



The All-Bird Bulletin

Bird Conservation News and Information

November 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.

www.nabci-us.org

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For a list of grant programs to obtain project funding, visit the NABCI Web site at <http://www.nabci-us.org/funding.html>

United States Reauthorizes North American Waterfowl Management Plan

On October 6, 2004 in Portland, Maine, Interior Secretary Gale Norton reaffirmed the United States' commitment to international waterfowl conservation by signing an update to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The Plan is a public-private partnership initiative to manage waterfowl and their habitats in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Partners have invested more than \$2.2 billion to protect, restore, or enhance more than 8 million acres of habitat since the initial 1986 signing of the Plan.

“The Plan put in place an innovative science-based, partnership-driven approach to international bird conservation,” Norton said. “Partners updated some of the scientific processes and priority analysis but the landmark approach they developed only 20 years ago to manage continental waterfowl is just as vital today. Wildlife managers used the Plan’s design to launch a new era in wildlife conservation, one based on partnerships to conserve shared natural resources.”



The North American Waterfowl Management Plan ranks the Common Eider as one of five High Priority waterfowl species. / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

With final approval from the Canadian and Mexican environmental ministries, the *2004 North American Waterfowl Management Plan—Strengthening the Biological Foundations* will guide the three countries in waterfowl conservation over the next five years. The Plan calls on the partners to manage sustainable landscapes, consult and cooperate with partners, and use sound science to make decisions. It ranks the Mallard, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Lesser Scaup, and Common Eider as High Priority species.

The Plan’s appendices provide detailed recommendations for improving the biological foundation of waterfowl conservation, including information on model-based planning and evaluation, continental and eco-regional prioritization of waterfowl conservation needs, and future waterfowl monitoring activities.

While the Plan is international in scope, projects to advance plan goals depend upon the strength of joint ventures, self-directed coalitions of public agencies and private organizations and individuals working at the regional and local levels to conserve habitat for North America’s bird populations. Presently, 14 U.S. habitat joint ventures are

committed to conserving all birds in all habitats within their respective geographic regions (see <http://www.nabci-us.org/jymap.dwt>). Joint ventures were originally formed to achieve the goals of the Plan but have since expanded their missions to address all birds of conservation concern. Four habitat joint ventures exist in Canada. Three international species joint ventures address monitoring and research needs for American Black Duck, sea ducks, and Arctic-nesting geese.



The Northern Pintail has experienced long-term population declines and is ranked as a High Priority waterfowl species. /W. Meinzer

The original Plan established an international committee with representatives from each of the three countries. The committee provides a forum for discussion of major, long-term international waterfowl issues and makes recommendations to directors of the three countries' national wildlife agencies. The U.S. delegation to the committee consists of two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives and one state representative from each of the four flyway councils. Canada's six delegates represent the federal and provincial governments. In Mexico, delegates represent the federal government, universities, and nonprofit conservation organizations.

The 2004 Plan document can be viewed at <http://birdhabitat.fws.gov/NAWMP/images/update04.PDF>. For more information, contact Seth Mott, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, at Seth_Mott@fws.gov

IAWFA Working Group Completes Report on Coordinated Bird Monitoring

Responding to a request from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geologic Survey, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies created a coordinated bird monitoring working group under its Science and Research Committee in March 2004. The tasks of the working group were to (1) identify key technical issues, approaches, and suggestions about the coordination of bird monitoring; (2) suggest a process for integrating and updating ideas from the avian conservation and research community; and (3) produce a report for the International's Science and Research Committee with recommendations on technical aspects of coordinated bird monitoring.

In September 2004, the working group completed its report entitled *Monitoring Avian Conservation: Rationale, Design, and Coordination*, which was presented at the International's 2004 Annual Meeting in Atlantic City, New Jersey where the International's Bird Conservation Committee endorsed it. The International asked the U.S. NABCI Committee to solicit comments on the report from its partners as a first step in discussions within the bird conservation community. The NABCI Committee asked its partner organizations to provide a set of electronic comments to Debbie Hahn, Migratory Bird Coordinator dhahn@iafwa.org by December 1, 2004. The report can be found on International's Web site at http://www.iafwa.org/2004%20Annual%20Meeting/Final%20CBM%20Report%20Formatted%20SEpt_21.pdf

Since the report is final, comments should address the major recommendations, decision points, and framework with an emphasis on the following questions: (1) Do you agree with the general content of the report? (2) Do you agree with the specific recommendations in the report? (3) What do you see as the key initial steps to implement the recommendations of the report? (4) Cite what you believe to be the most pressing management issues that require evaluation through coordinated bird monitoring activities.

