



The All-Bird Bulletin

Bird Conservation News and Information

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From the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI)



NABCI is dedicated to promoting and advancing integrated bird conservation in North America.

NABCI's goal is to deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation through regionally based, biologically driven, landscape-oriented partnerships.

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For a list of grant programs for project funding, visit the NABCI Web site at <http://www.nabci-us.org/funding.html>

To receive The All-Bird Bulletin or submit an article, contact Roxanne_Bogart@fws.gov

Fish and Wildlife Service Unveils Migratory Bird Strategic Plan



John Turner, Asst. Secretary of State, Migratory Bird Conservation Forum, January 2004

In March 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service unveiled its ten-year strategic plan which will serve as a blueprint and guidepost for the Service's bird conservation work over the next decade. The plan, entitled *A Blueprint for the Future of Migratory Birds*, presents the Service's overall vision, priorities, goals, and strategies to ensure a promising future for migratory birds.

The Service's commitment to all-bird conservation is stated clearly in the *Blueprint*, "This plan sets a course for the Service to engage existing and new partners in a comprehensive approach that coordinates and integrates partners' efforts across geographic scales, taxonomic groups, shared habitats and landscapes, and human cultural experiences."

The *Blueprint* reflects the combined wisdom of both the Service and its partners in migratory bird conservation. In addition to a public review in the fall of 2003, the Service hosted a Migratory Bird Conservation Forum in January 2004, to work directly with partners to solicit their input. "This Forum was an opportunity to sit down with our key leaders in the Service, states, conservation organizations, industry, and scientific community to set a course for migratory bird conservation," said Paul Schmidt, Assistant Director for Migratory Birds and State programs.

While the plan defines the Service's role in migratory bird conservation, it also emphasizes the importance of partnerships - that securing a future for migratory birds will require the collective efforts of all organizations and people that care about birds and their habitats. "Instead of focusing on our differences, we must focus on what we have in common for the greater good, and use our differences to our advantage" said Service Director Steve Williams to open the Forum.

The Service released the *Blueprint* at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Spokane, Washington where it was endorsed by the Bird Conservation Committee of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. As Gary Myers, chair of this IAFWA committee, stated, "The plan is critical to pull the bird conservation community together."

At the Conservation Forum, John Turner, Assistant Secretary of State characterized birds as the original diplomats. "Birds weave the nations of the globe together as neighbors."

To download an electronic copy of the plan, visit:
<http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/mbstratplan/mbstratplan.htm>

Continental Landbird Plan Available

Partners In Flight (PIF) released its much anticipated North American Landbird Conservation Plan at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Spokane, Washington in March 2004. At that conference, the Plan was endorsed by the Bird Conservation Committee of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.



Golden-winged Warbler is a PIF watchlist species in need of immediate conservation action.

PIF is eager to get these plans into the hands of everyone involved in bird conservation in the United States and Canada. Plans will be distributed through networks

of organizations such as the Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, Department of Defense, American Bird Conservancy, Canadian Wildlife Service, Bird Studies Canada, various state wildlife agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the forest products industry.

To partners wanting to obtain large numbers of copies, please note that PIF is still seeking to recover some of the printing costs which were fronted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. But everyone who can use this plan will get a copy. Contact Terry Rich to request plans (208-378-5347, Terry_Rich@fws.gov or piranga@msn.com if Fish and Wildlife Service internet access is down).

Bird Population Objectives Step-Down Workshop

The Partners In Flight population objectives step-down workshop in Port Aransas, Texas in February 2004, proved to be a big success. Details of objective-setting were explored by using data for four species (Long-billed Curlew, Little Blue Heron, Cerulean Warbler, Loggerhead Shrike) and a number of issues were advanced. Detailed minutes are available by contacting dave_krueper@fws.gov.

The next steps for PIF at the implementation level are already familiar to joint ventures that have the geographic information systems and other technical capacity to conduct serious conservation design:

- 1) characterize and assess current landscape conditions,
- 2) Develop management/population response models,
- 3) Assess conservation opportunities across the landscape,
- 4) Produce optimal solutions,
- 5) Implement on-the-ground actions, and
- 6) Monitor, evaluate, and adapt.

