

Three Billion Birds: Decline of the North American Avifauna

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Species extinctions have defined the global biodiversity crisis, but extinction begins with loss in abundance of individuals that can result in compositional and functional changes of ecosystems.

Using multiple and independent monitoring networks, we report population losses across much of the North American avifauna over 48 years, including once common species and from most biomes.

Integration of range-wide population trajectories and size estimates indicates a net loss approaching 3 billion birds, or 29% of 1970 abundance. A continent-wide weather radar network also reveals a similarly steep decline in biomass passage of migrating birds over a recent 10-year period.

This loss of bird abundance signals an urgent need to address threats to avert future avifaunal collapse and associated loss of ecosystem integrity, function and services.

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