



# The All-Bird Bulletin

*Bird Conservation News and Information*

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## Inside this issue:

Refuge System Birding Initiative: Fostering a Conservation Ethic 2

Science Support Team for Waterfowl Takes Shape 4

Funds Available for Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Projects 5

NRCS Announces All-Bird Conservation Initiative for Western MT 6

## 'Southern Wings' Helps State Fish and Wildlife Agencies Fly South

By *Deb Hahn, Migratory Bird and NABCI Coordinator, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*

As cooler temperatures are now upon us in most of North America, it's not hard to understand why millions of birds make their way south for the winter. Many travel to Latin America and use the tropical habitats there to over-winter or refuel during their journeys north and south.

To secure a future for migratory birds, we, as conservationists, need to look beyond our own borders and conserve habitats in southern latitudes.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Bird Conservation Committee is developing ways to bring together U.S. public and private conservation organizations and their southern counterparts in partnerships for the conservation of migratory birds.

Their developing initiative, the Southern Wings Program, is helping state fish and



The Savannah sparrow winters from the mid-Atlantic seaboard across the southern United States to the southern California coast, as well as most of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and various islands in the Caribbean./Donna Dewhurst, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

*Continued, Page 8*

## Marismas Nacionales Regional Alliance Hires Coordinator

by *Areli González, Coordinator, Marismas Nacionales Regional Alliance*

Marismas Nacionales is a Pacific coastal region in central Mexico, located to the south of Sinaloa State and the Baluarte River and to the north of Nayarit State and Matanchén's Bay. In March 2006, with support from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act-Mexico (NAWCA-Mexico), biologist Areli González was hired to coordinate the Marismas Nacionales Regional Alliance for the Conservation of Birds and Their Habitats, Sinaloa-Nayarit.



ALIANZA REGIONAL DE MARISMAS NACIONALES

*Continued, Page 3*



*Advancing integrated bird conservation in North America*

## The Refuge System Birding Initiative: Fostering a Conservation Ethic

By Roxanne E. Bogart, *Wildlife Biologist, Division of Bird Habitat Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt established Florida's tiny Pelican Island as the first federal bird reservation, the forerunner of the national wildlife refuge. Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System has grown to 546 refuges that provide breeding, wintering, and stopover habitat for more than 700 species of migratory birds. In fact, virtually one-third of all globally significant Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the United States are national wildlife refuges (NWR).

The Service conserves and manages these special places as havens for birds and other wildlife and as potential destination sites for the nation's 46 million birdwatchers. Indeed, more than sixty percent of refuge visitors will be watching birds during their visit.

Recognizing the importance of refuges to future generations of birds and birders, the Service has launched a National Wildlife Refuge System Birding Initiative. The effort aims to strengthen the relationship between the birding community and the Refuge System and to increase opportunities for quality birdwatching on refuges.



Families birdwatching together at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico./Debbie McCrensky, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

To carry out this initiative, the Refuge System and Migratory Bird Program will be collaborating with a newly appointed 14-member Birder's Team — a panel of well-known authors, editors, educators, conservationists, and members of the business community.

"Many of my best birding experiences have been on national wildlife refuges, starting with my first visit to the Great Salt Plains NWR in Oklahoma when I was eleven years old," said author and birding expert Kenn Kaufman. "I saw more than a dozen new birds that day, and decided immediately that refuges were magical places. It's only natural that the birding community should be more involved and more supportive of the Refuge System."

The Team is chaired by Jon Andrew, Refuge Chief for the Service's southeast region. Another "circle" of a couple dozen Service employees is being recruited to consult with and support the Team. In addition, a circle of supporting birders from outside the Service will be on hand to provide advice and feedback to the Team.

"The Birding Initiative is long overdue and a welcome chance to learn more about what birders would like to see happen on refuges," remarked Andrews. "It is also a great opportunity to help make the broader birding community aware of how to help conserve and protect refuge lands and other important bird habitats."

This effort is all about coming up with practical ways to make refuges more birder friendly and accessible. It is also about fostering a conservation ethic and involving more Americans in the work of conserving the nation's birds and other wildlife. By participating in quality family-oriented recreation, citizens, especially youth, can develop a deep sense of wonder for the natural world and a passion for protecting and restoring the earth's community of life for future generations.

Much work remains to be done, as many bird populations continue to decline. The Service has listed more than 90 bird species as threatened or endangered in the U.S. and nearly 300 species as birds of conservation or management concern. Habitat loss due to alteration or destruction continues to be the major reason for the declines of many of these species.

