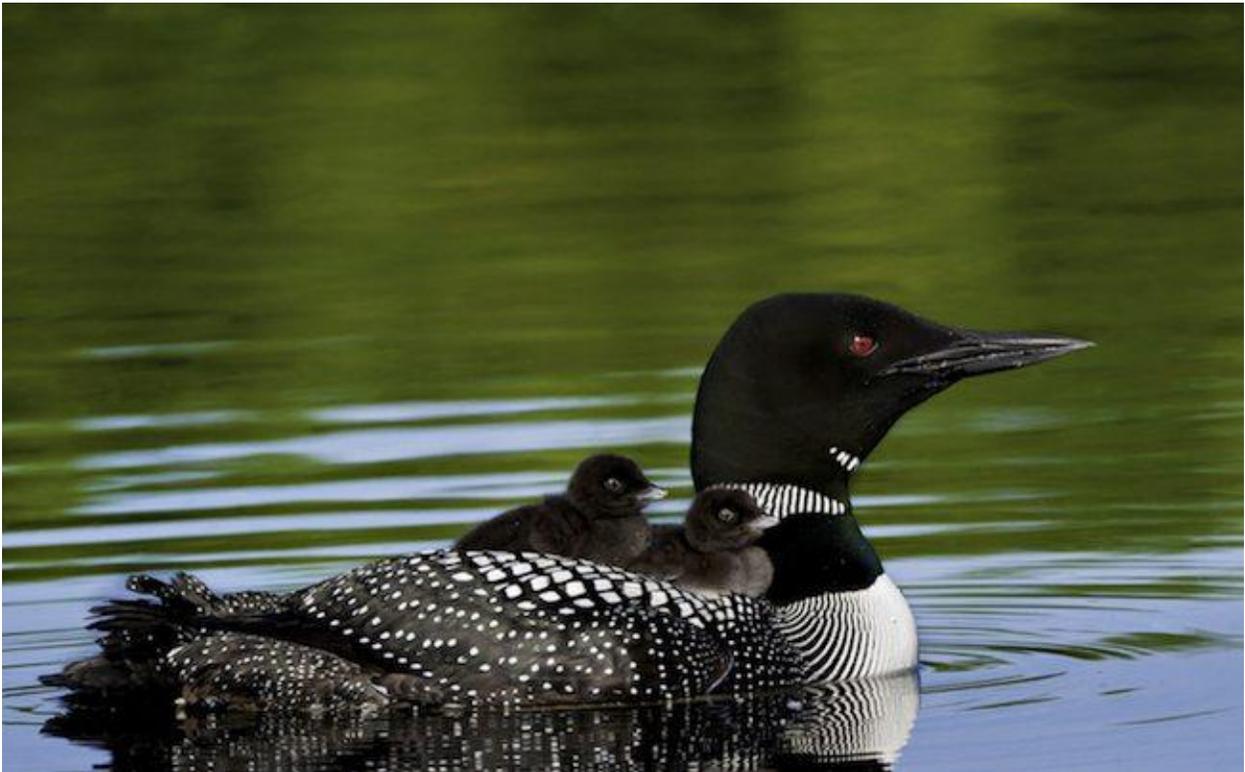


What Hope Looks Like to a Bird

Adapted from a [story by Flannery Keck](#)



Climate change may cause the common loon to disappear from Minnesota. (Photo: Audubon Society)

Matt Anderson is director of the National Audubon Society's Climate Initiative. Anderson's family has a cabin on a lake in Minnesota. On the lake, there's a nesting pair of loons. Anderson's family — including his 2-year-old girl — went up to the cabin for the Fourth of July. As they celebrated the holiday, they were excited to see one little loon chick, only a few weeks old, out on the water. You probably have memories like this of your own. Whether it's a rare bird you spotted on an outdoor excursion or a familiar flash of color that always darts around the backyard, birds are a special and constant feature of our lives. "They're in our art, our music, our religion — there's a deep personal connection between us," Anderson said in a recent talk with [Citizens' Climate Lobby](#) volunteers.

