



# AUDUBON UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER WINGS OVER WORKING LANDS



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# Flight Plan

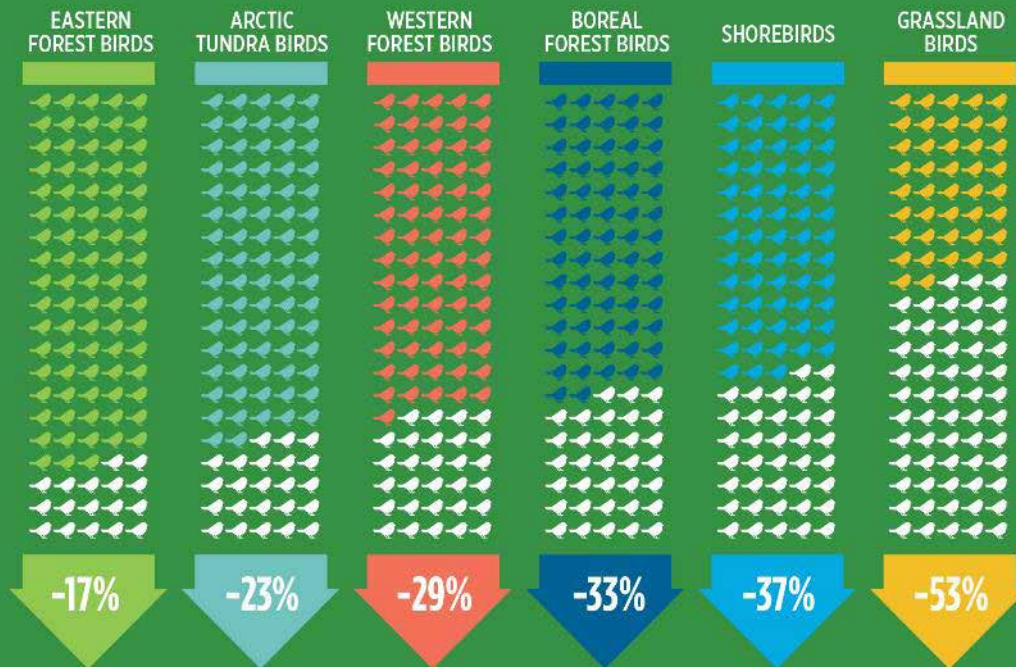
**AUDUBON STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2028 OVERVIEW**

*American Avocets. Photo: Natalia Kuzmina/Alamy*



## Our Why:

### DECLINING BIRD POPULATIONS SINCE 1970





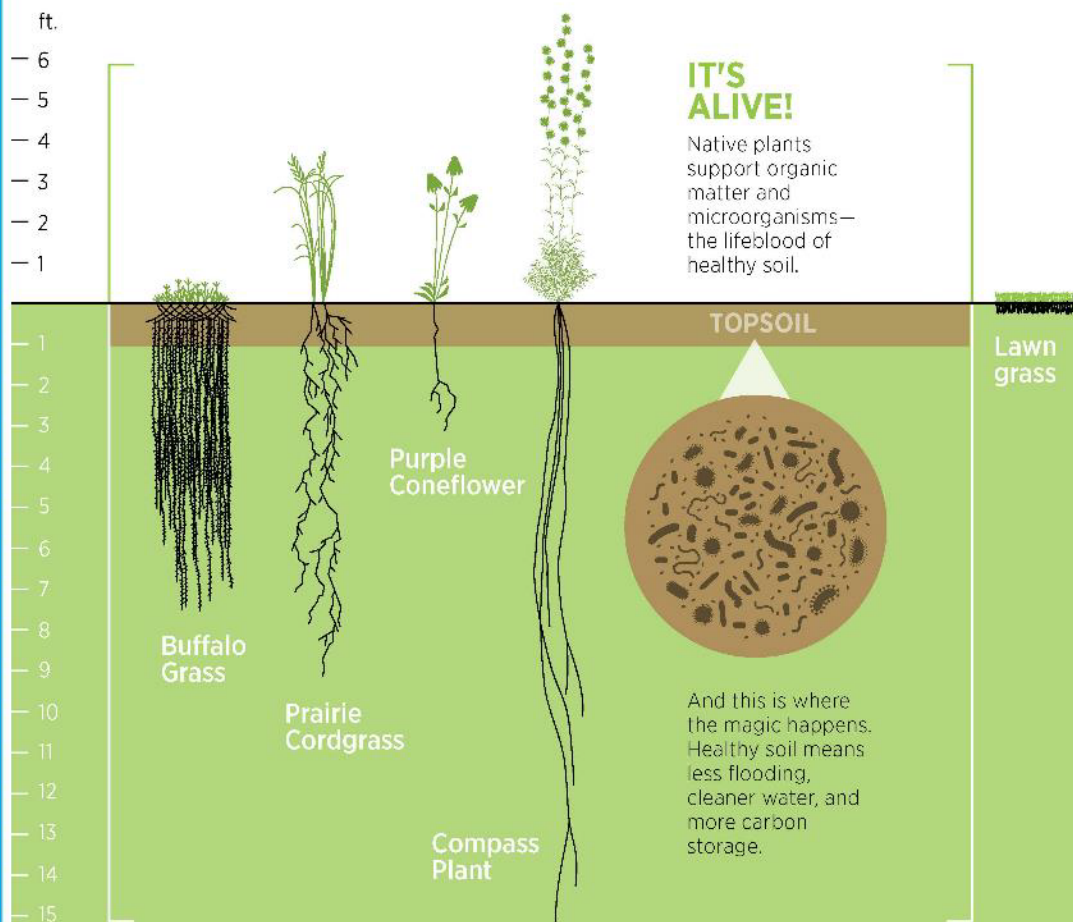
Regenerative Land  
Management Practices

