



The All-Bird Bulletin

Bird Conservation News and Information

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2009: A Year of Bird Conservation Celebrations and Achievements

Deb Hahn, Migratory Bird and NABCI Coordinator, Assoc. of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

The year 2009 has been full of milestones, groundbreaking achievements, and advances for bird conservation, and it is only May. For instance, the bird conservation community is celebrating two important birthdays: NABCI and NAWCA.

This year is the tenth anniversary of the [North American Bird Conservation Initiative](#) (NABCI). The U.S. Committee's brochure, *A Decade of Integrating Bird Conservation*, highlights the successes of the bird conservation community over the last decade in moving toward the NABCI vision of integrated bird conservation. ([Visit http://www.nabci-us.org/main2.html](http://www.nabci-us.org/main2.html)) The conservation landscape is considerably different than it was ten years ago, and the strong partnerships forged through NABCI and the other bird conservation initiatives have been integral to getting us to where we are today. You can read more about NABCI's achievements in the article on page 3 of this issue of *The All-Bird Bulletin*.

This year [the North American Wetlands Conservation Act](#) (NAWCA) celebrates 20 years of wetlands conservation. NAWCA is a shining success story: Grants made under the Act have supported thousands of projects across North America, leveraged billions in partner dollars, and affected some 25 million acres of habitat. For more information on NAWCA, turn to page 5.

The state fish and wildlife agencies recently announced the official start of the [Southern Wings](#) program, an international effort to facilitate state agency participation in the conservation of priority migratory birds throughout their lifecycles by working with partners in Latin America and the Caribbean. This program emulates the success of conservationists in forging continental partnerships to protect waterfowl populations and habitats. We hope that this program will experience the same level of success over the coming years. You can read more about the Southern Wings program on page 7.



Lark Bunting is one of six species that breed in the Great Plains of the U.S. and Canada and winter in Mexico's Chihuahuan grasslands showing steep population declines. /Gary Kramer,



Advancing integrated bird conservation in North America

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In the bird conservation community, there are few names that are held in more prominence than [Gary T. Myers](#), who recently retired after more than 45 years of service. Throughout his career, Gary was one of bird conservation's most ardent supporters and advocates. Most recently, Gary was Executive Director for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, a position he held for more than 30 years. Gary's career in wildlife management began in Colorado in the 1960's, and then he moved to Tennessee in the mid-1970's. During that time, he built an international reputation as one of conservation's foremost leaders. Gary has been at the forefront of a number of bird conservation initiatives, demonstrating his commitment to promoting and protecting our nation's birds and their habitats for the benefit of hunters, birdwatchers, and all those who enjoy the outdoors. The conservation community owes Gary a great debt for the work he has done, and we wish him all the best in the years to come.



International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) 2009 marks its 17th year with a celebration of the roles birds have played in Native cultures. Birds have been critical to Tribal life and are represented in cave art, weavings, pottery, stories, music, and ceremonies.

landowners and citizens. As of January 2009, joint ventures have guided the investment of more than \$4.5 billion to protect, restore, and/or enhance 15.7 million acres of habitat and to conduct research, conservation design, assessment, management, and outreach and education projects.

Reauthorization of the [Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act](#) is also being discussed. Successfully raising authorization levels for this important program will require support from across the entire conservation community. You can read more about what's going on in Congress for birds on page 10.

Although this is not a comprehensive list of all that is happening in bird conservation, it does highlight significant milestones in programs that exemplify what we can achieve by working together toward the common goal of conserving birds and their habitats.

As Jon Hoskins, U.S. NABCI Committee Chair and Director of the Missouri Department of Conservation, remarked, "Bird conservation is challenging and complex, in part due to the migratory nature of many bird species. The goal is to use sound science and effective management to ensure populations and habitats of North America's birds are protected, restored, and enhanced through coordinated efforts at the international, national, regional and state levels."

