

SEMINAR

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Hosted by Prof Koh Lian Pian

Why do we know so much about migratory birds, but not enough to conserve them?



By David S. Wilcove

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About the Speaker

David S. Wilcove is a professor of ecology, evolutionary biology, and public affairs at Princeton University and Vice Dean of the School of Public and International Affairs. His research focuses on the impacts of farming, logging, hunting, climate change, and other human activities on biodiversity. Prior to joining Princeton's faculty in 2001, he worked as a scientist for the Environmental Defense Fund, The Wilderness Society, and The Nature Conservancy. Professor Wilcove serves or has served on the boards of directors of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Society for Conservation Biology, Rare, American Bird Conservancy, Natural Areas Association, Galapagos Conservancy, and New Jersey Audubon Society, among other organizations. He received his undergraduate degree from Yale University and his doctorate from Princeton University.

For decades, scientists and citizen naturalists have been sounding the alarm about declines in populations of migratory birds across much of the globe. Thousands of scientific papers, reports, and news articles have been published on the magnitude, likely causes, and consequences of these declines. Moreover, technological advances have enabled ornithologists to explore aspects of bird migration that were simply unknowable just a decade or two ago. Yet, notwithstanding these impressive accomplishments, there remain dangerous gaps in our understanding of the cumulative impacts of different threats on migratory birds and in the spatially explicit habitat needs of these birds across their annual cycles. I will explore these gaps with respect to two well-studied and charismatic groups of migrants: songbirds migrating from the eastern United States and Canada to their wintering grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean, and shorebirds migrating along the East-Asian Australasian Flyway. Given all that we know about these remarkable birds, what more do we need to know to successfully protect them?