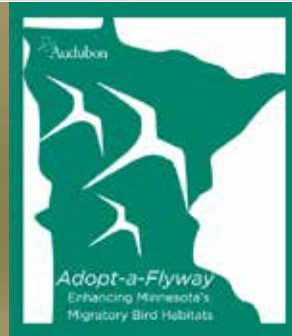




WINGS OVER WORKING LANDS



Dale Gentry Ph.D., Conservation Director
Sarah Hewitt, Senior Conservation Manager





What the World Needs Now



Mission

Audubon protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow.

North Star Vision

A future where birds thrive across the Americas because Audubon is a powerful, diverse, and ever-growing force for conservation.

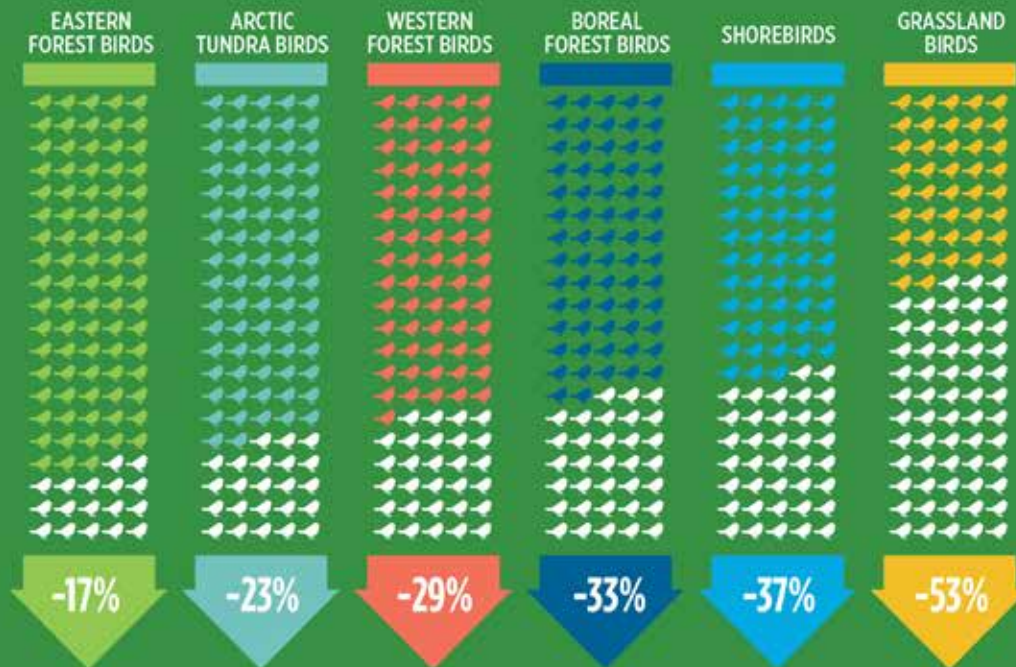
Purpose

When we create conditions for birds to thrive, we create conditions for people and the planet to thrive, too.

Our Why:

