

TALK TURKEY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Climate change is a huge threat to our birds, but many people who care about birds still have a lot of questions about how to talk about climate change – including how to identify who might be open to a conversation about it. Here are some tips on how to navigate a bird-centric climate conversation.

Audubon Tips for a Climate + Birds Conversation

- 1 The majority of Americans recognize climate change is real and a threat to our well-being. Yet a small group continues to perpetuate the misconception that it is a lie or a conspiracy. Research suggests these individuals cannot be persuaded, so don't start a climate conversation.

Indicators that people are entrenched in the denial of climate change and therefore should not be engaged:

- They use “hoax,” “lie,” or “conspiracy” or similar terms to describe climate change or global warming.
- They try to undermine the reality of global warming with these comebacks:
 - “It’s in the economic interests of scientists to pretend global warming is real.”
 - “Scientists and environmental organizations are liars.”
 - “Climate science has been repeatedly refuted.”



Do not debate the reality of global warming because that reinforces the perception that it's debatable. It's not. Instead, discuss ways this person can help birds.

- 2 But when it comes to how they think, feel and take action on global warming, plenty of folks are in the “moveable middle” – somewhere between “Climate change is my No. 1 worry” and “Climate change is nothing but a hoax!” It's these people – the unsure, unconvinced or unaware – on whom we want to focus our efforts.

The statements below, for instance, indicate the person is misguided but open to discussion. Take the opportunity to set the record straight and steer your audience in the right direction: toward the birds. Try these suggestions:

MYTH: “The climate is always changing – it's natural!”

RESPONSE: *The climate has changed throughout Earth's history, but what is different now is the scale, speed, and cause. Because of human activities, we are seeing a rate of change in a century that previously took thousands of years or more. For example, more than half of our winter bird species stay farther north than they did just 50 years ago. Did you hear that National Audubon Society ...*

MYTH: “Weather vs. climate” (“But it's snowing today where I live?!?!”)

RESPONSE: *Weather and climate are different. Climate is what you expect, like a very hot summer, and weather is what you get, like a hot day with pop-up thunderstorms. A change in climate will change weather patterns overall*

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(continued) but will not necessarily lead to the end of specific weather events – including snow, or cold snaps, or winter storms. The long-term trends are what are important. Did you hear the National Audubon Society ...

MYTH: “But we don’t have enough evidence yet, right?”

RESPONSE: *The evidence is overwhelming. Scientists know the planet is warming from data found in temperature and atmospheric records, ice core records and more. We’re seeing it in changes in the timing of seasons, too, including when and where birds fly. For instance, more than half of our winter bird species stay farther north than they did just 50 years ago. Did you hear the National Audubon society ...*



STOP

If you continue to hear pushback, it’s probably a good idea to stop the conversation there – you’ve successfully made them think about global warming and how it harms birds. That’s a win!

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If you have someone who says he/she doesn’t know anything about climate change, bring it immediately to birds. Start with the top lines about the study, have two examples of local birds threatened, then discuss why birds matter to you.

Top line from the study: Did you heard that scientists at the National Audubon Society found that global warming imperils more than 300 bird species? Without action, many could go extinct.

Making it personal:

I’ve been coming to this lake house for 20 years. I can’t imagine summers with the call of the loon. And I want my grandchildren to experience that same call throughout their lives – that’s why I’m concerned about global warming.

These Brown Pelicans are as part of my home as the Mardi Gras parades. The Gulf Coast wouldn’t be the same without them, so climate change is something I worry about.

I love trying to find Burrowing Owls with my kids – I don’t want to have to tell them we no longer share a home. That’s why I care about climate change.

Heart, not Head

Just because you are talking about climate change does not mean you have to be a climate scientist. Studies show more information is not the prescription for taking action on climate change – rather, global warming needs to be connected to something that matters to them. So know some basic facts (see left), repeat them often, and move on to what matters: how global warming threatens the things we love: birds.

Remember to:

- Keep it personal
- Tie to what’s happening locally
- Emphasize changes are already underway
- There is much we can do – for birds and for our communities

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- 4** Naturally, people will ask questions about the study and how Audubon reached its conclusions. Limit your discussion of the science specifics to top lines. Remember: you don't have to have a Ph.D. in ornithology to have a successful discussion, and you don't have to turn them into a climate activist with a single conversation. The goal is to make your concern apparent and encourage them to learn more.

QUESTION: How did Audubon reach this conclusion?

RESPONSE: *They took decades of bird observations from citizen scientists and matched those with historical climate data. This means they could identify what climate conditions each bird species needs and where that combination of conditions (temperature, precipitation, seasonality) will – or won't – be in the future.*

QUESTION: What do other studies say about climate change impacts on plants and animals?

RESPONSE: *This research joins thousands of other studies showing how plants and animals are already responding to higher temperatures. Plant hardiness zones are moving northward, for example, and plant and animal species are migrating up mountaintops.*

QUESTION: Why does that matter?

RESPONSE: *Birds are essential parts of complex ecosystems – all of which climate change threatens. And birds are important indicators of the healthfulness of our communities, too. If birds are in danger, we are, too.*

- 5** Many people recognize the reality of climate change but are pessimistic about our ability to stop it, or they fear fixing the problem will cost more than the impacts. Interestingly, many people who used to deny climate change now argue that it's real but unfixable. This too is a myth. Emphasize that progress is underway, and there is plenty to be done to protect birds in a warming world.

MYTH: "Climate change is beyond solving."

RESPONSE: *We're already making progress. Emissions reductions are taking place all over the world, and we have the technology and know-how to continue to the switch from fossil fuels to clean energy. Although the impacts are already here, we must do what we can to curtail the worst and slow the rate of change.*

MYTH: "It's too expensive to fix."

RESPONSE: *It's the cost of inaction that is too great. Extreme weather cost the U.S. \$100 billion worth of damage in 2012 alone. Economists predict the costs will rise sharply over time. The fundamental nature of the communities we cherish, including the birds we love, will be forever disrupted if we do not address*

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(continued) global warming.

There is much we can do to curb climate change and help protect the birds for a warmer world. Think about what the person likes to do:

- Garden or other outdoor activities? Point them to ways they can make their backyard bird- and climate-friendly.
- Be active in the community: Put birds and climate on the agenda of your leaders or consider encouraging their local groups to steward Important Bird Areas
- Engage politically: Support clean energy policies at the state and federal level

Encourage them to visit www.audubon.org/climate for more information. And don't worry: you'll have plenty of chances to talk to them about global warming and why it's a problem for birds. This is just the first of many conversations.

