



Yunguilla Valley, Photo by Paul S Wolf/Shutterstock



Wire-Crested Thorntail, Photo by Francisco Sornoza



WHY BIRD CONSERVATION MATTERS

for Governments, Impact Investors,
and Environmental Organizations

Governments, environmental organizations and the impact investing sector seek prosperity; prosperous communities, economies and environments are central to their missions. Bird conservation can help to achieve these objectives. Birds contribute to human health, improve agricultural production, generate millions of dollars in ecotourism revenue, and serve as indicators of environmental well-being.

However, **North America alone has lost 2.9 billion birds, or one in four birds, since 1970.** These trends parallel bird declines globally. This great loss of birds, primarily caused by habitat degradation, negatively impacts **human and ecosystem health.**

Reversing these declines is imperative to advancing sustainability goals and can be achieved by actions to improve livelihoods, create economic opportunities, and restore degraded ecosystems at a landscape level. In this way, bird conservation can further global sustainability and conservation objectives.

Mainstreaming the conservation of birds and their habitat in the design of governmental policies, subsidies and incentives, development programs, and conservation projects contributes to goals aiming to improve people's lives, health and communities; provide additional income; and conserve biodiversity.



Tapichalaca, Photo by G. Radko

BIRDING TOURISM GENERATES BILLIONS OF DOLLARS

Bird-related tourism generates billions in economic activity globally. In the U.S., birdwatching generates about \$40 billion annually, **creating over 860,000 jobs.**

BIRDS HELP COUNTRIES MEET GLOBAL OBLIGATIONS

The multiple services provided by birds and their conservation can play a central role in achieving the 2030 **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), including **SDG #8** (Decent work and economic growth) and **SDG #15** (Life on land).

Protecting bird species and their habitats will help countries meet obligations under the post-2020 **Global Biodiversity Framework** (GBF). It is anticipated that the prevention of species extinctions and the establishment of protected areas will have an even larger focus in the post-2020 GBF than in previous global goals.

Globally, roughly 3 million international trips are taken annually for the main purpose of bird watching. The primary international destinations for U.S. birdwatchers are **countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.**

Birdwatchers visiting Colombia spend an average of **US\$300 per day**, much more than the average tourist. Birdwatching tourism in Colombia is anticipated to be able to **generate US\$46 million annually**, creating 7,500 new jobs.

BIRD HABITAT PROTECTS PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

As climate change exacerbates natural disasters and droughts, habitat conservation and restoration are critical for communities to mitigate, adapt, and be resilient. Coastal wetlands and estuaries that provide vital habitat for waterfowl and other waterbirds also protect roads, buildings, and other public infrastructure experiencing major weather events providing up to **US\$23.2 billion per year in storm protection services** in the U.S. alone.

BIRDS IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND REVENUE

Insect-eating birds are natural consumers of crop insect pests, thus offering free pest reduction services in farms. In Jamaica, coffee farms from which birds were experimentally excluded from foraging suffered a higher infestation of berry borer beetle. **Birds increased farmers' revenues by an estimated US\$310 per hectare** by reducing coffee berry borers. At a **200-ha vineyard in Spain**, birds consumed one ton of insects, larvae, and invertebrates, protecting the grape crop from these crop-eating pests. Farmers' revenues increased by improving crop yield and reducing expenses on insecticides.

Birds provide pollination of food-producing plants. In Central America, **hummingbirds and bananaquits are important pollinators** for valuable crops, such as papaya and passion fruit. Countries like Ecuador, which produces nearly **51,000 tons of papaya a year**, benefit from birds.

Crops certified as “bird-friendly,” such as coffee, can receive price premiums for producers well above the regular market value of these commodities.



Dry Coffee, Photo by Benjamin Skolnik



Wood Thrush, Photo by Mike Parr

BIRDS CONTRIBUTE TO HUMAN HEALTH

Birds can serve as **indicators of contamination problems** that trigger human health issues. In the U.S., declines in waterfowl, pelicans, and birds of prey were some of the first clues about the dangers of contamination from heavy metals and pesticides, such as DDT.

Scavenging birds, such as vultures, help prevent diseases by consuming livestock carcasses that could lead to human or animal illness. In Spain, declines in scavengers birds removing livestock carcasses from fields **cost \$54 million** in the loss of ecosystem services every year.

Birds can also provide warnings about the occurrence of disease outbreaks and help prevent further spread. In the U.S., **crow deaths helped health authorities** identify a West Nile virus outbreak.



Mario Pilataxi at Narupa Birdblitz, Photo by Francisco Sornoza

BIRDS ARE INDICATORS OF BIODIVERSITY VALUE AND HABITAT RESTORATION SUCCESS

Birds are the most studied group of animals on the planet and are well-positioned to serve as indicators of the biodiversity value of an area.

Evaluating birds' response to habitat restoration is an effective way to measure whether conservation objectives have been met.

YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

A network of partners working on bird conservation at the national and regional scale already exists, and can advise on the relevance of birds to the governmental, impact investing, and environmental sectors. To learn more about how bird conservation can positively contribute to your programs, projects, and ventures, contact **American Bird Conservancy**, the **U.S. Forest Service**, and the **North American Bird Conservation Initiative**.

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