

Why birds are good indicators

There are many good reasons:

- They are widespread, diverse, mobile and live in most habitats
- Birds are better known than most other taxa
- They are relatively easy to identify, survey and census
- They are high up in the food chain and so are sensitive to land use and climate change
- Data are realistic and inexpensive to collect, analyse and report
- Methods of survey and analysis are well established
- Birds are popular and have resonance with the public and decision-makers alike
- They can be very useful in raising awareness of biodiversity issues
- They can, in some circumstances at least, faithfully reflect trends in other biodiversity



Rufous-tailed Jacamar & Rusty-margined Flycatcher, both native to South America.

How can you help?

We are keen for national organisations and representatives to contribute and guide the development of the Global Wild Bird Index in the coming years.

Further information

For further information on the Global Wild Bird Indicator project, please contact:

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

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Further information can also be obtained from:

Worldbirds:

www.worldbirds.org

Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring:

www.ebcc.info

2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership:

www.twentyten.net

Convention on Biological Diversity:

www.biodiv.org

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INFORMATION

The Global Wild Bird Indicator Project



Together for birds and people

The Global Wild Bird Indicator Project: bird population monitoring for biodiversity conservation

Background

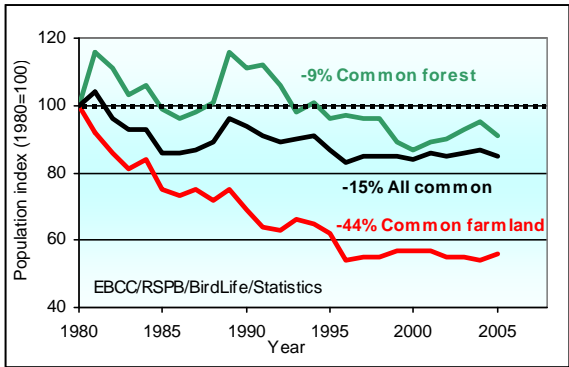
There is growing recognition across the globe that the decline in the state of nature may have profound consequences for the lives of people and their economies, through the loss of natural resources and the ecological services they provide. There is the equally compelling case for biodiversity to be conserved for its intrinsic and irreplaceable value to mankind. In response to this, world leaders have pledged to achieve a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at global, regional and national levels. But indicators are needed to measure progress towards reducing the rate of this biodiversity loss.

The Global Wild Bird Indicator Project

The Global Wild Bird Indicator Project aims to develop a global Wild Bird Index (WBI) which measures population trends of a representative suite of wild birds to act as a barometer of the general health of the environment. It is an easy-to-understand index that can be disaggregated geographically and by habitat for interpretation and communication.

The methodology for producing the global WBI is well developed: a Pan-European WBI has already been produced (see graph) and is being used to measure progress towards the EU's stated aim of halting biodiversity loss by 2010. The proven strengths of this index include sensitivity to environmental change, statistical robustness, ease of communication, efficient use of existing data, and ease and frequency of update.

Red-billed & Bar-breasted Firefinches are often seen in the vicinity of human settlements in much of Africa.



The Pan-European Wild Bird Indicator shows how common birds have declined over a 25-year period.

The Global Wild Bird Indicator Project will develop the global WBI from national population monitoring schemes. Where such schemes already exist, the Project will coordinate and facilitate the collation of species indices using data generated by these schemes. Where there are no schemes at present, the Project will provide tools and support to implement similar data collation and synthesis in a representative set of countries across regions. A key tool will be the web-based *Worldbirds*, which will support the collation of data in the form of species lists and bird surveys.



With a widespread range in Africa, Snowy-crowned Robin-chat is a bird typical of forest and savannah. It is common in parts of its range, although population trends have not been quantified.

Hooded Warblers breed in North America, but in the non-breeding season migrate to Central America and the Caribbean. However, whilst generally still relatively common and widespread, extensive monitoring has revealed declines in some parts of their range.



Eastern Yellow Robin, a bird native to Australia, is both widespread and common within its range. It is found in a wide range of habitats from dry woodland to rainforest, but it is also common in parks and gardens. Its familiarity in these habitats, and its often confiding nature, raise the public awareness of birds.

Barn Swallow is the world's most widespread species of swallow. It breeds in the northern hemisphere, migrating to warmer climes in the southern hemisphere in the non-breeding season. In both seasons, it is often found in close association with man.



The value of bird population monitoring

As well as contributing data to Wild Bird Indices, bird population monitoring schemes are valuable for other reasons.

- Widespread birds are often overlooked by other, usually more specialized, monitoring schemes; we sometimes know more about trends of rare species than common ones.
- Existing schemes have shown that many common species are declining and need conservation action, so bird population monitoring can help determine conservation priorities and identify threats.
- Bird population monitoring schemes can be used to raise awareness of birds and conservation using familiar species, rather than those which are very rare or obscure.