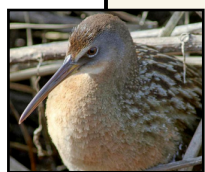


COMMON BIRDS IN DECLINE

*A State of the Birds Report
Summer 2007*

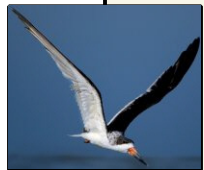
Many of our most common and beloved birds are experiencing precipitous population declines. Analyzing forty years of bird population data collected by citizen scientists for Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, combined, for the first time, with Breeding Bird Survey data from the U.S. Geological Survey, Audubon has identified our nation's most vulnerable common birds. Additional analyses focused on state level trends. Some mirror the national picture, while others reveal local and regional differences. The birds below are suffering serious population declines in Florida. Along with their national *Common Birds in Decline* list mates, 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://www.audubon.org> for the national findings.

FLORIDA'S VULNERABLE COMMON BIRDS



CLAPPER RAIL (*Rallus longirostris*)

Dependent on saltmarsh habitat throughout the state, this secretive bird's decline has mirrored the decline in quantity and quality of our coastal wetlands. The potential for sea level rise associated with climate change has particular implications for Clapper Rails and other birds living in tidally influenced habitats. (photo by Bill Stripling)



BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*)

This striking black and white seabird lays its eggs in shallow scrapes on Florida's beaches. Unfortunately, many beaches are so heavily visited by beachgoers that adults are repeatedly flushed from their nests, leaving chicks and eggs exposed to extremes of temperature and predators. For lack of undisturbed beaches to nest upon, this bird's numbers are dwindling. (photo by RJ Wiley)



AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*)

Our smallest falcon, this tiny bird of prey is a common winter sight in the interior of Florida, perched on telephone wires and other vantages, scoping for prey. In the breeding season, north Central Florida's pineywoods host a dwindling population, by many accounts the result of habitat loss— particularly the availability of dead pines in whose cavities the birds nest.



NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*)

Many Florida species, including this game bird, cannot thrive without habitats shaped by frequent fire. Historically, these began with lightning strikes. Today, land managers use more easily controlled prescribed fire. By returning fire to Florida's sandhills and dry prairies for Bobwhite, many other species are benefiting too. (photo by Ashok Khosla)



AMERICAN BITTERN (*Botaurus lentiginosus*)

This secretive bird of freshwater marsh is tied to the fate of Florida's wetlands. Wetland loss as well as degradation due to pollutants and invasive exotic plants threaten this bird's persistence. A common bird of the winter Everglades, it is a symbol for the important restoration of this world-class ecosystem as well Florida's other freshwater marshes. (photo by Gary Zahm)

Percent Decline
Since 1967
* Indicates % based on CBC

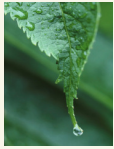
81%*

73%

60%*

96%

53%*



FLORIDA HABITATS AT RISK

Florida hosts more than 500 recorded species, including breeding birds, wintering birds, as well as those who use Florida as a vital migratory flyway enroute between their own breeding and wintering grounds. Spanning both temperate and sub-tropical climates and with large tracts of wildlands still remaining, Florida's habitats are vital to many of this hemisphere's birds which spend some part of their life history in our state.

However, threats to these habitats are substantial. Historic drainage projects have changed the very face of South Florida, resulting in the current push for restoration of Florida's unique Everglades. Excessive nutrients and invasive exotic plants threaten the function of remaining wetlands; well-drained uplands like Florida scrub, sandhills and dry prairies vie with human development; and protected areas including our beaches now face a new challenge: balancing the demand for human recreational use with the threat of disturbance to some of our state's most sensitive species of wildlife.



WHAT AUDUBON OF FLORIDA IS DOING

Floridians care deeply about birds and their habitats. Audubon of Florida is working with individuals across the state to monitor bird populations and ensure a future Florida with healthy habitats for wildlife and people. In addition to our continuing role as a leader in Everglades Restoration, Audubon of Florida engages in policy decisions that will decide the fate of Florida's birds:

1. Championing public land acquisition and good habitat management
2. Taking an active role in growth management and transportation planning decisions
3. Advocating for healthy wetlands and sound water policy
4. Meeting the challenge of climate change with leadership on energy issues
5. Helping find solutions to challenges facing wildlife.



WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER

It is not too late to stop the decline of these familiar birds, and in the process, protect the quality of life for everyone and everything that lives here in Florida. Specifically, we need to protect the wild places that make Florida special, by investing in a successor program to the state's wildly successful land acquisition program, Florida Forever. We need to employ wise water use policies including alternative water supplies, to ensure the sustainability of our communities and abundant water for wildlife. Finally, we need to invest in smart growth strategies to curb urban sprawl and plan communities in harmony with landscape-level ecosystems.

Join the Florida Conservation Network, Audubon's free electronic advocacy center, and receive emails with news on these Florida conservation issues and action alerts that make it easy to communicate with your elected officials on conservation issues important to you.

Visit www.audubonaction.org/florida to subscribe.

Find an Audubon chapter near you to join likeminded people in making a difference in your local community.

Find a local chapter by visiting:

www.audubonofflorida.org/who_chapters.html

Support Audubon of Florida

The mission of Audubon of Florida and National Audubon is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife for the for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. We could use your help. Please make a donation today by visiting

http://Audubonofflorida.org/help_donate.html