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

### *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 and farmers to stabilize declining bird populations on privately owned grasslands.







# Bird-Friendly Maple – What it means





# Bird-Friendly Maple

## “MORE THAN MAPLE”

 Audubon



APA 2018 – Randy Streufert



APA 2018 – Shirley Donald





# Bird-Friendly Maple

## “LAYER CAKE”

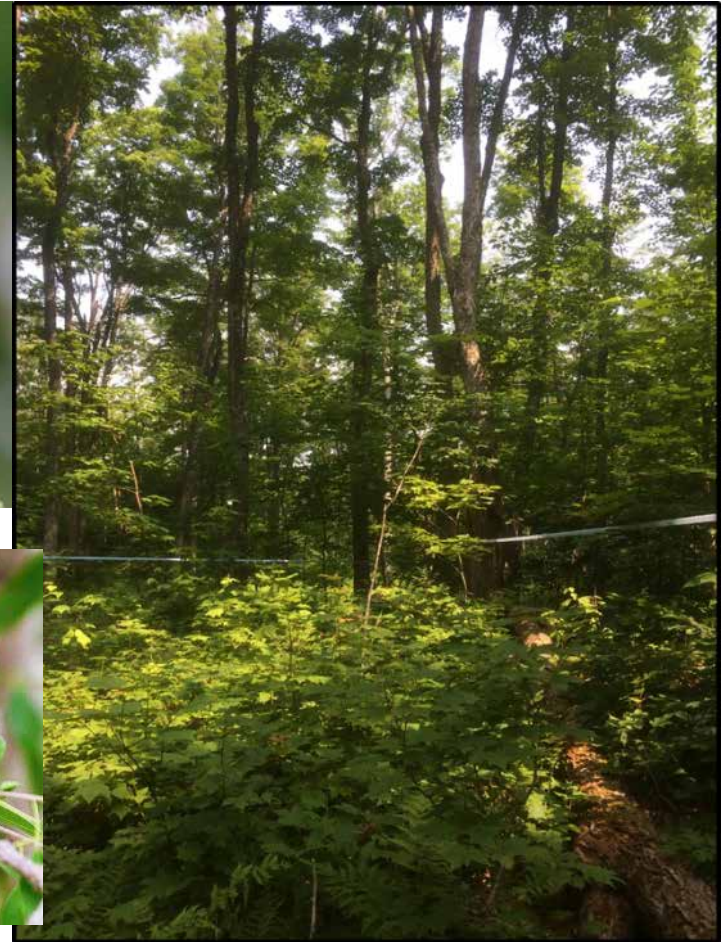
 Audubon



Juan Zamora



APA 2015 – Lorraine Minns





# Bird-Friendly Maple

## “DEAD WOOD IS GOOD WOOD”

 Audubon



APA 2016 – Kendall Ronning



Bob Hilscher





# Bird-Friendly Maple – “SAY YES TO NATIVE PLANTS”

 Audubon





## 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



## **New Staff!**

**Jacob Crawford, Forest Ecologist**

**[Jacob.Crawford@audubon.org](mailto:Jacob.Crawford@audubon.org)**





## 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.



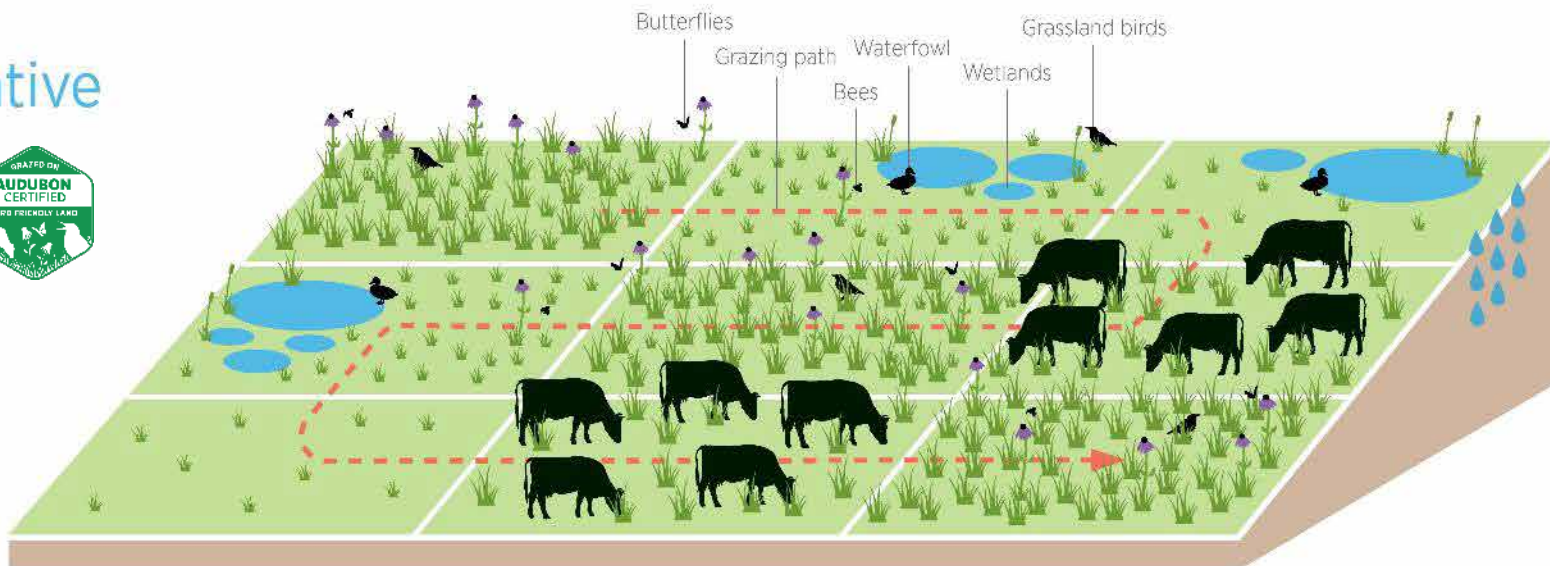
#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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.

## ACR in Minnesota

- Four certified farms
- 3,100 acres
- Two pending certifications through third-party auditor, Food Alliance



## Conservation Innovation Grant

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

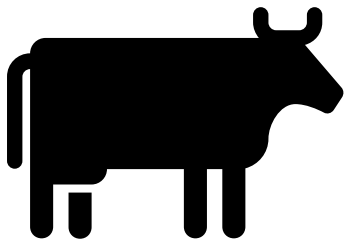


United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



## Bird-Friendly Practices Supported



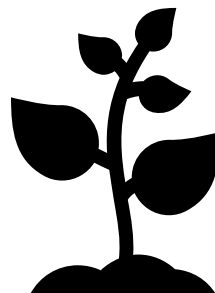
Fence and  
Livestock  
Pipeline



Prescribed  
Fire



Brush  
Management



Native Pasture  
and Hay Planting



## Bird Occupancy Payments

Participating farms are eligible to receive bird occupancy payments based on the presence of target bird species.

