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Forty-five years and counting: reflections from the Palomarin Field Station on the contribution of long-term monitoring and recommendations for the future

Bird populations and the ecosystems that support them are increasingly threatened by land use change and climate change. Careful monitoring of these systems is needed to understand the causes of bird population decline, to predict future threats, and to suggest solutions.

For decades, bird observatories such as the Palomarin Field Station have been closely monitoring bird populations and changes in their environment. These data have contributed greatly to our understanding of bird ecology and conservation and have provided a baseline understanding of the relationships between birds and their environments. These data have become essential for predicting how birds will respond to future environmental conditions.

In this paper, we review the contributions of bird observatories such as Palomarin to ornithology and highlight ways in which these stations will become increasingly important for conservation. In addition to ecological monitoring, field stations also play key roles as centers for collaborative research and training the next generation of conservation biologists and ecologists. Finally, based on 45 years of monitoring at Palomarin, we offer recommendations to ensure that ornithological field stations can continue to be leaders in bird research and conservation in the future.

Recommendations for field stations:

1. Explore diverse opportunities for funding
2. Develop a strong internship program
3. Use multiple monitoring methods
4. Measure relevant environmental and ecological variables
5. Rigorously standardize and document methodology
6. Regularly assess and evaluate methods
7. Maintain data quality and accessibility and follow best practices in data management
8. Explore new analytic methods
9. Strengthen the effect of single-site monitoring with collaboration and data-sharing
10. Regularly publish and share results

Paper Citation

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