



The All-Bird Bulletin

Bird Conservation News and Information

August 2004

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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Service Director Approves Central Hardwoods as Official “Joint Venture”

On June 24, 2004, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Steve Williams approved the Central Hardwoods partnership as an official “joint venture.” Under this status, the partnership is now eligible for Service administrative funding. The Central Hardwoods Joint Venture (CHJV) is now one of 14 habitat joint ventures in the United States along with four habitat joint ventures in Canada and three U.S.-Canadian species joint ventures. Habitat joint ventures are accepting the challenge of carrying out multiple bird conservation plans using an integrated approach.

Director’s Order Number 146 defines a joint venture as a self-directed partnership of organizations or individuals that has received general acceptance from the bird conservation community for implementing national or international bird conservation plans within a specific geographic area or for a specific taxonomic group. Working both collectively and independently, joint venture partners conduct activities in support of shared bird conservation goals, including biological planning, conservation design, project delivery, monitoring, evaluation and research, communications and outreach, and fundraising.

The entire Central Hardwoods Bird Conservation Region (BCR 24) is dominated by oak-hickory deciduous woodlands inhabited by interior forest species, such as Cerulean Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, and Louisiana Waterthrush. The region includes some of the most extensive mid-continent forests that probably provide source populations of these species for many surrounding areas. The region is the last major stronghold of the Eastern Bewick’s Wren, a species of early successional forests, and holds significance for migrating waterbirds and shorebirds.

Members of the CHJV formed the partnership in 2000, with the primary purpose of elevating emphasis on all-bird conservation within BCR 24. This newest joint venture seeks to take a lead role in implementing all-bird conservation objectives set forth by the various national and international bird conservation initiatives participating in the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI).

The Central Hardwoods Joint Venture (CHJV) submitted an implementation plan to the Service following procedures established in the Director's Order. Following review and consultation with partners, the Migratory Bird Program Staff recommended this southern partnership for approval by the Director. The President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget request includes new funds for the CHJV; however, actual funding for the CHJV is contingent on final appropriations action by



A priority landbird in the CHJV and a PIF Watchlist species, the Kentucky Warbler is a forest understory breeder that prefers deep shaded woods with dense, humid thickets. / Steve Maslowski

Congress. The CHJV's plan presents its long-term vision for all-bird conservation within the BCR which currently includes portions of Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. It also provides a synopsis of the partnership's activities to date, and identifies immediate priorities to establish and define the biological foundation, conservation design, and conservation delivery needs for the Central Hardwoods. For more information on this joint venture, contact the CHJV Coordinator, Jane Fitzgerald at jfitzgerald@abcbirds.org. To download the CHJV's implementation plan, visit <http://www.abcbirds.org/nabci/centralhardwoods.htm> or visit <http://birdhabitat.fws.gov/NAWMP/jvdir.htm> for more joint venture contact information. For a map of joint ventures, visit <http://www.nabci-us.org/jvmap.dwt>.

Scientists Propose Tools for Forest Landbird Conservation Planning and Assessment

A partnership of scientists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service, National Wetland Research Center, and the American Bird Conservancy are proposing to develop a ground-breaking model-based approach to landbird conservation planning and assessment for the Central Hardwoods and West Gulf Coastal Plain BCR's (BCR's 24 and 25). While the methods will be developed and demonstrated for these two BCR's, they will be based upon national level datasets and therefore can be applied to all BCR's lying within the forested biomes of the United States. To meet the range-wide needs of priority landbird species, Partners In Flight conservationists envision just this kind of coordinated planning and assessment between and among Bird Conservation Regions.



The Cape May Warbler, which breeds in spruce forests, is a PIF Species of Continental Importance with a high percent of its global population in the Northern Forest Biome.

Partners In Flight's North American Landbird Conservation Plan presents range-wide population estimates and objectives for 448 species of native landbirds breeding in the United States and Canada. These range-wide objectives are then apportioned to individual Bird Conservation Regions (BCR's) so that they can be translated into BCR-scale conservation objectives and strategies. The ultimate success of the Plan will depend upon scientists' ability to progressively refine these ecoregional population targets and habitat objectives using adaptive approaches to planning and assessment, such as those being proposed, that can be replicated consistently throughout species' ranges.

