

Breaking News: 3 Billion Birds Lost

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Many of you have heard by now about the stunning paper by leading bird scientists that was published on September 18 in the highly prestigious journal, *Science*. The study shows with great detail that we have lost nearly 3 billion birds since 1970. The alarming information means a huge reduction in the abundance of birds and an ecological crisis for us all. We have lost nearly 30% of our avian wildlife in just 50 years. To read the paper for yourself, go to: <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/3-billion-birds-lost-since-1970-north-america>

If you've been birding seriously for many years, as we have, you've already been aware that there are far fewer birds than there were in the 1960s or 70s or 80s. The decline is so obvious that it hurts.

Cornell Lab director John Fitzpatrick put it succinctly:

“A staggering loss that suggests the very fabric of North America’s ecosystem is unraveling.”

Many of the birds that have been lost lived in areas like the Colorado eastern plains and the grasslands of the central flyway. Just driving through Nebraska as Bill and I did last month shows us why. Instead of driving through grasslands, we drove hundreds of miles of corn, corn, and corn—and then wheat as we drove westward. In the loss of grasslands, we've lost many of our sparrows. We've lost warblers that use the woodlands and swallows that rely on the alarmingly declining insect populations. We've lost birds to new insecticides and other forms of pest control, apparent when you see cornfields absent of even a single weed.

But that doesn't mean it's time to give up hope. We just have lots more work to do now. First, of course, we need representatives to the federal government who value the endangered species act and the migratory bird treaty. We need protections in place for clean water and clean air. We need to stop polluting our environment.

Those changes will take a lot of effort in the coming year at the national and state levels. However, there are actions we take that will help to make a difference. In the illustration are seven simple actions we can take to help solve the dilemma.

1. Make simple adjustments to your windows to save birds' lives.
2. Keep your cats indoors. Cats kill millions of birds each year.
3. Replace your bluegrass lawn with natural native plants.
4. Don't use pesticides on your outdoor plants and buy organically grown foods whenever possible.
5. Drink shade-grown coffee that supports 42 species of North American songbirds.
6. Stop using plastics that are rarely recycled and take 400 years to degrade.

7. Go bird watching and invite your friends and neighbors.

Hunters and waterfowl lovers have managed to halt the decline of waterfowl, as the scientists reported. We can do the same with the rest of the birds that we value so highly.