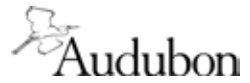


DECLINING BIRD POPULATIONS SINCE 1970





Wings Over Working Lands Initiative



Regenerative Land
Management
Practices

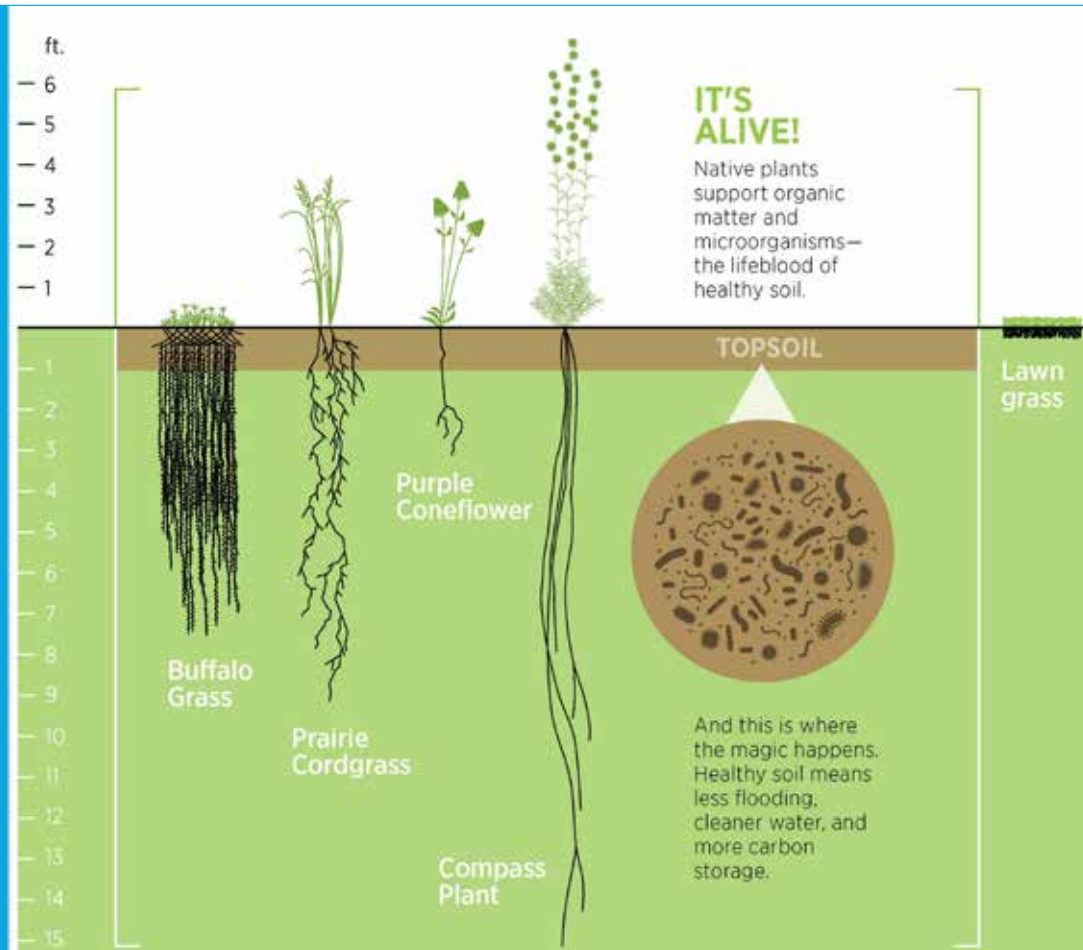
Public recognition or
certification for bird-friendly
management

Market-Based
Conservation
Strategies



Regenerative Land Management

The process of restoring degraded soils and habitat using management practices based on ecological principles.



Market-Based Conservation

Connecting conservation-conscious consumers to products that were grown or created with environmental standards.



Audubon's Wings Over Working Lands Programs in Minnesota

Bird-Friendly Maple

Recognition program that integrates sustainable forest management practices into the maple industry and emphasizes bird-friendly practices



Audubon Conservation Ranching

Certification program that partners with land stewards to use grazers to manage habitat and stabilize declining bird populations on privately owned grasslands



Adopt – A - Flyway

Recognition program that partners with land stewards to enhance bird habitat on private and public lands





Our Purpose:

Audubon Bird Friendly Maple aims to stabilize declining forest bird populations in partnership with maple product producers.





