

News Release



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More Than \$23 Million in Federal Grants and Matching Funds going to Conservation of Neotropical Migratory Birds and Habitat

Projects in Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota

Department of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar today announced more than \$4.8 million in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grants for 36 projects supporting neotropical migratory bird conservation throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Partners will match these funds with more than \$18 million that will support habitat restoration, environmental education, population monitoring, and other priority activities within the ranges of neotropical birds in the United States, Puerto Rico, Canada, Mexico and 12 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

“As we mark the observance of International Migratory Bird Day on May 9th and celebrate the incredible journeys these birds make between their summer and winter homes. I’m honored to be able to support partnerships that are making a real difference for neotropical migrants,” said Salazar. “These grants will support important multi-national partnership projects throughout the hemisphere so future generations of people in North, Central and South America can enjoy and appreciate these remarkable birds.”

Nearly 350 species of neotropical migratory birds breed in the United States and Canada and winter in Latin America, including plovers, terns, hawks, cranes, warblers and sparrows. The populations of many of these birds are presently in decline, and several species are currently protected as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 2000 established the matching grants program to fund projects promoting the conservation of neotropical migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Funds may be used to protect, research, monitor and manage bird populations and habitat, as well as to conduct law enforcement and community outreach and education. By law, at least 75 percent of the money goes to projects in

Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada, while the remaining 25 percent can go to projects in the United States.

International projects that include the United States:

- **Colorado, Nebraska, Mexico:** The Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory will use a grant of \$244,351 and a partner match of \$888,625 to conserve habitat for high priority and declining grassland bird species in western North America through monitoring, research and protection. This project will continue work funded by the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act since 2002 to conserve high priority and declining grassland bird species of western North America. Strategies include monitoring populations and researching the physiological health of wintering grassland birds in cultivated landscapes in Mexico to advance conservation strategies for mountain plover and 25 other high priority species. Partners will also protect 440 acres and manage more than 55,000 acres in a shortgrass prairie conservation area in Colorado that supports breeding populations of at least 22 high-priority grassland bird species. This project will also protect nests in agricultural fields. Grant funds will also allow outreach to engage landowners in conservation programs for mountain plovers in Colorado and Nebraska, and education targeting resource managers, agricultural producers and students to increase appreciation for grassland birds.
- **Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Canada:** The Wildlife Conservation Society will receive \$40,345, to be matched with \$121,900 in partner funds, to develop a multi-scale method, using grassland bird species as indicators, to evaluate the impact of bison on bird habitat and biodiversity. Partners seek to understand and document how bison reintroductions, particularly at large scales, might be good for reviving native grassland habitat and thus benefit grassland birds. Studies conducted during the process of bison reintroduction will help inform how grassland structure changes and is maintained at different scales. Habitat improvements will benefit Neotropical species such as the mountain plover, grasshopper sparrow, savannah sparrow and Sprague's pipit.
- **Alaska-Canada, Chile:** The Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology will use a grant of \$12,033, matched by \$36,100, to continue a rangewide study of Hudsonian godwit migration ecology and breeding biology. Funding will enable the project to encompass two additional field sites in Alaska and Canada and enable Chilean colleagues to undertake research on the non-breeding ecology of this large shorebird.
- **California, Mexico, Central and South America:** The Institute for Bird Populations will receive a grant of \$196,216, which will be matched by partner funds of \$957,600, to help operate 40 long-running neotropical migrant monitoring stations and establish and operate 10 new stations to fill geographic information gaps, increase sample sizes and provide baseline data for newly protected areas.

Projects in the United States and its Territories:

- **Illinois:** Audubon-Chicago Region will receive \$88,310 and partners will match with \$265,170 to return publicly owned hayfields and degraded grasslands in surrounding Chicago to a diverse prairie habitat, greatly increasing numbers of neotropical migrant grassland birds.
- **Minnesota:** The Nature Conservancy will receive \$100,000 to protect industrial forestland in northern Minnesota through the purchase of conservation easements from landowners to protect habitat, jobs, and public access. The grant will be matched with \$400,000 in partner funds.
- **New Mexico and Texas:** The Nature Conservancy will use a grant of \$250,000, matched by \$752,280, to expand protection of habitat critical to declining grassland bird species of the shortgrass and shinnery oak habitat of New Mexico.
- **Puerto Rico:** The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico will receive \$250,000 and match this grant with \$750,000 to acquire, manage, protect and restore critical migratory bird habitat and establish a Rio Encantado Natural Reserve to protect in perpetuity a portion of the habitat of wintering migratory birds in important karst ecosystems.
- **Wisconsin:** The Golden Sand Resource and Conservation Development Council will use a grant of \$250,000, matched by \$750,000 in partner funds, to help the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources enhance conservation of 130 neotropical migratory bird species by preserving 750 acres, providing breeding, nesting, migratory and stopover habitat.

More about the projects listed above, plus the 27 projects in Mexico, Central and South America, is on the Web at: <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NMBCA/2009.shtm>

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.