

Why We Need Bird Conservation

by birdfreak.com

Birds provide many things that are beneficial to humans and the environment. There are many reasons why bird conservation is vital, which can be broken down into four main categories:

1. Ecological Value
2. Scientific Importance
3. Economic Impact
4. Social Significance



Ecological Value of Birds

Birds are part of the natural system. They are pollinators for many plants. Hummingbirds, warblers and orioles are examples of birds that are important pollinators.

The Orchard Oriole eats nectar and pollen from flowers, especially during the winter. It is an important pollinator for some tropical tree species, transferring the pollen from flower to flower on its head. - Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Rodent control would be much more of a problem were it not for large rodent-eaters such as owls and hawks.

A nesting pair of Barn Owls with six young may consume more than 1000 mice during a three month nesting period. - Maryland DNR

Birds also eat incredible amounts of insects. Forest insects are extremely reduced because of birds, saving forest and money.

One study examined the indirect effects of North American insectivorous birds on plant growth and found that population declines reduce forest productivity because of potentially higher numbers of leaf-chewing insects. - Whelan, 1994

There is ecological damage from **not** protecting birds. Extensive recovery efforts for a species in trouble cost far more than protecting the habitat before it gets that far gone. This is not to say that we shouldn't protect these specific critically endangered species, but to focus also on protecting less endangered areas as well before it is too late.



Scientific Importance

Where did we learn about flight? How did Darwin come up with the mechanism for evolution, the theory of natural selection? Bird studies are constantly helping us advance scientifically.

Researchers at the Methodist Neurological Institute (NI) in Houston and Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City used functional MRI to determine that songbirds have a pronounced right-brain response to the sound of songs, establishing a foundational study for future research on songbird models of speech disorders such as stuttering. - Science Daily

Birds are also key to indicating environmental changes. Large, rapid bird declines can announce an environmental problem that needs immediate attention. Studies on how birds are affected by habitat fragmentation or pollution can clue us in to specific problems that eventually will also negatively affect us.

Pesticides contamination (especially DDT) impacts were shown by declines in Ospreys, Peregrine Falcons, Brown Pelicans, and Bald Eagles and, more recently, die-offs of waterfowl, shorebirds, and waders from agricultural runoff. - The Birders Conservation Handbook

Bird studies will continue to teach us more about climate, environmental issues, and lead to new scientific breakthroughs.



Economic Impact

The economic impact of birders is obvious. A typical weekend trip for a birder includes food, gas, lodging, as well as possibly new gear. Over a birder's lifetime, gear and travel adds up quite a bit and birder numbers have been increasing.

In the United States, recreation is important and increasing. According to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in 2001, 82 million people participated in hunting, fishing and wildlife watching, while in that same year 89 million people attended all major league baseball and professional football games.

Birds also save money by eating pests. From gardening to farming, birds can be beneficial to reduce the amounts of pesticides needed.

When forest birds eat insects, the result is greater tree growth and a longer period between insect outbreaks -- services that may be worth as much as \$5000 per year for each square mile of forest land. -Scott Robinson, 1997



Social Significance

You don't have to feel obligated to take care of the environment, but the Earth is what we make it and the birds definitely can't fight us for it. What birds provide in the terms of enjoyment is great and we are able to still today go out and watch them. Even non-birders can appreciate a singing robin after a rain in the summer and birds also represent many symbols such as freedom and strength.

Birding is a growing hobby, one that is good for all ages and a great family activity. Most people like to be outdoors, which is good for physical and mental health.

Healing the broken bond between our young and nature is in our self-interest, not only because aesthetics or justice demand it, but also because our mental, physical, and spiritual health depend upon it. - Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv

There is more than one reason we should conserve birds and it is up to us to learn and care for our environment and it is not too late to get involved.

Reference List

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