*Continued, Page 7*

**Marismas**, from Page 1

In 2001, the NABCI Trinational Committee identified Marismas Nacionales as one of five sites to pilot the development of regional alliances, entities that would parallel the bird habitat joint venture partnerships that operate in the United States and Canada. The regional alliances would promote the development of trilateral projects and help provide strong links in Mexico for these continental partnership activities.

Like joint ventures, the Marismas Nacionales Regional Alliance has the principal aim of involving federal, state, and municipal agencies and non-governmental organizations in the sustainable management of Marismas's wetland habitats to protect and restore the bird populations that depend upon them.

Marismas is a treasure of biodiversity. Its vast coastline supports 113, 248 hectares of mangrove swamps and estuaries, representing 15 to 20 percent of Mexico's mangroves — the most extensive stretch of these habitats along Mexico's Pacific coast — including four mangrove species under protected status. Scientists have recorded a total of 446 bird species in Marismas, representing almost 44 percent of Mexico's avifauna. The coastal habitats support numerous birds listed as priority species by the NAWCA, including 83 percent of priority ducks, 41 percent of priority shorebirds, 66 percent of priority colonial waterbirds, 71 percent of priority marshbirds, and 5 percent of priority land birds. Twenty percent of the world population of American avocets uses this ecosystem.

The numerous wetlands in Marismas Nacionales generate significant economic benefits by supporting commercial fisheries, especially shrimp, reducing impacts of wave surges and cyclones, filtering pollutants, and providing wood and medicines. Marismas Nacionales is a RAMSAR wetland of international importance, a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserves Network site of international importance, and a Mexican Area of Importance for the Conservation of the Birds (AICA).

Nevertheless, conservationists are faced with an array of significant environmental problems in Marismas, including habitat destruction due to expanding shrimp farms, agrochemical contamination of water, sea water incursion through human-made canals, and domestic sewage in water from upriver cities.

The Regional Alliance is working to protect the Marismas ecosystem through sustainable development and use of natural resources, environmental restoration, and protection from chemical contamination. Through a series of workshops and meetings, the Regional Alliance has formalized its Steering Committee, membership, declaration of principles, and a master action plan that establishes roles, mechanisms, and commitments. The workshops were funded by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, local partners, Mexican agencies, the Sonoran Desert Joint Venture, NAWCA-Mexico, NABCI-Canada and NABCI-US.

Participants at the workshop identified the need for leadership — to build a common vision for collective, coordinated regional bird habitat conservation — as a major issue. González brings that leadership. She comes to the Regional Alliance with a wealth of experience. In 2001, she completed an environmental diagnostic of Nayarit State and, in 2006, a study of the landscape ecology of Nayarit's north coastal plain. Her specialties include environmental and sustainable development planning, ecological classifications, and spatial data projects. She earned an undergraduate degree in biology from Autonomous Metropolitan University, México and is a Master's degree candidate in Biological Sciences at the Autonomous Nayarit University.

Members of the Regional Alliance are currently working on an action plan that proposes a budget and timeline for research, monitoring, habitat conservation, environmental education, training, and sustainable development projects. For more information, contact Areli González, [areliggs@hotmail.com](mailto:areliggs@hotmail.com).



The roseate spoonbill winters along the Mexican and Central American coasts, inhabiting marshes, lagoons, mudflats, and mangroves. Ryan Hagerty, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## Science Support Team for Waterfowl Plan Takes Shape

By Jorge Coppen, North American Waterfowl Management Plan Coordinator, Division of Bird Habitat Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Improving our understanding of the status of waterfowl populations and the effectiveness of conservation and management actions has been a critical need since the U.S. and Canadian governments first signed the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP or Plan) back in 1986.

For many years, the Plan Committee, the international body that provides leadership and oversight for Plan-related activities, has recognized the importance of carrying out waterfowl management as a cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation. The Committee has acknowledged that, to effectively implement this strategy, partners would need to adopt an adaptive resource management approach at both the joint venture and continental levels. Unfortunately, insufficient human and technical resources have been available to fully implement this ambitious effort.



Redheads are extreme brood parasites, laying eggs in the nests of more than ten duck species, including their own, and waterbirds such as American Bittern.

/Dick Pospahala, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

In 2000, the Committee established a team of people from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico to help strengthen the biological foundations of the Plan and facilitate continuous improvement of its conservation activities. The NAWMP Science Support Team or 'NSST' is now the Committee's principal technical advisory body with a prominent role in helping achieve the Plan's goal of sustaining abundant waterfowl populations by conserving landscapes, through partnerships guided by sound science.