Plus, they're just fun to look at! By the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's count, there are something like 47 million bird watchers in our country who enjoy these beautiful creatures. The Audubon society itself has about 1 million members, 462 chapters across the country, and 41 nature centers: that's a lot a bird enthusiasm.

Over the last 60 years, Audubon Society members have not only been dedicated bird watchers, but also citizen scientists, collecting data on bird sightings and activity. Audubon's scientists have used that wealth of data and top climate models to put together a sort of "field guide of the future," based on the birds' ideal climatic ranges and how those would shift due to expected greenhouse gas emissions. In September 2014, they released their findings. "It was pretty staggering," Anderson admitted. "Of the nearly 700 North American bird species, 314 of those bird species face a greater likelihood of extinction by 2080 — within that, well over 100 face that same threat of extinction due to climate change by 2050." ([Click here](#) to see and/or download the actual Audubon report *Birds and Climate Change*.)

"This was a wakeup call," Anderson said, because the rate of extinction is potentially faster than we've ever seen it. "To the best of our understanding, we've lost 9 bird species in North America since the Industrial Revolution," Anderson said, so a span of about 200 years. But now? "We're talking 314 in the span of 65."

With that data, the Audubon Society wasted no time taking the necessary steps to protect birds, other wildlife, and ourselves from climate change. First, they committed themselves to on-the-ground conservation and adaptation work within habitats to give birds and other species the best chance to adapt, biologically and behaviorally, to climate change. Then, they also jumped into public engagement work trying to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The science is clear that the more we can reduce emissions — and the more quickly we can do that — the better off people and birds will be. So now, field organizers all across the country are working at the municipal, state and federal level to create solutions, from planting native plants and putting solar on more homes to advocating for bird-friendly windmill installation and putting a price on carbon (which economists tell us is the most effective means for reducing heat trapping emissions. More on this later).

Audubon has also set up a powerful tool on their website, which you can find [here](#), for exploring the effects on specific bird species and areas. Love the Eastern Whip-poor-will? Search it with this tool, and you'll find that 78% of its breeding range will be lost by 2080 if climate change continues without mitigation. With this specific data, you can open up the conversation with other bird lovers and find common ground for fighting climate change.

Bird advocates are glad to hear that the most effective way to fight climate change is also something that strengthens the economy, creates jobs and improves our health by reducing airborne pollution. Putting a price on carbon, if done right (NOT by a carbon tax) involves a steadily increasing fee on carbon, and returning the revenues to households in the form of a monthly dividend. Then people can afford the rising prices on old fashioned energy sources. Meanwhile, non-emitting sources of energy (wind, solar, hydro, nuclear) become cheaper as

businesses ramp up their production in response to increasing market demand. "Carbon Fee and Dividend" is good for the climate and hence our local tourism base, insurance prices, home values, health care costs, our grandchildren's' livelihood, and yes birds! It's also good for jobs, the economy and family budgets. See the details at <http://citizensclimatelobby.org/carbon-fee-and-dividend/>.

Remember that common loon at Anderson's lake house? It's a pretty picture — and one that hangs in the balance. "The common loon here in Minnesota is projected to be gone by 2050. By the time my 2-year-old is right around the age I am today, that bird won't be here," Anderson said. It's possible it could adapt, but we don't know for sure.



Audubon's Matt Anderson with his 2-year-old daughter.

Anderson says, "The numbers are stark, but we often tell ourselves at Audubon, 'You are what hope looks like to a bird.'" We need to step up and be advocates for their habitats, for clean air and for a stable climate.

What can bird advocates do to help fight climate change? Please think about supporting [Citizens' Climate Lobby's](#) legislative proposal for Carbon Fee and Dividend. ***Convincing members of Congress is the key to putting this powerful tool to work.*** You can do this by contacting your representatives in Congress and telling them you want action on Climate Change in general and that you support Carbon Fee and Dividend in particular. If you want to join others in the community to put your name on a formal endorsement of our proposal, please contact the local chapter (portcharlotte@citizensclimatelobby.org) and we can help you get your name on the form.

So remember: you are what hope looks like to a bird. Get out there and make them hopeful.