

The Blue List for 1975



Harris' Hawk. Photo / Karl H. Maslowski from N.A.S.

The Blue List for 1975 finds nine species added and four removed, for a net gain of five and a new high total this year of 51. This year's evaluation is the synthesis of responses from 49 persons, including 26 Regional Editors, and 23 others with special knowledge of their areas. The evaluation should therefore be much more reliable than ever before, although there are contradictions and anomalies difficult to explain other than on the basis of imperfect understanding or incomplete information.

It should be emphasized again that inclusion on the Blue List does not necessarily mean that the species is declining throughout its range. The list includes those species reported as declining in numbers whether in restricted areas or throughout. It should not, furthermore, be confused with the official list of Endangered Species, which is

published elsewhere. The Blue List, as defined, is intended to give *early warning of potentially dangerous, apparently non-cyclical population declines*.

The Blue List is followed this year by nominations for future inclusion. There are 13 species which have been nominated by two reporters, and no less than 28 others nominated by a single reporter each. The grand total of 92 species that one or more experts are concerned about, excluding the endangered species, is a rather appalling fact.

One of the important functions of the Blue List is to alert observers everywhere to pay special attention to these species and report all observations (or lack of them) to their Regional Editors, so that more accurate evaluations may be made.

THE BLUE LIST

1. **Red-throated Loon.** Both coasts seem to feel that this species does not deserve to be on the list. Mid-continent observers, however, want to see it retained. Provisionally retained.
2. **Red-necked Grebe.** Opinion is evenly divided as to the inclusion on this species on the Blue List. The six "yes" votes came from the East and Gulf states, and the Northern Rockies area. "No" votes from upper Midwest, Pacific Coast, and surprisingly, the Middle Atlantic region.
3. **Western Grebe.** Considered declining by more editors this year than last: western regional observers are almost unanimous. Most "eastern" observers see no cause for concern.
4. **Fork-tailed Petrel.** Only two votes for this little-observed bird, and they were split. Middle Pacific wants to retain, Northern Pacific wants to drop. Retained for one more year.
5. **White Pelican.** Throughout the West, the feeling is that the White Pelican should continue on the Blue List. In the upper Midwest and along the eastern Gulf of Mexico, observers see no cause for alarm.
6. **Double-crested Cormorant.** The vote against retaining the cormorant is 13 to 8, and no regional tendencies seem to be apparent in the voting. The positive votes, enough to retain the species on the list, came from the Middle Pacific, Southern Pacific, Northern Great Plains, Northern Rockies, Ontario, Southern Atlantic, Western New York, and Central Southern regions. But there were also four votes for deletion from the same Central Southern Region.
7. **Reddish Egret.** Three editors recommended strongly that this species be added to the list — all along the area of the bird's occurrence — Florida, Central Southern, and South Texas. Never an abundant species; careful watch should be kept of the fortunes of the Reddish Egret.
8. **Black-crowned Night Heron.** Opinions are equally divided on the Black-crowned Night Heron — eleven votes apiece for retention and deletion, a repetition of last year's stalemate. Along the eastern seaboard, the species seems to be doing reasonably well; in the Mississippi Valley, Great Plains, and Gulf states, observers are less optimistic. As we said last year — more study needed!
9. **Wood Stork.** Unanimous response. "Keep the Wood Stork on the Blue List."
10. **White-faced Ibis.** The consensus is decidedly in favor of retention. In two of the three regions where there was dissenting opinion, the species is rarely observed.
11. **White Ibis.** Two Central Southern, one South Texas, and one Florida reporter feel that the ibis should be retained. Three Central Southern, two Florida, and one Southern Great Plains observers vote to delete. Here too, obviously, we don't know enough.
12. **Fulvous Tree Duck.** A candidate for exclusion last year, the species now picks up more support for retention from West Coast, Southwest, and Central Southern areas. Florida seems to be witnessing an expansion.
13. **Canvasback.** Although far from being a rare bird, the Canvasback has suffered serious decline in recent years — and should be watched carefully. New to the list.
14. **Sharp-shinned Hawk.** The vote in favor of retention this year is 22-8, indicating a somewhat less pessimistic viewpoint about the Sharpie than last year's. There is, however, little pattern to the placement of yeas and nays, and we wonder how reliable are our observer's views on this species.
15. **Cooper's Hawk.** No question whatsoever, with 28 reporters pessimistic about this species, and only three, all from the Southwest or West Coast, detecting no decline.
16. **Red-shouldered Hawk.** Retained on the Blue List by a rather substantial 18 to 5 ratio. The only optimistic returns came from Florida, the Central Southern region, and the Southwest.
17. **Swainson's Hawk.** Opinions divide sharply according to regions, with all western regions seeing serious declines, while the midwest and prairie regions see no cause for alarm. In other words, situation unchanged.
18. **Ferruginous Hawk.** Seven reporters believe the species to be in trouble, three do not. The Southwest, Southern Great Plains, and the Middle Pacific regions are the dissenters. What is the true status of the species?
19. **Harris' Hawk.** This year the vote is four for retention, one (Southern Great Plains) for deletion. Elsewhere the outlook is pessimistic.
20. **Marsh Hawk.** Seventeen of the reporters consider the Marsh Hawk a legitimate cause for concern, and that is enough to insure