The NSST serves as the primary forum for facilitating scientific communication and collaboration among joint ventures, flyway council representatives, the Plan Committee, and federal wildlife agencies. It will hold its eighth meeting on December 11th in Austin, Texas prior to the Joint Venture Business Model Roundtable sponsored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The NSST is helping the joint ventures establish management cycles that assess the costs and benefits of various conservation techniques, test key planning assumptions, and monitor progress toward joint venture goals and objectives. It is also coordinating joint venture monitoring and assessment activities, both within and among countries, to ensure a coherent and consistent approach to biological planning and evaluation. This coordination is essential for testing hypotheses about the relationships between variation in landscape attributes and waterfowl population dynamics at large spatial scales.

The NSST consists of three national representatives appointed by the Plan Committee Co-Chairs, one technical representative from each of the joint ventures and flyway councils, and representatives from working groups or subcommittees of the NSST. Plan Committee Co-Chairs may also appoint ad-hoc members. An Executive Committee oversees the NSST between its business meetings. Current members include Ron Reynolds, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Brian Sullivan, Playa Lakes Joint Venture, and Jorge Coppen, Plan Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In 2006, the NSST produced a Challenge Document that presents the most pressing issues facing the NSST. The report discusses the importance of addressing the coherence of harvest and habitat management, which are by nature inextricably linked, and the challenge of combining regional habitat objectives and linking them to continental population objectives. The need to create efficient approaches to waterfowl and habitat conservation, given limited resources and globalization, in the context of all bird management, is also discussed. For more information, visit the upcoming NSST web site: <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/NAWMP/index.shtm>.

## Funds Available for Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Projects

By Dan Lambert, Northeast Bird Monitoring Coordinator, American Bird Conservancy

The Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Partnership is pleased to announce the 2007 Survey Design and Implementation Fund. This project was made possible by a Multi-state Conservation Grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Programs, with assistance from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

The Partnership is now soliciting proposals for projects that promote coordinated monitoring of bird populations in the Service's northeast region (i.e., CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VA, VT, WV). Awarded funds, in the form of small contracts ranging in value from \$3,000 up to \$10,000, may be used to design and/or implement bird monitoring in this region.

Efforts stemming from the 2006 Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Workshop ([www.nebirdmonitor.org/workshops](http://www.nebirdmonitor.org/workshops)) will receive special consideration, as will those that develop detailed products that could be incorporated into the Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Framework ([www.nebirdmonitor.org/framework](http://www.nebirdmonitor.org/framework)). We also encourage proposals that address statistical design issues, including power analysis, either as a primary focus or as one of the major elements of the proposal.

Projects should aim to meet evaluation standards contained in *Opportunities for Improving North American Avian Monitoring: Draft Interim Report of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative Monitoring Subcommittee* (Van Horne et al. 2006). These standards include: Clearly articulated survey objectives that provide management and conservation context; explicitly defined geographic scope and spatial sampling units; defined taxa and inferential populations; primary response variables and environmental covariates; survey protocols (sampling frame, procedures, precision and bias); appropriate analytical procedures; long-term data storage and access, preferably in a central facility; clearly defined responsibilities across geographic coverage; training programs; and accessible reports, data, and metadata.

The application deadline is **January 15, 2007**. For more details and an application, visit [www.nebirdmonitor.org/tools-resources/2007rfp/view](http://www.nebirdmonitor.org/tools-resources/2007rfp/view) or contact Dan Lambert at 802-457-1053 x 132, [dlambert@abcbirds.org](mailto:dlambert@abcbirds.org).

The Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Partnership and the Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Design and Implementation Fund are administered by American Bird Conservancy in collaboration with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The project was developed by Northeast Partners in Flight, Northeast Shorebird Conservation Plan and Mid-Atlantic/New England/Maritimes Waterbird Conservation Plan, in concert with the NABCI Monitoring Subcommittee.



The green heron is a Neotropical migrant that nests in isolated pairs or small groups, often in trees or shrubs, sometimes on the ground, and frequently near water. /Lee Karney, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## NRCS Announces All-Bird Conservation Initiative for Western Montana

By Dave Smith, Area Resource Conservationist for Farm Bill Programs, Natural Resources Conservation Service

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has approved a special initiative allocating \$100,000 to bird conservation projects on private agricultural land in the Bitterroot Valley, the Flathead Valley, and the Tobacco/Stillwater Valleys of western Montana.

