

February 14th, 2022

RE: HF 2618

Chair Nelson and members of the committee,

A 2019 publication in the journal *Science* revealed that North America's bird population has declined by approximately 30%, three billion birds overall, since 1970 ([Rosenberg et al. 2019](#)). This shocking revelation, paired with our understanding of the critical role birds play in the health of our natural ecosystems and therefore our human communities, have highlighted the need to discern the various factors responsible for bird declines and work to reverse the pattern.

While many factors contribute to these declines, the loss, and degradation of habitats are the most important. We are increasingly aware that land that may appear to be suitable habitat, may not be if the native plants have been replaced with non-natives, as is often the case in residential and developed areas. Native plants host more insect species and therefore support the food web necessary for a thriving community of other animals, including birds ([Tallamy, 2004](#)). [Burghardt et al. \(2008\)](#) showed that residential yards that do not differ in the number of plant species but do differ in the percentage of plants that are native vs. non-native, contain a significantly different community of insects and birds. Not surprisingly, the yards that contained more native plants contain many more insect and bird species, including many species of regional conservation concern.

At the Audubon Society, our calling is to protect birds and the places they need. This lofty goal can only be achieved by using the best science to guide our ethical commitment to a thriving environment. We now know that landscaping with non-native plants is contributing to declines in birds and insects. Based on this evidence, we support policies that remove the roadblocks preventing people from developing their yard as a habitat for insects and birds.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

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Literature Cited

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[Rosenberg, K. V., Dokter, A. M., Blancher, P. J., Sauer, J. R., Smith, A. C., Smith, P. A., ... & Marra, P. P. \(2019\). Decline of the North American avifauna. *Science*, 366\(6461\), 120-124.](#)

[Tallamy, D. W. \(2004\). Do alien plants reduce insect biomass?. *Conservation biology*, 18\(6\), 1689-1692.](#)