With its report completed, the coordinated bird monitoring working group has been disbanded. The U.S. NABCI Committee now will reinstitute its Monitoring Subcommittee and develop a set of recommendations and a summary of comments to be presented at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in February 2005, in Arlington, Virginia.

eBird In Flight in Mexico

Join aVerAves and register all your bird observations! The National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity, together with the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI-Mexico) have put together aVerAves as an online tool for birdwatching and monitoring. aVerAves was developed by Conabio, Cornell University's Ornithology Lab, and the National Audubon Society. aVerAves is the Mexican version of eBird in the United States.

With aVerAves, users can record and store all information on the birds that they've seen anywhere in Mexico or the rest of North America, whether in their gardens, neighborhoods, or the countryside. aVerAves gives users access to historical databases to explore and analyze the reports of other birdwatchers from all over the country and continent. This continuously updated database can be used by all amateur and professional birdwatchers, scientists, managers, and conservationists who want to learn more about the distribution and movements of birds across Mexico, the U.S., and Canada.



The Magnificent Frigatebird is a waterbird species of High Concern that occurs over warm coastal or offshore waters and nests on islands with dense growths of mangroves or other trees or shrubs.

Your participation will greatly contribute to the conservation of Mexico's – indeed, all of North America's – birds. We invite you to register all your bird sightings – it's very easy! Please visit us at <http://www.conabio.gob.mx/averaves>.

Bird Conservation Alliance Takes Off

The Bird Conservation Alliance evolved from the American Bird Conservancy's Policy Council and is a network of organizations dedicated to the conservation, study, education, and observation of birds. Through the Alliance, millions of birdwatchers and concerned citizens are united with conservation professionals, scientists, and educators for the conservation of wild birds. The Alliance's goals are to prevent further bird extinctions, reverse declines in bird populations, and assure the protection and management of sufficient habitat to effectively conserve populations of the full range of native, wild bird species for the future.

The Alliance serves as a forum for organizations to exchange information and ideas on conservation issues, facilitate collaborative advocacy among its members, and provide resources to help members with their bird conservation work. The Alliance held its first meeting entitled *The Future of Birds and Bird Conservation* on November 10, 2004 in Arlington, Virginia. Participants discussed current bird conservation issues, heard from a range of speakers on the status and future of birds and bird conservation, and began setting out a plan for how the Alliance can work most effectively to enhance bird conservation.

For more information, visit <http://www.birdconservationalliance.org/> or contact Alicia Craig, Director of the Bird Conservation Alliance at acraig@abcbirds.org or call 317-251-2473. Alicia serves on the Association of Field Ornithologists (AFO) Council and is the AFO AField newsletter editor. She also serves on the board of Operation Migration and is the past president of the Amos W. Butler Audubon Society Chapter in Indianapolis, Indiana. She coordinates the Important Bird Area program in Indiana for the National Audubon Society.

Refuge System Recognizes Migratory Bird Conservation as Priority

In May 2004, employees of the National Wildlife Refuge System gathered with diverse members of the conservation community to develop a shared set of priorities for the Refuge System for the next five to ten years. During this national gathering, called the *Conservation in Action Summit*, Service employees and partners identified priority actions in five areas of challenge to the Refuge System: wildlife and habitat, recreation, science, strategic growth, and leadership. Participants discussed migratory bird management as part of the ‘wildlife and habitat’ topic.

Two migratory bird priorities surfaced repeatedly. The first related to having each refuge identify the Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern pertinent to its management, along with stepping down the population and habitat objectives identified for their respective Bird Conservation Regions. The second priority revolved around implementing a refuge system-wide bird and habitat monitoring effort.

A final report on implementing the priorities identified at the Summit will be available in early 2005. For more information about the results of the Summit, contact Larry Williams, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NWRS Branch of Communications, at 703-358-2174, Larry.William@fws.gov.

Audubon Holds First Western Hemisphere Important Bird Areas Conference



Photo by John Cecil

As the BirdLife International partner for the U.S., Audubon hosted the first Western Hemisphere Important Bird Areas (IBAs) meeting on August 11-15, 2004 in Sierra Vista, Arizona. This was the fourth IBA meeting Audubon has organized, but the first with extensive international participation. Over 125 individuals attended the event from 44 states and territories of the U.S and 16 countries including the Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, and the United Kingdom. In addition to program staff, many IBA partners participated in the meeting, including staff from state and federal agencies, and bird habitat joint venture representatives.