The first publication of its kind, [The State of the Birds 2009, United States of America](#), was released in March. The report uses the best available science to highlight the plight of our nation's more than 800 species of birds. Organized by habitat, the report provides an overview of the state of bird populations and solutions to help stem the declines. The report also highlights our conservation successes. The value of the report will be its ability to raise the awareness of policymakers and the public about the need for coordinated action to continue to save our treasured migratory birds. On page 8 you can read more about this groundbreaking report.

Capitol Hill also has been active for birds in 2009. Recent testimony highlighted the [Duck Stamp](#) and the bird habitat joint ventures. Celebrating its 75th anniversary, the Federal Duck Stamp Program is one of the most successful conservation initiatives in the U.S. and, since 1934, has generated more than \$725 million in revenues. H.R. 1916 would amend the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, popularly known as the "Duck Stamp Act" by increasing its fee. Since the last Duck Stamp price increase in 1991, land prices have soared in many parts of the nation necessitating more revenue to continue this thriving program.

H.R. 2188 would authorize the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's bird habitat [Joint Venture Program](#) and would codify the mechanisms currently used to establish and support these partnerships operating across the United States. The joint ventures include federal, state, provincial, tribal, and local governments, businesses, conservation organizations, academia, and individual

A Decade of Growth: Visionary Leadership for U.S. Bird Conservation

Greg Butcher, Director of Bird Conservation, National Audubon Society and Chair, U.S. NABCI Communications Subcommittee

This year the United States North American Bird Conservation Initiative Committee (Committee) is celebrating its 10th anniversary — a decade of working toward a vision and goal of integrated bird conservation:

Vision: *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.*

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

In October 1999, the Committee met for the first time in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, with nine conservation leaders in attendance, including three state wildlife agency directors and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) director.

Over the last ten years, the bird conservation community has experienced a profound evolution toward even greater cooperation and collaboration for all birds.

The Committee itself is a prime example. Working together now are 22 Committee members representing five non-governmental organizations; seven bird initiatives, working groups, and joint venture partnerships; and ten state and federal agencies. Representatives of Ducks Unlimited, Wildlife Management Institute, and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan work side-by-side with the National Audubon Society, American Bird Conservancy, Partners in Flight, and many others.

Such partnerships are happening at various scales throughout the bird conservation community. For example, there has been an increase in the breadth of bird working groups of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Bird Conservation Committee, growing numbers of bird habitat joint ventures in the U.S. and Canada, and more state and federal agency bird biologists.

The Committee is dedicated to improving the effectiveness of conservation efforts and thus has been working to facilitate learning across the community on conservation design, monitoring, private land conservation, and international cooperation. It also has been motivating organizations to work together to increase resources and allocate them in mutually beneficial ways.

In this tenth year of its existence, the Committee is reflecting on its contributions to integrated bird conservation. For example, the Committee has made great progress in spreading its vision to organizations across the continent. As a result, many public agencies, organizations, and partnerships have adopted and are working toward NABCI's vision and goal, including state-level bird conservation initiatives and bird habitat joint ventures across the U.S. and Canada.

The Committee has influenced government agency policies on issues important for advancing bird conservation. Knowledge gained at Committee meetings is influencing the stances member agencies and organizations take on important state and national policies and strategies for birds.

The Committee also has encouraged NGOs to unify themselves around funding priorities. The Bird Conservation Funding Coalition (BCFC), which grew out of the Committee's NGO Subcommittee, has enabled NGOs



Burrowing Owl populations are declining in many areas and are listed as threatened or endangered in some states and provinces. Gary Kramer, NRCS Photo Gallery

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to speak with one voice in promoting common funding messages on Capitol Hill. Over the last four years, BCFC's advocacy work has helped increase or maintain steady funding levels for key programs such as State Wildlife Grants, science support for the Service's Division of Migratory Bird Management, the bird habitat Joint Venture Program, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, the Service's Wildlife Without Borders Program, the Forest Service's International Program, and the Breeding Bird Survey.

