



## Wilson's Creek National Battlefield

### Background

Birds are useful indicators of ecological change because they are highly mobile and generally conspicuous. As climate in a particular place changes, suitability may worsen for some species and improve for others. These changes in climate may create the potential for local extirpation or new colonization. **This brief summarizes projected changes in climate suitability by mid-century for birds at Wilson's Creek National Battlefield (hereafter, the Battlefield) under two climate change scenarios (see Wu et al. 2018 for full results, and Langham et al. 2015 for more information regarding how climate suitability is characterized).** The high-emissions pathway (RCP8.5) represents a future in which little action is taken to reduce global emissions of greenhouse gases. The low-emissions pathway (RCP2.6) is a best-case scenario of aggressive efforts to reduce emissions. These emissions pathways are globally standardized and established by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for projecting future climate change. The findings below are model-based projections of how species distributions may change in response to climate change. A 10-km buffer was applied to each park to match the spatial resolution of the species distribution models (10 x 10 km), and climate suitability was taken as the average of all cells encompassed by the park and buffer.

### Results

**Climate change is expected to alter the bird community at the Battlefield, with greater impacts under the high-emissions pathway than under the low-emissions pathway (Figure 1).** Among the species likely to be found at the Battlefield today, climate suitability in summer under the high-emissions pathway is projected to improve for 16, remain stable for 21, and worsen for 13 species. Suitable climate ceases to occur for 9 species in summer, potentially resulting in extirpation of those species from the Battlefield (e.g., Figure 2). Climate is projected to become suitable in summer for 16 species not found at the Battlefield today, potentially resulting in local colonization. Climate suitability in winter under the high-emissions pathway is projected to improve for 13, remain stable for 10, and worsen for 4 species. Suitable climate does not cease to occur for any species in winter. Climate is projected to become suitable in winter for 41 species not found at the Battlefield today, potentially resulting in local colonization.

### IMPORTANT

This study focuses exclusively on changing climatic conditions for birds over time. But projected changes in climate suitability are not definitive predictions of future species ranges or abundances. Numerous other factors affect where species occur, including habitat quality, food abundance, species adaptability, and the availability of microclimates (see Caveats). Therefore, managers should consider changes in climate suitability alongside these other important influences.

We report trends in climate suitability for all species identified as currently present at the Battlefield based on both NPS Inventory & Monitoring Program data and eBird observation data (2016), plus those species for which climate at the Battlefield is projected to become suitable in the future (Figure 1 & Table 1). This brief provides park-specific projections whereas Wu et al. (2018), which did not incorporate park-specific species data and thus may differ from this brief, provides system-wide comparison and conclusions.

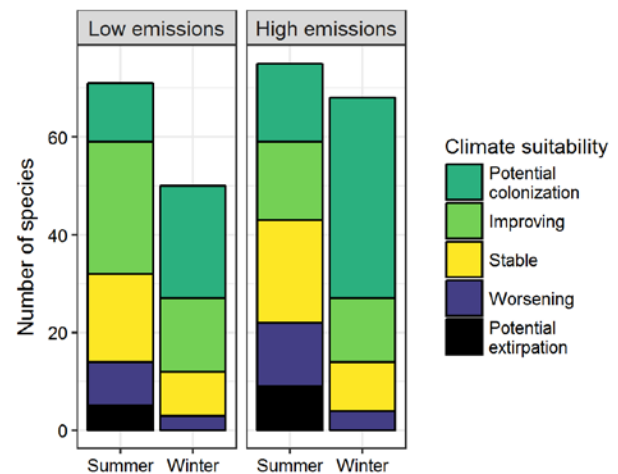


Figure 1. Projected changes in climate suitability for birds at the Battlefield, by emissions pathway and season.

## Results (continued)

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### Potential Turnover Index

**Potential bird species turnover for the Battlefield between the present and 2050 is 0.20 in summer (32<sup>nd</sup> percentile across all national parks) and 0.20 in winter (27<sup>th</sup> percentile) under the high-emissions pathway. Potential species turnover declines to 0.15 in summer and 0.12 in winter under the low-emissions pathway.** Turnover index was calculated based on the theoretical proportions of potential extirpations and potential colonizations by 2050 relative to today (as reported in Wu et al. 2018), and therefore assumes that all potential extirpations and colonizations are realized. According to this index, no change would be represented as 0, whereas a complete change in the bird community would be represented as 1.