retention. There seems little pattern to the voting. As for other raptors, we simply cannot always make accurate population estimates. With the decline everywhere of wetlands, it would seem logical that the Marsh Hawk must be also declining, but no less than eleven reporters witness no decline.

21. **Osprey.** This species won the most number of votes for retention on the entire list — 34 — a dubious honor. Once again the Northern Pacific, Southern Great Plains, and Western Great Lakes Regions dissent.
22. **Caracara.** Unanimous in favor of listing, with nine votes this year.
23. **Prairie Falcon.** In all but two areas where it is found, the feeling is strong that the Prairie Falcon should be retained on the Blue List.
24. **Merlin.** Once again, almost unanimous in favor of listing, with 31 reporters in favor, and only Rogers in the Northern Rockies seeing no cause for concern.
25. **American Kestrel.** This species received a much larger vote for inclusion this year than last, a bad sign, although more regional observers were in favor of deletion than retention. The vote this year: 15 for, 18 against, with the Pacific Coast, Florida, and the Central Southern regions particularly noting declines.
26. **Sage Grouse.** Little comment this year. Northern Rockies and Middle Pacific regions wish to retain, Northern Great Plains to delete. Provisionally retained.
27. **Mountain Quail.** Provisionally added on the basis of the opinions of three reporters in the Northern Pacific coast region. More information is needed.
28. **American Oystercatcher.** The vote is 9 to 2 in favor of retention on the list, with strong approval coming from the Central Southern region and from Florida. Elsewhere, this normally uncommon species seems to be holding its own, although threatened by habitat reduction and disturbance everywhere.
29. **Piping Plover.** Last year the vote was 9 to 4 for inclusion, this year it is 19 to 4. Habitat reduction is still the problem; in the Midwestern Prairie region the species appears to be reaching the endangered status.
30. **Snowy Plover.** Apparently in trouble over much of its range north of the Mexican border, with no less than 18 reporters, many of them in the wintering areas of the species, witnessing a decline. There seems no problem, however, in the Southern Pacific and Southwest regions.
31. **Upland Sandpiper.** Added to the list on the basis of adverse reports by three editors from the interior of the continent, one in the Middle Atlantic Region, and one in the Hudson-St. Lawrence region. Not specifically noted by others; it would be helpful to have added opinions on this species next year.
32. **Gull-billed Tern.** Nine to one in favor of retaining this tern on the Blue List.
33. **Least Tern.** Retained on the Blue List because of its precarious dependence on man-made spoil banks and protection from interference along the beaches. Especially threatened on the Pacific Coast and in the interior. Twenty-three votes for retention.
34. **Ancient Murrelet.** Only one comment on this species was received this year, and it advised retention. Information on which to determine the status of the Ancient Murrelet is badly needed.
35. **Yellow-billed Cuckoo.** A problem species. The vote was overwhelmingly for removal from the list: 25 to 5. But in five different areas, reporters consider the species to be declining — areas as widely separated as Southern Pacific, Northern Great Plains, and Florida.
36. **Barn Owl.** No less than 28 reporters wish to see the Barn Owl retained on the Blue List, with nine voting for deletion. Areas with no apparent problems include California, the Southwest, Florida, and New Jersey. Data on the species is badly needed.
37. **Burrowing Owl.** Last year's vote was 7 to 3 for retention, this year's is 10 to 5. Florida and the plains states seem to be the areas where there are fewer problems, although there are dissenting reporters in both areas.
38. **Common Nighthawk.** Added to the list on the basis of adverse reports from the Hudson-St. Lawrence, and two areas in the Middle Atlantic region.
39. **Lewis' Woodpecker.** Provisionally added to the list on the basis of opinions of five reporters in the Northern Pacific Coast region. More widespread information is needed.
40. **Hairy Woodpecker.** Provisionally added to the list on the basis of opinions of three reporters in Florida and the Central Southern Region. No mention elsewhere. To be watched.
41. **Purple Martin.** Added to the Blue List on the recommendation of no less than 11 observers. The Pacific Northwest, the Appalachians, the Middle Pacific and the

