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## **Climate Change Poses Threat to Boreal Birds but Solutions Exist to Make Birds More Resilient**

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Many boreal bird species risk significant declines as a result of climate change, but a new report identifies areas of Canada's Boreal Forest that hold the key to birds' long-term survival. While conditions in some bird habitats are expected to shift, large landscapes within the boreal region will remain relatively stable. Protecting these boreal lands will offer birds the best chance to thrive.

The report, a first-of-its-kind assessment released by the Boreal Songbird Initiative, examined 53 bird species and found that more than half could face declines—some up to 70 percent—if steps are not taken to conserve important habitat. Birds particularly at risk because of a projected decline in their area of suitable climate include the Canada Jay (also known as the Grey Jay or Whiskey Jack), Palm Warbler, and Rusty Blackbird. Other bird species, like the Cape May Warbler, are projected to move northward but will need intact habitats along the way to survive.

The analysis identifies two types of landscapes that, if protected, could provide nesting grounds, vibrant wetlands and intact forest habitat that will support birds for decades to come:

**Climate Refugia:** Large areas of the forest will remain relatively stable and continue to sustain many bird species. Most of these climate refugia for birds overlap with important storehouses of carbon, caribou habitat and other high conservation values.

**Climate Corridors:** Many bird species will move northward as conditions change over time. Protecting pathways of intact boreal forest will help vulnerable bird species adapt to their new ranges.

"It's exciting to find solutions that will help boreal birds be resilient in the face of climate change," said Dr. Jeff Wells of the Boreal Songbird Initiative. "The science is showing us places that will be relatively stable and provide important bird habitat into the future. We can use that information now to protect birds and the boreal lands they depend on."

The discoveries outlined in the report, "Boreal Forest Refuge: Conserving North America's Bird Nursery in the Face of Climate Change," confirm that birds are important indicators of forest health. The boreal landscapes that will help birds adapt to climate change are the same places that sustain caribou and other wildlife and provide communities with clean air and water.

Identifying these landscapes can help guide Canada as it strives to meet international commitments aimed at combating species extinction.

“Canada pledged to sustain biodiversity by protecting at least 17% of lands by 2020,” said Wells. “The projections of where birds and other wildlife will continue to thrive in the Boreal Forest provide valuable information for achieving that goal,” said Dr. Wells.

It’s not just Canada that will benefit from protecting bird habitat. Birds that begin life in the Boreal Forest migrate across the Western Hemisphere, pollinating plants, dispersing seeds and controlling insects along the way.

To maintain this larger web of biodiversity, the report recommends using climate refugia and corridors as a guide for land use decisions and conservation strategies. It notes that Boreal Forest region remains the traditional territory of Indigenous Peoples, and many Indigenous Nations are creating Indigenous Protected Areas and innovative models to conserve large landscapes within the forest.

“Indigenous-led conservation efforts underway in the Boreal Forest offer some of the greatest hope for protecting birds and other wildlife into the future,” said Wells. “The research also shows that all provinces and territories have opportunities to help birds withstand climate change. Partnerships between Crown and Indigenous governments will ensure birds flourish in the boreal for generations to come.”

The report and additional materials can be found at:

<https://www.borealbirds.org/announcements/report-conserving-north-americas-bird-nursery-face-climate-change>

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**ABOUT THE BOREAL SONGBIRD INITIATIVE:** The Boreal Songbird Initiative (BSI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to education and outreach about the importance of the boreal forest region to North America’s birds, other wildlife, and the global environment.