



**BIRD STUDIES CANADA**  
**ÉTUDES D'OISEAUX CANADA**

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**Christmas Birds Observed throughout the U.S.  
Found to Depend on Canada's Boreal Forest**  
*Groups on Both Sides of the Border Eye Conservation Strategies*

Tennessee Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Philadelphia Vireo, Cape May Warbler, Nashville Warbler all sound like birds that would live in the U.S. “In fact, over 80% of the global population of these songbirds depends on Canada’s Northern Boreal Forest to nest and raise their young each summer,” said Marilyn Heiman the Director of the Boreal Songbird Initiative.

A report released today, Importance of Canada’s Boreal Forest to Landbirds by Bird Studies Canada, estimates that as many as 3 – 5 billion landbirds migrate south from their breeding grounds in the Boreal Forest each year. Approximately one billion of those birds winter in the U.S. making it the biggest beneficiary of the birds produced in the Boreal Forest. In parts of the southern U.S., up to 1/3 of the birds present in the winter are Boreal Birds. “These include several species Americans will be looking at in their bird feeders this winter or searching for during the National Audubon Society’s Annual Christmas Bird Count,” said Bob Perciasepe, Vice President for Policy, National Audubon Society.

Michael Bradstreet, the CEO and Director of Bird Studies Canada said, “This is the first report ever to assess the importance of this little known Canadian northern forest to U.S. bird populations.”

Key Points of the Bird Studies Canada report include:

- The Boreal is of immense global significance to landbirds in North America;
- 30% of the landbirds in North America (186 species) breed in the Boreal;
- Canada’s Boreal is the birthplace to over 50% of the global population for approximately 40 bird species. Plus almost 90% of the global population for the following 6 species are born in the Boreal: Palm Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Black-backed Woodpecker, Connecticut Warbler, Northern Shrike, and Smith’s Longspur;
- Many Boreal birds use the U.S. for staging areas in their annual spring and fall migrations. In some areas, almost 50% of the birds during these migrations are Boreal Birds.

“Unfortunately, the Boreal Forest of Canada is in trouble,” said Cathy Wilkinson of the Canadian Boreal Initiative. “Although the Canadian Boreal is one of the last intact forests left on the planet, decisions made by Canadian Governments in the next 3 – 5 years will determine the fate of this incredible ecosystem.” Resource development projects are being planned in Northern



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Canada including oil and gas, timber, hydro, and mining in some of the most remote places left in North America.

“A comprehensive national approach is critical to both protecting and sustainably managing this global resource. In Canada, conservation groups, industry, First Nations and governments need to work together to develop a framework for the entire Boreal Forest that will safeguard these critical values,” said Wilkinson. She added, “It will take support from people in Canada as well as the U.S. to make this a reality.”

Susan Casey-Lefkowitz, Senior Attorney, Natural Resources Defense Council agreed, “Public attention from the U.S. will be a key element in the campaign to protect the Boreal. This attention will be critical because U.S. consumers purchase much of the pulp and paper, oil and gas and hydro power being produced in the Boreal Forest. In addition, Canada and the U.S. are each other’s largest trading partners. Over \$1.5 billion of goods cross the border each day.”

David Pashley, Vice-President for Conservation for American Bird Conservancy said, “Some of the most common birds that winter in the U.S. breed in the Boreal.” These include, White-throated Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Bohemian Waxwings, Rusty Blackbirds, Purple Finches, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Dark-eyed Juncos, Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins to name a few.” He added, “Protection of the Boreal is critical for maintaining the diversity and quantity of many birds we enjoy watching in the U.S.”

“Some of these very same species are experiencing population declines,” said Bradstreet. These include White-throated Sparrows, Rusty Blackbirds, Pine Siskins, Purple Finches and Northern Flickers. “Other Boreal breeders that migrate through the U.S. on their way to wintering grounds in Latin America are also experiencing declines such as Least and Olive-sided Flycatchers, Connecticut, Canada and Blackpoll Warblers, and Gray-cheeked Thrushes.” According to the report, approximately 40 species of Boreal landbirds are currently experiencing population declines either in the Boreal or region wide.

Jerry DeMarco of Sierra Legal Defense Fund, referring to a report that his group has submitted to the NAFTA Commission for Environmental Cooperation on behalf of several conservation groups in Canada and the U.S. said, “In 2001, clearcutting in Ontario alone destroyed over 85,000 migratory bird nests.” He added, “Unless a major effort is initiated to improve logging practices and protect large interconnected areas of the Boreal Forest, we will see a greater loss of bird nests for many species which could translate into fewer birds flying south on their annual migration and fewer birds showing up at feeders in the U.S.”



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