The Committee has produced several important products. At its first meeting, the Committee endorsed the map of Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) as a means to organize and facilitate integrated bird conservation. A tri-national mapping team, created under the auspices of NABCI, developed the BCR map which systematically apportions the North American continent into ecologically distinct regions with similar bird communities, habitats, and resource management issues. The success of the BCRs is evidenced by the many initiatives, organizations, and programs that use them for planning, implementation, and evaluation, including the resident game bird initiatives and NRCS' Conservation Effects Assessment Project.



The Prairie Warbler is declining throughout most of its range mainly due to loss of breeding habitat to development and natural change of shrubby habitat to forest. /Jeff Nadler

The Committee's report *Opportunities for Improving Avian Monitoring* presents a set of national bird monitoring issues and needs developed by the diverse set of partners that make up the Monitoring Subcommittee. Through this report, the Committee encourages partners to improve bird monitoring programs and databases, and better link monitoring and management through adaptive processes. The Committee also is supporting regional efforts, such as the Northeast Coordinated Bird Monitoring Partnership.

Most recently, and in collaboration with the Intermountain West Joint Venture, the Committee published the *Field Guide to the 2008 Farm Bill for Fish and Wildlife Conservation* to help conservation practitioners navigate Farm Bill conservation programs. This document is available as a pdf or interactive Web site. Visit <http://www.nabci-us.org> for more information.

In its newsletter, *The All-Bird Bulletin*, the Committee promotes the vision and work of NABCI in the U.S. and addresses critical issues across the bird conservation initiatives. Visit <http://www.nabci-us.org/news.html> to access back issues of this publication, including special issues on communications, monitoring, and more.

Most of the continent's birds are migratory and thus have continental — even hemispheric — geographic ranges. Bird conservation efforts here in the United States must address the needs and habitats of these species. Over the past 10 years, the Committee has partnered with the national NABCI committees in Canada and Mexico to foster increased tri-national collaboration on a number of projects.

In 2005, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and Environmental Secretary and Minister in Mexico and Canada signed the NABCI Declaration of Intent to promote a continental approach to conserve North America's birds and their habitats. To carry out this approach, the Committee is working with counterparts in Canada and Mexico to help create Mexican regional alliances (joint venture-like partnerships) and continentally important proposals that link priority sites for shared bird species across the three countries. Since 2003, these Mexican alliances and proposals have been developed and implemented to varying degrees in five project areas.

Increased urbanization, increasing demands for grain, increasing climate change and other threats have conservationists on alert. A host of capabilities in biological planning, conservation design, and conservation delivery will be required to strategically deal with these issues. The U.S. NABCI Committee continues to believe that the success of these efforts depends upon an integrated approach — one that is grounded in sound science and landscape-level, partnership-driven delivery across the continent— and beyond.

NAWCA Celebrates 20 Years of Funding Conservation Partnerships

Rachel F. Levin, Communications Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Bird Habitat Conservation

In 1989, Congress passed the [North American Wetlands Conservation Act](#), declaring, among other things, that maintaining healthy populations of birds in North America depends on “the protection, restoration, and management of wetland ecosystems and associated habitats in Canada, as well as in the United States and Mexico.”

Nearly two decades later, grants made under the Act’s authority have supported thousands of cooperative projects across North America, leveraged billions in partner dollars and affected some 25 million acres of habitat - making it a true conservation success story.

From the maritime provinces of Canada to the Yucatan Peninsula, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act has made an extraordinary difference in continental habitat conservation, tapping into partners who, though often diverse in mission, are genuinely committed to conserving wetlands and associated uplands for migratory birds and the hundreds of other species that depend on these habitats.

Building on established cooperation among the United States, Canada and Mexico for bird conservation – namely through the 1986 North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an international agreement that provides a strategy for long-term protection of wetlands and associated upland habitats – the Act was designed to encourage partnerships to conserve wetland ecosystems across the continent to benefit not just waterfowl but also other migratory birds, fish, and other wildlife. NAWCA grants have helped to support the habitat conservation work of a host of conservation partnerships on the landscape.



