

Audubon MINNESOTA

SPRING 2017



Making a Safe Passage Possible

BY MOLLY PEDERSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Growing up in a small town, I remember when my family would drive to big cities to shop or visit family. Compared with the sky's darkness around my country home, the city skylines were vibrant and dazzling. I remember thinking that the city lights would help all of the birds flying overhead, making it possible for them to see the buildings and avoid crashing into them. Boy, was I wrong!

But as I talk to more and more folks about Audubon Minnesota and the work we do, I see a real need for all of us to rethink our skylines and the role they can play in helping birds safely migrate through our urban areas.

The reality is that, across the country, our urban areas kill and injure hundreds of millions of migrating birds each year. Fortunately, there is a really simple, effective solution. **Turning out unnecessary lights can reduce bird mortality from collisions by over 80 percent.**

That's why Audubon Minnesota launched "Lights Out" in 2007. Sixty-three buildings around Minnesota turn off their lights during the spring and fall migration seasons. With your support, we can double that number and create a "Lights Out Zone" that stretches all the way to the Wisconsin border.

This spring, many of the more than 250 bird species that fly through Minnesota will travel thousands of miles from their winter homes.

Join us in helping birds through the final leg of their extraordinary journey! Your donation to Audubon Minnesota *remains in Minnesota* to support local conservation efforts. Make a gift online today at mn.audubon.org. ■

Lights Off, Fly On!



Join with us to save birds, save energy, and reduce pollution.

More than 250 bird species migrate through Minnesota, many of them small songbirds such as warblers, thrushes, tanagers, and sparrows.

On the cover, Yellow-rumped Warbler by Rebecca Field. Above, Scarlet Tanager by Jim Williams.

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Navigating the Night

Spring is a busy time of year for many migratory birds as they travel thousands of miles north to their breeding grounds.

Through Lights Out, Audubon Minnesota supporters are helping migratory birds like White-throated Sparrows avoid potentially-deadly obstacles and reach nesting grounds.

Many birds migrate at night to avoid predation, use celestial cues for navigation, and maximize daylight foraging hours.

Bright city lights lure nighttime migrants into urban areas and confuse them by obscuring the moon and stars. Once trapped in the bright, windowed maze of the city, birds may crash into buildings or circle buildings until they collapse from exhaustion.

A study by the Field Museum in Chicago found that turning off lights at one downtown building reduced migratory bird deaths there by 83 percent.

Over the past decade, volunteers have noted more than 4,700 dead and injured native, migratory birds from a sampling of buildings in downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis.

In 2007, Audubon Minnesota launched Lights Out to encourage buildings to reduce their lighting use. There are currently 63 buildings participating in Lights Out in Minnesota.

Through Lights Out, Audubon Minnesota supporters are helping migratory birds avoid potentially-deadly obstacles and reach nesting grounds.

By supporting Audubon Minnesota, you are helping lower greenhouse gas emissions, increase the number of participating buildings, and ultimately, helping more birds make it safely to their destination. ■

Homeowners are encouraged to participate in Lights Out to help make their homes more bird-friendly, too.

Take these simple steps to make a difference today:

- ▶ Turn off unnecessary indoor and outdoor lights at night.
- ▶ Shield external lights to direct light downward.
- ▶ Install motion sensor-activated lights.
- ▶ Encourage building managers to participate in Lights Out. Implementing Lights Out practices will reduce energy consumption and save money.



CREDIT: JIM WILLIAMS



PHOTOS BY PER BREIEHAGEN

The Minneapolis skyline before and after Lights Out on the same night. Lights Out helps migrating birds by decreasing bright lights from urban buildings.

Thank You Lights Out Participants

BLOOMINGTON

HealthPartners
Normandale Lake Office Park
Reflections Condominiums

GOLDEN VALLEY

The Colonnade
General Mills

MINNEAPOLIS

20, 100 & 111 Washington Square
33 South Sixth St./City Center
333 South Seventh Street Tower
Ameriprise CSC Building
Ameriprise Financial
Campbell Mithun Tower
Capella Tower
Carlyle Condominium
Fifth Street Towers - 100 & 150 South Fifth Street
Fifty South Sixth
Grant Park Tower
Hennepin County Central Library
Hennepin County Government Center
Hennepin County Health Services Building
IDS Center
International Centre
LaSalle Plaza
Mill Ruins Building
Mill City Museum
One Financial Plaza
Oracle Centre
Plaza Seven
RBC Plaza/Gaviidae Common II
Retek on the Mall
River Parkway Place
Riverplace
Thrivent Financial

