



MINNESOTA

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

January 10, 2023

Re: Support of House File 207 – Lawns to Legumes

Dear Members of the Committee:

Audubon Minnesota supports the appropriation of ongoing funding for the Lawns to Legumes program. This program helps increase residential habitat for bees, birds, and butterflies at a time 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 support the food chain.

The National Audubon Society's recently released [Survival by Degrees report](#) paints a dire picture for the future of birds: More than 150 species in Minnesota are threatened by impacts of changes to Minnesota's weather patterns. A recent study from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology also found a staggering loss of birds. **North American bird populations have declined by 29%, and grassland bird populations have declined by 53% since 1970.** These population declines are tied to reductions in habitat quality associated with the conversion of native habitats to agriculture or human-dominated landscapes. In response to these declines, it is critical that we enhance habitat quality and food availability by encouraging landscaping with native plants.

In addition to shifting habitats, Minnesota continues to experience erratic weather events with significant flooding and unusual periods of drought. As average weather years become rare, increasing the number of deep-rooted native plants prepares our local ecosystems to better tolerate periods of record rainfalls and long stretches of heat and drought.

To survive, birds in Minnesota need native plants and the insects that have co-evolved with them. Most landscaping plants are exotic species that provide little food 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 through programs like Lawns to Legumes, we can help birds in the face of climate change, urban development, and other threats.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dale Gentry
Conservation Director
[Audubon Minnesota](#)

Alongside the following independent Audubon chapters across Minnesota:

- Peter Mattson, President of [Austin Audubon Society](#)
- Catherine McGoldrick, Vice President of [Brainerd Lakes Area Audubon Society](#)
- Daniel Kneip, President of [Central Minnesota Audubon Chapter](#)



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- Rob Daves, President of [Minnesota River Valley Audubon Society](#)
- Peter Buessler, President of [Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society](#)
- Viola Riggle, President of [Prairie Lakes Audubon Society](#)
- Greg Burnes, President of [St. Paul Audubon Society](#)
- Dann Adair, President of [Wild River Audubon Society](#)
- Joel Dunnette, President of [Zumbro Valley Audubon Society](#)