As a result of the workshop's effectiveness, the PIF Council approved a motion to hold more workshops in other locations around the country. Both the Western Working Group and Southeastern Working group have already had at least one special meeting on this topic. Expressions of interest from the Midwest and Northeast are particularly sought. Contact Terry_Rich@fws.gov with any suggestions.

International Migratory Bird Day: A Vehicle for Educating About All Birds

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) is a day to recognize and celebrate migratory birds and the conservation actions needed to ensure their survival. The original focus of IMBD was neotropical migratory songbirds, species that travel between nesting habitats in North America and nonbreeding grounds in South and Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.



However, just as PIF partners are concerned about the conservation of all birds, and coordinate with other bird initiatives, the IMBD program is a tool for all-bird education. This is evidenced by new offerings in the IMBD Products

Catalog, such as the Jr. Duck Stamp Curriculum and Shorebird Sister Schools Curriculum, and in the themes of the past few years: Wetlands, Exploring Habitats, and in 2004, Colonial Birds. IMBD celebrants have always drawn on any locally occurring birds to lead their audiences to greater awareness and concern about conservation, from common backyard feeder favorites to charismatic migrants of any taxonomic group.

Launched in 1993 by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and supported by other members of the PIF Information and Education Working Group, IMBD became the hallmark outreach event for PIF. It is now

coordinated by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and supported by multiple partners through sponsorship, creation and review of products, promotion, coordination, and celebration.

IMBD 2004 falls on May 8th. To learn more about the IMBD 2004 materials, events, and messages, visit <http://www.birdday.org>. You can join the IMBD-specific listserv by sending an email to "FWS-IMBD-request@lists.fws.govf" with "subscribe" in the subject line. If you have specific questions, contact the IMBD Co-coordinators [Jennifer A Wheeler@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer_A_Wheeler@fws.gov) or Susan Bonfield, sbonfield@aol.com or call the IMBD toll-free hotline 1-866-334-3330.

Notes from the Field



Monitoring High-elevation Habitat in the Atlantic Northern Forest

For decades, mountain forests of the northeastern United States and adjacent portions of Canada were excluded from avian monitoring programs. Their remote location, challenging terrain, and unpredictable weather presented a host of logistical problems. The Vermont Institute of Natural Science set out to address these difficulties in 2000, with encouragement and funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 5 Nongame Bird Program. The result is Mountain Birdwatch, a citizen science project designed to track high-elevation songbird populations and describe patterns of avian distribution and abundance.

Mountain Birdwatchers with advanced identification skills monitor all bird species, while other participants are trained to count a group of five. The focal species are: White-throated Sparrow, Winter Wren, Blackpoll Warbler, Swainson's Sparrow, Winter Wren, Blackpoll Warbler, Swainson's Sparrow, and the program's flagship species, Bicknell's Thrush. Separated from Gray-cheeked Thrush in 1995, Bicknell's Thrush breeds exclusively in montane fir forests that stretch in an archipelago from the Catskills to Cape Breton. Bicknell's Thrush tops the list of Highest Priority Species in Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 14, while Blackpoll Warbler is considered a High Priority Species.

Monitors survey about 120 routes each year in New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Over 60 additional routes have been established in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia by Bird Studies Canada's High Elevation Landbird Program. To date, results have been used to develop and validate a Bicknell's Thrush habitat model, identify gaps in the existing network of conservation lands, assess risks of proposed habitat alteration, and educate recreational users of montane forests about songbird conservation. Each of these applications advances key objectives for the Atlantic Northern Forest, as identified at the BCR's 2002 workshop. For more information or to adopt a route of your own, visit www.vinsweb.org/cbd/mtn_birdwatch.html.

The MoSI Program: A New Winter Monitoring Network for Migratory Landbirds

The Institute for Bird Populations (IBP), with support from the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act and 33 other partners, has established the MoSI (Monitoreo de Sobrevivencia Invernal) Program, a standardized network of mist-netting and bird-banding stations operated during the winter months. The first 29 MoSI stations were operated in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean during the winter of 2002-03. Now in its second year, the MoSI Program has more than doubled in size with 64 stations being operated in ten Neotropical countries. MoSI Program goals include: (1) the assessment of habitat-, age-, and sex-specific overwintering survival rates and late winter physical condition for a suite of about 20 migratory landbird species, and (2) the application of these data to the formulation of management plans for these species on their wintering grounds.

