

IMPACT REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2020



Thank you for supporting the **Cornell Lab of Ornithology.**

Over the course of the past year, your gift to the Cornell Lab helped make our work on behalf of birds and biodiversity possible. Support from our Golden-wing Society and Chairman's Council members powers all Lab initiatives—from scientific research and conservation, to educational programming and citizen science projects. By strengthening our dedicated funding,

unrestricted commitments like yours enable us to go above and beyond in our mission to protect the natural world. In the following pages, we hope you enjoy learning about some of the remarkable things you've helped us accomplish during fiscal year 2020. We send you our gratitude for sustaining our efforts to make our planet a better place for birds and wildlife.



FISCAL YEAR 2020 BY THE NUMBERS

22.4 MILLION DIGITAL SPECIMENS

archived, in total, in the Macaulay Library that are available for use in scientific research, education, conservation, and the arts



10,721 SPECIES ACCOUNTS

published in our Birds of the World digital ornithological database



12 FELLOWS

received support from the Coastal Solutions Fellows Program to address threats facing shorebirds and habitats along the Pacific Americas Flyway

984 BIRD SPECIES

detectable via sound alone by our BirdNET bird song identification app



125,000+ MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

made it all possible

TOP TO BOTTOM: BAR-TAILED GODWIT BY GILLIE MATTHEW/MACAULAY LIBRARY, PHOTO BY ANURAG VISHWAKARMA/GBBC, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW BY JOCELYN ANDERSON/MACAULAY LIBRARY, AND BARN SWALLOWS BY MARK HAYS/MACAULAY LIBRARY



SERVING THE PUBLIC DURING COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic transformed lives around the world, the Cornell Lab was able to extend our existing online resources and mobilize additional quarantine-friendly offerings to help people maintain their connection with birds and nature.

For teachers, students, and families who suddenly found themselves dealing with the difficult reality of online learning, the Lab's Education team came up with ways to get their materials into the hands of those who needed them most. In partnership with the American Ornithological Society, we offered seven of our comprehensive online Bird Academy courses to university ornithology instructors free of charge. More than 100 professors shared these courses with their students, and as a result more than 2,000 college students were still able to gain insight into the fascinating world of ornithology and bird behavior while studying at home. In addition, our K-12 Education team put together "Curriculum for Cooped-Up Kids," a free collection of online lessons and project ideas. Focusing on elementary and middle school students, these engaging activities were designed to be easily implemented by teachers and parents, and help introduce young people to scientific inquiry through learning about birds and nature. These lessons reached an estimated 150,000 students, and the accompanying Facebook group that was created to facilitate an exchange of ideas and strategies between parents and educators has become a growing community with more than 1,800 members.

Our Bird Cams, which offer intimate windows into

the lives of birds through 24/7 livestreams accessible to anyone online, became a popular resource for teachers structuring lessons around the cams as part of remote learning. They also served as outlet for people seeking to connect to the beauty of nature while self-isolating. From April to June, Bird Cams viewership doubled to nearly 14 million. Around the world, people have been discovering the power of birds to bring moments of relief from the difficulties of the pandemic, and many turned to our free Merlin bird identification app while experiencing the joys of birdwatching for the first time. An easy-to-use resource for experienced and introductory birders alike, more than 650,000 new users enjoyed using the Merlin app this past spring. The Macaulay Library also served as a virtual resource for nature enthusiasts, as the archive experienced a surge of media uploads from contributors who have been recording local wildlife while quarantining at home—the month of March 2020 saw a nearly 87% increase in audio recording uploads from the previous year. As a digital archive, the Macaulay Library is a treasure trove of millions of natural history photos, audio recordings, and video clips that is free for anyone with an internet connection to explore.

At the Cornell Lab, we see service as a vital part of our mission, and we strive to help connect people of all walks of life with birds and nature, no matter their external circumstances. Thanks to our members and supporters, we are pleased to be able to offer the public accessible, science-based resources that celebrate the wonders of the natural world.



PUTTING SCIENCE INTO ACTION TO BRING BACK WILD BIRD POPULATIONS

Last September, a joint research effort led by the Cornell Lab discovered that more than 1 in 4 birds in the United States and Canada have disappeared since 1970. For the first time, ornithologists were able to quantify the severity of the threat to bird populations. The study, published in *Science*, found that North America has lost nearly 3 billion breeding adult birds.

As troubling as these findings are, the research did indicate a path forward to reversing these declines—the study’s analysis of 529 bird species showed that raptors and waterfowl were an exception to the massive losses suffered by other avian populations, and have actually grown over the last 50 years. This development can be traced to government regulations outlawing DDT and hunting in the case of raptors, and concentrated efforts to conserve wetlands in the case of waterfowl. The data make the role of science-based action clear—changing human behavior and public policy makes a powerful difference for birds and for our planet.

To bring critical attention to the crisis, and emphasize the positive impact collective action can

make in fighting environmental challenges, the Lab launched a public awareness campaign to #BringBirdsBack. Focusing on 7 Simple Actions people can take to help birds, the campaign highlights where our daily routines intersect with the welfare of birds and the environment—from a morning cup of coffee to lawn care, there are opportunities for all of us to make empowering decisions that can help birds. The Lab’s Science Communication team spurred the movement through a campaign website (<https://www.3billionbirds.org/>) and social media, creating digital toolkits and printable materials in multiple languages to reach tens of thousands of people.

As we work with our partners to share critical data with policymakers and strategize global conservation actions, we are determined to continue to advance conservation research and improve the methods we use to disseminate that research to the public. Scientific insight is the first step, but urgently engaging the wider world in protecting the environment and biodiversity is how we will make sure our future is one with more birds in it, not fewer.

