

2026



NEW JERSEY
AUDUBON

Forestry for Birds



Cedar Waxwing



Birds of New Jersey



Over 450 species of birds have been recorded in New Jersey, ranging from songbirds to raptors to shorebirds and more.

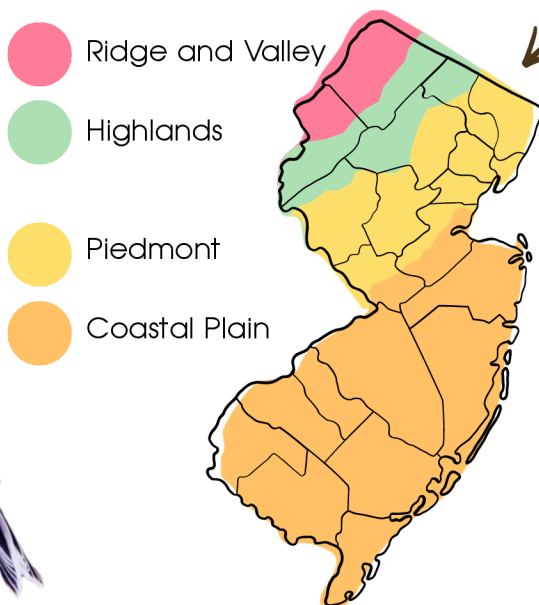
Many are full-time residents, while others are only here for part of the year.

The spring and summer months mark the breeding bird season, after which the fall migration begins. Some species only spend the winter months here, escaping the harsher conditions of northern climates.



The incredible diversity of birds found in the Garden State is in part due to its location along the Atlantic flyway, making it a migratory hotspot as birds travel south along the coastline.

Resident and migratory birds are supported by a diversity of habitats spanning four distinct physiographic provinces: ridge and valley, highlands, piedmont, and coastal plain.



Crucial for Our Ecosystems

Ecological Role

Pollination

- Typically, people think of bees and butterflies when they think of pollinators. Did you know that birds help with pollination, too? As birds visit flowering plants to feed on nectar, pollen is picked up by their bodies and transferred from one flower to the next. Hummingbirds are a great example of nectar-feeding species that help to pollinate countless plants each year.

Seed Dispersion

- Birds not only support seed production through pollination, but help to disperse seeds as well. As they eat berries and nuts, the seeds within those fruits pass through the digestive system and are eventually deposited within droppings across the landscape. Lighter seeds with small hooks or barbs may become attached to the birds' bodies and become dislodged in new areas as they travel between habitats.

Pest Control

- Many birds rely on insects as a significant portion of their diet. This, in turn, helps to manage insect populations. From caterpillars to termites to grasshoppers to mosquitoes, birds eat a wide variety of insects considered to be pests in agriculture or backyard gardens.



Barred Owl

Indicator Species - Signals of ecosystem health.

Being relatively easy to observe, birds are often used in monitoring and research to understand changes in the environment. Collecting information such as species abundance and diversity provides valuable insight into regional habitat changes over time and can highlight the need for active management to restore ecological function and health.

Recreational Value - People love birds!

Whether it is through casual backyard birding, competing in New Jersey Audubon's annual World Series of Birding, or anything in between, people enjoy observing birds in their natural habitat. Noticing their behaviors, hearing their calls, appreciating their beautiful plumage, watching parents rear their young – there is so much to learn and enjoy.

Forest Management Supports Birds

Habitat Diversity - No two birds are exactly alike.

Some species are generalists, able to thrive in a variety of habitats, while others are highly specialized and will only be found where specific habitat requirements are met. To support the hundreds of bird species found in New Jersey, a diversity of habitat types must be maintained, enhanced, or established. Within forest systems, diversity can relate to the composition of tree species in different forest types across a region. For example, oak-hickory uplands, pitch pine barrens, Atlantic white cedar wetlands, or red maple lowlands. It can also mean a diversity of age classes across the landscape, from scrub-shrub and early successional forests, to mature, closed canopy systems.

Promoting a variety of forest types and ages across the landscape is the best way to support birds and other wildlife.

We Need to Act Now

North America has lost 3 billion birds since 1970, and the losses are continuing.

Over 180 species in NJ are considered species of greatest conservation need, many of which are also threatened or endangered.

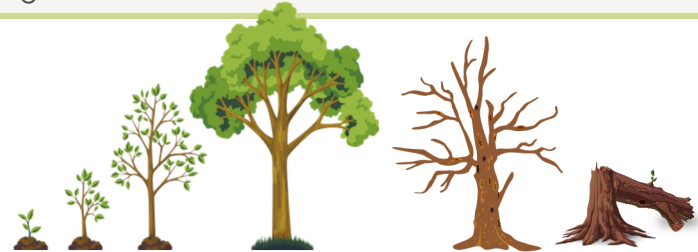
Habitat loss and degradation are key factors in this decline.



Scarlet Tanager

Vertical Structural Diversity

- Within a forest, the structure of the vegetation is an important consideration for wildlife habitat.
- Forests have layers
 - Mature trees make up the canopy
 - Smaller trees and shrubs in the understory
 - Herbaceous plants and ground cover on the forest floor.
- Some birds forage and nest in the canopy layer, whereas others spend most of their time in the lower layers and forest floor.
- Managing for forest conditions that have healthy plants within each vertical layer will provide food and shelter for a variety of forest-dwelling birds.



Horizontal Structural Diversity

- This refers to differences in the forest age, structure, and type across a site or landscape.
- One way to increase this type of diversity is with canopy gaps. These are openings within the forest that allow sunlight to reach the forest floor, promoting a dense growth of vegetation.
 - Gaps sometimes occur naturally, but can also be intentionally created by selectively cutting groups of trees.
 - This is particularly beneficial for birds in areas where mature, closed canopy forest stands have limited understory vegetation.
 - The dense growth of understory vegetation within the canopy gaps provides ample forage and nesting opportunities for birds.