Fed by five rivers, the Great Bay is the most important wetland ecosystem in New Hampshire. The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership, one of the nation’s outstanding landscape partnership success stories, has received six NAWCA Standard Grants. /U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Signed by President George Bush on Dec. 13, 1989, the Act created the [North American Wetlands Conservation Council](#) to help support wetlands protection, restoration and enhancement projects by providing grants to public-private partnerships to carry out projects in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Three times a year, the Council recommends a slate of grants to the [Migratory Bird Conservation Commission](#), whose seven members are authorized by the Act to give final funding approval for projects.

Funds for the Act’s two grant programs are derived from Congressional appropriations, as well as penalties, and forfeitures collected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918; federal fuel excise taxes on small gasoline engines, as directed by amendments to the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950, to benefit coastal ecosystem projects; and interest accrued on the fund established under the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937.

Congress reauthorized the North American Wetlands Conservation Act in 2002, expanding its scope to include the conservation of all habitats and birds associated with wetlands ecosystems, not just waterfowl – making it truly an “all-bird” conservation program.

Partners in Act-funded projects range from land trusts to timber companies, working ranches to duck clubs, municipal governments to Native American tribes, and chambers of commerce to charitable foundations.

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The North American Wetlands Conservation Act awards grants under two programs: Standard and Small Grants. Both are competitive programs and both require that grant requests be matched by partner contributions at no less than a 1-to-1 ratio. Funds from U.S. federal sources may contribute towards a project, but are not eligible as match.

The Standard Grants Program supports projects in Canada, the United States, and Mexico that involve long-term protection, restoration, or enhancement of wetlands and associated upland habitats. In Mexico, partners also use grant funds to conduct projects involving technical training, environmental education and outreach, organizational infrastructure development, and sustainable-use studies.

The Small Grants Program supports the same types of projects as the U.S. Standard Grants Program. However, project activities are usually smaller in scope and involve fewer dollars. Grant requests may not exceed \$75,000, and funding priority is given to grantees or partners new to the Act's grants program.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Council has been widely viewed as a leader in international habitat conservation activities through its implementation of the Act. The strength of the Council comes from this diverse membership; the Council is composed of the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Executive Director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, directors of state fish and game agencies representing each of the four migratory bird flyways, and three representatives of nonprofit conservation organizations.

As we celebrate the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's 20th anniversary in 2009, the Service and its partners in wetlands conservation have much to be proud of. In the past two decades, more than 4,000 partners have been involved in nearly 2,000 Act-funded projects. More than \$918 million in grants has leveraged some \$1.8 billion in matching funds and \$1 billion in non-matching funds. Projects across the continent have affected nearly 25 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands – making the Act truly one of the world's most successful pieces of conservation legislation.



Originally created to support the North American Waterfowl Management plan and protect habitat for species such as the American Wigeon, NAWCA expanded its scope and is now dedicated to conserving wetland and associated habitat for all native wild birds. /U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Southern Wings Program: Helping States Conserve Priority Migratory Bird Species

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

Kicked off in March 2009 with the endorsement of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Southern Wings Program is an international effort to conserve priority migratory bird species on their wintering grounds.

About 450 species of songbirds such as flycatchers, vireos, swallows, thrushes, warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, buntings, and orioles have 90 percent of their wintering range south of the U.S./Mexico border. Many non-songbirds—including herons, egrets, geese, ducks, plovers, sandpipers, terns, cuckoos and swifts—also join the passerines for eight months of the year in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Temperate and tropical America have hundreds of shared bird species, and their people share many conservation concerns and goals. Conserving birds throughout their annual cycle is critical to securing the future of birds that breed within the boundaries of individual states.

Over the last two years, state fish and wildlife agencies led the development of the Southern Wings Program under the direction of the Bird Conservation Committee. The intent is to provide a mechanism to support and facilitate the participation of state fish and wildlife agencies in projects that advance their goals of conserving priority birds. Although some state agencies already participate in projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, many others were interested, but had no mechanism to do so. Until now.

