

Updates on Federal and State policies and statuses for the Rusty Blackbird in the U.S.

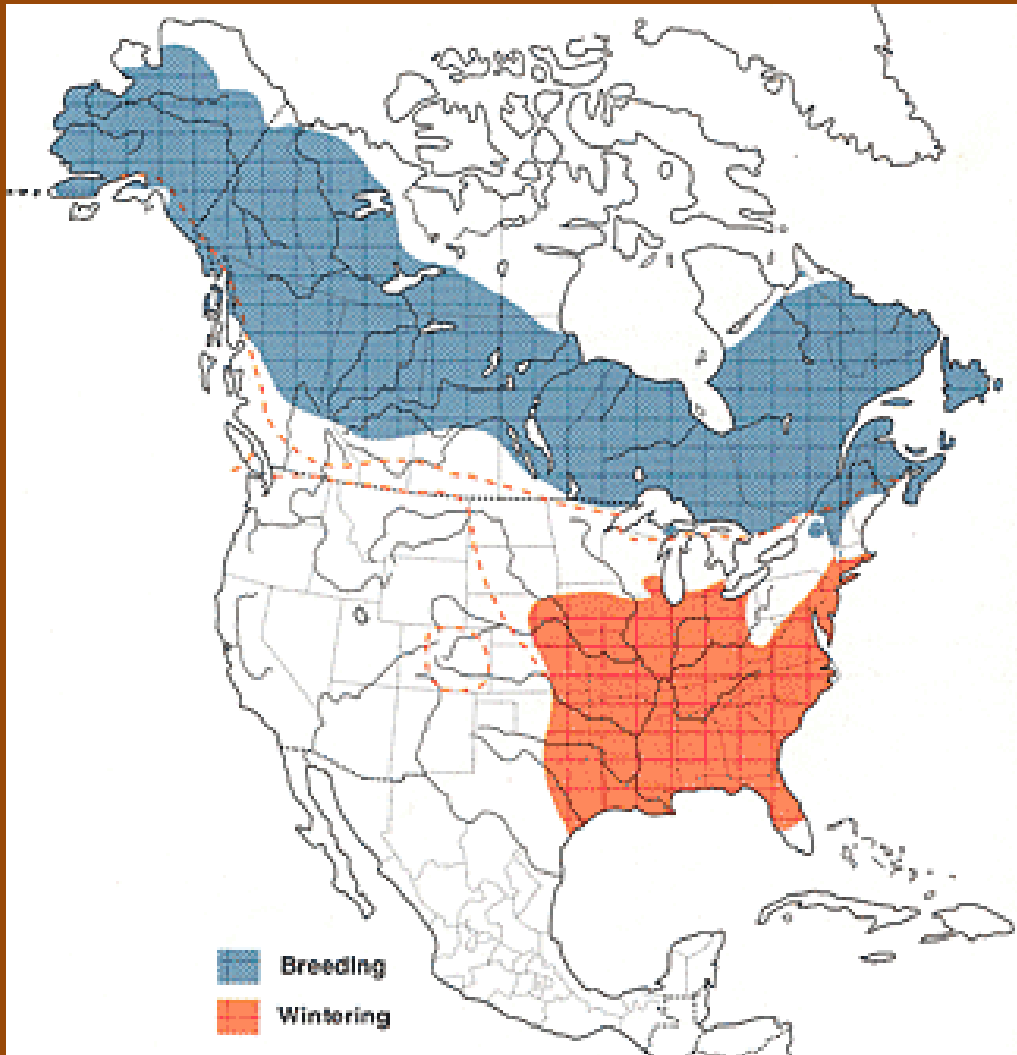


Kate Heyden, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Dean Demarest, USFWS SE Region

Dave Tessler, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Rusty Blackbird Status- States



- RUBL range includes 33 US states

Map source:

http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/research/rusty_blackbird/decline.cfm

State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs)

Species of Greatest Conservation Need

SWAPs outline the steps that are needed to conserve wildlife and habitat before they become more rare and more costly to protect.

The intent is to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered.

- Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) are identified within each SWAP in order to focus conservation efforts on the species which need it the most. This designation:

- Does not provide regulatory protection.

- Opens up funding opportunities.

