

Continentially Important Proposal for the Laguna Madre



*Advancing
Integrated Bird Conservation
in North America*

**NORTH AMERICAN BIRD
CONSERVATION INITIATIVE**

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Reddish Egret, James Leopold



The Laguna Madre and Delta of the Río Bravo Natural Protected Area is located in coastal Tamaulipas, due south of the border with Texas. The Laguna Madre of Tamaulipas and Texas is 50,800 hectares in size — the most extensive hypersaline ecosystem of the five that exist on earth. It consists of a system of lagoons with water depths that vary between thirty centimeters and one meter. Laguna Madre marks the northern limit of distribution of various types of tropical vegetation, most notably four species of mangroves that have special protection status in Mexico. Mangroves provide habitat for many crustaceans and fish of economic importance, as well as a diversity of nesting and wintering birds. Mangroves also contribute to the organic richness of the coastal lagoons, helping to maintain high levels of primary productivity.

A rich diversity of birds occurs in Laguna Madre throughout the year. The region supports more than 450 species of birds, 144 of which are permanent residents. The majority of the birds migrate to the region from breeding grounds in the United States and Canada. The area is important for both waterbirds and landbirds, including Northern Pintail, Short-billed Dowitcher, Reddish Egret, and Prothonotary Warbler. The Laguna Madre has been officially recognized an Important Bird Area and a wetland of international importance by Ramsar and the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

The dominant vegetation on the margins of the Laguna Madre is Tamaulipan Thornscrub, a plant community that has enormous importance for many kinds of landbirds. Only thirty percent of the thornscrub habitat that existed sixty years ago still survives.

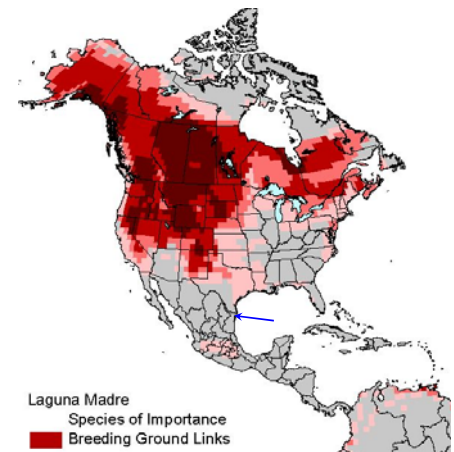
Many organizations, public and private, international and local, share a great concern for the conservation of the Laguna Madre's ecosystems. This proposal will help consolidate the region's many conservation partners and activities following its Declaration as a Natural Protected Area. It will also increase knowledge and conservation of priority sites and species and help maintain the area's productivity, thus benefiting local populations.



Northern Pintail/ John and Karen Hollingsworth

The proposal's ten year budget is US\$37.5 million. Activities include:

- Conservation of 20,000 hectares of waterfowl feeding and resting areas, particularly for priority species such as Redhead and Northern Pintail.
- Protection of 200 km of shorebird wintering areas, including barrier islands and mudflats.
- Protection of 80,000 ha of migratory bird stopover areas, focusing on intact Tamaulipan Thornscrub vegetation surrounding the Laguna.
- Restoration and protection of 10,000 ha of biological corridors throughout the region.
- Establishment of a long-term monitoring program for waterfowl, shorebirds, and migratory landbirds.
- Development and dissemination of appropriate best management practices for private, *ejido*, and federal lands.
- Building and continued maintenance of a regional alliance through support for a coordinator, communications, and annual meetings.
- Support for coordination with the Rio Grande Joint Venture in Texas and other Bird Habitat Joint Ventures with common migratory species and habitat conservation issues.
- Partner capacity building workshops in GIS, avian monitoring, legal tools, and other topics.



Breeding ground links for priority birds of the Laguna Madre