**Pennsylvania’s Bird Species Threatened by Climate Change, New Audubon Study Reveals**

**Ruffed Grouse and Scarlet Tanager Could Disappear without Action**

AUDUBON, Pa. (Sep. 9, 2014) – Global warming threatens the survival of nearly half the bird species in the continental United States and Canada, including many of Pennsylvania’s birds, warn National Audubon Society scientists in a groundbreaking new study released today. Local birds at risk include the Ruffed Grouse, Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush and Baltimore Oriole.

 “We are pushing dozens of bird species out of Pennsylvania and possibly off of the planet,” said Phil Wallis, Audubon’s Executive Director for Pennsylvania. “Birds that survived the clearing of Penn’s Woods in the early 1900s and DDT poisoning in the 1950s and ‘60s may finally succumb to food and habitat changes due to global warming.”

Of 588 bird species examined in the seven-year study, 314 species are at risk. Of those, 126 species are at risk of severe declines by 2050, and another 188 species face the same fate by 2080. The Audubon report says that hundreds of species not previously considered at risk will be challenged to survive in a climate-changed future. According to the study, 84 species that breed in Pennsylvania may greatly decrease or disappear from the state.

 In Pennsylvania, birds of concern include the iconic state bird, the Ruffed Grouse. Continued global warming will lead to greatly reduced habitat for grouse. Other forest species, such as the vibrant red and black Scarlet Tanager, could largely disappear from Pennsylvania’s forests.

Two other beloved species of concern include the Wood Thrush and Baltimore Oriole. It will be a silent spring for many people if the beautiful flute-like song of the Wood Thrush is no longer heard in woodlots and large forests across Pennsylvania. The iconic orange and black orioles that have historically nested throughout the state will continue to decline in numbers and may disappear altogether.

Audubon Pennsylvania is currently working with local Audubon chapters, government agencies, and other groups toward the protection and proper management of Important Bird Areas and other priority habitats. Audubon’s study adds new urgency to protect areas of the state that breeding and migrating birds depend on, including large forested blocks of the Pennsylvania Wilds such as the Loyalsock State Forest, the Kittatinny Ridge corridor through southeast and south-central Pennsylvania, and the coastal areas of Lake Erie.

 “The greatest threat our birds face today is global warming,” said Audubon Chief Scientist Gary Langham, who led the investigation. “That’s our unequivocal conclusion after seven years of painstakingly careful and thorough research. Global warming threatens the basic fabric of life on which birds – and the rest of us – depend, and we have to act quickly and decisively if we are going to avoid catastrophe for them and us.”

Langham and other Audubon ornithologists analyzed more than 40 years of historical North American climate data and millions of historical bird records from the U.S. Geological Survey’s North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count to understand the links between where birds live and the climatic conditions that support them. Understanding those links then allows scientists to project where birds are likely to be able to survive – and not survive – in the future.

Audubon's study shows how climate conditions including rainfall, temperature and changing seasons – the building blocks for ecosystems and species survival – may have catastrophic consequences when tipping those balances.

While some species will be able to adapt to shifting climates, many of North America’s most familiar and iconic species will not.

“The prospect of such staggering loss is horrific, but we can build a bridge to the future for America’s birds,” said Audubon President and CEO David Yarnold. “We know that if we help avoid the worst impacts of climate change for birds, we’re doing the same for our kids. And this new report can be a roadmap to help birds weather the storm of global warming.”

 Audubon today launched a new web portal – Audubon.org/Climate – dedicated to understanding the links between birds and global warming, including animated maps and photographs of the 314 species at risk, a technical report, and in-depth stories from the September-October issue of Audubon magazine, which is also devoted to the topic.

 “In Pennsylvania we stand to lose more than 80 breeding birds and nearly 100 other migratory birds by 2080,” said Wallis. “We know that people across the state are taking this threat personally because birds matter to them. Audubon Pennsylvania is committed to protecting the areas where birds live today and where they will also be able to live in the future, even as climate changes.”

**About Audubon**

Audubon has had a presence in Pennsylvania since 1896, and in 1997 the state office of the National Audubon Society was established to lead a centralized, statewide conservation effort. With nearly 30,000 members, 21 local chapters, and a diverse group of partners, Audubon Pennsylvania accomplishes conservation goals statewide through the program areas of science, education, policy and on-the-ground conservation action.

The National Audubon Society saves birds and their habitats throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation. Audubon's state programs, nature centers, chapters and partners have an unparalleled wingspan that reaches millions of people each year to inform, inspire and unite diverse communities in conservation action. Since 1905, Audubon's vision has been a world in which people and wildlife thrive. Audubon is a nonprofit conservation organization.

Learn more at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org) and follow @audubonsociety.

# # #

**Media Contact by Region:**

Eastern Pennsylvania, Phil Wallis, pwallis@audubon.org, 610-246-3488

Central Pennsylvania, Paul Zeph, pzeph@audubon.org, 717-574-6668

Northwest Pennsylvania, Sarah Sargent, ssargent@audubon.org, 814-232-3300

Pittsburgh or Southwest Pennsylvania, Jim Bonner, jbonner@aswp.org, 412-963-6100