

## **Pennsylvania Birds of Conservation Concern**

The Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan states that Birds are among the best-known and most popular wildlife species. They often are used to represent the ecosystems of less-popular and well-known species, acting as umbrella species for conservation action. Penn's Woods are extremely important to the continued health and size of forest bird populations in the Northeast. The biggest declines in the state's bird populations, however, have occurred in grassland, wetland and early successional habitats. More than 70% of the Birds of Conservation Concern nest or forage in wetlands. The state list reflects the dramatic decline in wetland quantity and quality over the last several decades.

The Birds of Conservation Concern reflects a mixed strategy of bird conservation. Rare, locally distributed and declining species are listed because they are representative of habitats in decline. This is a reactive conservation approach. Some species are listed because our state is extremely important to species that are either relatively common in the state or are undergoing declines range-wide. This is a proactive approach. By combining these approaches, it is anticipated that we can conserve the diversity of birds and the ecosystems that support wildlife in the state.

The entire Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan is available at:

<http://www.pgc.state.pa.us/pgc/cwp/view.asp?a=496&q=162067>

Below are two subsets of birds, grassland and forest, from the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan that will utilize agricultural landscapes. These subsets were selected from the Summary List of Species of Greatest Conservation Concern, (10.5), available at: <http://www.pgc.state.pa.us/pgc/cwp/view.asp?a=496&q=162067>

### **GRASSLAND**

Barn Owl  
Dickcissel  
Eastern Meadowlark  
Grasshopper Sparrow  
Henslow's Sparrow  
Marsh Wren  
Northern Bobwhite  
Northern Harrier

### **FOREST & FOREST "EDGE"**

American Woodcock  
Black-billed Cuckoo  
Blue-winged Warbler  
Brown Thrasher  
Golden-winged Warbler  
Northern Bobwhite  
Prairie Warbler  
Red-headed Woodpecker  
Yellow-breasted Chat  
Whip-poor-will

## **GRASSLAND**

### **Barn Owl**

*Tyto alba*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** At Risk. Regular breeding species and migrant; some individuals may be residents.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, nests in large trees or human structures.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Decline in populations, grassland habitat, potential nest sites, and prey species. Poorly studied nocturnal species.

### **Dickcissel**

*Spiza americana*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** PABS-Proposed state endangered. Regular breeding species in some location, erratic in others; and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Extensive grasslands, agricultural landscapes.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Decline in habitat; very limited breeding range. As a ground nester, sensitive to nest disturbance and predation. Partners In Flight Watch List, Partners In Flight priority I, IIC species.

### **Eastern Meadowlark**

*Sturnella magna*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** Regular breeding species and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, agricultural landscapes, reclaimed strip mines.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Declining population and habitat; indicator species for large-scale grasslands. As a ground nester, sensitive to nest disturbance and predation. Partners In Flight priority IIA species.

### **Grasshopper Sparrow**

*Ammodramus savannarum*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** Regular breeding species and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, agricultural fields, reclaimed strip mines.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Dramatic range-wide decline in populations. Indicator of large-scale grassland habitats. As a ground nester, sensitive to nest disturbance and predation. Partners In Flight priority IIC species.

### **Henslow's Sparrow**

*Ammodramus henslowii*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** Regular breeding species and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, agricultural fields, reclaimed strip mines.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Partners In Flight I priority species; Pennsylvania Watch List species (highest concern list). As a ground nester, sensitive to nest disturbance and predation. Though still somewhat abundant, elevated to High-Level Concern due to population declines/threats. Pennsylvania has high responsibility for species with 8.9% of global breeding population.

## **Marsh Wren**

*Cistothorus palustris*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** PABS-Rare. Regular breeding species and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Emergent wetlands.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Limited and spotty distribution (clustered in few places), decline in habitat.

## **Northern Bobwhite**

*Colinus virginianus*

**Legal Status:** Game Bird; closed season protection in areas where native bobwhite may still occur.

**Notes:** PABS At-risk, possibly extirpated. Global rank G5. Resident.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, thickets, barrens, agricultural landscapes.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Range-wide decline in population and habitat. Need for genetic research (sub-specific status of native populations and current populations). Confusion between stocked individuals and native breeding population (if it still exists). A difficult species to assess because of stocked individuals of uncertain origin.

## **Northern Harrier**

*Circus cyaneus*

**Legal Status:** Protected. Global rank G5. State rank S3S4.

**Notes:** PABS At-risk. Regular breeding species, passage migrant, and winter resident.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, wetlands, agricultural landscapes, barrens.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Decline in populations and habitat. Sensitive to nest disturbance (nests on ground). Northeast Region priority species.

## **FOREST & FOREST "EDGE"**

### **American Woodcock**

*Scolopax minor*

**Legal Status:** Migratory Game Bird

**Notes:** Regular breeding species and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Early successional habitats, moist fields, thickets, forest clearings and seeps, brushy swamps.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Partners In Flight priority species; a U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan "species of high concern"; a Pennsylvania Watch List species; declining breeding and migrant populations. Sensitive to environmental contaminants through its principal food, earthworms.

### **Black-billed Cuckoo**

*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** Regular breeding species and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Forests and thickets.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Partners In Flight IIA priority species; decline in breeding population.

### **Blue-winged Warbler**

*Vermivora pinus*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** Regular breeding species and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Early successional forest, thickets, barrens, rights-of-way corridors.

### **Brown Thrasher**

*Toxostoma rufum*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** Regular breeding species and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Thickets, early successional forest, barrens, old fields.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Indicator of early successional habitats; somewhat area-sensitive.

### **Golden-winged Warbler**

*Vermivora chrysoptera*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** Regular breeding species and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Early successional forest, thickets, barrens, rights-of-way corridors.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Partners In Flight high priority species; Pennsylvania Watch List species; population decline in state and region; Pennsylvania has high responsibility for species. Nests vulnerable to predation and brood parasitism.

### **Northern Bobwhite**

*Colinus virginianus*

**Legal Status:** Game Bird; closed season protection in areas where native bobwhite may still occur.

**Notes:** At Risk, possibly extirpated. Resident.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, thickets, barrens, agricultural landscapes.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Range-wide decline in population and habitat. Need for genetic research (sub-specific status of native populations and current populations). Confusion between stocked individuals and native breeding population (if it still exists). A difficult species to assess because of stocked individuals of uncertain origin.

### **Prairie Warbler**

*Dendroica discolor*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** Regular breeding species and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Early successional forest, thickets, barrens, young conifers.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Partners In Flight priority species; Pennsylvania Watch List species; recent range-wide declines; high densities in pine-oak barrens.

### **Red-headed Woodpecker**

*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** Regular breeding species, passage migrant, and winter resident.

**Habitat:** Savannah-like forests, parks, swamps.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Decline in population; spotty distribution; poorly studied species. Partners In Flight priority I (continental importance) species.

## **Yellow-breasted Chat**

*Icteria virens*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** Regular breeding species and passage migrant.

**Habitat:** Thickets, early successional forest, barrens.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Indicator species of thickets and early successional forests. May be area-sensitive thicket species.

## **Whip-poor-will**

*Caprimulgus vociferus*

**Legal Status:** Protected

**Notes:** Regular breeding species and passage migrant. Northeast Region priority species.

**Habitat:** Forests and barrens.

**Reason(s) for concern:** Partners In Flight IIA priority species. Poorly studied nocturnal species; perceived population decline; possible decline in prey populations (large nocturnal insects).