

Continentially Important Proposal for the Marismas Nacionales



*Advancing
Integrated Bird Conservation
in North America*

**NORTH AMERICAN BIRD
CONSERVATION INITIATIVE**

Debbie Hahn
U.S. NABCI Coordinator
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
444 North Capital Street, NW
Suite 725
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: 202-624-8917
Fax: 202-624-7891
dhahn@fishwildlife.org

Marbled Godwit/ Greg Thomson



Marismas Nacionales is one of Mexico's most important wetland ecosystems. Stretching along the Pacific coast from Mazatlan to San Blas, it contains the most extensive mangrove complex on the west coast of Mexico, as well as numerous lagoons, ponds, mudpans, and other wetland habitats. Because of its strategic location and diversity of habitats, Marismas Nacionales sustains an impressive number of migratory, resident, and endemic birds — approximately 322 species.

Marismas Nacionales is recognized as a wetland of international importance by Ramsar and a site of hemispheric importance by the Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network. CONABIO, Mexico's National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity, designated it as a Marine, Terrestrial, and Hydrological Priority Site and an Important Bird Area. According to the Partners in Flight's *North American Landbird Conservation Plan*, Marimas Nacionales may host half of all Neotropical landbird species and up to 16 Watch List Species — species of highest conservation concern.

This proposal includes a variety of conservation activities in Marismas Nacionales and along the migratory path that extends north through the Great Salt Lake in Utah to the Chaplin and Quill Lakes of Saskatchewan. The proposal

builds on the tri-national Linking Communities, Wetlands, and Migratory Birds program, which has been in existence for the last ten years, and the work of the Intermountain West Joint Venture.

The proposal is made up of three comprehensive projects involving conservation, education, and ecotourism. The total cost of the five-year program is US\$22.4 million.

The conservation project involves the following:

- Develop habitat and population objectives for priority species.
- Provide support for technical assistance to Mexico for designing bird surveys, training surveyors, and managing data.
- Identify critical habitats and times throughout the annual cycle for the priority species and developing conservation strategies for these areas.
- Implement an adaptive monitoring plan based on population sizes and targets of priority species.
- Identify key sites for marbled godwits, long-billed curlews, and snowy plovers through satellite tracking and winter habitat assessment.

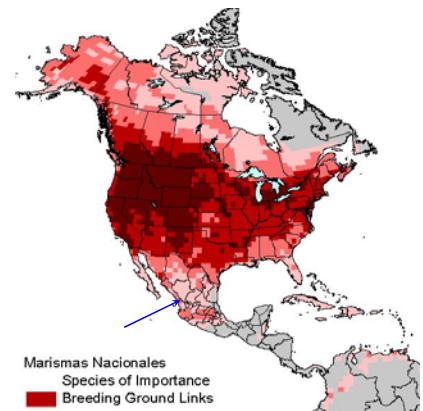
The education proposal involves the following formal and site-based education activities:

- Extend the existing Shorebird Sister Schools program to communities in the Chaplin and Quill lakes area and increase involvement in Utah and Nayarit.
- Develop and refine an interdisciplinary environmental education curriculum on bird ecology specific to Utah.
- Implement teacher exchanges in coordination with local bird festivals.
- Implement university level exchanges centered on bird ecology and international bird education practices.
- Expand migratory bird interpretation displays at the nature centers near the Great Salt Lake and Chaplin/Quill Lakes.
- Develop a business plan for the proposed nature center in San Blas and help fund the building and operation of the facility.

The eco-tourism project will involve preparing a business plan to evaluate the economic returns likely to be produced by eco-tourism activities at Marismas Nacionales, the Great Salt Lake, and in the Chaplin and Quill Lakes region of Saskatchewan. It will also improve coordination and fund cultural, political, and scientific exchanges among existing bird festivals at the three sites.



Least Sandpiper/ Donna Dewhurst



Breeding ground links for priority birds of the Marismas Nacionales