State agencies spend considerable time, money, and effort conserving and managing habitat for birds when they are in the United States. They have also built partnerships while working across state borders and the Canada-U.S. border. Through Southern Wings, States will be able to protect these same species throughout their lifecycle and expand these partnerships throughout the Americas, where ever there priority birds may travel.

The Program is based solidly on migratory bird biology. It has been designed to allow for relatively easy and seamless financial participation by interested states, and will report back to those states on project progress and accomplishments. The Program will also leverage state funds to reap the benefits of partner match.

The Program has begun to collect funds from those states interested and able to participate in 2009. The Western, Southeastern, and Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies have agreed to play a key role in the Program. They are now collecting money from their member states, and will transfer that money to the appropriate third party once projects are identified. Each participating state and regional association will be able to nominate a member to the national technical committee, which is responsible for identifying projects.

Now is the time to act to conserve migratory birds throughout their lifecycles. The Southern Wings Programs provides a transparent mechanism for state agencies to join with other partners throughout the country to work internationally to secure a future for migratory birds. With the support of our partners, including the American Bird Conservancy, National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, U.S. Forest Service International Programs, and the National Park Service Park Flight Program, we are excited about the future of this groundbreaking program.



Listed as a Federal Species of Special Concern, the Golden-winged Warbler breeds in early successional habitats and overwinters in Central America and the northwestern tip of South America.
/Charlie Moores

How are Our Birds Faring? A Look at the State of Birds in the U.S.

Alicia King, Communications Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Migratory Bird Management

Birds are a national treasure—a treasure we share with people across the world. The United States is home to a tremendous diversity of native birds, with more than 800 species inhabiting terrestrial, coastal, and ocean habitats, including Hawaii. Among these species, 68 are federally listed as endangered or threatened. Additionally, more than 174 are species of conservation concern because of their small distribution, high threats, or declining populations.



Incidental capture in commercial fishing is the most significant source of mortality of Black-footed Albatross, a species of high conservation concern. /USFWS

Because the health of bird populations is linked to the quality and health of their habitats, bird populations can provide a good indication of the health of our nation's ecosystems.

Initiated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the [State of the Birds 2009](#) report was created through an unprecedented partnership: Government wildlife agencies and conservation groups have come together as a subcommittee of the U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) Committee to produce the first collaborative and comprehensive analysis of the state of our nation's birds.

So how are our birds faring? The results are sobering: bird populations in many habitats are declining—a warning signal of the failing health of our ecosystems.

The *State of the U.S. Birds 2009* report presents a new synthesis of major bird-monitoring databases, including data from thousands of citizen scientists and professional biologists. Data from three continent-wide monitoring programs was gathered to create bird population indicators for major U.S. habitats.

Bird population indicators for grassland and aridland habitats show the strongest declines over the past 40 years. Some birds that depend on forests are also declining. The results reflect the influence of human activities and global change on our nation's birds. Every U.S. habitat harbors birds in need of conservation. Hawaiian birds and ocean birds appear most at risk, with populations in danger of collapse if immediate conservation measures are not implemented.

The possibility of extinction is still a cold reality for many birds: 13 species may no longer exist in the wild (10 species from Hawaii, plus Bachman's Warbler, Ivory-billed Woodpecker, and Eskimo Curlew). Several species face unprecedented conflict with humans for land at peak economic value, for example, in peninsular Florida, mid-continental prairies, coastal California, Texas hill country, and the Pacific Northwest.

In contrast, indicators for wetland species, wintering coastal birds, and hunted waterfowl show increasing populations during the past 40 years, reflecting a strong focus on wetlands conservation and management. This is heartening evidence that strategic land management and conservation action can reverse declines of birds. Birds that coexist with humans in urban and suburban areas have also increased since 1968.

