



**EMBARGOED UNTIL MONDAY, MARCH 16 AT 6:00 AM ET**

**Top Bird Groups Unite to Urge Greater Protection of North America's Boreal Forest**  
*At least 50% protection needed to save critical breeding ground for birds*

Leading bird and nature organizations in Canada and the United States, representing millions of birders, are embracing modern conservation science and calling for increased protection of North America's boreal forest, the annual breeding ground for billions of birds.

The Boreal Songbird Initiative and Ducks Unlimited, with the backing of other leading organizations, are launching the *Boreal Birds Need Half* campaign to protect at least 50% of the boreal forest from industrial development. The campaign is endorsed by National Audubon Society, Bird Studies Canada, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Environment for the Americas, Nature Canada, Nature Needs Half, Birdzilla, and Wild Bird Centers of America.

These groups represent a growing army of bird enthusiasts that numbers in the tens of millions. A 2012 survey by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Task Force found that nearly 1 in 5 adult Canadians consider themselves birders. This group spends more time birding (133 days per year) than those engaged in any other nature-based activity. A similar survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that nearly 50 million Americans identify as birders. Birding is also big business, with billions of dollars spent on bird-related activities each year.

"Protecting at least 50% of the boreal forest is in line with what modern conservation science contends is needed to preserve the ecological health of the forest and its biodiversity, and we hope that governments will adopt land conservation policies that reflect the science," said Dr. Jeff Wells, senior scientist for the Boreal Songbird Initiative and International Boreal Conservation Campaign. "The importance of boreal forest habitat for birds will only increase in the future; climate change has already begun pushing bird ranges further north, making the boreal forest an important refuge—a 'Noah's Ark' for birds," added Wells.

A recent poll in Manitoba showed the public strongly supports increased boreal forest conservation: 88% of those polled favored protecting at least half of the boreal forest, with 63% believing the level of protection should be even higher.

"When you see broad support from the scientific community, bird organizations, and everyday citizens, it makes a compelling case for increased boreal forest protection," said Kevin Smith, national manager of boreal programs for Ducks Unlimited Canada. "In addition to protecting 50% of the boreal forest,

sustainably managed development in the remaining areas will be essential to striking the right balance between ecological health and economically healthy communities.”

The boreal forest, often referred to as “North America’s bird nursery,” plays a critical role in providing spring and summer nesting habitat for an estimated 3 billion birds and more than 300 species—nearly half of all bird species in the U.S. and Canada. Many bird species are in sharp decline, however, including the namesake Canada Warbler. Bird organizations are focusing increased attention on one of the key factors attributed to bird declines: loss of habitat.

The campaign seeks to educate governments, industry, and the public on the need to set aside at least half of North America’s boreal forest from industrial development for the billions of birds that rely on it.

Following the launch, the campaign plans to add businesses to its list of endorsers as well as collect signature endorsements from individuals in Canada and the U.S. In addition to protecting at least half of the boreal forest, the campaign urges sustainable development in the remaining areas. It emphasizes that both protected areas and industrial activities should proceed only with the free, prior, and informed consent of affected Indigenous communities.

The *Boreal Birds Need Half* campaign is being launched in advance of the United Nations’ International Day of Forests on March 21, and in conjunction with the release of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service video highlighting the importance of the boreal forest to birds. It is also the same week that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is airing the TV documentary, “Songbird SOS,” focusing on the decline of songbirds worldwide.

More information on the *Boreal Birds Need Half* campaign and the recent report *Boreal Birds Need Half: Maintaining North America’s Bird Nursery and Why It Matters* can be found at [www.borealbirdsneedhalf.org](http://www.borealbirdsneedhalf.org).

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*The Boreal Songbird Initiative and Ducks Unlimited are part of the International Boreal Conservation Campaign (IBCC), working to conserve and sustainably manage North America’s Boreal region, a globally important ecosystem stretching more than 1 billion acres from Alaska to Labrador and containing one of the world’s largest remaining old-growth forest and wetland ecosystems.*

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact:

Lisa McCrummen (206) 321-9461 [lisa@borealbirds.org](mailto:lisa@borealbirds.org)

David Childs (253) 441-1127 [davidc@borealbirds.org](mailto:davidc@borealbirds.org)

For additional media resources: [www.borealbirds.org/announcements/boreal-birds-need-half-campaign](http://www.borealbirds.org/announcements/boreal-birds-need-half-campaign)