

North American Bird Phenology Program



The Challenge: The North American Bird Phenology Program (BPP) houses a data set of 6 million historical observations of over 800 bird species, documenting occurrences and migration times from the 1880s through the 1970s -- the longest and most comprehensive legacy data set on bird migration in existence. In an effort to rescue this invaluable data set, the BPP has scanned and are in the process of transcribing the records with the help of a network of online volunteers. The data is stored in a database, from which it is shared with scientists, managers, educators, and the public. Since the program was revived in 2009, nearly one million records have been transcribed.



The Science: The BPP's goal is to understand how climate change has affected bird migration arrival and departure dates. This historic collection of migration cards illuminates almost a century of migration patterns and population status of birds.



The Future: Scientific research using BPP data is working to assess changes in bird migration at broad spatial and temporal scales in response to climate and land-use changes. The program aims to continue working with online volunteers to unlock this data and make it available for additional research studies.