Southern Pacific regions are the areas where declines in martin populations have been especially marked.

42. **Florida Scrub Jay.** All Florida reporters are in favor of retention.
43. **Bewick's Wren.** This year opinions are divided 19 to 9 in favor of retention; last year there was but one dissenter. Is this wren still a valid Blue List species? Apparently not in the Northern Pacific, Southern Pacific, and Southwest regions.
44. **Mountain Bluebird.** Added on the basis of reports from ten observers, all in the Northern Pacific or Rocky Mountain regions. One Colorado observer suggested "don't put any bluebirds on the list," but others disagree.
45. **Loggerhead Shrike.** No change in status, with 24 reporters favoring retention, and ten — widely scattered — against. Apparently holding its own in the plains provinces and states, in Florida, and the Southwest.
46. **Bell's Vireo.** Last year's ratio in favor of retention was 5 to 1. This year it is 15 to 2. Those two dissenting reporters are in the Southwest and Southern Great Plains regions, although there was a retention vote also in the latter region.
47. **Yellow Warbler.** Although the vast majority of reporters note no declines in this species, six dissenters are enough to retain the species for another year.
48. **Lesser Goldfinch.** Provisionally added on the basis of opinions of four Northern Pacific reporters.
49. **Grasshopper Sparrow.** Last year's Blue List said "Added on the basis of disturbing reports from Florida and the Northeast. Still in no danger elsewhere." This year the situation seems to have worsened, with declines noted by 18 reporters, including the Western Great Lakes, Appalachian, Midwest Prairie, and Central Southern regions, as well as Florida and the Hudson-St. Lawrence area.
50. **Henslow's Sparrow.** No question of the steady decline of this meadow sparrow; all nineteen reporters agree that it should be retained on the list.
51. **Bachman's Sparrow.** A far stronger consensus this year that the Bachman's Sparrow is indeed declining throughout its range, with a lone dissenting vote from Florida.

The following species have been deleted from the Blue List this year: Limpkin, Franklin's Gull, Gray Vireo, Common Yellowthroat. De-listing in these instances is more a case of increased information or corrected misinformation than any real population increases in the species.

Possible future candidates for the Blue List include the following species, each nominated by two reporters (initials of their regions follow) Least Bittern (MP, HS), American Bittern (MP, HS), Turkey Vulture (CS, F), Black Vulture (CS, F), King Rail (MP, HS), Broad-winged Hawk (HS, F), Barred Owl (HS, MP), Short-eared Owl (CS, WGL), Red-headed Woodpecker (CS, F), Cliff Swallow (MA, HS), Western Bluebird (NRI, NP), Yellow-throated Vireo (F, A), Yellow-throated Warbler (CS, A).

Species nominated by a single observer include: Little Blue Heron (HS), Snowy Egret (F), Ruffed Grouse (A), Greater Prairie Chicken (MP), Sharp-tailed Grouse (NRI), Bobwhite (WGL), Wilson's Plover (HS), California Gull (MP), Black Skimmer (HS), Black-billed Cuckoo (CS), Whip-poor-will (HS), Horned Lark (NGP), Rough-winged Swallow (F), Eastern Kingbird (F), Eastern Phoebe (CS), House Wren (HS), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (F), Ovenbird (A), Louisiana Waterthrush (WGL), Kentucky Warbler (F), Hooded Warbler (F), Com. Yellowthroat (NP), Orchard Oriole (F), Summer Tanager (F), Purple Finch (HS), Vesper Sparrow (HS), Lark Sparrow (NGP), Fox Sparrow (NRI)

Dusky Seaside Sparrow, and Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow, having been merged as local races of Seaside Sparrows, have been removed from the Endangered Species List. Obviously these races are still endangered, and should be Blue-Listed.

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