Bird-Friendly Maple – What it means

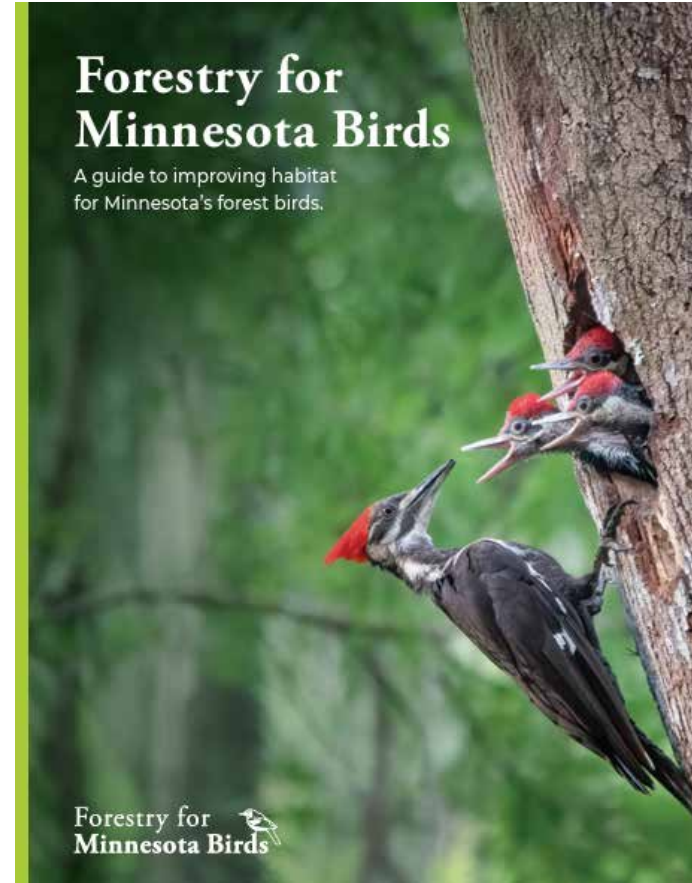




Bird-Friendly Maple

Maple for Birds = Forestry for Birds

- Enhance structural diversity and support regeneration
- Keep snags and down wood
- Add or maintain conifers, other native trees and shrubs
- Manage invasive species





Audubon's Approach – Bird-Friendly Maple



- **EDUCATE** maple producers and consumers on the importance of healthy forests to birds and how they can be partners in conservation efforts
- **PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE** to maple producers on managing sugarbushes with birds in mind
- **RECOGNIZE** maple producers for their efforts to incorporate bird habitat into their forest management





Our Purpose:

Audubon Conservation Ranching aims to stabilize declining grassland bird populations in partnership with land stewards.