The model approach addresses the three broad needs of assessing, monitoring, and predicting landscape sustainability based on the extent and distribution of available habitats. More specifically, the model proposes to: 1) *assess* at ecoregional scales the ability of landscapes to sustain priority species at prescribed population levels based on the extent and distribution of available habitats; 2) *monitor* changes in the ability of landscapes to sustain species; and 3) *predict* changes in landscape sustainability based on alternative assumptions concerning succession and natural disturbance, land use, conservation strategies, management practices, and development pressures.

The methods will be derived from two national data sets, the National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD) and the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program. In so doing, the ongoing work of partners of the Central Hardwoods and Lower Mississippi Valley (LMV) Joint Venture will be leveraged and expanded in support of national scale methods to develop landscape characterization and assessment models, and GIS-based habitat suitability models and simulation models for comparing land-management alternatives. For more information, contact Charles Baxter LMV Joint Venture Coordinator, charles_baxter@fws.gov

Coordinated Bird Monitoring Technical Working Group Formed

At the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March 2004, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (IAFWA) Science and Research Committee appointed an ad hoc working group to explore the technical issues of coordinated bird monitoring. The Directors of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the Service) and the U.S. Geological Survey (the Survey) and the President of the IAFWA jointly endorsed the formation of this technical working group following discussions at the March meetings.

The Science and Research Committee charged the working group with three objectives: 1) To identify key technical issues, approaches, and suggestions about the coordination of bird monitoring as a basis for comprehensive discussions in the bird conservation and research community; (2) To suggest a process for integrating and updating ideas from the avian conservation and research community; and (3) To produce a report for the IAFWA Science and Research Committee with recommendations on technical aspects of coordinated bird monitoring. Discussions of technical issues include the topic of surveillance monitoring versus management-driven monitoring.

The nine-member working group, consisting of three individuals from the Survey, three from the Service, and three from the States, has held four meetings since May 2004. The group has discussed the why (i.e., why monitor and why coordinate), how (i.e., how do we develop a well-designed monitoring program), and who (i.e., who is involved in the coordination and how will it occur) of coordinated bird monitoring. The working group is now preparing a final report and will present their recommendations on this monitoring approach to the U.S. NABCI Committee and the IAFWA Science and Research Committee in September 2004.

Concurrently, the U.S. NABCI Monitoring Working Group continues to work on state and regional bird monitoring plans, but, at the direction of the U.S. NABCI Committee, will temporarily stop working on the broad scale coordinated bird monitoring program until the IAFWA working group completes its recommendations.

Mexican Regional Alliances Taking Shape

Based upon an analysis of the priority Important Bird Areas in México, the Mexican NABCI Committee selected a group of six Important Bird Areas to pilot the development of regional alliances and trinational projects: Northeastern Yucatán peninsula, El Triunfo, Chihuahuan Desert grasslands, Marismas Nacionales, Chamela-Cuixmala, and El Cielo.

From November 2002 through March 2003, NABCI partners held four workshops in México, one for each of the first four sites listed above. These workshops included 30 to 35 invitees from México and 8 to 10 invitees from Canada and the United States, representing a mix of people from government and non-government organizations and academic institutions knowledgeable of regional partnerships, bird conservation planning, and on-the-ground action. The workshops served as a first step for improving the capacity for trinational cooperation and developing organizational and individual commitments to work on developing regional alliances (e.g., joint ventures) and trinational demonstration projects. The Trinational NABCI Committee agreed to continue to support Mexico's efforts to create and strengthen these regional partnerships.

In each region where the workshops were held, NABCI partners are now looking to hire a coordinator and develop regional master plans and action plans. Through funding from Canada, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, and other sources, partners hope to have one coordinator in place by the end of the summer. For more information, contact Humberto Berlanga, Mexican NABCI Coordinator hberlang@xolo.conabio.gob.mx

News from NABCI-Canada

The Canadian and U.S. North American Wetlands Conservation Councils (NAWCC) as well as the Canadian North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) Council met in Kananaskis, Alberta on July 12-13, 2004. The Canadian and U.S. Councils met independently for one day followed by a half-day joint session to discuss issues of mutual interest. The focal point of the joint session was the 2004 update to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) and future directions for NAWMP and the NAWMP Plan Committee. In particular, Council members shared views on the best approach to undertaking an evaluation of the NAWMP Program and projects, a priority identified by the NAWMP Plan Committee for the coming years.

