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Chairman Howell:

Audubon Great Lakes supports House Bill 5631, which would create a plan to restore American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) populations in Michigan. Scientific studies show that climate change is the biggest threat to birds and people alike, with two-thirds of North American bird species at risk of extinction due to our warming planet. American Woodcocks risk losing their entire range in the Lower Peninsula and roughly half their range in the Upper Peninsula if global temperatures rise by 3 degrees. Creating an American Woodcock conservation strategy and habitat management plan now is essential for their survival.

American Woodcocks rely on young forest habitat to survive and thrive. Young forest management for game birds like the American Woodcock will also benefit climate vulnerable non-game birds including Golden-winged Warblers, Prairie Warblers and Eastern Whip-poor-wills — which are each listed as Michigan Species of Concern and Joint Venture Focal Species.

Early successional habitat also benefits non-focal species that birders enjoy, including Eastern Towhees and Indigo Buntings. With bird watching growing in popularity during the pandemic and some misconceptions that early successional forest management is bad for birds, including non-game bird species that will benefit from the bill could encourage broad support.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Brian Vigue
Policy Director