

Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

Migratory Bird Conservation

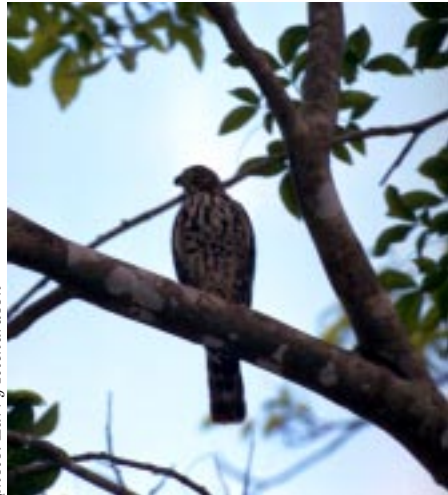


photo: Larry Richardson



photo: USFWS



photo: USFWS

Frank Bowers
Regional Migratory Bird Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1875 Century Blvd., Suite 420
Atlanta, GA 30345
Phone: 404/679 7188
Fax: 404/679 7285
E-mail: frank_bowers @ fws.gov

Inventory and Monitoring

- Colonial waterbird and waterfowl inventories on national wildlife refuge system lands.
- Migratory shorebird habitat use at Cabo Rojo saltflats.
- Pigeon and dove surveys.
- Breeding bird surveys and Christmas bird counts.

Research

- Factors affecting breeding success rates of snowy plovers at Cabo Rojo saltflats, as well as colonially nesting terns, pelicans, tropicbirds, boobies, and yellow-shouldered blackbirds (several of these species are federally endangered).
- Migratory and native bird use of shade-grown coffee plantations and development of social and economic incentives to perpetuate this important habitat type.

Management

- Development of bird conservation plan for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.
- Habitat restoration at Laguna Cartagena National Wildlife Refuge.
- Vegetation management and protection of colonially nesting bird habitats.
- Hunting regulations development.
- Issuance of migratory bird permits.

Partnerships

- Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources.
- Virgin Islands Fish and Wildlife Service.
- University of Puerto Rico.
- U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service.

- U.S.D.A. Forest Service.
- U.S.G.S. Biological Resources Division.

Outreach

- Migratory Bird Day.
- Educational materials for pigeon hunters.

Questions and Answers

Why is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service so involved with migratory birds?

The Service, as a result of Congressional action and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918) has responsibility for this group of Federal trust species. Because migratory birds (game and nongame species) move across state, provincial and national borders, they are recognized as an international resource requiring conservation on a continental basis. Protection in North America is provided for by conventions between the United States, Canada, Japan and Mexico. There are migratory bird treaties with these countries that require the United States to determine when, to what extent, and by what means it is compatible with the terms of treaties/conventions to allow use of these birds and their habitats. The Secretary of the Interior has been charged with such determinations.

Are there permit requirements to protect migratory birds, their nests and eggs, or body parts?

Yes, each Service region has a migratory bird permit branch(es) that decides if permits are needed for various actions involving migratory birds. The types of permits that may be issued or required are:

- Eagle Exhibition.
- Eagle Indian Religious.
- Eagle Scientific.
- Eagle Depredation.
- Taxidermy.

Puerto Rico Migratory Bird Conservation

Waterfowl Sale/Disposal.

Scientific Collecting.

Depredation.

Rehabilitation.

Special Purpose (Possession).

Salvage of Dead Birds.

Miscellaneous Special Purpose.

Falconry.

Raptor Propagation.

How are migratory bird hunting regulations established?

The Service collects population, habitat, hunter and harvest data on an annual basis to gauge the status of hunted species. This is a cooperative effort with the states, Canada and Mexico. Waterfowl hunting regulations for migratory species use flyways (broad geographical areas traveled by groups of migrating birds) to establish regulation frameworks for hunting. The states within a flyway work with Service biologists to analyze data and propose regulations to the Service's Regulation Committee. This committee judges the proposals and recommends a broad set of hunting regulations that include season dates, bag/species limits, etc. These framework regulations are approved by the Service Director, and states are then allowed the flexibility to choose specific state regulations within the flyway frameworks.