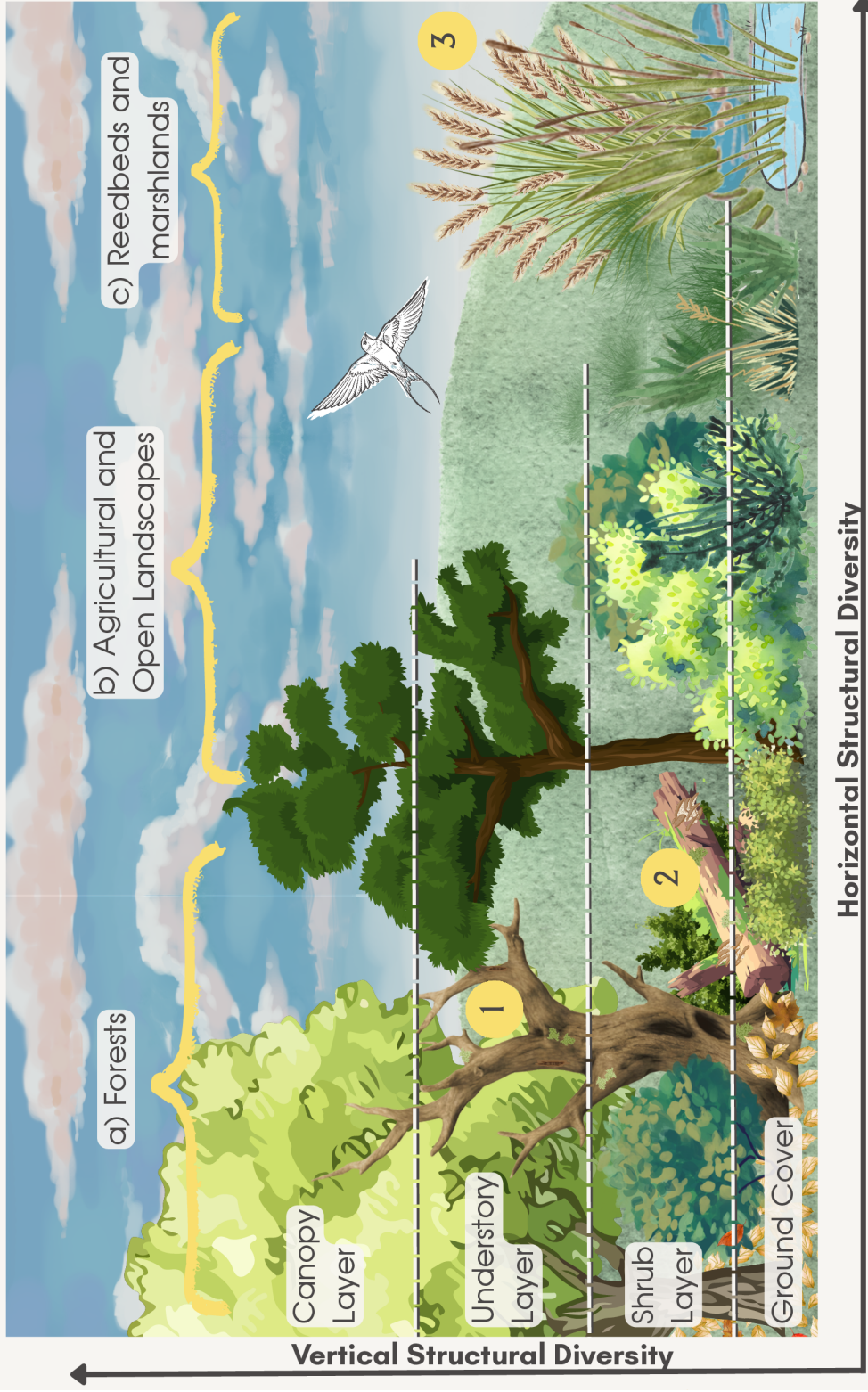
Bird's Nest in Young Pine Tree



Thinning as a forestry management technique



American Woodcock



1

Snags

Standing dead trees may not seem desirable, but they can be teeming with life. Many birds and other wildlife are cavity nesters, meaning they utilize openings within decaying trees or other structures for shelter and nesting. Some birds, such as woodpeckers, excavate the holes themselves. Others are opportunistic and will use a cavity that was previously made by another animal. In areas where it is safe to do so, leaving or creating snags provides this crucial habitat. Larger trees (above 12 inches in diameter) are particularly beneficial for this purpose.



2

Down Woody Material

Dead wood on the ground is part of a healthy ecosystem. As fungi and insects utilize and break down the fallen debris, they provide excellent forage for birds. Downed logs and branches also act as shelter for birds on the forest floor.



3

Invasive Plant Management

Fostering diverse native plant communities is key to supporting birds. Non-native invasive plant species negatively impact ecosystems by outcompeting native plants for resources and reducing overall species diversity. While they do provide cover and resources to wildlife, it is often lower in quality. The fruits of native plants offer higher quality nutrients during key periods such as the fall migration, providing more energy reserves than those of invasive plants.



Phragmites (Common Reed)



Pileated Woodpecker



Saw-Whet Owl



Sharp Shinned Hawk



Northern Flicker Chicks



Wild Turkey

Interested in Managing Your Forest for Birds?

To learn more about how to manage your land for birds and other wildlife, contact us at

conservation.njaudubon.org

or visit our website at

<http://njaudubon.org/stewardship>