

Tennessee Songbirds

Birds that are disappearing due to global warming in Tennessee:

[Alder Flycatcher](#)
[American Redstart](#)
[Baltimore Oriole](#)
[Bank Swallow](#)
[Black-capped Chickadee](#)
[Black-throated Blue Warbler](#)
[Black-throated Green Warbler](#)
[Blackburnian Warbler](#)
[Blue-headed Vireo](#)
[Blue-winged Warbler](#)
[Canada Warbler](#)
[Cerulean Warbler](#)
[Chestnut-sided Warbler](#)
[Cliff Swallow](#)
[Dark-eyed Junco](#)
[Golden-winged Warbler](#)
[Grasshopper Sparrow](#)
[House Wren](#)
[Least Flycatcher](#)
[Olive-sided Flycatcher](#)
[Ovenbird](#)
[Red-breasted Nuthatch](#)
[Rose-breasted Grosbeak](#)
[Savannah Sparrow](#)
[Scarlet Tanager](#)
[Song Sparrow](#)
[Tree Swallow](#)
[Vesper Sparrow](#)
[Warbling Vireo](#)
[Willow Flycatcher](#)
[Winter Wren](#)
[Yellow Warbler](#)
[Yellow-throated Vireo](#)
[American Goldfinch](#)

Birds are one of life's small joys. For many, it is thrilling to see a bright splash of color on a spring day or hear the song of a bird outside your window. In those quiet, still moments, if you take a moment to listen, you can hear that nature has its own natural symphony created by the songs of birds. It is a gift of nature that such birds – which play an important role in healthy ecosystems by controlling pests, dispersing seeds, and pollinating plants – are also so beautiful and such a joy to watch.

But, as nature's indicators, birds are also showing signs that our environment is changing. Human activity – particularly the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas – is sending tremendous additional quantities of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The buildup of these gases is causing the planet to heat up and is altering the basic climate systems to which nature is adapted. There is a growing body of scientific evidence that some birds (as well as plants and other wildlife) are already responding to the changing climate.

Global warming could affect birds in many ways, shifting their distributions and altering their migration behavior and habitat, and even diminishing their survival ability. Many of the songbird species we see and enjoy in nature are shifting their ranges and migrating earlier, often making it more difficult for them to find food. In some places, we may no longer see our favorite birds.

There are also signs that recent climate trends are affecting birds' behavior. Studies in the United States and Europe have found that some songbirds are migrating earlier in spring months, corresponding with warmer temperatures. For example, research of migratory birds in North America shows that the arrival dates of 20 species were up to 21 days earlier in 1994 than in 1965, while just a few species were later (Root, unpublished data; Price and Root 2000). This includes long-distance migrants like the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Barn Swallow.

According to these studies, Tennesseans could see a reduction and even elimination of songbirds in the coming years if global warming continues at the current rate. The popular Tennessee state bird, the mockingbird, could be in danger as well.

Since songbirds play a critical role in ecosystems by eating insects, pollinating plants, and dispersing seeds, such changes risk throwing ecosystems off balance. Models show that these shifts are likely to worsen unless global warming is abated.

The good news is that solutions are not a distant dream either. There are things each of us can do in our homes and businesses, and actions our governments can take, that will help solve this problem. We can begin at home by making energy efficiency part of our purchasing decisions. We can support adoption of better fuel economy standards for new vehicles and the increased use of clean, alternative energy sources such as solar power and fuel cells. And we can urge Congress to enact caps on emissions of greenhouse gases from major sources such as power plants. Above all, we must recognize what our beloved songbirds are telling us – global warming threatens our own backyards, and we must begin to confront it.

Information obtained from:

Price, J., Glick, P. (2002). The birdwatchers guide to Northern America. Reston and The Plains: National Wildlife Federation and American Bird Conservatory.