



Working together for birds and people

Our Vision

Birds are beautiful, inspirational and international. Birds are excellent flagships and vital environmental indicators.

By focusing on birds, and the sites and habitats on which they depend, the BirdLife Partnership is working to improve the quality of life for birds, for other wildlife (biodiversity), and for people.

BirdLife's aims are to:

- prevent the extinction of any bird species
- maintain and where possible improve the conservation status of all bird species
- conserve and where appropriate improve and enlarge sites and habitats important for birds
- help, through birds, to conserve biodiversity and to improve the quality of people's lives
- integrate bird conservation into sustaining people's livelihoods.

Why Conserve Birds?

Birds are part of biodiversity of immense value

The combined value of 17 different ecosystem services - such as pollination and water catchment - is estimated between US\$16 and 54 trillion per year, around twice the entire world's Gross National Product. These services are not traded in markets and carry no price tags to alert society to changes in their supply or to deterioration of the ecosystems which generate them.

Biodiversity's genetic library accounts for about half of the annual increases in crop productivity and is also key to our capacity to respond to climate change, diseases and crop pests.

The annual world fisheries catch is worth more than US\$50 billion and is a major source of animal protein. This is a resource that must be managed wisely.

A biodiverse environment is an invaluable source of new pharmaceuticals and other useful products. Of the 150 commonest prescription drugs used in the USA, 118 are based on compounds derived from natural sources.

About half of all plant species, including man food-producing crops, are pollinated by animals. In New Zealand the decline of native honeyeater species has led to declines in the native plants that rely upon them for pollination. In parts of the USA bee populations are now so depleted because of the modern agricultural practices that mobile beehives are brought in to pollinate crops. This service is estimated to cost billions of dollars per year.

Societies value birds for economic, cultural, ethical and spiritual reasons

The world's commonest bird is the domestic chicken whose wild ancestors, the junglefowls of Asia, were domesticated around 5,000 years ago. The chicken's meat and eggs are an important source of protein for many people.

In parts of Africa a special relationship between birds and local tribesmen has developed. Honeyguides lead the tribesmen to the site of an active bees-nest. After the tribesman has opened the nest to obtain the honeycomb inside, a small piece is left as a reward for the bird. Over the centuries birds have inspired artists, and bird images are frequently used to adorn everyday objects like money and postage stamps.

Ever increasing numbers of people belong to bird societies. In the UK, more than one million people have joined the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) - more than the membership of the three largest UK political parties combined, and the number is continuing to rise. In New Zealand, 40,000 people are members of Forest and Bird (BirdLife in New Zealand) and in Malta, the membership of BirdLife Malta stands at more than 3,000, from a total population of 378,000.

The birdwatching industry is a growing economic force

Penguin Parade at Phillip Island Nature Park in Victoria is Australia's third largest tourist destination, after the Great Barrier Reef and Ayer's Rock. In 1995, 1,000 local jobs were dependent on the tourist trade to the park which attracted more than half a million visitors who spent an estimated US\$63 million.

Every year 6,000-8,000 people visit the nature reserve of Cousin Island managed by Nature Seychelles. This was once a loss-making coconut plantation, but tourism revenue now sustains the reserve (an internationally important site for seabirds and three globally threatened species) and the local community.

In South Africa, the annual expenditure by birdwatchers is around US\$12-27 million, with the Boulders Bay Penguin colony alone worth around US\$2.4 million.

In 1991, the birdwatching industry was worth US\$5.2 billion in the USA and around 191,000 jobs were dependent upon it. Between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, birdwatching in the USA showed a 155% growth in numbers.

Conserving birds clearly has great economic benefits.

Birds are indicators of the state of the environment.

Studying birds tells us about the habitats on which we all depend. The dramatic decline in Eurasian Skylark numbers in western Europe is indicative of the relentless intensification of agricultural practices and the non-sustainability of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy.

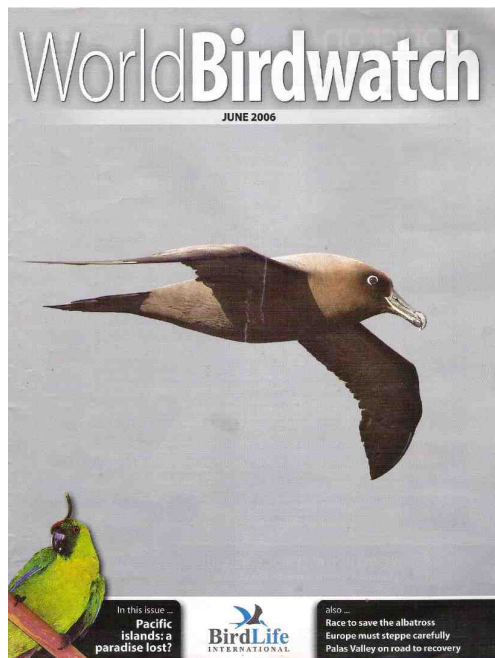
In Costa Rica, lowland forest birds are extending their ranges up mountain slopes, apparently because the high-altitude cloud-forests are drying out as a result of global warming.

Common Whitethroat numbers in Europe fell sharply in the late 1960s. The cause was traced to the desertification of their wintering grounds in sub-Saharan Africa, a problem exacerbated as a result of overgrazing by livestock.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a huge drop in the numbers of Peregrines and other birds of prey raptors in Europe and the USA was linked to the build up of DDT in the food chain, traces of which were increasingly being found in people. Could population crashes of raptors in Asia and elsewhere be indicative of a similar

poisoning of the environment?

