



Questions and Answers

The US Communications Working Group of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) developed this Q&A document for people seeking answers to specific questions regarding NABCI and how it relates to other bird conservation initiatives, organizations, and programs. The Q&A will be updated as integrated bird conservation progresses across the continent and hemisphere.

If there are additional questions that you would like to see answered, please visit the US NABCI web site at <http://www.nabci-us.org> and contact the Webmaster.

1. What is the North American Bird Conservation Initiative?

NABCI is a vision for the future of bird conservation in North America. It's an exciting vision of people in the United States, Canada, and Mexico working in partnership to better coordinate, and when necessary, integrate their efforts to conserve bird populations and the landscapes upon which they depend. It's a vision of people taking on the challenge of working across geopolitical borders, across landscapes, across taxa-specific bird initiatives, across programmatic and organizational divides, and across social and cultural boundaries. NABCI is about people joining forces across all of these divisions to secure the future for North America's wild birds.

The US NABCI Vision: Populations and habitats of North America's birds are protected, restored, and enhanced through coordinated efforts at international, national, regional, state, and local levels, guided by sound science and effective management.

The US NABCI Goal: To deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation through regionally based, biologically driven, landscape-oriented partnerships.

NABCI is a forum for:

- Initiating and broadening partnerships for bird conservation across the continent;
- Increasing funding for conserving birds in the United States, Mexico, and Canada and wherever else they may occur during their life cycles;
- Making partnerships and resources more effective and efficient by fostering integrated bird conservation;
- Building on existing structures for delivering conservation, such as Joint Ventures, and stimulating new Joint Venture-like structures and mechanisms as appropriate;
- Developing a common biological framework for conservation planning, design, and delivery;

- Working together through the challenges presented by conserving birds on a landscape scale; and
- Fostering greater cooperation among the nations and peoples of the continent.

NABCI's overall approach is to provide these services by strengthening and facilitating coordination among existing partnerships and initiatives, rather than creating new, redundant structures for conservation delivery.

2. Why was NABCI started?

The concept of NABCI grew out of the realization among bird conservation leaders that, despite our best efforts, bird populations in North America still face tremendous threats to their long-term health. Only through a coordinated, integrated approach among the many segments of the bird conservation community can these numerous threats be overcome.

The last two decades of the 20th century experienced an unprecedented development of proactive, partnership-based bird conservation initiatives: The North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners in Flight, US Shorebird Conservation Plan, and Waterbird Conservation for the Americas. In the United States, NABCI evolved out of a recognition among conservationists of the value of coordinating and integrating the conservation planning, implementation, and evaluation efforts of these initiatives to achieve a comprehensive, landscape-oriented approach to conservation.

The phenomenal growth in non-consumptive bird recreation and expanding grassroots support for comprehensive bird conservation gave added impetus to the development of the cooperative approach embodied in NABCI.

3. Who's in charge of NABCI?

No single individual or entity has top-down authority over NABCI and its participants. NABCI is an integrated approach, which many in the conservation community voluntarily espouse, to protect and restore bird populations for future generations. To the degree that there is a NABCI "organization," it is designed to serve as a forum for furthering this approach.

The following entities exist in the United States:

- US NABCI Committee
- Subcommittees and Working Groups
- National Coordinator

In addition, there is a Trinational NABCI Committee consisting of three representatives each from the United States, Canada, and Mexico. These individuals represent their national committees in consideration of issues that are appropriately addressed at a trinational level.

4. Who makes decisions concerning NABCI?

In the United States, national level decisions are made by the US NABCI Committee. The Committee works by consensus, although there are provisions for voting if needed. The Committee's decisions concern strategic, national level guidance to facilitate integrated bird conservation.

No similar NABCI decision-making bodies exist at the regional, state, and local levels. Partners at these levels work through their individual organizations and through the bird conservation initiatives, or other partnerships such as Joint Ventures, to coordinate conservation activities when and where they deem necessary.

5. What is the US NABCI Committee doing to further bird conservation?

The US NABCI Committee serves as a forum for discussing and dealing with the complex and often difficult challenges of integrated bird conservation at national and international levels. The work of the Committee (and associated subcommittees and work groups) is driven by priorities identified in its Action Plan.

6. How is NABCI funded?

Very limited funding is dedicated to NABCI itself. Integrated bird conservation is an expensive endeavor funded by the many partners directly or indirectly involved in delivering the vision of NABCI—state, federal, and tribal governments, non-profit organizations, companies, foundations, and others. Each of these entities is entirely autonomous in its funding decisions, and none are bound by directives from the US NABCI Committee or anyone else involved in NABCI.