Producers can earn up to \$5,000 in a breeding season, or \$10,000 for two years. Audubon will conduct bird monitoring to determine payment.

### ***Payment Structure:***

10-25% target species = \$1,500

25-50% target species = \$2,500

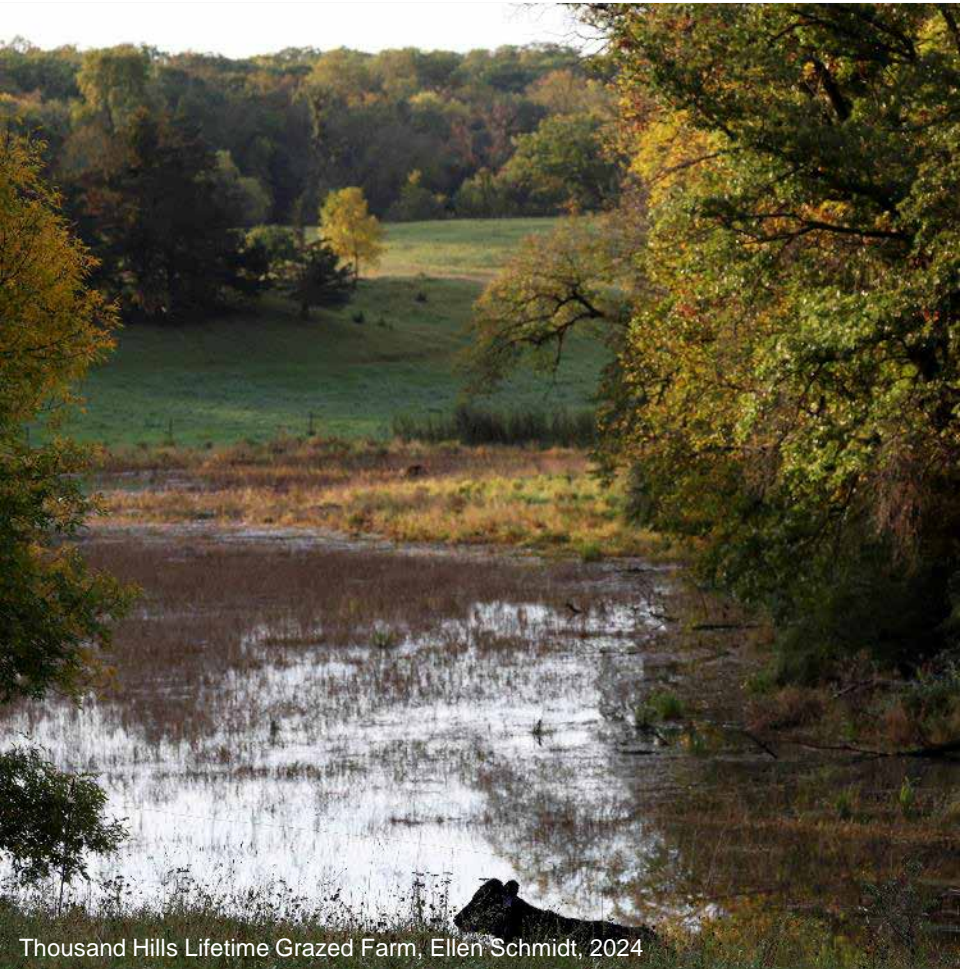
50-75% target species = \$3,500

75%+ target species = \$5,000

## Bird Monitoring – Autonomous Recording Units

- Songmeter Mini, Wildlife Acoustics
- Monitoring across entire breeding season (Late April – Mid June)
- Collect target bird species occupancy data to inform bird occupancy payments
- BirdNet, data analysis platform





## More CIG Deliverables

- Organic Valley Dairy Farm Technical Assistance
- Bird-Friendly Regenerative Grazing BMP Recommendations
- Virginia Tech Conservation Social Impact Study

# THANK YOU!



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