



Bringing back the birds

To: Chair Scott Dibble and Members of the Minnesota Senate Transportation Committee

February 20, 2023

Dear Senators,

American Bird Conservancy, which works to conserve birds throughout the Americas, strongly supports SF 718 – the Highways for Habitat Program bill. Minnesota is home to some of the Nation's most important wildlife lands. The Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways, important migratory bird routes, all cross through the state,ⁱ making it vital for the continued success of North American birds. SF 718 would help protect and create habitat for birds and other wildlife while enriching the landscapes of your gorgeous state.

SF 718 would turn highways into beautiful natural landscapes. As we have developed natural areas, wildlife has struggled to keep up in many cases. Birds, however are incredibly resilient when provided with the correct resources. **Studies have found that bird species richness in a given area is greater where there is a healthy roadside environment.**ⁱⁱ Roadside habitats are also important corridors for wildlife, connecting existing habitats and making safe passage and migration possible.

The pesticide reduction consultation in Section 1, Subdivision 3(3) and (4) are of particular interest to American Bird Conservancy; they call for training and categorization procedures to reduce mowing and pesticide use. **Every year, as many as 67 million birds are killed by pesticides.**ⁱⁱⁱ Even more are lost when invertebrate prey they rely upon are killed by pesticide exposure or do not have adequate habitat.

SF 718 will not only enhance the natural beauty of Minnesota, it has real economic benefits. **Wildlife watching alone brings in over \$620 million to the state annually,**^{iv} which will be bolstered by more wildlife-friendly roadside habitats. SF 718's provisions would decrease the cost of roadside maintenance via reduced mowing, reduced herbicide use, and reduced future costs of habitat restoration or pollution clean-up.

American Bird Conservancy strongly supports SF 718 and urges favorable committee reports and cosponsorship of the bill.

Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

E. Hardy Kern III
Director of Government Relations, Pesticides and Birds Campaign
American Bird Conservancy



AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY



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ⁱ <https://www.minneapolisaudubon.org/blog/2020/4/21/snsod1k33bay3xjwpX2t0srw2ce30z>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969721065566>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.fs.usda.gov/psw/publications/documents/psw_gtr191/psw_gtr191_1065-1070_mineau.pdf

^{iv} <https://www.parksandtrails.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Economy-Handout-web.pdf>