

# North American Bird Conservation Initiative



*Bringing  
It All  
Together*



U.S. NABCI Committee  
September 2000

Our goal is to facilitate the delivery of the full spectrum of bird conservation through regionally based, biologically driven, landscape-oriented partnerships.

The conservation community needs the support of new partnerships and additional resources in its quest to more efficiently secure the future for all of North America's wild birds. The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) is prepared to help meet these challenges and bring to life the vision of integrated bird conservation.

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S. MASLOWSKI

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very day, day and night, birds are nesting or migrating throughout the varied landscapes of North America. They are an integral part of our lives, whether we encounter them in remote areas with gun, camera, or binoculars or observe them from our kitchen window or while walking on a city street. From shorebirds and waterfowl to seabirds, herons, and songbirds, over 1,100 species of birds can be found in our continent's Arctic tundra, deserts, wetlands, grasslands, mountains, and forests.

Populations for many of these species, however, are in trouble. Some songbird populations have declined dramatically: Cerulean Warbler, Loggerhead Shrike, and Painted Bunting populations have plummeted 60 to 75 percent over the past three decades. Of the ducks identified in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Northern Pintail and Scaup remain significantly below Plan population goals. Of the 50 shorebird species that breed in the United States, almost half are considered to have undergone notable population declines. The status of most colonial waterbirds is poorly known, but it is suspected that many are following the trajectory of the Black Tern, which has declined 61 percent since the mid-1960s.

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), a coalition of U.S., Canadian, and Mexican governmental agencies and private organizations, is the most inclusive framework for bird conservation ever assembled on this or any other continent. For the first time ever, the vast majority of leaders in natural resource management and biological diversity conservation are agreeing to work together on a shared vision of bird conservation. Founded on the strengths and knowledge that have accumulated through the years in the conservation community, NABCI will bring together the resources to effect more efficient bird conservation.

This brochure provides you with the U.S. NABCI Committee's vision and model for conservation and proposes to you, the conservationist and land manager, how we will work for you. We are committed to providing leadership for a shared vision of bird conservation. We will leverage new resources and channel them to people working on the ground. We will help to build bridges and to expand current conservation partnerships. This initiative will help to create an environment in which all concerned with the health of the land—natural resource managers, hunters, landowners, birdwatchers, and others—can work together to achieve common goals.

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*Great Blue Heron*

KAREN HOLLINGSWORTH

## What does NABCI add to the work already being accomplished?

The primary role of NABCI is to coordinate, not duplicate, the efforts of the four major bird plans: North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners In Flight, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and North American Colonial Waterbird Plan. Many of the birds targeted by these plans share the same habitats. By leveraging the plans' limited resources, both human and financial, we will improve the outlook for bird conservation across all of North America.

As a partner in NABCI, you can add to work already being accomplished by promoting the use of birds as focal species for landscape-conservation planning. You can also promote the management of habitats to benefit both game and nongame



