

DoD PIF Key Focus Area: Stewardship

Bird Conservation in the Military



Mission

To conserve migratory and resident birds and their habitats on Department of Defense lands.

DoD Partners in Flight

The Department of Defense (DoD) Partners in Flight (PIF) Program identifies strategies, goals, and priorities for eight key areas that support and enhance the military mission: stewardship, partnerships/cooperation, communications, habitat and species management, bird/animal aircraft strike hazard, monitoring, research, and information and education. These goals and priorities outline the DoD PIF Program vision for developing and implementing conservation actions that support the mission while minimizing impacts to bird species and their habitats. One of these key focus areas is **stewardship**, which enables DoD to better integrate programs for migratory and resident birds into existing natural resources and land management programs.

Focus Area Goal

Contribute to sustaining viable bird populations through sound stewardship on DoD lands.

Background

Over the last 200 years, the U.S. population has skyrocketed from about 8 million to 300 million. In that time, people have harvested resources for energy and food, built cities, and developed and grown industries, often failing to consider environmental consequences. As a result, we have lost a part of our natural heritage, degrading and depleting the resources upon which our quality of life depends.



*Several multi-year DoD-funded projects focus on studying Burrowing Owls on DoD installations, as well as the species' migratory routes and wintering grounds.
Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

For example, we have lost more than half of our nation's original wetlands, 98% of our tallgrass prairies, and virtually all virgin forests east of the Rocky Mountains. Without habitats to provide feeding, resting, and nesting opportunities, bird species across the country are declining. For those species that nest only in arid lands, 75% are in decline, while in the Hawaiian Islands, as many as 71 bird species may already have gone extinct.

Stewardship

DoD is required by law and by purpose to be a good steward of its lands. This means taking care of the land and resources so that wildlife and habitat will be self-sustaining, and so testing and training activities can continue. Proper stewardship requires staff who are professionally trained in biological and wildlife sciences, who are knowledgeable of what resources are available on military lands, and who understand how these resources function synergistically. Maintaining qualified staff and ensuring proper stewardship in a time of unprecedented urban growth and development is challenging, but vital.

Priorities

DoD PIF developed the following priorities to help DoD achieve its stewardship goals:

- maintain a network of knowledgeable installation biologists to help implement mission-relevant goals;
- encourage DoD senior leadership to participate in national and regional bird conservation organizations and initiatives;
- maintain involvement and/or partnership in state, regional, or national bird conservation groups and initiatives;
- encourage installation natural resources managers to acquire and maintain professional knowledge and/or certification(s) to ensure sound stewardship of military lands; and
- support DoD PIF Working Group Representatives who ensure stewardship and bird management activities on military installations meet, enable, or enhance training capabilities.

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Enabling the Mission, Defending the Resources
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