



*International
Migratory
Bird Day
(IMBD),
held annually
on the second
Saturday in
May, is an
invitation to
celebrate and
support
migratory bird
conservation.*

IMBD Information

web - <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd>
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web - <http://www.BirdDay.org>
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Catalysts for Conservation

Birds Selected for the IMBD 2003 Art

Each of the ten birds selected for the IMBD 2003 art holds a significant place in the history of conservation in the Americas. These birds have served as conservation catalysts, inspiring people to change their ways and take action to conserve natural resources.

Passenger Pigeon

Ectopistes migratorius

Conservation Issue: The Passenger Pigeon offered European settlers in eastern North America a seemingly unlimited supply of food for table and market; this species was also slaughtered for recreation. Although once numbering between two and five billion (25% - 40% of the total number of birds in what is now the U.S.), the Passenger Pigeon population rapidly dwindled as a result of overharvest, with the species going extinct in the wild in 1900.

Conservation Change: Dismayed by the irreversible effect of human overexploitation, citizens, scientists, and lawmakers came together in numerous organizations to support wildlife, including the American Ornithologists Union (1883), the Bureau of Biological Survey (1885, now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), the National Audubon Society (1886), and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (1902).

Snowy Egret

Egretta thula

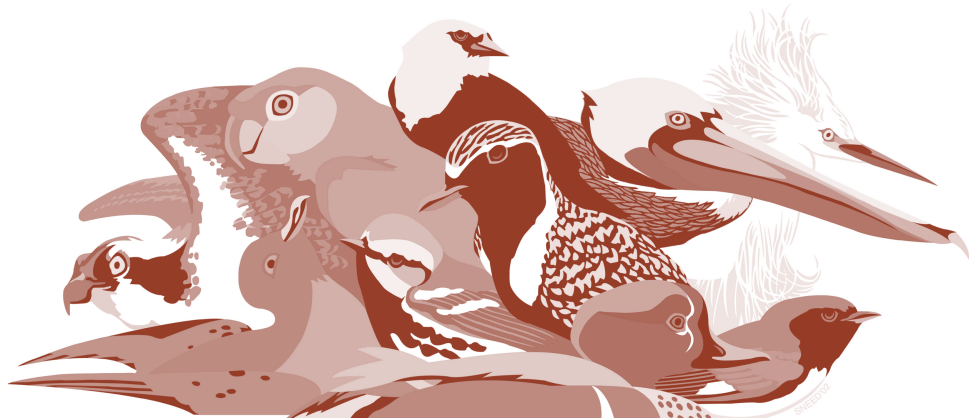
Conservation Issue: In the late 1800s, it was considered high fashion to adorn hats with wild bird feathers. The long, wispy ornamental tail feathers (or aigrettes) of breeding Snowy Egrets were especially favored, but over 60 species of birds were targeted by plume hunters.

Conservation Change: In response to the slaughter associated with the feather trade, conservation-minded individuals and organizations launched a massive public campaign to educate lawmakers and consumers. Many state and local governments passed protective laws, and in 1900, the Lacey Act made it a federal crime in the U.S. to cross state lines with birds or their parts taken illegally.

Brown Pelican

Pelecanus occidentalis

Conservation Issue: At the end of the 19th century, Pelican Island was the only remaining pelican rookery on Florida's east coast as a result of plume hunting and egg collection. A German immigrant named Paul Kroegel took a special interest in trying to protect the last remaining pelicans and became the island's warden, risking his life in sometimes violent face-offs with plume hunters.



Conservation Change: U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt realized that wildlife conservation required sanctuaries as well as regulations, and on March 14, 1903, he signed an Executive Order establishing Pelican Island as a federal sanctuary. In doing so, Roosevelt created what is known today as the National Wildlife Refuge System, now numbering over 530 refuges.

American Golden-Plover

Pluvialis dominica

Conservation Issue: The long-distance migrations of some birds take them across national borders, requiring international cooperation for their conservation. The American Golden-Plover's migration is a striking example: this shorebird's annual journey takes it thousands of miles from the Arctic to South America and back each year.