### Climate Sensitive Species

The Battlefield is or may become home to 2 species that are highly sensitive to climate change across their range (i.e., they are projected to lose climate suitability in over 50% of their current range in North America in summer and/or winter by 2050; Table 1; Langham et al. 2015). Suitable

### Management Implications

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Parks differ in potential colonization and extirpation rates, and therefore different climate change adaptation strategies may apply. **Under the high-emissions pathway, Wilson's Creek National Battlefield falls within the intermediate change group.** Parks anticipating intermediate change can best support landscape-scale bird conservation by emphasizing habitat restoration, maintaining natural disturbance regimes, and

### Caveats

The species distribution models included in this study are based solely on climate variables (i.e., a combination of annual and seasonal measures of temperature and precipitation), which means there are limits on their interpretation. Significant changes in climate suitability, as measured here, will not always result in a species response, and all projections should be interpreted as potential trends. Multiple other factors mediate responses to climate change, including habitat availability, ecological processes

climate is not projected to disappear for these 2 species at the Battlefield; instead the Battlefield may serve as an important refuge for these climate-sensitive species.



**Figure 2. Although currently found at the Battlefield, suitable climate for the American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*) may cease to occur here in summer by 2050, potentially resulting in local seasonal extirpation.** Photo by John Benson/Flickr (CC BY 2.0).

reducing other stressors. Furthermore, park managers have an opportunity to focus on supporting the 2 species that are highly sensitive to climate change across their range (Table 1; Langham et al. 2015) but for which the park is a potential refuge. Monitoring to identify changes in bird communities will inform the selection of appropriate management responses.

that affect demography, biotic interactions that inhibit and facilitate species' colonization or extirpation, dispersal capacity, species' evolutionary adaptive capacity, and phenotypic plasticity (e.g., behavioral adjustments). Ultimately, models can tell us where to focus our concern and which species are most likely to be affected, but monitoring is the only way to validate these projections and should inform any on-the-ground conservation action.

## More Information

For more information, including details on the methods, please see the scientific publication ([Wu et al. 2018](#)) and the [project overview brief](#), and visit the [NPS Climate Change Response Program website](#).

### References

eBird Basic Dataset (2016) Version: ebd\_relAug-2016. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York.

Langham et al. (2015) Conservation Status of North American Birds in the Face of Future Climate Change. PLOS ONE.

Wu et al. (2018) Projected avifaunal responses to climate change across the U.S. National Park System. PLOS ONE.

### Contacts

Gregor Schuurman, Ph.D.  
Ecologist, NPS Climate Change Response Program  
970-267-7211, [gregor\\_schuurman@nps.gov](mailto:gregor_schuurman@nps.gov)

Joanna Wu  
Biologist, National Audubon Society  
415-644-4610, [science@audubon.org](mailto:science@audubon.org)

## Species Projections

**Table 1. Climate suitability projections by 2050 under the high-emissions pathway for all birds currently present at the Battlefield based on both NPS Inventory & Monitoring Program data and eBird observation data, plus those species for which climate at the Battlefield is projected to become suitable in the future. "Potential colonization" indicates that climate is projected to become suitable for the species, whereas "potential extirpation" indicates that climate is suitable today but projected to become unsuitable. Omitted species were either not modeled due to data deficiency or were absent from the I&M and eBird datasets. Observations of late-season migrants may result in these species appearing as present in the park when they may only migrate through. Species are ordered according to taxonomic groups, denoted by alternating background shading.**

\* Species in top and bottom 10th percentile of absolute change

^ Species that are highly climate sensitive

- Species not found or found only occasionally, and not projected to colonize by 2050

x Species not modeled in this season

Common Name	Summer Trend	Winter Trend
Wood Duck	x	Improving
Blue-winged Teal	-	Potential colonization
Bufflehead	-	Potential colonization
Red-breasted Merganser	-	Potential colonization <sup>^</sup>
Northern Bobwhite	Improving	Stable
Eared Grebe	-	Potential colonization
Anhinga	-	Potential colonization
American White Pelican	-	Potential colonization
Great Blue Heron	Improving	-
Great Egret	Potential colonization	Potential colonization
Little Blue Heron	Potential colonization	Potential colonization
Cattle Egret	Potential colonization	-

Common Name	Summer Trend	Winter Trend
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Potential colonization	-
Black Vulture	Potential colonization	-
Osprey	-	Potential colonization
Mississippi Kite	Potential colonization	-
Red-shouldered Hawk	Improving	-
Red-tailed Hawk	Worsening	Stable
Ferruginous Hawk	-	Potential colonization
Killdeer	Stable	Stable
Greater Yellowlegs	-	Potential colonization
Least Sandpiper	-	Potential colonization
American Woodcock	-	Potential colonization
Gull-billed Tern	-	Potential colonization