The MoSI network also facilitates feather collection for DNA and stable isotope analyses that aim to link breeding and wintering populations. IBP currently has a cooperative agreement with UCLA's Neotropical Migrant Conservation Genetics Project for the analysis and archiving of feather samples. By providing spatially-extensive data on habitat quality and linking wintering and breeding population parameters, MoSI aims to be a critical component of landbird conservation in North America. For more information, visit www.birdpop.org/MoSI/MoSI.htm.

Assessing Monitoring Protocols for Shorebirds and Marshbirds in the Prairie Potholes

Biologists Diane Granfors and Neal Niemuth with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) have initiated pilot studies to assess monitoring protocols for breeding shorebirds and marshbirds in the Prairie Pothole Region, Bird Conservation Region 11. Assessing protocols is the first step in developing reliable surveys for these species, many of which are poorly represented in the Breeding Bird Survey. These surveys also are designed to determine relationships between population numbers and landscape characteristics which will help target conservation actions for these species.

In a similar effort, Susan Skagen, with the U.S. Geological Survey's Fort Collins Science Center, has been developing protocols to monitor migrating shorebirds throughout the Prairie Pothole Region. Monitoring on migration areas may help supplement monitoring efforts on breeding grounds in the Arctic. Random survey sites were stratified by two landscape influences: the proportion of cropland and the proportion of wetland. Known migration stopover sites also were surveyed.

With two field seasons completed, analyses on the migrating shorebird data have begun. One of the interesting findings to date is that for many species, more than 90 percent of the population stops over at the small, but extremely numerous, shallow wetlands scattered across the region, and relatively few birds stop over at the larger wetlands that are known to attract birds year after year. Forthcoming analyses will discern the relationship between migration stopover sites and landscape features and will be used for strategic management and to help target future migration monitoring areas. For more information, contact [Diane Granfors@fws.gov](mailto:Diane_Granfors@fws.gov), [Neal Neimuth@fws.gov](mailto:Neal_Neimuth@fws.gov), or [Susan K Skagen@usgs.gov](mailto:Susan_K_Skagen@usgs.gov)

Bird Conservation Planning at the State Level: A Northeastern Example

By October 1, 2005, state wildlife agencies must develop Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies (CWCSs) to receive State Wildlife Grants, which provide federal funds to conserve wildlife and their habitat, particularly nongame and at-risk species.

Although a large amount of bird conservation information is available to develop CWCSs, most exists along ecological boundaries, such as Bird Conservation Regions. Translating this information from ecological to state boundaries to make it easily accessible to state agencies for their CWCSs is a challenging task.

The Northeast Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has committed to making bird conservation information available at the state level for any interested state in the northeast. So far the Service's Northeast Region Division of Migratory Birds, in conjunction with the Division of Federal Aid, has collaborated with several state wildlife agencies to "step-down" regional information to state boundaries, including Maine, Connecticut, and New Jersey. First, each state identified the bird information needs for their CWCSs and then discussed what role the Service could play in providing this information. In one case, the Service invited a contractor and a state biologist to spend a week at the Regional office to help develop the materials? a method the Service strongly recommends.

Using existing information from conservation plans, integrated bird workshops, and other sources, the partners identified the priority species from each bird initiative that occur within the state, and then grouped these species into general habitat categories. Where information was available to estimate population size and trends, they also calculated state-specific population and habitat targets for priority species based on the magnitude of the population trends. Communication and collaboration among state and non-governmental organization representatives, bird initiative experts, and Service biologists were critical to ensuring reliable results. For more information, contact [Scott Johnston@fws.gov](mailto:Scott_Johnston@fws.gov) or [Randy Dettmers@fws.gov](mailto:Randy_Dettmers@fws.gov).

The Service's Northeast Region and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies are documenting this process as a model for developing the content and format of bird conservation information in CWCSs in other regions. The Service also has identified contact people in every state who would be available to provide bird conservation information for state planning. Biologists from the Service and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology are working to convert regional bird conservation estimates, targets, and objectives for landbirds and shorebirds to the state level for all states in the nation. For more information on the landbird effort contact Ken Rosenberg, kvr2@cornell.edu and on the shorebird effort contact [Brad Andres@fws.gov](mailto:Brad_Andres@fws.gov).