U.S. Bancorp Center
U.S. Bank Center
U.S. Bank Plaza
Wells Fargo Center

MINNETONKA

301 & 401 Carlson Parkway
601 Tower at Carlson Center
Carlson Center East I

PLYMOUTH

One & Two Carlson Parkway

ROCHESTER (MAYO CLINIC)

Gonda Building
Guggenheim Building
Hilton Building
Mayo Building
Siebens Building
Stabile Building

ROSEVILLE

Symantec

ST. LOUIS PARK

MetroPoint

ST. PAUL

Bremer Tower Building
Ramsey County Government Center
Ramsey County Library
Saint Paul City Hall/Ramsey County Courthouse
Securian Financial (400 Building)
Securian Financial (401 Building)
Travelers Insurance
Wells Fargo Place
Wilder Center

WABASHA

National Eagle Center

Pushing for Conservation Policy

The 2017 Legislative session ends on May 22. Audubon Minnesota is tracking several bills related to clean water and clean air for birds and people. Our government affairs team is working with lawmakers and other stakeholders to prevent drastic funding cuts and rollbacks of critical protections. Our efforts include:

HF888 Environment and natural resources budget

- ▶ Our parks and trails are some of the best places to introduce kids to birds and nature. We support additional funding to maintain and enhance these treasured places.
- ▶ We support allowing the DNR to protect birds, water and wildlife from the harmful effects of toxic lead.

SF1937 Energy budget

- ▶ All Minnesotans should be able to get electricity from clean, renewable sources. We are working to prevent the legislature from making it harder for people in rural areas to access wind and solar power.

HF1265/SF550 Environmental Trust Fund spending (lottery proceeds)

HF 707 Legacy Amendment spending

- ▶ These funds were constitutionally approved by voters and provide important additional investments in our natural resources. We support funding projects that were approved by the citizen-led councils tasked with recommending how these dollars should be spent.



Audubon Minnesota was a sponsor of Water Action Day on April 19 at the State Capitol. Over 700 Minnesotans urged lawmakers to support the state's buffer law and other important safeguards for water.

Buffers are Better for Clean Water

In 2015, Audubon Minnesota joined forces with dozens of environmental, sporting, and outdoor recreation organizations to pass the state's landmark Buffer Law. The initiative establishes 110,000 acres of new perennial vegetation buffers along rivers, streams, lakes, public ditches, and some wetlands.

With more than 40 percent of the state's waters polluted or impaired, the need for this initiative is clear. Buffers protect Minnesota's water resources by helping filter out phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment, and stabilizing banks. In addition to these water quality benefits, some buffers will provide much needed habitat for birds and pollinators.

Now, Minnesota is well on its way to full compliance. In March, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources reported that 74 percent of Minnesota's counties are already 60-100 percent compliant with the law, a full eight months before landowners have to meet the first deadline.

"These buffers would not be in place today without the support and advocacy of Audubon's thousands of members throughout the state," said Molly Pederson, Audubon Minnesota's Executive Director. Molly served as Governor Mark Dayton's environment and agriculture advisor at the time the law was passed, and recalls the stiff opposition when he first proposed the initiative. "People thought it was a good idea with no chance of ever becoming law," she said.

Audubon's members made hundreds of phone calls and sent thousands of emails to their legislators urging them to pass a strong law that improves water quality and protects the aquatic life important to birds. "It made a difference when lawmakers saw this as a top priority for their constituents," Molly said. "Now, we have a law that will clean up water and provide the support landowners need to comply. Audubon members can tell our children and grandchildren that we made it happen." ■

In addition to the clean water benefits, buffers create habitat for birds like Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Yellowthroats (pictured), Sedge Wrens, and Song Sparrows.



CREDIT: JIM WILLIAMS



CREDIT: REBECCA FIELD



CREDIT: USDA

Landowners Help Reduce Runoff

What do landowners have to do to help reduce runoff, and when do they need to do it?

- ▶ Nov. 1, 2017 – 50-foot average width (30-foot minimum width) buffers, or alternative practices, must be in place on lands adjacent to public waters.
- ▶ Nov. 1, 2018 – 16.5-foot minimum width buffers, or alternative practices, must be in place on lands adjacent to public ditches.



CREDIT MICHAEL FURTMAN

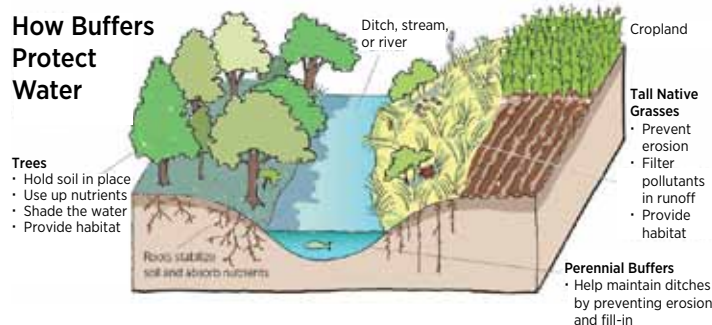
Drainage ditches like this may introduce pollutants to surface water. Installing buffers helps to filter excess soil and nutrients.