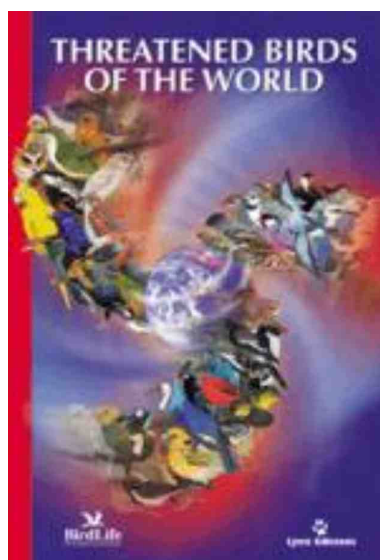
In general, places that are rich in bird species are also rich for other forms of biodiversity. Birds can be used as good indicators of these important areas.



World Birdwatch magazine

World Birdwatch is the quarterly magazine of BirdLife International and is full of articles written by leading experts, bringing you exciting and informed insights into bird conservation projects straight from the field. Stunning photographs by leading wildlife photographers capture the vivid beauty of some of the world's rarest birds and the spectacular places where they live. The most up-to-date news about bird conservation is also featured.

World Birdwatch has been specially commended by the BBC Wildlife Magazine Awards. Issues are published in March, June, September and December.

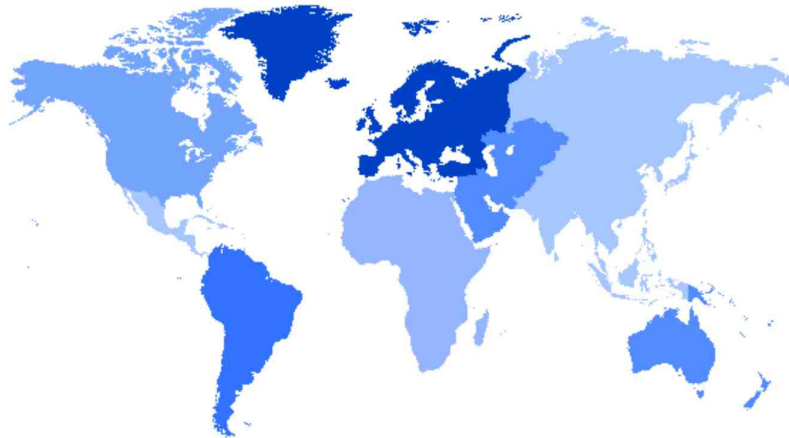


Threatened Birds of the World

"an inspiration" - New Scientist

Birding with a purpose...

...collecting data for the conservation of birds worldwide



...our vision

Our vision is to create a network of Internet systems that provides a platform for the collection, storage and retrieval of bird observations worldwide.



Developed as a global 'family' of databases, each country has its own system linked to the map portal at www.worldbirds.org. This portal allows you to choose a country and submit your bird observations, so making a valuable contribution to bird conservation on a local, national and international scale.

Broadly accessible and with a strong community structure, this global initiative, brought to you by BirdLife International, the RSPB and Audubon, will establish a vast source of bird and environmental information generated by general birdwatchers and professionals alike.

Over time, more countries will be brought on-line as BirdLife partners implement new systems, leading to better coverage. Some of these databases will be developed independently, but many will be based on a core system, developed with the intention of bringing on-line as many countries as possible quickly and with minimal expense.



Caribbean Birds is now available on-line to capture bird observations recorded throughout the Caribbean. This system aims to collect data from both local observers and visiting tourists, with an emphasis on empowering citizen scientists and

community monitoring groups. It will also collect data for conservation work and provide a strong focus for birders and birding groups.

Caribbean Birds is part of the Worldbirds global programme - a joint initiative brought to you by BirdLife International, the RSPB and Audubon, linking together existing and new Internet systems to collect and report on bird populations and movements in different countries around the world.

This new initiative enables users to store and manage their own observations, extract reports and view, print or download maps. Log on to www.worldbirds.org/caribbean and register your personal details and explore different locations; find out what birds have been seen and when/where they were recorded. As well as contributing your own observations, you will be able to view other people's records, which may influence your next birding trip. Use the checklists to keep track of your sightings.

We would like to invite all individuals interested in birds to support **Caribbean Birds** by getting involved and submitting their records. This Internet database will provide valuable information on bird species at Important Bird Areas (IBAs). More broadly, data collected through all Worldbirds systems will contribute significantly to common bird monitoring, through tracking changes in species represented on birders' daylists. Worldbirds data will become a key source of information from which we can develop indicators for common bird species. These will then help indicate changes in the conditions of the wider environment.

In the next few months, there are lots of exciting plans for **Caribbean Birds**. The Worldbirds team will be improving the design of the overall system, enhancing existing functionality, sourcing improved mapping - including links to Google Earth (July '07) and integration with the World Bird Database (WBDB) enabling users to move easily between Worldbirds, and BirdLife's species and sites (i.e. IBA) data.

We very much look forward to your participation and hope that **Caribbean Birds** will be a great success, both in strengthening the BirdLife Partnership and provide much needed information on the state of the birds throughout the Caribbean.

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