

COMMON BIRDS IN DECLINE

A State of the Birds Report Summer 2007

Many of our most common and beloved birds are experiencing precipitous population declines. Analyzing forty years of bird population data collected by citizen scientists for Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, combined, for the first time, with Breeding Bird Survey data from the US Geological Survey, Audubon has identified our nation's most vulnerable common birds. Additional analysis focused on state level trends. Some mirror the national picture, while others reveal local and regional differences. The birds below are among those suffering the most serious population declines in Connecticut. Along with their national *Common Birds in Decline* listmates, they showcase the need for vigilance in protecting local habitats and the health of our environment. Working together, we can make a difference. Visit <http://stateofthebirds.audubon.org/CBID> for the national findings.

CONNECTICUT'S VULNERABLE COMMON BIRDS

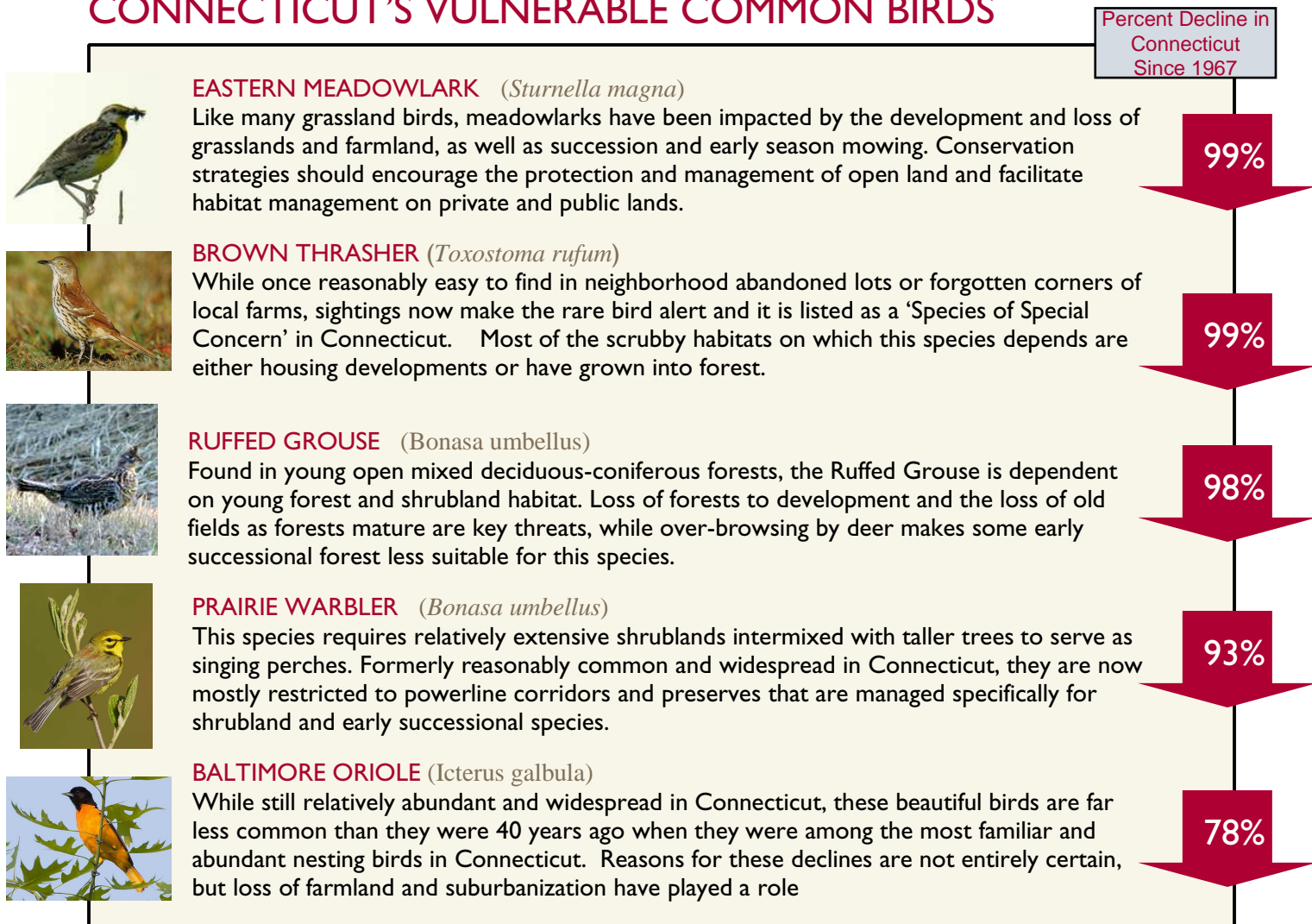
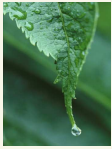