Common Name	Summer Trend	Winter Trend
Forster's Tern	-	Potential colonization
Eurasian Collared-Dove	-	Potential colonization
White-winged Dove	-	Potential colonization
Mourning Dove	Stable	Worsening
Inca Dove	Potential colonization	-
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Improving	-
Greater Roadrunner	Improving	Improving
Barn Owl	-	Potential colonization
Barred Owl	x	Improving
Common Nighthawk	Improving*	-
Common Pauraque	-	Potential colonization
White-throated Swift	-	Potential colonization
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Stable	-
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Stable	Improving
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	Potential colonization	-
Downy Woodpecker	Worsening	Stable
Red-cockaded Woodpecker	-	Potential colonization
Northern Flicker	Stable	Worsening*
Pileated Woodpecker	Stable	-
American Kestrel	x	Stable
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Worsening	-
Acadian Flycatcher	Worsening	-
Eastern Phoebe	Stable	-
Great Crested Flycatcher	Stable	-
Brown-crested Flycatcher	Potential colonization	-
Western Kingbird	Potential colonization	-
Eastern Kingbird	Worsening	-

Common Name	Summer Trend	Winter Trend
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Improving*	-
White-eyed Vireo	Stable	-
Bell's Vireo	Improving*	-
Red-eyed Vireo	Potential extirpation	-
Blue Jay	Stable	Stable
American Crow	Stable	Stable
Purple Martin	Improving	-
Barn Swallow	Stable	-
Cliff Swallow	Improving	-
Carolina Chickadee	Improving	Improving
Tufted Titmouse	Stable	Improving
White-breasted Nuthatch	Potential extirpation	-
Brown-headed Nuthatch	Potential colonization^	-
Brown Creeper	-	Worsening*
House Wren	Potential extirpation	-
Sedge Wren	-	Potential colonization
Marsh Wren	-	Potential colonization
Carolina Wren	Stable	Improving
Bewick's Wren	-	Potential colonization
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Stable	-
Eastern Bluebird	Stable	-
Mountain Bluebird	-	Potential colonization
American Robin	Potential extirpation	-
Gray Catbird	Potential extirpation	-
Brown Thrasher	Worsening	-
Northern Mockingbird	Improving	Improving
American Pipit	-	Potential colonization

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Summer Trend</b>	<b>Winter Trend</b>
Sprague's Pipit	-	Potential colonization
Chestnut-collared Longspur	-	Potential colonization
Smith's Longspur	-	Potential colonization
Blue-winged Warbler	Stable	-
Black-and-white Warbler	Stable	-
Prothonotary Warbler	Improving	-
Swainson's Warbler	Potential colonization	-
Orange-crowned Warbler	-	Potential colonization
Kentucky Warbler	Stable	-
Common Yellowthroat	Potential extirpation	Potential colonization
Hooded Warbler	Stable	-
Northern Parula	Stable	-
Yellow-breasted Chat	Worsening	-
Eastern Towhee	Potential extirpation	-
Cassin's Sparrow	Potential colonization	Potential colonization
Bachman's Sparrow	Potential colonization	Potential colonization
Chipping Sparrow	Potential extirpation	Potential colonization
Field Sparrow	Worsening	Improving
Vesper Sparrow	-	Potential colonization

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Summer Trend</b>	<b>Winter Trend</b>
Lark Sparrow	Potential colonization	Potential colonization
Grasshopper Sparrow	Worsening*	-
Fox Sparrow	-	Improving
Lincoln's Sparrow	-	Potential colonization
Dark-eyed Junco	-	Stable
Northern Cardinal	Improving	Improving
Pyrrhuloxia	-	Potential colonization
Indigo Bunting	Worsening	-
Painted Bunting	Potential colonization	-
Dickcissel	Improving	-
Red-winged Blackbird	Worsening	Stable
Eastern Meadowlark	Improving	Improving
Brewer's Blackbird	-	Potential colonization
Common Grackle	Worsening	-
Great-tailed Grackle	-	Potential colonization
Bronzed Cowbird	-	Potential colonization
Brown-headed Cowbird	Worsening	Improving
American Goldfinch	Potential extirpation	Stable
House Sparrow	x	Worsening*