*American Redstart*

S. MASLOWSKI



*Mallard*

E & P BAUER



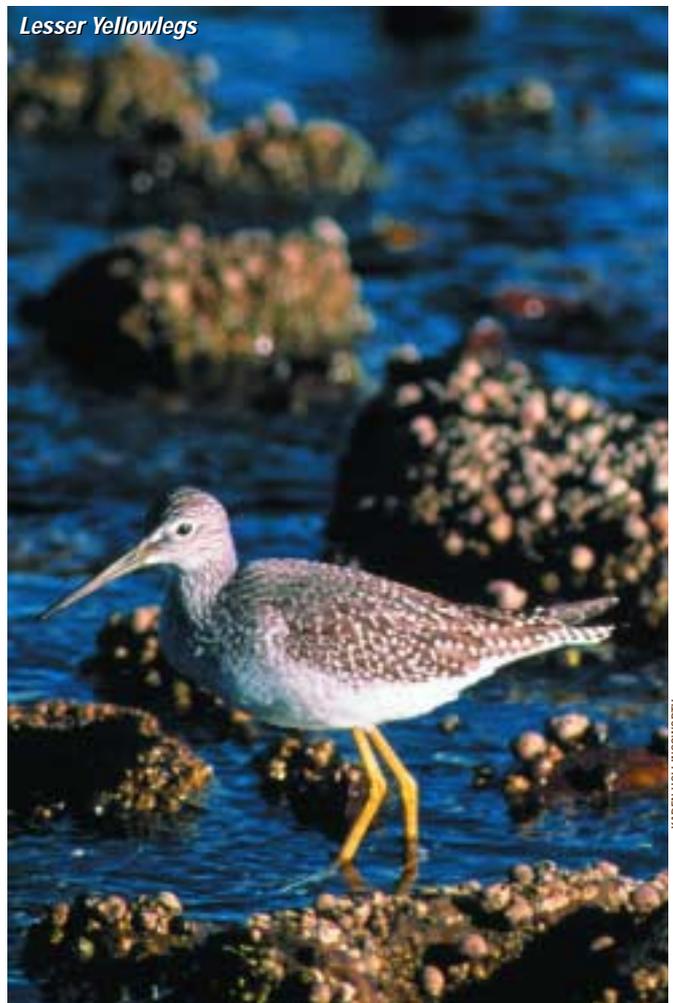
*Forster's Tern*

JAMES P. IMATISSON

birds, be they migratory or nonmigratory. With partners sending a consistent bird-conservation and land-management message to the public, we will be more likely to receive the support needed to broaden the scope and success of our conservation work. In fostering international cooperation, we will ensure the conservation of migratory birds throughout their continental ranges. Using the concept of integrated conservation, partners in NABCI will ultimately help to keep birds, as well as other species that share their habitats, from becoming endangered.

This integrated approach to bird conservation will help to minimize the conflicts that characterize many environmental issues and to attract the involvement of many nontraditional partners. Because most birds are tolerant of a wide variety of primary land uses, well-conceived and well-managed programs of recreation, silviculture, grazing, and many other practices can support important segments of our bird life.

*Of the 50 shorebird species that breed in the United States, almost half are considered to have undergone notable population declines.*



*Lesser Yellowlegs*

KAREN HOLLINGSWORTH



*Dunlin*

D.C. TWICHELL

## Why should all of this attention be focused on birds?

First, healthy bird populations are indicators of healthy ecosystems, which are needed by both wildlife and people. Second, birds are important in their own right, as significant components of our biological heritage and in performing numerous ecological roles. Some of those roles, such as controlling pest-insect populations, bring us enormous economic benefits. Finally, birdwatching is the fastest-growing form of outdoor recreation in the United States—some 63 million participants as of 1997—and hunting of game birds is a rich tradition held dear by millions. It's safe to conclude that interest in birds in the United States is widely shared and growing.



*Blue-winged Teal*

KAREN HOLLINGSWORTH



*Black Skimmers*

JACK DARRELL



*Northern Shoveler*

KAREN HOLLINGSWORTH

## What is the value of an international initiative?

Many of North America's birds are an international resource by virtue of their annual migration across national borders. Successful conservation of such migratory bird populations depends upon conservation and management in every part of their range.

International communication and coordination is a fundamental aspect of NABCI. International support of NABCI can result in increased resources for all involved—more than any one country alone would be able to generate for bird conservation. Canada and Mexico are full partners in NABCI. At some point in the future, other countries south of Mexico and in the Caribbean also may become active partners.

## What do birds need?

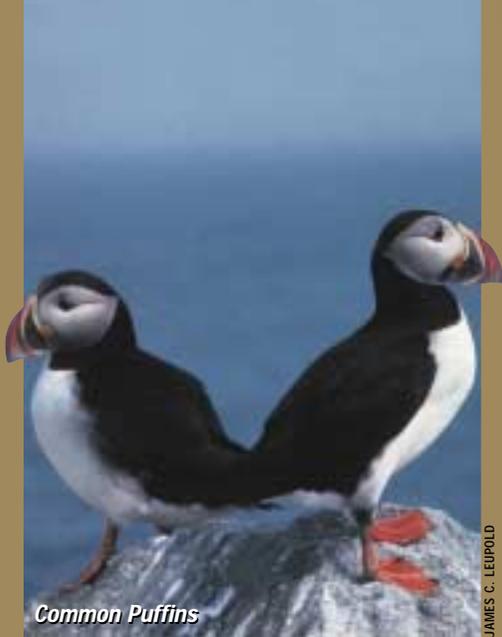
More than anything else, birds need functioning ecosystems throughout their ranges. Like all other living creatures, birds also need clean air and water and an environment free of toxic chemicals and pathogens. Or simply stated, they need safe and healthy places to feed, rest, and reproduce.