- Each state was required to complete a SWAP (2005) in order to receive funds from the State Wildlife Grants program.

- Some states have revised since, but a full evaluation and revision is mandatory by 2015.

Rusty Blackbird in SWAPs

- List Compiled of All state within Rusty's range and whether or not they had species listed.
- Need was identified to encourage more states to list the bird.

Breeding Range

State	Listed?
Alaska	Yes
Maine	Yes
New Hampshire	Yes
Vermont	Yes

- In 2010, **17** states listed Rusty Blackbird as a species of concern.
- **16** states within the species range did not list the Rusty Blackbird.

Winter Range

State	Listed?
Arkansas	Yes
Illinois	Yes
Iowa	Yes
Kentucky	Yes
Louisiana	Yes
Minnesota	Yes
Mississippi	Yes
New York	Yes
South Carolina	Yes
Tennessee	Yes
Texas	Yes
Virginia	Yes
Wisconsin	Yes
Alabama	No
Connecticut	No
Delaware	No
Florida	No
Georgia	No
Indiana	No
Maryland	No
Massachusetts	No
Michigan	No
Missouri	No
New Jersey	No
North Carolina	No
Ohio	No
Pennsylvania	No
Rhode Island	No
West Virginia	No

Rusty Blackbird Steering Committee



Why is this important?

- Increases awareness
- Opens up funding opportunities.
- In general, allows state biologists to attend meetings and spend more time working on the species.

Rusty Blackbird Steering Committee

International Rusty Blackbird Technical Working Group

Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, National Zoological Park



«Name»
«Organization»
«Mailing Address»
«City», «State» «Zip»

January 14, 2010

Dear «Name»,

We are writing to encourage the «Organization» to include the Rusty Blackbird as a featured species in «Full_State»'s State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). Seventeen states already include the Rusty Blackbird in their SWAPs. Your state provides vital wintering and migration habitat for this rapidly declining species. Recognition in «Full_State»'s SWAP could make a significant contribution to the conservation of this poorly understood species.

The Rusty Blackbird is suffering one of the steepest declines of any bird in North America. This migratory species has declined by about 95% over the past 40 years according to Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data. An annual decline of 5-12% appears to be range-wide: from breeding areas in boreal forests stretching from Alaska to Maine, to wintering areas spanning the eastern half of the U.S. Several hypotheses have been developed to explain the decline, but none have yet been confirmed. Rapid action to fill research needs and implement management responses will be crucial for the conservation of this once common species.

The International Rusty Blackbird Technical Working Group (IRBTWG) was formed in 2005 to understand and reverse the decline in this North American endemic. The IRBTWG is composed of representatives of federal, state, and provincial government agencies, universities, and non-profit organizations. The IRBTWG works to identify and prioritize research and management needs, facilitate information exchange, and foster collaborative efforts throughout the range of the Rusty Blackbird. We encourage a representative of your agency to participate at some level in the IRBTWG. Membership is open and interested individuals may join via the website below.

The State Wildlife Agency Subcommittee of the IRBTWG examined the SWAP of every state comprising the core of this species' distribution, and found that the Rusty Blackbird is not included in your SWAP. Data from various sources including the Christmas Bird Count, Great Backyard Bird Count, eBird, and recent Rusty Blackbird Hotspot Blitz (February 7-16, 2009) suggest that «Full_State» provides important migration and wintering habitat for Rusty Blackbirds. Protecting the Rusty Blackbird in the heart of its

- Letter sent to all states which did not have bird listed in SWAP in January 2010.
- Each state that received letter was contacted by a member of the Rusty Blackbird Steering Committee to discuss the possibility of listing the species.

Results

State	Will Rusty be listed?
Alabama	Probably
Connecticut	Maybe
Delaware	No response
Florida	Yes- Already changed!
Georgia	Maybe
Indiana	No response
Maryland	Probably
Massachusetts	Maybe
Michigan	Maybe
Missouri	No
New Jersey	Yes
North Carolina	Maybe
Ohio	No
Pennsylvania	Yes
Rhode Island	No response
West Virginia	Maybe

- Positive Response- 11 states are considering or committing to listing the species.

Yes	3
Probably	2
Maybe	6
No	2
No Response	3