



Why Birds Matter: Avian Ecological Function and Ecosystem Services

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For over one hundred years, ornithologists and amateur birders have jointly campaigned for the conservation of bird species, documenting not only birds' beauty and extraordinary diversity, but also their importance to ecosystems worldwide. But while these avian enthusiasts have noted that birds eat fruit, carrion, and pests; spread seed and fertilizer; and pollinate plants, among other services, they have rarely asked what birds are worth in economic terms. In *Why Birds Matter*, an international collection of ornithologists, botanists, ecologists, conservation biologists, and environmental economists seeks to quantify avian ecosystem services—the myriad benefits that birds provide to humans.

The first book to approach ecosystem services from an ornithological perspective, *Why Birds Matter* asks what economic value we can ascribe to those services, if any, and how this value should inform conservation. Chapters explore the role of birds in such important ecological dynamics as scavenging, nutrient cycling, food chains, and plant-animal interactions—all seen through the lens of human well-being—to show that quantifying avian ecosystem services is crucial when formulating contemporary conservation strategies. Both elucidating challenges and providing examples of specific ecosystem valuations and guidance for calculation, the contributors propose that in order to advance avian conservation, we need to appeal not only to hearts and minds, but also to wallets.

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