

# **CONSERVATION CORNER**

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **HAS BIRDS OUT ON A LIMB**

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Nairobi, Kenya - A new report released today by WWF finds a clear and escalating pattern of climate change impacts on bird species around the world, suggesting a trend towards a major bird extinction from global warming.

The report, **Bird Species and Climate Change: The Global Status Report**, reviews more than 200 scientific articles on birds in every continent to build up a global picture of climate change impacts.

"Robust scientific evidence shows that climate change is now affecting birds' behaviour," said Dr Karl Mallon, Scientific Director at Climate Risk Pty. Ltd., authors of the report. "We are seeing migratory birds failing to migrate, and climate change pushing increasing numbers of birds out of synchrony with key elements of their ecosystems."

The report, prepared by international climate change specialists, identifies groups of birds at high risk from climate change: migratory, mountain, island, wetland, Arctic, Antarctic and seabirds. While bird species that can move easily to new habitat are expected to continue to do well, bird species that thrive only in a narrow environmental range are expected to decline, and to be outnumbered by invasive species.

The report also shows that birds suffer from climate change effects in every part of the globe. Scientists have found declines of up to 90% in some bird populations, as well as total and unprecedented reproductive failure in others.

Scientists also analysed available projections of future impacts, including bird species extinction. They found that bird extinction rates could be as high as 38% in Europe, and 72% in north-eastern Australia, if global warming exceeds 2°C above pre-industrial levels (currently it is 0.8°C above).

"Birds have long been used as indicators of environmental change, and with this report we see they are the quintessential 'canaries in the coal mine' when it comes to climate change," said Hans Verolme, Director of WWF's Global Climate Change Programme. "This report finds certain bird groups, such as seabirds and migratory birds, to be early, very sensitive, responders to current levels of climate change. Large-scale bird extinctions may occur sooner than we thought."

If high rates of extinction are to be avoided, rapid and significant greenhouse gas emission cuts must be made, WWF says.

The global conservation organization also believes that the current approach to bird conservation, focused on protecting specific areas with a high bird diversity, will fail because climate change will force birds to shift into unprotected zones. A major change in approach to bird conservation is required, according to WWF.

**Find out more ...**

[Download the report.](http://wwf.org.au/publications/bird-species-and-climate-change/) <http://wwf.org.au/publications/bird-species-and-climate-change/>

Website: <http://wwf.org.au/news/birds-climate/>