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CONNECTICUT HABITATS AT RISK

Connecticut's forests, fields, wetlands, lakes, rivers and the shores of Long Island Sound host an impressive diversity of birds, with over 400 species recorded within our borders. These birds are attracted to Connecticut because of the rich variety of habitats found in the state, from the mixed evergreen/deciduous forests of the Northwest Highlands to the open farmlands of the Connecticut River Watershed and tidal marshes and beaches of Long Island Sound. However, Connecticut's critical bird habitats face a number of threats. Forest habitat is being degraded from fragmentation and parcelization; rising sea levels jeopardize tidal marsh and beach strand habitats; and Connecticut lacks a mix of trees and shrubs of various ages, and as forests mature, birds like the Ruffed Grouse and Prairie Warbler are declining because of the lack of shrub-scrub habitats. Meanwhile, populations of grassland birds like the Eastern Meadowlark and Grasshopper Sparrow have declined because of development of open grasslands and their succession to forest, as well as early-season mowing and conversion to row crops.



WHAT AUDUBON CONNECTICUT IS DOING

Audubon Connecticut is working with the Connecticut DEP and other partners to inventory key grassland bird nesting areas and developing Important Bird Area (IBA) conservation plans at 13 of our 26 IBAs. We provide assistance to landowners to manage habitats for the benefit of birds and other wildlife.

Audubon helped secure funding for Connecticut's National Wildlife Refuges to protect key habitats in the CT River Watershed and Long Island Sound. Our centers and sanctuaries serve as models for habitat management, not only providing significant habitat for birds, but also teaching tools for how to best help species of conservation concern. Our naturalists educate thousands of school children annually in an effort to inspire the land stewards and conservation leaders of tomorrow.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Connecticut residents can help keep common birds common in a variety of ways.

- Practice 'Audubon at Home' principles in your yard; reduce pesticide use and provide native plantings to support birds and forage insects as an alternative to lawns.
- Support smart growth planning and open space funding to help identify and protect key habitat. Since forests are potent carbon storage banks, protecting open space can also help reduce the state's carbon footprint and reduce our contribution to climate change. Additionally, the more we sprawl, the more we have to drive. Development converts land from a carbon sink to a carbon source.
- Get involved in local planning commissions to ensure sustainable growth with wildlife in mind at the hometown level.
- Buy shade-grown coffee.
- Help track bird population trends and identify key habitats through bird monitoring projects, including Christmas Bird Count, Great Backyard Bird Count, Summer Bird Count and eBird. The more we know the more effective we can be.
- Volunteer at a local IBA.
- Join and volunteer for your local Audubon Chapter
- Sign up for Audubon Connecticut's Advocacy listserv.
- Buy a wildlife license plate or participate in the state Endangered Species Income Tax Check-off Program.
- Support funding for our National Wildlife Refuges, state parks and forests and DEP Wildlife Division.
- Reduce your energy use by installing CFL light bulbs and purchasing energy efficient appliances.
- Sign up for CTCleanEnergyOptions. <http://www.ctcleanenergyoptions.com/>
- Reduce light pollution and save energy by installing efficient full cut-off lighting fixtures for your outside lighting needs and motion sensing lights in lieu of lights that are always on.
- Support mass transit initiatives.
- Forest landowners: Work with Audubon to implement bird friendly forest management.
- Landowners with open fields: Delay mowing fields until after July 15th each year.
- Maintain old fields and forest edges in early-successional habitat.