

Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee
State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Re: Support of H.F. 3524

Dear Members of the Committee:

Audubon Minnesota supports appropriating funds for the Lawns to Legumes program, as described in H.F. 3524. The program helps to increase residential habitat for bees, birds, and butterflies when we are seeing dramatic declines in their populations. With 96 percent of all land-based bird species in North America feeding insects to their young, we need plants that contribute to the food chain.

Audubon released our Survival by Degrees report last fall, which painted a dire picture for the future for birds: More than 150 species in Minnesota are threatened by impacts of climate change. In addition to Audubon's climate report, a new study from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology found a staggering loss of birds. **Collectively, grassland bird populations have declined by 53% since 1970.**

Native plants will also help keep excess water on the landscape. In addition to shifting habitats and erratic weather events, climate change will continue to cause major flooding. We are seeing record rainfalls, consistently swollen streams and rivers, and infrastructure that is overwhelmed or destroyed by the deluge. Increasing the number of deep-rooted plants helps reduce runoff in areas with a high ratio of impermeable surfaces.

To survive, birds in Minnesota need native plants and the insects that have co-evolved with them. Most landscaping plants in nurseries are exotic species that make poor food sources for wildlife. Exotic plants also generally require more water and chemicals to thrive, increasing maintenance time, costs, and water contamination. By adding more native plants to backyards, we can help birds in the face of climate change, urban development, and other threats.

Sincerely,

Rob Schultz
Executive Director
Audubon Minnesota

Keith Olstad
President
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

Peter Buessler
President
Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Chapter