



Audubon CHICAGO REGION

COMMON BIRDS IN DECLINE

A State of the Birds Report Summer 2007

Many of our most common and treasured birds are experiencing precipitous population declines. Analyzing forty years of bird population data collected by citizen scientists for Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, combined with Breeding Bird Survey data from the U.S. Geological Survey, Audubon has identified our nation's most vulnerable common birds. Illinois is the home of our nation's two fastest declining groups of birds – grassland and shrubland birds – as well as others. Below is a sample of birds suffering serious population declines here. 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://stateofthebirds.audubon.org/CBID> for the national findings, and www.habitatproject.org to learn how you can help.

ILLINOIS' VULNERABLE COMMON BIRDS

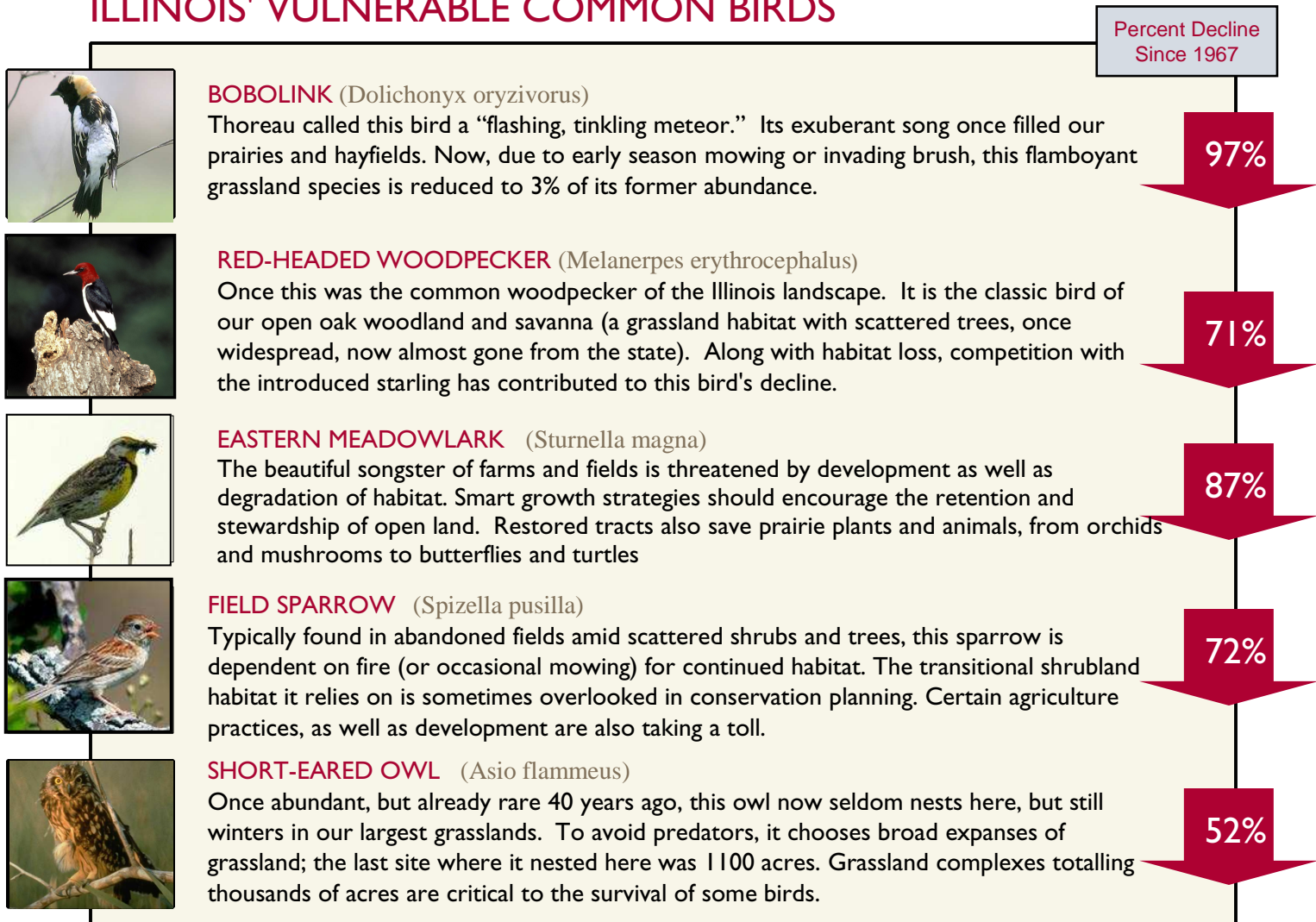
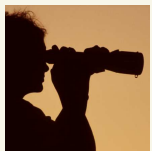


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ILLINOIS HABITATS AT RISK

Illinois, the Prairie State, has lost over 99 percent of its original prairie and 90% of its original wetland acreage. Habitat losses caused sharp declines in many bird populations. Our grasslands and shrublands are home to the fastest declining birds in the continental United States. Indeed, of the top twenty declining birds nationally, twelve nest in Illinois native habitats – Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow and Horned Lark in grassland; Northern Bobwhite, Loggerhead Shrike, Field Sparrow, Lark Sparrow and Whip-poor-will in woodland, savanna and shrubland; and Northern Pintail, Common Tern, American Bittern and Little Blue Heron in wetland and shore. Our critical habitats face daunting threats. Grassland birds need expansive acreages of unbroken grassland – some need 50 acres, others 8000 or more. Our grasslands, once kept free of woody invasives by fire, now need our help to keep them clear. Shrubby fields and savannas– once a byproduct of natural disturbance patterns – now increasingly need to be planned for and maintained. The enormous twice-yearly migration through the state brings still more declining species that depend on Illinois habitats.



WHAT AUDUBON IS DOING

The Chicago region is home to an active and thriving community of bird conservationists and citizen scientists. Audubon-Chicago Region is working with local Audubon chapters and hundreds of individuals throughout the region to monitor bird populations and restore habitat. Our large restoration projects are model partnerships between public agencies and volunteers that use best practices to dramatically increase bird numbers in grasslands, woodlands and wetlands.

We work within Chicago Wilderness to map and survey key habitats through our Grassland Blitz and Shrubland Blitz. We also work with forest preserve districts to support scientifically sound management practices for those birds.

Examples of effective conservation partnerships include our work with Com Ed to improve shrubland habitat under power lines and our Lights Out program to protect birds migrating through the Loop. Our Important Bird Areas program identifies critical bird habitat in the state, and we then work with local groups to promote the conservation of these areas.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Residents of Illinois can keep common birds common in a variety of ways. Homeowners can help by keeping their cats indoors, modifying windows that birds crash into, and maintaining bird-friendly yards with layered, diverse landscaping and reduced insecticides.

Individuals can play a critical role in determining bird population trends and informing good management by volunteering for habitat restoration and bird monitoring projects, such as the BCN Census and the Christmas Bird Count.

Public landowners can reduce fragmentation and habitat degradation by restoring woodlands and grasslands. Landowners with large fields can delay mowing them until after August 1st each year. Farmers can enroll acreages in conservation set-aside programs.