Key issues discussed as part of the Canadian NAWCC/NABCI Council meeting included efforts to enhance the migratory bird program in Canada, options for applying the successful joint venture model to Canada's boreal ecosystem, and an update on the forestry/migratory bird working group recommendations for changes to the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (and associated regulations) to provide a better mechanism to address the issue of incidental take of birds.

The next meeting of the Canadian NAWCC/NABCI Councils will be October 19-20, 2004 in Montague, Prince Edward Island. For more information, contact Silke Neve, NABCI Canada Coordinator, (819) 994-0512, S.Neve@ec.gc.ca.

Notes from the Field



Gulf Coast Joint Venture Goes All-Bird

At its June 2-3, 2004, meeting the Gulf Coast Joint Venture (GCJV) Management Board declared itself an integrated bird conservation joint venture. Board members intend for the GCJV to be the conservation partnership responsible for guiding and delivering habitat conservation activities that are important to all priority bird species within the joint venture area.



The Gulf Coastal Prairie (BCR 37) provides critical in-transit habitat for migrating shorebirds, such as the Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and most neotropical forest birds of eastern North America. /Rick Lanctot

The partnership was established under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), a strategy for the conservation and perpetuation of continental waterfowl populations that depends on restoring wetlands and associated ecosystems within priority landscapes throughout North America. Partners of the GCJV have accepted the responsibility of transforming the goals of the NAWMP into biologically-driven habitat conservation within an ecologically-based focus area of special significance to waterfowl.

With the Management Board's June decision, the GCJV is now formally expanding its scope to help deliver habitat conservation initiatives for migratory birds other than waterfowl, including Partners In Flight, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan. "The Gulf Coast Joint Venture's transition to an integrated bird conservation partnership will require time and resources,

but the partners recognize the importance of making it happen." said Greg Esslinger, GCJV Coordinator.

Board members are drafting a mission statement that will reflect the GCJV's expanded bird conservation focus and are reviewing the partnership's organizational structure. Any organizational changes that are believed to be needed to move integrated planning and implementation forward will be discussed at the next Board meeting in November 2004. For more information, visit the GCJV web site

<http://southwest.fws.gov/gulfcoastjv/Default.htm> or contact Greg Esslinger at greg_esslinger@fws.gov

Ontario Holds Landbird Conservation Planning Workshops

The vision of Partners In Flight is to sustain the natural numbers, natural habitats, and natural geographic ranges of native landbirds through coordinated efforts by scientists, governments, and private citizens. Using PIF's continental framework for landbird conservation, the Canadian Wildlife Service's Ontario Region is working with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Bird Studies Canada to develop landbird conservation plans for all four of Ontario's Bird Conservation Regions.

Efforts are currently underway for BCR 8, Boreal Softwood Shield, and BCR 12, Boreal Hardwood Transition. Once these plans are complete, efforts will then focus on planning for BCR 7, Taiga Shield and Hudson Plains. Workshops for BCR 13 (Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain) have already been conducted and the results can be found at <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/PIF/PIFOntario.html>.

The next workshop will be held late September/early October and will cover landbird conservation planning in BCR's 8 and 12 with participation from the neighboring provinces of Quebec and Manitoba which share responsibility for these boreal BCR's. For more information, contact Brigitte Collins, Project Development Biologist, (613) 952-2408.

Northern Prairie and Parkland Waterbird Conservation Plan Released

The Waterbird Conservation for the Americas initiative has released the first regional waterbird conservation plan. The document assesses the state of waterbird populations and habitats in the Northern Prairie and Parkland Region (BCR 11 with portions of BCR's 6 and 10) and recommends habitat conservation and management strategies that influence broad landscapes in order to benefit the greatest number of water-dependent species, particularly high priority species. As a bi-national effort, the Plan was authored by Neal Niemuth of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Gerry Beyersbergen and Michael Norton of the Canadian Wildlife Service. A printed version of the document, published by the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, is being circulated by the authors in the region; an electronic copy is posted at <http://birds.fws.gov/waterbirds/NPP/>.