At the national level, a limited number of NABCI efforts have been funded through contributions from various partners. These include:

- The NABCI Coordinator's position. This on-going position is funded by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) on the basis of various grants. The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) has helped support this position (funding as much of 35% of its budget in earlier years and about 10% in 2002). The remainder comes from grants from private foundations and ABC's general operating budget.
- Communications efforts and products supported by government agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- Contributions of staff time by many partner agencies and organizations.

7. Is NABCI going to compete with other efforts for bird conservation funding?

No. NABCI is working to expand resources for bird conservation. Several of the US Committee's Action Plan items deal explicitly with increasing financial resources for bird conservation.

8. Will NABCI directly deliver funds to on-the-ground bird conservation?

No, NABCI will not directly deliver funds to on-the-ground bird conservation in the United States. Through the forum and synergy created by NABCI, however, partners are working together to augment funding in various ways and are making great strides in that direction.

9. How is NABCI going to be delivered on the ground?

NABCI as an “organization” does not deliver conservation on the ground. On-the-ground conservation is done by the agencies, organizations, and partnerships that are best suited to deliver it. For example, organizations and individuals are working together through Joint Ventures, and other similar partnerships, to protect and restore habitats for birds. In addition, Bird Conservation Region staff are being hired in some regions to help state and federal agencies and private organizations advance the technical aspects of all bird conservation planning and delivery.

10. How does NABCI relate to the bird conservation initiatives such as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and Partners In Flight?

Representatives from the various bird initiatives sit on the US NABCI Committee. The Committee, thus, functions as a national forum bringing together representatives from the initiatives, as well as other organizations, to exchange ideas, debate issues, and help move integrated bird conservation forward. The Committee’s role is to facilitate integrated bird conservation at all levels.

At the regional, state, and local levels, the bird conservation initiatives are advancing the vision of integrated bird conservation espoused by NABCI by coordinating and integrating conservation planning, design, and delivery. In addition, most Joint Ventures, created originally under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, have accepted the challenge of undertaking all-bird conservation and are working day-to-day to make integrated bird conservation a reality on the ground.

11. How does NABCI relate to the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (NAWCC)?

The US NABCI Committee and the NAWCC share some of the same members, but are two very different entities. The North American Wetlands Conservation Act of 1989 (amended, 1994,1998) formally established the NAWCC to review and recommend wetlands conservation projects for funding approval to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The US NABCI Committee is a self-directed body that has crafted a vision for integrated bird conservation and is working to advance and promote that vision both through partnership efforts and through the programmatic activities of individual member organizations.

12. How do NABCI efforts in the United States relate to efforts in Canada and Mexico?

Successful conservation of migratory birds requires effort in all of the countries in which each species spends part of its yearly cycle. The flight paths of migratory birds link nations together and serve as a reminder of the need to look beyond the confines of our geopolitical boundaries. NABCI thus far only includes participation by the United States, Canada, and Mexico. A Trinational NABCI Committee exists to foster international coordination for conserving those birds of common interest to our nations.

Due to the different political, cultural, and financial settings, NABCI and integrated bird conservation have evolved differently in the three countries. Through the coordination body of the Trinational Committee, each country can offer its strengths and experiences as guidance and assistance to the other two countries, as well as coordinate on specific issues that require a North American perspective. These issues include the development of an international agreement for North American birds, linked projects, sharing of relevant biological and conservation information, and trinational level communications efforts.

13. What about Central and South America?

The US, Canada, and Mexico have agreed to work jointly toward a vision of integrated bird conservation. NABCI thus serves those species of birds that spend substantial portions of their life cycles within the boundaries of these three countries.

However, many North American species spend two-thirds of the year migrating through and wintering in other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. For this reason alone, the conservation of North America's migratory birds must embrace an expanded vision that encompasses coordination and technical and financial support of activities throughout the entire Western Hemisphere.

Although NABCI does not currently include membership by other Latin American countries, it may expand in the future. In the meantime, several of the bird conservation initiatives and many partner organizations at work in North America are engaged south of Mexico and in the Caribbean.

14. What has NABCI accomplished so far?

At the national level, the US NABCI Committee has crafted a vision of integrated bird conservation and is providing a forum for partners to discuss and strategize on how best to advance towards that vision. The various national and international forums are helping to promote and facilitate the on-the-ground work of the initiatives and organizations that make up its membership.

More specifically, the synergy and new working relationships fostered by NABCI have contributed significantly to important bird conservation progress such as:

- ✓ Development of the continental geographic framework of the Bird Conservation Regions;
- ✓ Increased numbers and areas covered by Joint Venture partnerships and the expanded role of many of these partnerships in all bird conservation;
- ✓ Development of the technical capacity and collaborative planning needed for integrated bird conservation in areas within and outside Joint Ventures;
- ✓ Increased awareness of the conservation needs of all birds;
- ✓ Increased coordination and efficiency among the great variety of partners whose common interest is bird conservation.

