservation efforts are needed to realize the vision of a nation sustained economically, biologically and spiritually by abundant natural resources and spectacular wildlife in perpetuity.***

[www.stateofthebirds.org](http://www.stateofthebirds.org)

