

BIO 132 – Field Ornithology
Critical Thinking Assignment
Population Changes in Birds

Due Date: beginning of class on November 3. No credit will be given for late assignments.
Paper must be typed.
This is an individual assignment. You will not get credit for group submissions.

Introduction

Worldwide, life is experiencing dramatic extinction on a scale only matched by a handful of events in the history of our planet. The actions of human society appear to be all or part of the cause of most species extinctions documented in human history.

Conservation biologists work to understand animal and plant populations in an effort to develop strategies to prevent species from going extinct. In class we discussed bird populations, how they are studied, and some of the most common causes of changes in bird populations.

Assignment

Goal: Students will expand on the framework established in class by studying and thinking about changes in the population of a bird species, how the change was detected, what may have caused the change, and what actions they suggest to address the change.

Each student will **be assigned one species of bird from a list provided by the instructor**. Students may select a species that is not on the list with the instructor's approval. Each student will write about a different bird species.

Submit a 3-5 page essay, structured as follows:

1. *Introduction*. Very briefly, provide some basic information about your bird species. What does it look like? What does it eat? What is its preferred habitat? In what part of the world is it found? These basic questions will help inform your thinking in subsequent sections.
2. *Population Changes*. Research the history of your bird species. Is it common? Endangered? Extinct? In what ways has its population changed? How were the population changes detected?
3. *Causes of Population Changes*. What reasons have been proposed for the changes in the population of your bird species? What do you think have been the most important causes? Why do you think the cause or causes you named are the most important?
4. *Plan for the Future*. Now is your opportunity to think like a conservation ornithologist. Is the population of your bird species secure? Are dramatic measures needed to save your bird species from extinction? Propose actions that you think will allow your bird species to thrive for centuries to come.