

May 6, 2022

Re: Support Highways for Habitat as included in H4293-3 (Revisor page R5, R85)

Dear Conferees:

Audubon chapters across Minnesota join Audubon Minnesota in urging your support to establish and appropriate funds for the Highways for Habitat program, as described in [H.F. 4313](#) / [S.F. 4110](#). This program will increase habitat for bees, birds, and butterflies at a time when we are seeing dramatic declines in their populations. With 96 percent of all land-based bird species in North America feeding insects to their young, we need plants that support the food web.

Recent studies confirm that native plants offer significantly more value to local conservation efforts for birds and pollinators ([Burghardt et al. 2009](#), [Burghardt et al. 2010](#)). Comparisons of areas with similar diversity and biomass of native vs. non-native plants found that areas containing native plants supported significantly more birds (including species of greatest conservation need) and insects. These and numerous other studies confirm that native plants offer more value to local conservation efforts and using native plants on the borders of our highways will create habitat for numerous pollinators and birds.

Audubon's recently released [Survival by Degrees report](#) paints a dire picture for the future for birds: More than 150 species in Minnesota are threatened by the impacts of changes to Minnesota's weather patterns. A recent [study from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) also found a staggering loss of birds. North American bird populations have declined by 29% and grassland bird populations have declined by 53% since 1970. By adding more native plants to highways through programs like Highways for Habitat, we can help birds in the face of changing weather, urban development, and other threats.

Sincerely,

Rob Schultz, Executive Director
[Audubon Minnesota](#)

[Saint Paul Audubon Society](#)

[Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis](#)

[Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society](#)

[Wild River Audubon Society](#)