Audubon Certified Bird Friendly Seal

The Audubon Certified bird friendly seal recognizes lands managed to promote birds and biodiversity.

Turning consumers into conservationists through the power of their purchase.



Program Protocols

The Three Pillars



HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Ranchers adopt a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) that addresses site-specific habitat goals and management actions to benefit target grassland bird species.



ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE

Certified ranches demonstrate a commitment to properly caring for livestock by adhering to livestock production methods that reflect best practices for animal health and welfare. Growth hormones are prohibited.



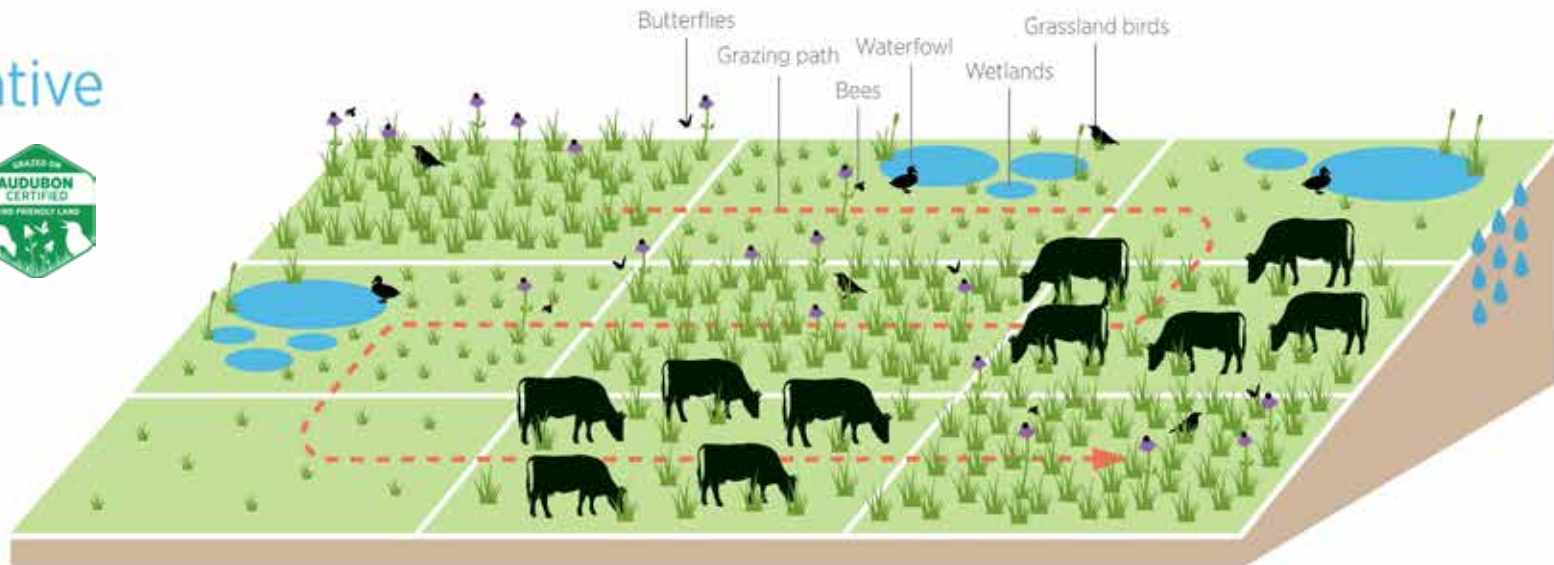
ENVIROMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