Throughout the three days of the conference, presentations focused on the current status and future direction of the program globally, and at the hemispheric, national, and local levels. Participants generally discussed the status of bird conservation and shared examples of ways to coordinate and link bird conservation activities. One highlight of the meeting was Audubon’s debut of its new Web-based IBA database and map at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.html>.

Afternoon workshops and discussion groups offered attendees a chance to further explore IBA tools and conservation approaches such as geographic information systems, joint ventures, database training, criteria training, monitoring, community participation, and working with landowners. One afternoon was devoted solely to discussing IBA conservation efforts in the following regions: Western U.S. and Canada; Mexico; Southeastern U.S. and Caribbean; Midwestern U.S. and Canada; Central and South America; and Northeastern U.S. and Canada.



The Cactus Wren is a Partners In Flight Stewardship species of the Western Shrubland avifaunal biome where its nests are conspicuous in cholla cactus and desert trees. /J. Cecil

Evening sessions included presentations on results from a research survey of minorities involved in birding and conservation planning and IBAs. In addition to the presentations and discussions, attendees showcased more than 24 posters that summarized current U.S. and international projects in Important Bird Areas. For more details about the conference and images of the event visit:

http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/Conference04/conference04_Summaries.html.

Wetlands Association Dedicates Conference to Migratory Birds

In mid-October 2004, more than 120 conservationists from seven countries, including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Chile, and Australia travelled to Kansas City, Missouri to attend the 2004 conference of the Association of State Wetlands Managers. Organizers dedicated the conference to building the capacity of organizations to assess, protect, restore, and manage wetlands of international importance and the migratory birds that use them. The meeting was designed to promote partnerships between bird conservationists and wetlands managers and to provide a venue for the U.S. Ramsar Committee and international Ramsar program staff.



Nearly one-half of North America's bird species depend upon wetlands for resting, feeding, or nesting. In the United States, 138 species are considered dependent upon wetlands. /B. Gill

The Association's goal is to protect and restore the nation's wetlands and it traditionally brings together representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), state wetland agencies, and other programs working under the mandates of the U.S. Clean Water Act. Organizers of the conference, Jeanne Christie, Executive Director of the Association, and Jon Kusler, Associate Director of the Association, have for many years wanted to make bird conservation a theme at their annual conference, believing that wetland and water quality-focused programs could gain from integrating more closely with wildlife and habitat conservation efforts.

The Association's meeting was well attended by members of the bird

conservation community. More than 50 bird conservationists were present, most reporting that they had never before attended this conference. The plenary speakers included Steve Williams, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director, John Meagher, Director of EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds, and David Pashley, Vice President for Conservation Programs at the American Bird Conservancy, among others. The meeting attracted many wetlands conservationists seeking to integrate bird habitat values into their work, including a Natural Resource Conservation Service representative from Coastal Louisiana, a representative from the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, and a municipal stormwater manager.

Organizers dedicated two sessions to improving communications between wetland and bird conservationists, including a pre-symposium discussion and a breakout session towards the end of the conference. Discussions among participants explored areas of collaboration and mutually beneficial communications efforts. Watch for a special issue of The All-Bird Bulletin dedicated to sharing information presented and discussed at this conference.

Boreal Songbird Initiative Publishes Interactive Guide

In early October 2004, the Boreal Songbird Initiative (BSI), based in Seattle, Washington, in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, Inc. and the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), launched an interactive, online field guide to Boreal birds, providing a new tool to the millions of U.S. bird enthusiasts who track birds at their backyard birdfeeders and in their local communities. The guide is posted on BSI's Web site http://www.borealbirds.org/boreal_species_sub-home.html. It can also be viewed on NWF's eNature site <http://www.enature.com/>.

Marilyn Heiman, director of the Boreal Songbird Initiative said, "The new Boreal bird guide will help bird enthusiasts in the U.S. recognize which birds they see in their communities have traveled from nesting grounds in Canada's threatened and largely unprotected Boreal forest region." Canada's Boreal forest is a 1.4 billion acre greenbelt of forest, wetlands, tundra, rivers, and lakes that stretches across the center of Canada from Alaska to the Atlantic Ocean (*see* map at: <http://www.borealbirds.org/forest.html>)



The American White Pelican is a waterbird species of Moderate Concern that breeds in the southern fringes of the Boreal forest in the Canadian prairie provinces south through to Montana and South Dakota. /J. Foster

provides one of the world's most critical blocks of breeding habitat. It's really the bird 'bank' for the U.S. since without it we would be without the vast numbers of birds that we see in migration and winter in our backyards, parks, and wildlife reserves. Literally, billions of familiar North American birds are born there each year."