*Some songbird populations have declined dramatically: Cerulean Warbler, Loggerhead Shrike, and Painted Bunting populations have plummeted 60 to 75 percent over the past three decades.*



*Northern Flicker*

KAREN HOLLINGSWORTH



*Common Puffins*

JAMES C. LEUPOLD

## How can these needs be met?

The first step in meeting these needs is comprehensive planning, which must be based on the best biological knowledge available and the socio-economic characteristics of a region. Those concerned with or affected by bird conservation must be active participants in the process. The four bird plans have made great progress laying the necessary biological foundation for conservation. Under NABCI, the objectives for the bird groups will be integrated and translated into explicit habitat recommendations. The result will be a shared vision of landscape conservation in which the long-term well-being of birds is balanced with other uses of land.

A shared concept of geography and landscapes is critical to effective planning. To that end, participants in NABCI have adopted a map of North



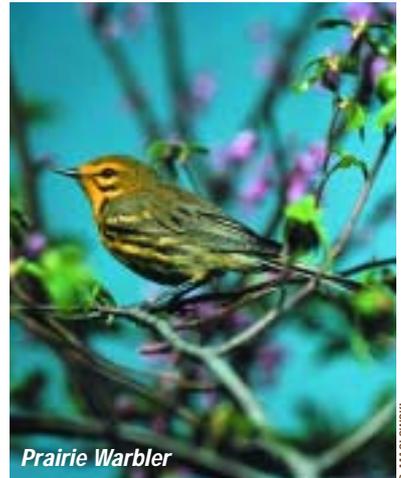
*White-rumped Sandpipers*

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*Trumpeter Swans*

DOV HULTMAN



*Prairie Warbler*

S. MACOSKOWSKI

America that delineates geographic areas called Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs). A BCR encompasses landscapes having similar bird communities, habitats, and resource issues. It will be the fundamental biological unit in which integrated bird conservation—including planning, implementation, and evaluation—will be delivered. The map and a booklet containing BCR descriptions can be found in the pocket at the back of this brochure.

After planning comes implementation, which requires resources and infrastructure. The best existing infrastructure is found in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's joint ventures. These self-directed, grassroots partnerships are working to achieve regional objectives based on local needs, opportunities, and limitations, but they are guided by international conservation principles and continental goals. The 11 U.S. habitat joint ventures have already taken on the mission of conserving all birds. For those BCRs not covered by a current joint venture, existing joint venture boundaries may expand to cover a broader area, or a new joint venture may form to fill the void. We envision a nation of coast-to-coast joint ventures.

As implementation progresses, we should assess the status of bird populations and the conditions of key habitats. We must test the assumptions made during the planning process by monitoring responses to conservation actions and then, in light of those responses, refine the adaptive process: plan, implement, evaluate. Critical research programs that support these field activities also will be adjusted to address emerging issues.

*Of the ducks identified in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Northern Pintail and Scaup remain significantly below Plan population goals.*



*Wood Ducks*

JAMES C. LEUPOLD



Canada Goose

TIM MCCABE

*The status of most colonial waterbirds is poorly known, but it is suspected that many are following the trajectory of the Black Tern, which has declined 61 percent since the mid-1960s.*

## What can I do to help?

You can join existing partnerships, giving financial support or expertise, whether it be in biological or computer science, land management, economics, communications, or any other discipline that will aid in the conservation of birds. You also can support the development of a joint venture where none exists. We have a lot of ground to cover to create coast-to-coast joint ventures. We *really* do need your help in bringing it all together.

For additional information about NABCI and how you can become involved, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Bird Habitat Conservation, which provides administrative support to the U.S. NABCI Committee. Contact information is on the back cover of this brochure.



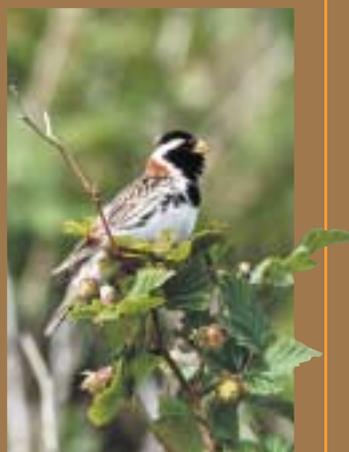
Emperor Geese

DAVE MENKE



Additional copies of this brochure may be obtained from the

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