

# Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act



Of the nearly 800 bird species known to occur in the United States, approximately 500 migrate across our borders, with the large majority wintering in the Caribbean and Latin America. Hemisphere-wide habitat loss due to deforestation and development threaten the future survival of these neotropical migrants. Conservation efforts are especially important in the Caribbean region, which provides the crucial role of winter habitat and staging area for birds winging their way to their winter homes in Latin America or to spring and summer homes in North America.

On July 21, 2000, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) was signed into law. The legislation passed both houses of Congress with strong bi-partisan support. Sponsorship for the NMBCA was extremely broad thanks to its positive elements. It provides a *broad-spectrum approach* to bird conservation sought for some time by gamebird and non-gamebird advocates alike. The NMBCA has the potential to serve as a major *delivery mechanism* to further develop bird conservation strategies for songbirds, shorebirds, waterbirds, and all other bird species in need of conservation action. The legislation *authorizes \$5 million per year*, which is Congressional permission to establish a program and set funding ceilings. Funding must be provided through the annual governmental appropriation process. Funds have not been appropriated to date.

Key elements of the NMBCA are:

- Includes *all migratory birds*. No distinction is made between game and non-game species.
- Encompasses *all habitats*. The NMBCA covers species from offshore islands to mountain tops.

- Emphasizes *partnerships*. Every Federal dollar must be matched by at least 3 dollars in non-federal or private contributions.
- Focused toward *on-the-ground* projects. The NMBCA is non-regulatory and approximately 97 percent of the funding must go towards specific conservation activities that address local problems and needs.
- Promotes conservation *hemisphere-wide*. The NMBCA supports conservation in North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, covering migratory paths of most U.S. birds.
- *Complements* U.S.-based bird conservation initiatives. Seventy-five percent of funding will be directed to address conservation needs of U.S. birds abroad.
- Establishes a broad-based *Advisory Group*. This spectrum of bird conservation groups will advise the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on maximizing the effectiveness of the NMBCA.
- Modeled after the successful *North American Wetlands Conservation Act* and the *Multinational Species Conservation Acts*.

**Left:**

*Long-Billed Curlew, Peregrine Falcon, Belted Kingfisher, Black Skimmer, Bachman's Warbler*

A Guide to the Birds of the West Indies by Princeton University Press/FWS Winged Ambassadors

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
International Affairs  
Division of International Conservation  
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 730  
Arlington, VA 22203  
<http://international.fws.gov>  
FW91A\_DIC@fws.gov  
April 2001**