Heiman stated that, "Logging, oil and gas and hydropower development are rapidly moving northward in the Boreal region. I encourage birders who visit our new online guide to get involved and help the effort to protect the Boreal region before it's too late." For more information including photos, maps, and sound files call Marilyn Heiman, Director, Boreal Songbird Initiative, 206-956-9040.

Up to five billion birds – from warblers, sparrows and thrushes to ducks, pelicans, cranes, and shorebirds – migrate from Canada's Boreal forest to wintering grounds in the U.S. and farther south. More than half-a-billion warblers of 27 species and close to a billion sparrows of 25 species are estimated to migrate out of the Boreal each year. In addition, almost half of North America's ducks and geese use the Boreal for some portion of their lifecycle.

The new guide features an interactive map through which visitors will be able to click on one of 25 U.S. cities to see a comprehensive list of Boreal-breeding birds that migrate through or winter in that area. For some cities, including Los Angeles, Boston, and Seattle, the guide includes detailed local narratives about sighting Boreal birds. The new bird guide also includes recorded calls, flyway maps, and breeding, feeding and habitat information for commonly sighted Boreal birds. The Initiative plans to add more species accounts in the coming months.

Dr. Jeff Wells, of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and a contributor to the new guide remarked, "The Boreal forest



The Black-throated Green Warbler is a Partners In Flight Stewardship species with a high percentage of its global breeding population in the Northern Forest avifaunal biome. /L. Elliott, NatureSound Studio

Neotrop '05 Grant Program Deadline Nearing

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Bird Habitat conservation is now accepting applications for funding under the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act's 2005 grant program. Application instructions are posted at http://birdhabitat.fws.gov/NMBCA/eng_neo.htm. **Applications must be sent by December 3, 2004.** For more information, call 703-358-1784 or e-mail neotropical@fws.gov.

The 'Neotrop' Act establishes a matching grants program to fund projects that promote the conservation of these species in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The authorization level for the program is \$5 million, 75 percent of which must fund projects outside of the United States. Congress appropriated \$4 million in Fiscal Year 2004. 'Neotrop' projects may include the protection and management of bird populations and their habitats, research and monitoring, law enforcement, and outreach and education. In the United States and Mexico, the 'Neotrop Act' provides an important upland funding source complementing the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. All grant requests must be matched by partner funds at least 3:1. Partner funds from a U.S. federal source may be involved in the project, but are not eligible as match.

Report on Webless Migratory Game Birds Available

The Webless Migratory Game Bird Research Program report is now available in hardcopy. Send your request to David Dolton at David.Dolton@fws.gov or call him at 303-275-2388. The current issue contains abstracts primarily on Sandhill Cranes, doves and Band-tailed Pigeons, and American Woodcock. You may also express your desire to establish a standing order so that you automatically receive this annual report, which in past and future years will cover projects on marsh birds (e.g., rails, bitterns, Sora, Common Moorhen).



The Sandhill Crane reaches its peak abundance at migratory stopover points on the Great Plains, making them vulnerable to habitat loss or degradation. /U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

New Gulf Coast Joint Venture Coordinator Hired

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that Barry Wilson has accepted the position of Gulf Coast Joint Venture (GCJV) Coordinator, effective November 14, 2004. Barry has been the Biological Team Leader of the GCJV since December 1997. In that position, he provided leadership to strengthen and refine the Joint Venture's waterfowl habitat conservation plans for its six initiative areas and to develop its Evaluation Plan. He organized and chaired the Joint Venture's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research Team, and developed priorities for using geographic information system and remote sensing technologies to elevate waterfowl and wetland conservation. He brings experience in working with Joint Venture partners and is enthusiastic about moving integrated bird conservation forward in the region.

In his new position, Greg Esslinger, former GCJV Coordinator, will oversee and coordinate all three joint ventures administered out of the Service's southwestern Regional office in Albuquerque, New Mexico, including the Gulf Coast, Playa Lakes, and Sonoran Joint Ventures. To find out more about the Gulf Coast Joint Venture, visit <http://southwest.fws.gov/gulfcoastjv/Default.htm>.