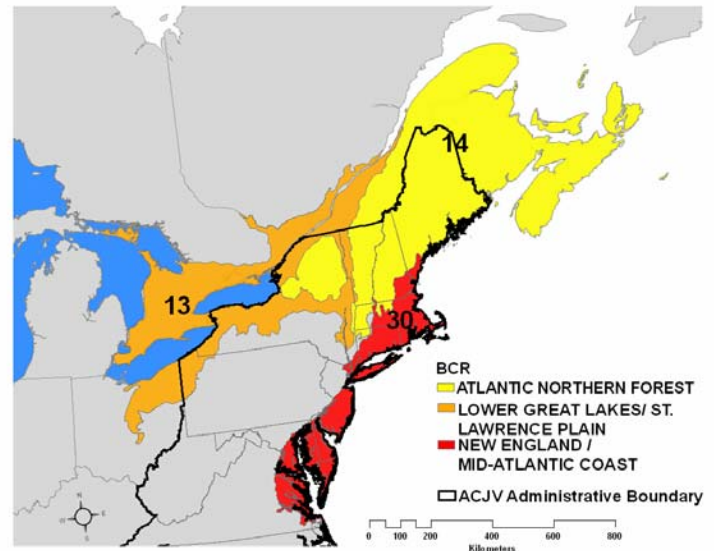




Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region (BCR 13) - Atlantic Coast Joint Venture

BCR Description and Priorities

The Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region (BCR 13) encompasses low-lying areas around Lakes Erie and Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, south of the Canadian Shield. This region is a mosaic of grasslands, shrublands, forests, wetlands, agricultural fields, and human development. The BCR includes some of the most important breeding habitat in the Northeast for grassland birds of concern such as Henslow's Sparrow and Bobolink. Natural shrublands and agricultural abandonment also provide important habitat for declining early successional, shrub-nesting species, such as Golden-winged Warbler and American Woodcock. However, the region's major importance to most birds is the stopover habitat it provides during migration. It attracts some of the largest concentrations of migrant passerines, hawks, shorebirds, waterfowl, and waterbirds in eastern North America. These concentrations are often associated with threatened lakeshore habitats.



Conservation Design Approach

The Tools. A diverse group of stakeholders in BCR 13 have been collaborating for years on bird conservation planning and implementation, and the development of a conservation design strategy for the region. These partners determined that they first needed newer and more accurate map layers for high priority habitats (e.g., grasslands, shrublands, and wetlands), since existing maps of these habitats were outdated and inaccurate. In 2005, the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV) contracted with Ducks Unlimited to: 1) acquire and classify new remotely-sensed data for a pilot project area: the St. Lawrence Valley in New York; 2) develop new GIS habitat layers for existing and potential grasslands and wetlands; and 3) integrate this information into an existing decision support model, developed for Mallards in the Mid-Western U.S., which identifies landscapes most likely to sustain populations of Mallards and other species that share its breeding habitat.

This project continues with a host of partners (e.g., Audubon New York, NYS DEC, SUNY-Brockport, USDA/NRCS, Ducks Unlimited, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) currently collaborating to ground-truth and assess the accuracy of the new habitat map layers. Their efforts should produce the information needed to develop powerful conservation design tools that identify the most important landscapes to protect and manage for suites of priority bird species across all major habitat types.

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Conservation Design

The Benefits. State Wildlife Action Plans for New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Vermont all recognize the importance of BCR 13 to a suite of species of conservation concern. These include breeding birds associated with grasslands (e.g., Grasshopper Sparrow), shrublands (e.g., Golden-winged Warbler), wetlands (e.g., Least Bittern), and forests (e.g., Cerulean Warbler), as well as a multitude of species that rely on stopover habitat in the region during migration (e.g., waterfowl). Each of these states will likely contribute to, use, and benefit from conservation design products being developed for BCR 13.

Contact:

Mitch Hartley, BCR 13 Coordinator
Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
52 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376
(413) 863-0209 Ext.3