What are other options for landowners?

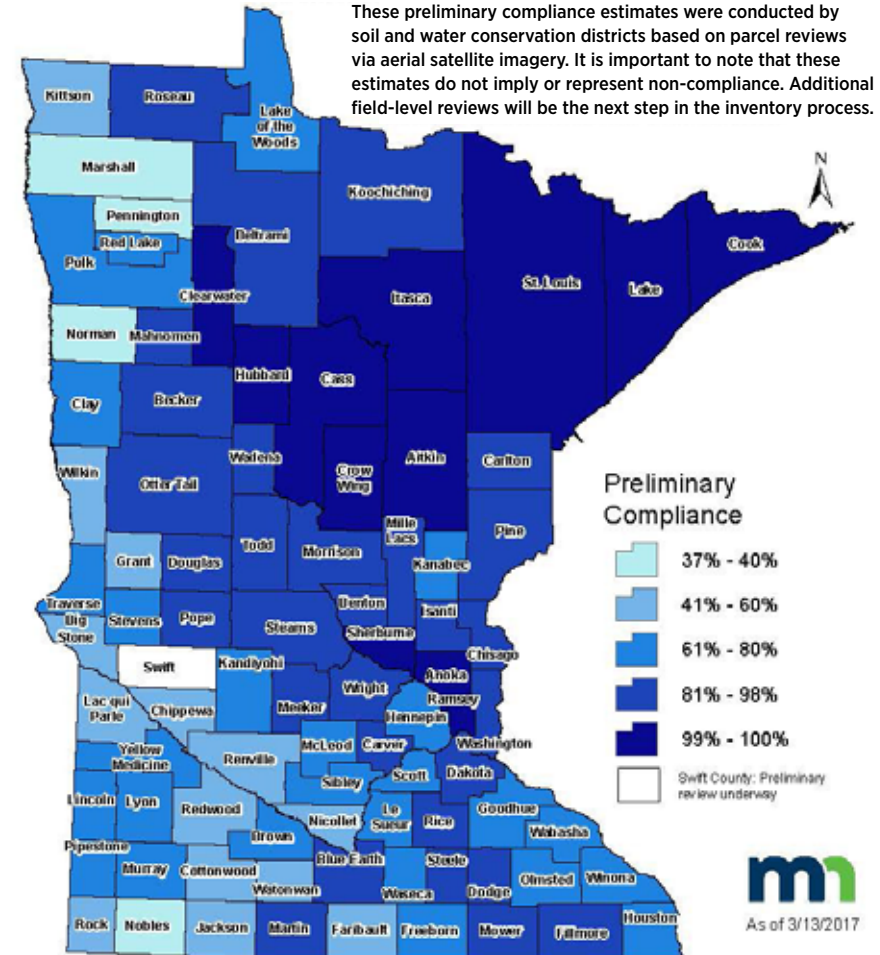
The law's goal is simple: reduce runoff from land into nearby lakes, rivers, streams, and ditches.

For many landowners, that means installing a buffer. But some landowners are working closely with their local soil and water conservation districts on alternatives that include managed grazing, installation of hayable buffers, native prairie plantings, and enrollment in the federal Conservation Reserve Program or the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program. ■

How Buffers Protect Water



See if your county is on track. Shown below, estimated percentage of parcel buffer law preliminary compliance.



Growing Plants for Birds

With bird migration currently underway, we invite you to grow bird-friendly native plants at home. Gardens are outdoor sanctuaries for birds, insects, and other wildlife. Every spring, migrating birds visit yards looking for nourishment and protection to raise their young.

Keep Common Birds Common

By growing native plants, you can help protect birds!

Attract birds by using native plants:

Birches and sumacs for **Chickadees** and **Titmice**

Honeysuckle vines, penstemons, milkweeds, and sages for **Hummingbirds**

Beeches and oaks for **Warblers** and **Vireos**

Pines, hickories, oaks, and cherries for **Woodpeckers**

Echinacea for **American Goldfinches** and many other species!

Most landscaping plants in nurseries are exotic species that are prized for qualities that make them poor food sources for wildlife. Exotic plants generally require more water and chemicals to thrive, increasing maintenance time, costs, and pollution. Some can even become invasive.

By adding native plants to your yard, balcony, garden, or rooftop, you can help birds in the face of climate change, urban development, and other threats. ■



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