

THE PURPOSE AND VALUE OF MONITORING IN SUPPORT OF NABCI

Monitoring is a fundamental element of all comprehensive conservation agendas. Monitoring programs in support of NABCI are used to measure changes in populations or sub-populations, habitats, and distributions of individual bird species over time. Results of monitoring are used “*a priori*,” to set conservation agendas, and “*a posteriori*,” to test the effectiveness or impact of management actions such as habitat manipulation or regulation of sport harvest.

A priori monitoring programs are usually designed to continue in perpetuity and cover the entire ranges of species or major sub-populations in order to document natural population fluctuations and detect aberrant declines that could ultimately lead to endangerment. This information is extremely useful for focusing management attention on species that may be most in need of human intervention.

A posteriori programs are usually time-restricted and conducted at a much more local scale, in order to document how populations respond to specific management actions. As a component of an ideal adaptive management framework, *a posteriori* monitoring of both populations and habitat is used in tandem with iterative management modifications until the management protocol is optimized. Regardless of their purpose, it is essential that all monitoring programs have a sound biological and statistical foundation.