NRCS will assist farmers, ranchers, and private forestland owners with restoring and enhancing habitat for migratory birds in accordance with a strategic bird conservation plan developed by the Intermountain West Joint Venture, a public/private partnership dedicated to the conservation of bird habitats in selected portions of 11 western states.



Lewis's woodpecker is a Partners in Flight Watchlist Species of the Intermountain West Avifaunal Biome where it can be found in various riparian habitats, including cottonwood gallery forests, which have been substantially degraded over the last hundred years. /Dave Menke, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

NRCS will provide funding from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through its "All-Bird Conservation EQIP Special Initiative" to landowners interested in conserving riparian areas, wetlands, aspens, low-elevation dry forest, and other priority habitats in 25 selected Bird Habitat Conservation Areas. These funds were part of \$5 million in EQIP funding allocated by the State Conservationist to nine special initiatives in Montana for FY 2007.

"We are pleased to announce this opportunity to assist private landowners with conservation practices that improve habitat for songbirds, raptors, waterfowl, and other birds," said Craig Engelhard, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Missoula.

Eligible practices include riparian forest buffers, wetland restoration, forest stand improvement, and facilitating practices, such as fences and water developments, that may be necessary to integrate bird conservation with agricultural production on

working farms and ranches. Partnerships with other agencies and conservation organizations are being developed to leverage funds and technical expertise. Landowners may receive up to 100% of the cost of specific projects with combined funding from NRCS and partner agencies and organizations.

The primary objective of the Initiative is to encourage landowners to restore and enhance habitat for declining bird species in accordance with international bird conservation plans such as Partners in Flight, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan. The conservation strategies suggested in these plans were consolidated by the Joint Venture for Montana into a regional plan entitled, *Coordinated Implementation Plan for Bird Conservation in Western Montana*. The regional plan identifies priority species and habitats, and serves as the scientific basis for the EQIP Initiative.

"Effective habitat management on working private lands is a critical element in meeting conservation objectives for bird species in need," said Dan Casey, the Northern Rockies Bird Conservation Region Coordinator for the American Bird Conservancy in Kalispell. "This initiative will be a big step forward in acknowledging and supporting the role of agricultural lands in bird conservation."

NRCS is offering a special sign-up for the All-Bird Conservation Initiative from December 1 to December 15. Visit your local USDA Service Center or contact Dave Smith, NRCS Resource Conservationist for Farm Bill Programs in Missoula, at (406) 829-3395, ext. 122 for more information.

## PIF Plans 2008 International Conference: 'Tundra to Tropics'

The 4th International Partners In Flight (PIF) Conference will be held February 13-16, 2008, at the new McAllen Convention Center in McAllen, Texas. The conference theme will be *Tundra to Tropics: Connecting Birds, Habitats, and People*, which will be shared with International Migratory Bird Day (<http://www.birdday.org/>) for 2008. The focus of the conference will be international connections of all sorts that further bird and habitat conservation throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Concurrent paper sessions will include standard sessions, typical of scientific society meetings, and sessions followed by a facilitated discussion. The goal of the latter sessions will be to produce a strategic action plan to be distributed to all partners within weeks of the conference. There will be keynote speakers, vendors, social events, a poster session, a variety of single- and multi-day birding field trips, and proceedings that will include papers developed from posters.

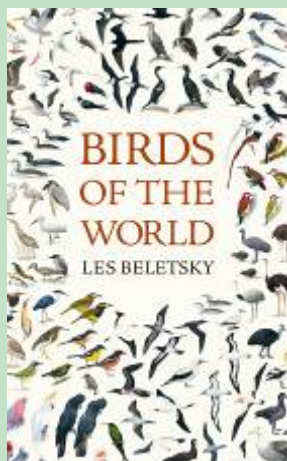
Details will be posted on the PIF web site (<http://www.partnersinflight.org>) and distributed through various bird conservation listserves as they develop. In the mean time, contact Terry Rich with inquiries ([terry\\_rich@fws.gov](mailto:terry_rich@fws.gov)).

### Birding, from Page 2

Declining, too, are outdoor recreational experiences among children. In his recent best-selling book, *Last Child in the Woods*, author Richard Louv reports the dramatic decline, over the past 20 years, in unsupervised outdoor play and discovery by children. He cites diminishing opportunities for young people to enjoy woods and streams because of fear of crime, rapid suburban development, and a trend toward indoor entertainment.

