Audubon’s Harlem Mural Project Hits 100-Species Milestone

In John James Audubon’s former Manhattan neighborhood, the Audubon Mural Project is marrying public art and climate change, with the goal of installing paintings of all 314 species identified as threatened in Audubon’s *Birds and Climate Change* report. And recently, it notched a major milestone—100 species.

Working to emphasize birds’ adaptability in the face of mind-boggling migrations, artist George Boorujy’s recent mural features a gang of five warblers staring with intense expressions. “A gang of tough guys basically, because they are tough little guys,” he says.

With almost a third of the murals currently displayed around Harlem, the project has already gone a long way to beautify the community and create a powerful draw for tourists and residents throughout New York City. And more importantly, the effort is serving as a fresh, surprising way to bring attention to a critically important conservation crisis.

The Trump administration has released an alarming report showing “the impacts of climate change are intensifying across the country;” something birds, like the Spotted Owl, have been telling us for years.

This National Climate Assessment was produced through a collaboration of 300 experts including 13 governmental agencies and incorporated the findings of a 2016 study by Audubon’s Senior Climate Scientist, Dr. Brooke Bateman.

To discover how birds are changing their patterns to deal with climate change, Bateman compiled data for 285 North American species spanning more than 60 years. The study revealed that climate change is forcing some species’ breeding ranges to shift much faster than the previously estimated 0.4 mile a year average—with some moving up to 3 miles every year.

And the report emphasizes that without significant and immediate action, climate-related threats will only continue to rise.

Audubon is championing science-based approaches to reduce carbon pollution, and working to make climate solutions a top priority with the new Congress.
Audubon Advocacy

Audubon’s Conservation Strategy in Action

In 2018, Audubon mobilized its members to urge their representatives to get involved and take proactive conservation positions. Efforts included taking representatives on bird walks, having birders engage with members of Congress, encouraging local “Year of the Bird” proclamations, and advocating for funding of conservation policy priorities.

And we won some major victories:

- We moved 22 Congress members to take action on conservation issues as a result of our direct engagement.
- We successfully secured multiple supporters for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, including four key Republicans.
- We won funding for energy storage research and development, which was passed in Congress and signed by the president in mid-September.

Audubon and Volunteers Fight to Save California’s Tricolored Blackbirds

In California, the Tricolored Blackbird population has shrunk from several million to a few hundred thousand. But to gain legal protections for the blackbirds, conservationists must prove their population is in decline, a difficult task considering the colonies move around each year. And with colonies of up to 25,000 birds, missing a few large groups could make it that much harder to prove the species is in decline in future years.

To get the most accurate counts, Audubon California and partners have organized a volunteer-led state-survey every three years, with 89 birders visiting over 800 locations for last year’s count.

Now the bird is undergoing a formal status review for a federal listing, and new Audubon data showing a 30% Tricolored population decline in the last decade will provide strong support for these increased protections.

And just last April, their hard work paid off. The Tricolored Blackbird was officially listed as a threatened species in California, a distinction that’s already saved hundreds of birds.

Audubon Fights the Trump Administration’s Latest Rollbacks to Bird Protections

In October, the Trump administration announced plans to revise the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The hundred-year-old law, which protects nearly a thousand species, was passed thanks to efforts by Audubon chapters and ultimately became the National Audubon Society’s founding victory.

But the administration’s revised interpretation only prohibits purposeful bird deaths, making incidental killings immune from enforcement under the law. The move would effectively reverse decades of government policy on the enforcement of the MBTA, weakening the law that’s motivated businesses to adopt simple practices that have saved billions of birds.

Audubon has filed a lawsuit challenging the Trump administration’s interpretation of the law. And eight states have united to file a similar suit opposing this dangerous reversal.

Threats to birds covered under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

- **Wind turbines**
  - Up to 328,000 birds died due to wind turbine strikes
- **Oil spills**
  - More than 1 million birds died from the Deepwater Horizon spill
- **Oil waste pits**
  - 500,000 to 1 million birds killed per year
- **Communication towers**
  - Up to 7 million birds killed per year from collisions
- **Gas flares**
  - Unknown number but thousands of birds have been killed in single events
- **Power lines**
  - Up to 64 million birds killed per year (from collisions and electrocution)