Successful conservation requires information about the population status of every species to ensure the survival of endangered birds and to manage common species so they never become threatened. Little is known about the population trends of birds in many habitats, hampering our ability to help them. Greater monitoring and assessment efforts are needed to ensure that we can identify where birds need help and how to help them—while we still have time to make a difference.

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Also required is support for cooperative conservation efforts among the government, conservation organizations, and ordinary citizens—private landowners, hunters, and birdwatchers. Below are key messages regarding habitat conservation and management actions urgently needed to help restore healthy bird populations.

Aridland - Unplanned urban sprawl is by far the greatest threat to aridland birds. A regional system of protected areas can enhance quality of life for people and enable birds to survive.

Grassland - Farm conservation programs provide millions of acres of protected grasslands that are essential for the birds in a landscape where little native prairie remains.

Game Birds – Cooperative partnerships are carrying out important landscape-level management that benefits both game and non-game bird species.

Urban Birds - Creating greenspace for birds in cities areas can help adaptable urban birds as well as migrants stopping over during their long journeys.

Forest - Sustainable forestry, landowner incentives for forest preservation, and urban greenspace initiatives can protect natural resources and help ensure the long-term viability of many forest birds.

Arctic - The future of arctic habitats and birds depends on our ability to curb global climate change and to explore energy resources with minimal impact to wildlife.

Wetland - Although many wetland birds show troubling declines, conservation programs have protected millions of acres and contributed to thriving populations of hunted waterfowl, herons, egrets, and other birds.

Waterfowl - Successful waterfowl conservation in North America is a model for widespread habitat protection that has reversed declines of many bird species.

Marsh birds - Marshes respond quickly to management and restoration efforts, and small marshes, which are vulnerable to conversion during droughts, can support large numbers of birds.

Coast - Half of all coastally migrating shorebirds have declined, indicating the need to protect coastal habitats besieged by development, disturbance, and dwindling food supplies.

Ocean Birds - Nearly half of ocean birds in the U.S. are of conservation concern, indicating deteriorating ocean conditions. Management policies and sustainable fishing regulations are essential to ensure the health of our oceans.

Hawaii - Hawaii's native birds and habitats are under siege from invasive species and disease. Immediate action is needed to prevent birds from going extinct within our lifetimes.

The number and scope of severe threats to birds is daunting, but implementing solutions immediately and widely will pay off in benefits to society, the economy, and the health of our environment. Together we can reverse the damage to our nation's habitats and protect our remaining natural landscapes—the foundation upon which our precious resources, our wildlife, and the future of our children depend.

Legislative Update: A Bird Conservation Perspective

Anne Law, Deputy Director of Conservation Advocacy, American Bird Conservancy

The White House finally released the long-awaited details of the President's Fiscal FY 2010 budget proposal in early May. Many of the environmental programs at the Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency, which have been underfunded in previous years, saw boosts in their funding levels. The President's detailed budget articulates line by line how the administration plans to spend the roughly \$3.4 trillion budget blueprint that Congress approved in April. The release of the detailed FY 2010 budget finally allowed lawmakers to begin the appropriations process.



Spotted Sandpiper is one of several wetland generalists showing long-term declines. /Dave Menke, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Secretary Salazar was slated to testify before both the House and the Senate Appropriations Committees shortly after the release to defend the Interior Department's \$12 billion budget. Congressional lawmakers generally approved of the agency's funding request noting that it was a "remarkable shift in priorities" from the previous administration. Numerous provisions were praised by lawmakers, including increased funding for lands and parks, renewable energy, a new youth initiative, and climate change research and mitigation.

Below are some highlights within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to help protect declining species and their habitats:

- A strong commitment to the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund was indicated by the \$10 million increase over FY 2009 levels;
- The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund received a \$15 million increase over FY 2009;
- The National Wildlife Refuge System received an additional \$20.4 million over FY 2009 levels;
- State Wildlife Grants received a \$40 million increase over FY 2009 levels; and
- The bird habitat Joint Venture Program and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act received level funding for FY10, but increases in FY09. Specifically, the joint ventures' FY09 level is \$12.942 million, a \$2.049 million increase. The Act's FY09 level is \$4.75 million, a \$320,000 increase.