Implementing landscape-oriented conservation and fostering a conservation ethic are the two vital ingredients to secure a future for North America's birds. This goes beyond Refuge work. Through the Migratory Bird Program's bird habitat joint venture partnerships, for example, the Service is looking within and beyond refuge borders to conserve habitats across the landscape to restore declining bird populations and keep common birds common. International bird conservation plans for landbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds, and waterbirds are guiding these landscape level efforts.

Through the Refuge System's Birding Initiative and Team, the Service and its partners hope to establish refuges as the premier birding locations and reconnect people to nature, fostering in them a passion for conserving and managing bird habitat. For more information, contact Paul Baicich, [paul.baicich@verizon.net](mailto:paul.baicich@verizon.net).



### **Birds of the World Now Available**

Finally a book that covers the world's birds family-by-family with readable text and professional illustrations. In more than 500 pages, ornithologist Les Beletsky has gathered over 1,600 original paintings that reveal the form, posture, and plumage of all the avian families, with featured illustrations of 1,307 avian species. The paintings are from eleven of the world's leading bird artists, with many being published here for the first time.

Kenn Kaufman describes the book as follows, "Expert naturalist Les Beletsky and a team of first-rate artists have produced a bird world overview that is as accurate and informative as it is beautiful." Available from Johns Hopkins University Press, 1-800-537-5487 or <http://www.press.jhu.edu>. \$50.00. Readers of *The All-Bird Bulletin* receive a 20% discount by using code NAF.

*The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) is a coalition of organizations and initiatives dedicated to advancing integrated bird conservation in North America.*

*The vision of NABCI is to see populations and habitats of North America's birds protected, restored, and enhanced through coordinated efforts at international, national, regional, state, and local levels, guided by sound science and effective management.*

*The goal of NABCI is to deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation through regionally based, biologically driven, landscape-oriented partnerships.*

*The All-Bird Bulletin is a news and information-sharing publication for participants of NABCI.*

*For subscription or submission inquiries, contact the Editor, Roxanne Bogart, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 802-872-0629 ext. 25 or [Roxanne\\_Bogart@fws.gov](mailto:Roxanne_Bogart@fws.gov). To download back issues, visit <http://www.nabci-us.org/news.html>.*

*The All-Bird Bulletin publishes news updates and information on infrastructure, planning, science, funding, and other advancements in the field of integrated bird conservation and management. Include author's name, organization, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address. Pictures are welcome but not necessary.*

### **Southern Wings**, from page 1

wildlife agency representatives develop and partner in conservation projects in Latin America. Each project will directly link to areas in the United States on the basis of shared birds in need of conservation.



The semipalmated plover, named for the slight webbing between its toes, makes nonstop 2,000-mile transoceanic flights from New England and southern Canada to South America. /Donna Dewhurst, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Migratory birds are a shared trust resource. In fact, 20 to 60 percent of breeding bird species in most states winter in the tropics. What happens on the wintering grounds can not only affect these species' over-winter survival rates, but their reproductive success on the breeding grounds as well. Moreover, habitat threats in many parts of the southern range are even more severe than those in the north.

“The Southern Wings Program is being created to provide opportunities for state fish and wildlife agencies to partner on projects that benefit the Latin American and Caribbean wintering habitat of priority birds that breed in their states,” said Dave Erickson, Wildlife Division Chief, Missouri Department of Conservation.

The Association's Bird Conservation Committee conceived the idea for the program and directors in each state regional association subsequently supported its advancement.

It is anticipated that non-governmental organizations, including The Nature Conservancy, American Bird Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, and the National Audubon Society, will organize funds from state agencies and other sources to implement the projects. Project scope and cost can vary in scale from relatively modest to significantly large.

The Southern Wings Program complements the trinational projects being developed by NABCI, which link partners in the United States, Mexico, and Canada (visit <http://www.nabci-us.org/trinationalprojects.htm> for more information). The Southern Wings program is focused on developing a mechanism to facilitate state involvement in bird conservation partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean over the long term. The NABCI effort, on the other hand, is focused on acquiring new and innovative funding sources for continentally linked bird conservation projects and partnerships. Both are based on connections driven by high priority migratory birds and both are focused on pooling multiple funding sources. Though the programs have somewhat different origins and objectives, together they will contribute in a complementary way toward the overall goal of migratory bird conservation.

For more information on this program as it develops, and to view current project proposals, visit the Southern Wings Program online at [http://www.fishwildlife.org/allbird\\_LAC\\_projects.html](http://www.fishwildlife.org/allbird_LAC_projects.html).