Due to wetlands loss, populations of many waterbird species are at risk in the Northern Prairie and Parkland Region, including American Bittern, a species of High Concern. /Karen Hollingsworth

To celebrate the completion of the Northern Prairie and Parkland Region Plan, and to symbolize the flow of resources such plans can stimulate, the Waterbird Coordinator, on behalf of the Waterbird Conservation Council, provided a small award to support the Plan's objectives. Based on consultation with regional planners and opportunities made available by land managers, partners directed the award to support the expansion of the Nikoliasen Waterfowl Production Area, a high priority area which is a stop along the "Lake Region Birding Trail" where visitors come to view waterbirds, shorebirds, waterfowl, and grassland songbirds. This block of land will provide excellent habitat for water-dependent birds in this region, including waterbird species of High Concern, such as Franklin's Gull, Black Tern, Yellow Rail, and American Bittern.

All-Bird Initiative Emerges in Ohio

In May 2004, a consortium of Ohio conservation partners teamed together to launch a statewide, all-bird conservation initiative in the Buckeye State. Led by Audubon Ohio, Black Swamp Bird Observatory, Ohio State University's School of Natural Resources, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Division of Wildlife, the Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative (OBCI) is part of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative and modeled after the first successful statewide plan developed in Wisconsin.

The mission of OBCI is to ensure the conservation and effective management of birds in Ohio by fostering partnerships among governmental agencies, conservation organizations, businesses, and the public. "It is vital that we encourage the active participation and support of all groups and individuals with an interest in Ohio's birds" said Dr. Rodewald, interim chairman of OBCI and wildlife faculty member at Ohio State University.

"When this idea was first discussed, we wanted to gather all the major players in conservation and land management across Ohio and share with them our vision for a more coordinated effort to benefit wildlife across Ohio with a strong focus on birds," stated Dave Scott, Assistant Administrator with the Division of Wildlife.

A visit to the OBCI website <http://www.obcinet.org> will show the 21 organizations that currently make up the Coordinating Council of OBCI. An additional 28 organizations to date have agreed to become partners in this statewide bird conservation initiative. This diverse group includes local park districts, zoos, nature clubs, academic institutions, land trusts, as well as state and national conservation organizations and governmental agencies. We're pleased to see the interest and collaboration that comes from focusing on birds. These partnerships, both new and old, should be a catalyst to securing more conservation attention and funding for wildlife, especially birds." said John Ritzenthaler of Audubon Ohio.



A breeder of mid-western and southeastern wooded swamps, the Prothonotary Warbler is a Partner's In Flight Watchlist Species. /Simpson

Nebraska All-Bird Partnership Soars

The Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation (the Partnership) is a super-partnership. That is to say, over 150 entities throughout the State of Nebraska – state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, academics, businesses, producer groups, and private landowners - have united to better understand, manage, and promote Nebraska's birdlife. This group recognizes that birds are an excellent gateway to restoring and managing healthy ecosystems with their full complements of biodiversity.

The Partnership will promote a coordinated, science-based, landscape approach to voluntary land stewardship that will conserve, improve, and expand habitat for all bird species within sustainable rural communities. Partners will carry out an ecosystem approach unified by a common need for communication, education, and a broader appreciation for the diversity of Nebraska's bird species and habitats.

In just over two years since the Partnership was created, it has achieved some great results. It has led statewide conservation planning for all birds, collaborating with the Rainwater Basin, Playa Lakes, and Upper Mississippi and Great Lakes Joint Ventures. Both years it conducted two open invitation symposia – one to build the conservation capacity of organizations, and the second to discuss relevant research and management topics, such as for grassland birds. It conducted a survey of partners to provide find common ground and build new collaborations for local conservation efforts. And it delivered over \$55,000 in small grant funding.

The partnership's newest effort, scheduled to be completed in the next six months, is to build a web-based system of birding trails, linking together over 400 sites for birdwatchers to visit.

Visit <http://www.nebraskabirds.org> and <http://www.nebraskabirdingtrails.com> for more information.