On the legislative front, Congress is expected to be quite busy this year tackling huge issues like climate change and healthcare reform. However, also on the agenda are a few bills to protect and promote bird conservation.

In mid-May, expert witnesses testified at a House Natural Resources subcommittee hearing supporting legislation which would significantly advance bird conservation in the United States. The Joint Ventures for Bird Habitat Conservation Act of 2009, sponsored by Rep. Frank Kratovil (D-MD), would formally authorize the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Joint Ventures Program, which has been effectively carrying out bird conservation planning and projects since 1987.

The two other bills also under consideration at the hearing were: H.R. 1916 and H.R. 2062. H.R. 1916, offered by Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), proposes to raise the price of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, popularly known as the "Duck Stamp," to provide increased funding for habitat acquisition and conservation. H.R. 2062, offered by Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), proposes to boost enforcement of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act by increasing the penalties for intentionally killing protected bird species. An effort is being spearheaded to add a citizen suit provision to this bill.

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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 the quarterly newsletter of the U.S. NABCI Committee. The All-Bird Bulletin publishes news and information on infrastructure, planning, science, funding, and other advancements in the field of integrated bird conservation and management.

To download back issues, visit <http://www.nabci-us.org/news.html>.

For subscription or submission inquiries, contact the Editor, Roxanne Bogart, 802-872-0629 ext. 25 or Roxanne.Bogart@fws.gov. Include author's name, organization, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address. Pictures are welcome but not necessary.

In early April, Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chairman of the Environment and Public Works Water and Wildlife Subcommittee, introduced bipartisan legislation, S. 690, to boost funding for the conservation of migratory birds. Cosponsors of the bill include Senators Mike Crapo (R-ID), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Bill Nelson (D-FL), and Joseph Lieberman (I-CT). The Senate bill, S. 690, reauthorizes the existing Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA), but at significantly higher levels, to meet the growing needs of our migrants, many of which are in rapid decline. Representative Ron Kind (D-WI) introduced companion legislation in the House of Representatives at the end of April. The bill, H.R. 2213, was a bi-partisan effort with Rep. Jim Gerlach (R-PA) co-sponsoring the bill.

The legislation was introduced following the release of the *State of the Birds 2009*, the most comprehensive assessment to date on the status of bird populations in the United States. The report found that over 250 American bird species are in decline or facing severe threats.

Field Guide to the Farm Bill for Fish and Wildlife Conservation

The Farm Bill is one of the most important tools enacted by Congress for restoring, enhancing, and protecting habitat on private lands. As the number of conservation programs has increased since the 1985 Farm Bill, so have the amount of funds authorized to further conservation on private lands. The 2008 Farm Bill authorized approximately \$23 billion for a five-year period.

To help landowners, conservationists, biologists, and others take advantage of conservation programs in the 2008 Farm Bill, the North American Bird Conservation Initiative in partnership with the Intermountain West Joint Venture has published the *Field Guide to the 2008 Farm Bill for Fish and Wildlife Conservation*. The publication is available in pdf format or as interactive Web pages on the U.S. NABCI Web site at <http://www.nabci-us.org>. A pdf is also available for downloading at <http://www.fishwildlife.org/pdfs/FarmBillGuide.pdf>

The publication presents an overview of the Farm Bill and its history, as well as important information on the organizations that administer it. Also provided is information on setting priorities, maximizing wildlife benefits, conservation planning, conservation practice standards, performance measurements, and assessments. A resources page provides citations of studies that document the impacts of Farm Bill programs and practices on wildlife.

The author, Randall Gray, worked for 31 years for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, where he helped develop, deliver, and evaluate Farm Bill conservation programs. Before retiring, his final position was the National Wildlife Biologist. He is presently the Farm Bill Coordinator for the Intermountain West Joint Venture.