



# Audubon ARKANSAS

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## **New Audubon Study: Changes in Birds' Movements Undeniably Linked to Climate Change 125 Arkansas species now wintering farther north. For some species, no place to go.**

Little Rock, AR, February 10, 2009—A report released today by the National Audubon Society documents a trend of northward and inland movement of North American birds over the past 40 years. The report provides new and powerful evidence that global warming is having a serious impact on natural systems. Derived from analyses of citizen-gathered data from the past 40 years of Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, the study reveals that 58 percent of the 305 species that winter on the continent shifted significantly north since 1968, some by hundreds of miles.

Dr. Dan Scheiman, Bird Conservation Director for Audubon Arkansas said, "Forty years of data are showing that Arkansas is experiencing ecological disruption as a result of global warming. Unfortunately, it amounts to running an unplanned and uncontrolled experiment of massive proportions whose severity we cannot predict."

Of the 177 North American species that have significantly shifted north, **the 125 species that occur in Arkansas have moved nearly 100 miles on average.** Fourteen Arkansas bird species are now significantly less common in the state than they once were because warming temperatures enable them to winter north of our border. In contrast, 11 species that used to be concentrated south of Arkansas now winter in the state with increasing frequency.

"Although shifts northward suggest some species are capable of adapting to warming conditions, there is a limit," said Dr. Scheiman. "There will be no place to go for species whose habitat has been decimated by overuse, pollution, and other threats."

Population shifts among individual species are common, fluctuate, and can have many causes. However, Audubon scientists say the ongoing trend of movement by some 177 species—closely correlated to long-term winter temperature increases—reveals an undeniable link to the changing climate.

Said Dr. Scheiman, "Continued warming is of tremendous economic importance to Arkansas because it will contribute to further declines in popular gamebirds. People will notice a big change in their backyard birds as well."

Northern Bobwhite, American Black Duck, Northern Cardinal, and Dark-eyed Junco have retreated north by 85, 182, 60, and 116 miles, respectively, over 40 years. Snow Goose, Northern Shoveler, Great Egret and House Wren, once concentrated along the Gulf Coast in winter, have all taken advantage of warmer conditions and shifted their ranges north by 217, 78, 110, and 34 miles, respectively. As these birds move north, they may be at increased risk from unusually cold winters or harsh storms.

Ken Smith, State Director of Audubon Arkansas said, “Many Arkansans are poised to take action that will stop global warming and protect our birds and environment. With new leadership in Washington, this is a critical moment for our congressional delegation to take the lead. If we delay addressing our collective energy, economic and global warming challenges, it will only make it more difficult to prevent the worst impacts from global warming. We at Audubon Arkansas are working intently to slow climate change in our state. We are helping Arkansans become more energy efficient, opposing new coal-fired plants in our region; developing sustainable energy policies, and restoring wildlife habitat.”

A list of Arkansas birds affected by climate change on other information can be found at **[ar.audubon.org](http://ar.audubon.org)**. Audubon urges citizens to take action by signing a national petition demanding aggressive federal policy action at [birdsandclimate.org](http://birdsandclimate.org).

Audubon Arkansas was founded as the 25<sup>th</sup> state office of the National Audubon Society in 2001. Our vision is a state where the love and respect for nature is a cultural legacy. Communities are engaged in responsible stewardship, protecting and conserving our native environment for future generations. This leads naturally to our mission to inspire and lead Arkansans in environmental education, resource management, habitat restoration, bird conservation and enlightened advocacy [ar.audubon.org](http://ar.audubon.org)

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