By restricting pesticides, minimizing fertilizers, and protecting streambanks, ranching practices result in cleaner streams, healthier soils, increased plant diversity, and more pollinators.



Regenerative Grazing

Cattle graze in one area and move on to the next, allowing the full regrowth cycle essential for grassland ecosystems.



DIVERSE HABITAT

Regenerative grazing enhances habitat diversity, which benefits birds, pollinators, and other wildlife.



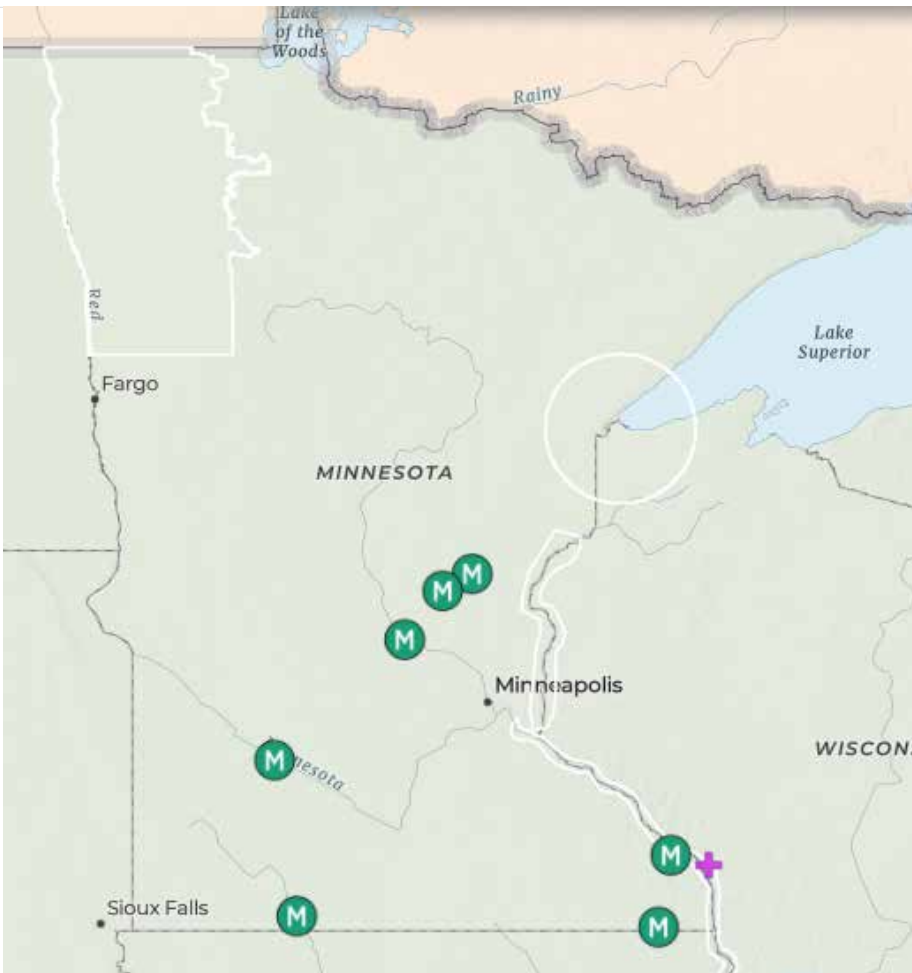
CARBON SEQUESTRATION

Plants capture atmospheric carbon most efficiently during the regrowth process.



CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Healthy soils with deep roots hold more water and can withstand droughts.



Audubon Conservation Ranching in Minnesota

- Five certified farms - 3,980 acres
- Two pending certifications through third-party auditor, Food Alliance – 2,000 acres
- Six enrollments in progress.

Audubon Conservation Ranching Nationally

- 150 ranches and farm, nearing 4.5M acres
 - 2030 goal: 200 ranches, 5M acre impact
- 20 state impact
- Growth in SW and NW United States

Conservation Innovation Grant

- September 2024, \$2.5M
- Technical and Financial Assistance
 - Bird + Soil Monitoring
 - Habitat Practice Cost Share
 - Incentive Payments
 - Bird Occupancy Payments
- Technical Capacity in MN, WI, and IA
- Funding available through 2028



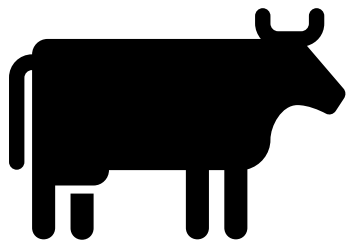
United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Innovations

- **Bird Occupancy Payments** - Participating farms are eligible to receive bird occupancy payments based on the presence of target bird species
- **Dairy Grazing** – Partner with Organic Valley to assess bird-friendliness of grazing for dairy
- **Incentive Payments** – Resting land to support Rx fire and after seeding
- **Bird Monitoring** – Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) to monitor birds and assess habitat outcomes from habitat enhancements
- **Social Science** – Work with Virginia Tech to assess producer perceptions of Audubon Conservation Ranching

