



## Northern Rockies Bird Conservation Region (BCR 10) Intermountain West Joint Venture

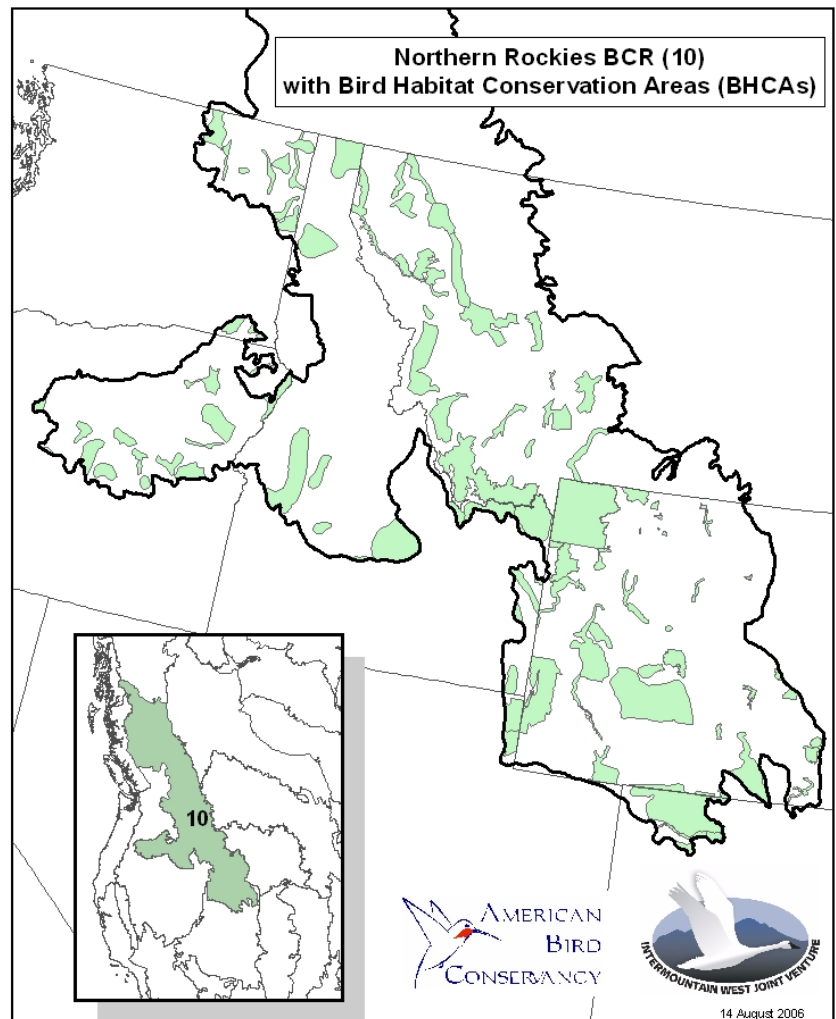
### BCR Description and Priorities

The Northern Rockies Bird Conservation Region (BCR 10) is one of three primary BCRs that form the bulk of the area covered by the Intermountain West Joint Venture (Joint Venture) in the U.S. It extends northward to coincide with the majority of the Canadian Intermountain Joint Venture. The BCR includes significant portions of five states (i.e., WY, MT, ID, OR, and WA), as well as small portions of Utah and Colorado. The largest wilderness areas in the United States are also contained in this BCR.

Mountain valleys range from below 1,500 feet in the northern portions of the BCR to over 6,000 feet in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. The valleys, mostly dominated by grassland, sagebrush, and wetlands, are receiving the brunt of a human population boom in many areas. Grazing and agricultural practices have also had a profound effect on some of the lower elevation habitats. For example, Palouse Prairie—a

bunchgrass prairie type preferred by priority species, such as the Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Long-billed Curlew—is a primary conservation concern in Idaho, eastern Washington, Montana, and southern British Columbia (BC).

The higher elevations range up to over 12,600 feet in places such as Montana’s Absaroka Range and along the BC-Alberta border. The mountains are primarily public land, managed in many cases for multiple uses, such as timber production, grazing, and recreation. High priority forest habitats include open, mature stands of ponderosa pine, old growth mixed forest, and whitebark pine. Priority species of these habitats include Flammulated Owl, Lewis’ Woodpecker, and Blue Grouse.



# Conservation Design

## Conservation Design Approach

*The Tools.* Biologists are using coarse-scale geospatial data layers (e.g. GAP Analysis, Ecological Systems, Protected Areas) and local, state, and regional expert consultation to identify Bird Habitat Conservation Areas (BHCAs) throughout the Joint Venture. The BHCAs represent priority areas for conservation action, where priority habitats, priority populations, threats, and partnership opportunities are the greatest. The U.S. portion of the Northern Rockies BCR contains nearly 100 BHCAs totaling more than 30 million acres or 25 percent of the BCR's 118 million acres in the U.S. The Canadian Intermountain Joint Venture has identified similar focal areas.

Biologists are using local and finer-scale planning tools, such as cover type, species distribution, land ownership, habitat condition, to improve habitat and population objectives for individual BHCAs, state portions of the BCR, and the Joint Venture as a whole. These efforts are part of the BCR's ongoing adaptive management process, which involves working closely with the Technical Committee of the Joint Venture and with individual state steering committees. The efforts are also being coordinated with state-level planning to implement State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAP).

*The Benefits.* These conservation design efforts provide forums to coordinate the development and refinement of objectives from the local scale up through the regional scale. Some specific project examples include:

- Mapping riparian habitat condition, ownership, and protection status within BHCAs to provide project areas for state agency and Natural Resource Conservation Service program delivery (e.g., incentives, restoration, easements), and the development of a regional "Conservation Without Borders" riparian initiative throughout the BCR;
- Improved monitoring of SWAP priority species on the Rocky Mountain Front to delineate priority areas for state, federal, and private land conservation programs, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and The Nature Conservancy; and
- Developing BCR-wide and sub-regional habitat-based population estimates and objectives to drive refinement of BHCA boundaries and provide regional context to state program delivery.

Using the conservation design tools described above, the IWJV directed \$3,625,000 of NAWCA funds to four projects in BCR 10 in FY 2005 and 2006.

### Contact:

Daniel Casey  
Northern Rockies BCR Coordinator  
American Bird Conservancy  
dcasey@abcbirds.org  
(406) 756-2681