

# Audubon

## COMMON BIRDS IN DECLINE

*A State of the Birds Report*  
Summer 2007

# WAKEUP CALL

Combing through 40 years of data, Audubon biologists find that today's common species may not be so common tomorrow—and that they're sending messages worth heeding. **By Greg Butcher**

If you live in the East or Southwest, a bird like the eastern meadowlark is synonymous with summer, with its clear, comfortably familiar whistle and brilliant yellow plumage. But the skies are becoming a little quieter and the landscape a little drabber these days because the eastern meadowlark and many other species we enjoy, and at times take for granted, are slowly but surely declining.

Since 1967 the average population of the common birds\* in steepest decline have fallen 70 percent, from 17.6 million to 5.35 million individuals. These are the alarming findings of Audubon biologists, who for the first time ever have combined data from

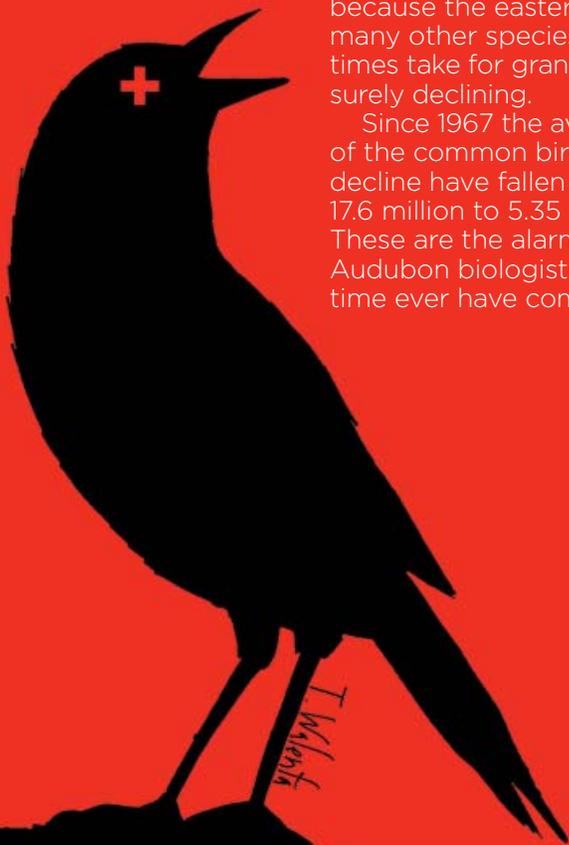
the world's longest-running uninterrupted bird census—Audubon's Christmas Bird Count (CBC)—with information from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)—organized by the U.S. Geological Survey—to get a handle on how populations of common North American species have fared during the past 40 years. Both surveys depend on volunteers—citizen scientists—to collect the data, which are then analyzed by ornithologists.

Much of the concern stems from the wide variety of birds affected. As a result the joyful sights and sounds of birds that we shared as a matter of course with our parents a generation ago are already harder for our children to experience today. Will they be all but impossible to spot with our grandchildren in decades to come? Or will we heed the warnings of their precipitous drops and address significant threats to the birds and to the quality of our own lives?

Fortunately, there are many things you can do for the birds and for our future (see the "What You Can Do" section). By working together for bird conservation, we can provide the birds with the planet they deserve and the one we need as well.

---

*Greg Butcher is Audubon's Director of Bird Conservation.*



\*Common birds are species with more than 500,000 individuals worldwide, with a range of more than 385,000 square miles, and that do not qualify for Audubon's WatchList of at-risk species. The birds featured here are those suffering the most severe declines over the past 40 years. For an additional 10 species, go to [Audubonmagazine.org](http://Audubonmagazine.org).