In the end, the partners, not NABCI, get the credit for any on-the-ground accomplishments.

15. Where is NABCI going in the future?

The US NABCI Action Plan was developed by Staff to the US NABCI Committee and endorsed by the Committee in January 2002. The purpose of the Action Plan is to provide focus for the bird conservation community in its efforts to facilitate integrated bird conservation. The Action Plan identifies the most important issues for bird conservation at the national level. These items are not listed in priority order.

- Secure a source of funding for upland bird conservation projects.
- Increase appropriations to federal agencies to allow them to achieve their bird conservation objectives.
- Assure that state wildlife agencies have the capacity to allow them to appropriately contribute to achieving bird conservation objectives.
- Achieve comprehensive national coverage by effective bird conservation partnerships such as joint ventures.
- Maintain the health and vitality of the bird conservation initiatives.
- Increase the capacity of US-based organizations to contribute to effective bird conservation internationally.
- Develop and implement a communication strategy.
- Nurture a system capable of adequately monitoring all of the birds of the country.
- Work toward an agricultural policy that provides significant benefits for bird populations.

16. Doesn't the idea of "integrated bird conservation" have limits—you can't manage for all birds on every piece of land?

The intent to manage for all birds certainly does not mean managing for all birds in all places. Each habitat type supports a suite of wild bird species, and the vision of NABCI entails improving the ecological health of that habitat type in order to benefit those birds. Maximizing avian diversity on an individual management unit can be detrimental to the region if it sacrifices unique habitat for species of concern to meet habitat needs for generalists already common in the region. An important lesson of bird conservation planning is to simultaneously consider the needs of birds at local, regional, and continental scales.

17. What are Joint Ventures?

Joint Ventures are independent, autonomous, self-directed, regionally-based entities which implement and deliver bird conservation. Joint Ventures were formed in the mid-1980's as the implementation arm of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and delivery system for on-the-ground waterfowl conservation. Recently, Joint Ventures have expanded their missions to include implementation of the various bird conservation initiative plans. Fundamental to the organization of JV's is a management board that directs conservation activities including:

- Developing and implementing strategic biological planning, including evaluation and monitoring of objectives;
- Facilitating, developing, and coordinating diverse and broad conservation partnerships;
- Engaging in bird conservation project fund-raising activities from public and private sources; and
- Communicating key bird conservation messages to partners and stakeholders as well as local, state, and national leaders.

18. What are Bird Conservation Regions?

Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) are ecologically distinct regions in North America with similar bird communities, habitats and resource management issues. BCRs were developed in 1998 to accomplish the following:

- Facilitate science-based communications and coordination among the bird conservation initiatives;
- Systematically and ecologically apportion Canada, the United States, and Mexico into conservation units;
- Facilitate regional approaches to ecological and biological aspects of bird conservation;

- Promote new and expanded science partnerships;
- Integrate overlapping or conflicting conservation priority classifications; and
- Serve as the primary unit within which biological foundation issues are resolved and sustainable landscapes are designed.

19. How are Bird Conservation Regions related to Joint Ventures?

Joint Ventures, although developed under the auspices of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, are accepting the challenge of carrying out multiple bird conservation plans using an integrated approach. Staff have been hired in several BCRs to work closely with Joint Ventures, state agencies, and other partners to develop the technical capacity and collaborative planning needed to carry out integrated bird conservation.

NABCI has prompted a need and desire to develop bird conservation delivery systems that build on both Joint Venture partnerships and the biological foundation of BCRs. At its February 1, 2000 meeting, the US NABCI Committee agreed to promote conservation delivery via existing and new Joint Ventures as “one layer of carpet” nationwide, thus reducing or eliminating redundant partnership structures and separate biological planning processes. Many Joint Ventures are expanding and integrating with BCRs in a variety of ways, all of which are effect give to deliver bird conservation.

20. What about those areas of the United States that are not covered by Joint Ventures?

Due to efforts of partners throughout the country, the amount of area not covered by Joint Ventures (the so-called “white space”) is shrinking dramatically. This has resulted from shifts in the boundaries of existing Joint Ventures to coincide with BCR boundaries and the creation of new Joint Venture partnerships. In addition, serious discussions are underway, in much of what is not currently formally within a Joint Venture, to create new partnerships in the near future.

21. What do staff in Bird Conservation Regions do?

Staff have been hired in a number of BCRs to work with Joint Ventures, state agencies, and other partners in their efforts to coordinate the work of organizations and individuals involved in bird conservation in their regions, including representatives of each of the bird conservation initiatives. They are working closely with partners to develop the technical capacity and collaborative planning needed to deliver integrated bird conservation.