



For Immediate Release

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New Tool Uses Birds to Help Target Conservation Opportunities

Northeast Bird Habitat Conservation Initiative unites eBird Science, strategic land conservation, and climate data to visualize species needs.

REDDING, CT (October 17, 2022) – Launched earlier this month, the [Northeast Bird Habitat Conservation Initiative Mapping Tool](#) is a free, easy-to-use, interactive mapping project designed to aid northeastern conservation practitioners and organizations, including regional conservation partnerships and land trusts in their work. Using birds as its guide, the tool will support activities such as habitat management plan and stewardship development, land prioritization and acquisition strategies, and landowner and community engagement.

This unique and novel tool showcases Cornell Lab of Ornithology **eBird** Status & Trends (S&T) data for 43 priority bird species across five different habitat types, including forest, shrub/young forest, coast/shoreline, grassland, and wetland/marsh, as GIS data layers. The S&T data can be downloaded to add into preexisting GIS and land prioritization projects or overlaid with layers such as protected open space, National Audubon's Important Bird Areas, and The Nature Conservancy's Resilient and Connected Landscapes data, helping paint a clear picture of the relationship between the land and birds.

"Birds are charismatic barometers of ecological change used to help indicate ecosystem health, evaluate habitat management, create greater connections with communities, and inform about how best to spend limited conservation dollars," says Sara Barker, Cornell Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative Director, Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

"The rate of decline in bird species across the U.S. is alarming, and the leading cause of that decline is habitat loss," says Katie Blake, Conservationist at Highstead, a regional conservation non-profit in Connecticut. "By being able to clearly demonstrate the presence and distribution of priority bird species in a given area, it can help mobilize support for conservation and improvement of key habitat.

The tool was created by partners in the [Northeast Bird Habitat Conservation Initiative](#), a collaborative effort between The Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP) Network, Audubon groups, Highstead, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. GIS experts at Harvard Forest and Highstead and scientists from the Cornell Lab created simplified versions of the eBird modeled abundance bird data and made it freely available.

eBird is among the world's largest biodiversity-related science projects, with more than 100 million bird sightings contributed annually by eBirders around the world. A collaborative enterprise with hundreds of partner organizations, thousands of regional experts, and hundreds of thousands of users, eBird is managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

"This interactive mapping tool showcasing eBird science data is a valuable way to visualize the intersection of bird species of conservation concern and privately owned and unprotected land as a key piece to creating habitat connectivity for birds and other wildlife at a regional scale," says Barker.

Visit <https://bit.ly/NBHCIMappingTool> to access this new and exciting tool.

About Highstead

[Highstead](#) is a regional conservation non-profit based in Redding, Connecticut, that is dedicated to increasing the pace of land protection in New England and beyond through science, sound stewardship and collaboration with diverse partners.

About Cornell Lab of Ornithology

[The Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) is a membership institution dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds.

About NBHCI

[The Northeast Bird Habitat Conservation Initiative](#) (NBHCI) connects Regional Conservation Partnerships with bird conservation organizations and agencies throughout the northeast to expand land conservation based on shared ecological priorities. Highstead and Cornell Lab of Ornithology serve as co-leading organizations of NBHCI.