Conservation Change: Concern for the American Golden-Plover, which suffered from heavy market hunting, and other migrants led to the landmark 1916 Migratory Bird Treaty between the U.S. and Great Britain (on behalf of Canada). This treaty formed the basis of powerful, far-reaching federal laws that make it unlawful to pursue, hunt, take, capture or kill; attempt to take, capture or kill; possess, offer to or sell, barter, purchase, deliver or cause to be shipped, exported, imported, transported, carried or received any migratory bird, part, nest, egg or product, unless permitted by regulation. Similar treaties were signed by the U.S. with Mexico (1936), Japan (1972), and the Soviet Union (1976).

Green-winged Teal

Anas crecca

Conservation Issue: Many early conservationists were sportsmen, responsible hunters with a strong interest in saving species, especially waterfowl. They recognized that the Green-winged Teal, other ducks, geese, and swans needed protected wetlands in which to nest, and supported the use of public lands for waterfowl refuges. Thus it is that sports hunter groups like Ducks Unlimited (formed in 1937) are also some of the most successful wetland conservation organizations.

Conservation Change: Waterfowl licenses ("Duck Stamps") became the funding mechanism for refuge land acquisition (in the U.S., via the 1934

Migratory Bird Stamp Act). Ninety-eight percent of Duck Stamp proceeds go directly to wetlands acquisition, so buying a stamp is one of the easiest ways for anyone – hunter or not – to support habitat conservation. The Green-winged Teal appeared on the 1939-40 and 1979-80 U.S. Duck Stamps.

Yellow-headed Blackbird

Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus

Conservation Issue: Waterfowl provided the primary impetus for many conservation laws, but so did concern for wetlands and wetland species in general. The Yellow-headed Blackbird, resident of marshes and ponds across the northern prairies, is symbolic of the variety of birds, other animals and plants found in wetlands.

Conservation Change: The year 1937 saw the passage of the U.S. Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (also known as the Pittman-Robertson Act for the Congressmen that introduced it), which provides additional funding for wildlife programs via taxes on firearms and ammunition. The Pittman-Robertson account was later converted into a trust fund, with the interest contributing to wetland conservation projects in Canada, Mexico, or the U.S. generated under the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA).

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Conservation Issue: Positioned at the top of the food chain, the Osprey is vulnerable to the effects of toxic chemicals accumulated in the bodies of the fish it preys upon. Particularly harmful are organochlorine pesticides, such as DDT, which was widely introduced in the 1940s. Osprey populations experienced drastic declines as Osprey eggs, their shells weakened by DDT and crushed under the weight of incubating adults, failed to hatch.

Conservation Change: Society's awareness of the sinister effects of pesticide poisoning was largely due to Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*. In it, Carson described a hushed and sad world without birdsong, with humans and wildlife alike suffering from pesticide overuse. Due to human health concerns, and for the sake of the Osprey and other birds, DDT was banned in the U.S. and Canada in the early 1970s.

Thick-billed Parrot

Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha

Conservation Issue: The trade in wild-caught birds (legal and illegal), coupled with habitat destruction, has caused neotropical parrots to become one of the most threatened groups of birds in the world. One such example is the Thick-billed Parrot, endangered due to shooting, trade, and the loss of its mountainous pine forest habitat in Mexico.

Conservation Change: Concerns about the damaging effects of wildlife trade prompted the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), signed by 80 nations in 1973 (the signatories now number 158). This convention is implemented by domestic laws in individual nations, such as the U.S. Wild Bird Conservation Act. Conservation-minded consumers must always be careful not to buy parrots or other exotic birds unless positive that the bird was bred in captivity.

Black-throated Green Warbler &

Black-throated Blue Warbler

Dendroica virens &

Dendroica caerulescens

Conservation Issue: The Black-throated Green and Black-throated Blue warblers, and many other songbirds, travel annually from their homes in Latin America and the Caribbean to breeding grounds in North America. Data from annual counts such as the Breeding Bird Survey have shown disturbing declines of many neotropical migrants caused by a variety of threats, notably habitat loss and degradation in both wintering and breeding habitats and at important stopping places in between.

Conservation Change: Though lively, bright, and a favorite of bird watchers, warblers and other small migratory birds did not historically receive the same degree of attention as the large showy waterbirds or harvested waterfowl. A new era of bird conservation was launched in 1990 with the creation of Partners in Flight, a cooperative initiative committed to working internationally to conserve all birds. The passage of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act in 2000, which provides funds for conservation projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, promises more positive changes for – and because of – birds.