Bird-Friendly Practices Supported



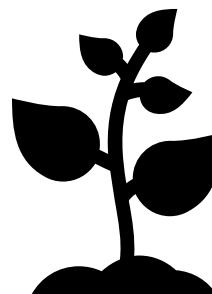
Fence and
Livestock
Pipeline



Prescribed
Fire



Brush
Management

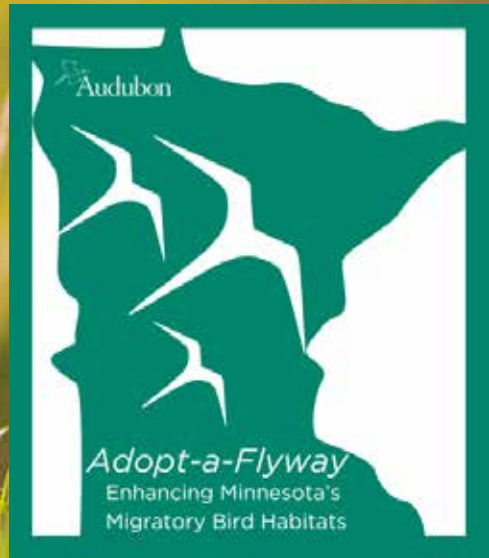


Native Pasture
and Hay Planting

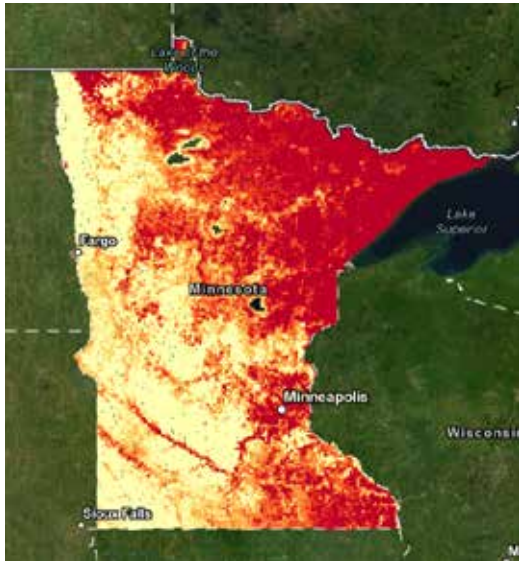


Our Purpose:

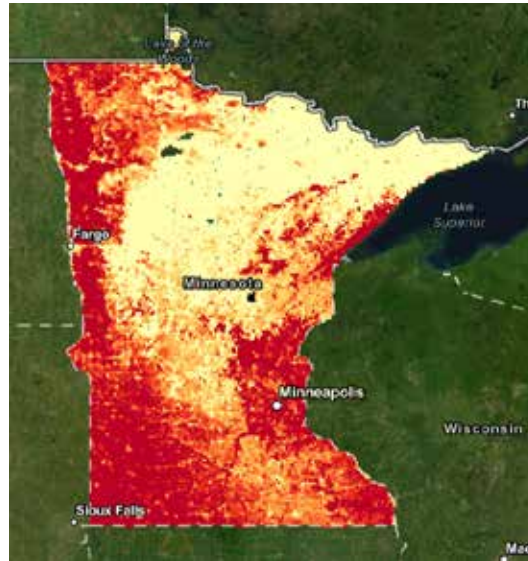
Audubon Adopt-A-Flyway aims to stabilize declining migratory bird populations in partnership with diverse land stewards.



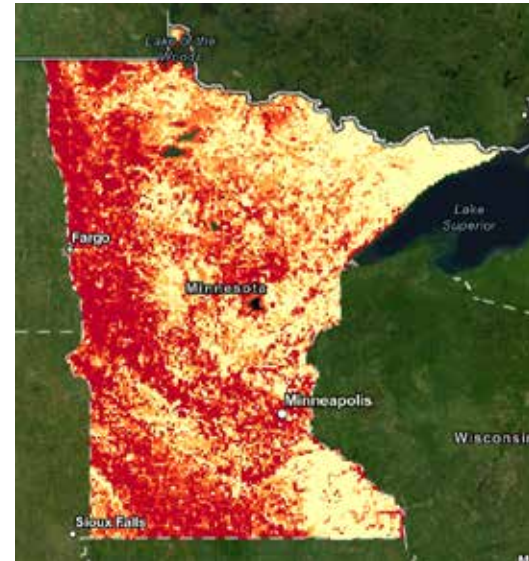
Prioritize sites in migratory stopover priority areas



Forest stopover



Open areas stopover



Water stopover



Adopt-A-Flyway

- **Technical and Financial Assistance for public and private land stewards**
- **ARU bird monitoring to assess outcomes**
- **Public recognition and social connections**
- **Urban to Rural**



Assessing impact: Bird monitoring

The Bird-Friendliness Index: making conservation accountable by measuring impacts of management actions

The Bird-Friendliness Index is an accountability metric used to quantify the impact of Audubon's Conservation Ranching program on vulnerable grassland and aridland birds.

WHAT IS THE BIRD-FRIENDLINESS INDEX?

A metric that measures the abundance, diversity, and resilience of a bird community.

$$\text{BFI} = \text{ABUNDANCE} \quad \begin{array}{c} \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \end{array} + \text{DIVERSITY} \quad \begin{array}{c} \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \end{array} + \text{RESILIENCE} \quad \begin{array}{c} \nearrow \end{array}$$

WHAT DOES THE BFI TELL US?

Areas with higher abundance and more vulnerable birds support healthy communities.
High functional diversity means communities are more stable and resilient.



Questions?



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Dale.Gentry@audubon.org