

DoD PIF Key Focus Area: Research

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 **research**, which enables DoD to better integrate programs for migratory and resident birds into existing natural resources and land management programs.

Goal

Identify knowledge gaps and conduct research relevant to mission support and priority bird conservation requirements.

Background

There are significant knowledge gaps surrounding the key factors limiting population sizes for priority bird species. Bird population responses to environmental variables, including DoD activities, are often poorly understood; therefore, the true effects of bird conservation activities on military mission requirements, whether positive or negative, are sometimes unknown or misunderstood.

DoD PIF must work with partners to improve its understanding of these issues. Bird conservation activities can promote multilateral cooperation among military installations and other partners. Limiting factors for many migratory birds occur across landscapes much larger than the DoD footprint, beyond installation and U.S. borders. Research on migratory connectivity—knowing where birds that breed on DoD lands spend the non-breeding season—can help identify limiting factors that occur off DoD lands. Similarly, understanding how to manage species and habitats that are reliant on human management for their continued existence will become increasingly critical as encroachment, habitat fragmentation, and non-native species further constrain management options.



A multi-year DoD-funded project studied the Western Sandpiper and its migration routes to develop a model for other co-occurring shorebirds to better understand stopover patterns and behavior.

Photo: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Priorities

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

- Help identify research-related bird conservation issues of highest relevance to mission requirements and installation needs.
- Develop ideas and projects that help facilitate bird- and habitat-related research projects of immediate importance to DoD.
- Support identified DoD migratory bird research and development requirements.
- Contribute important data to large regional migratory bird conservation projects.
- Encourage appropriate partnering in collaborative research efforts (e.g., Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units, U.S. Geological Survey, Joint Ventures).
- Develop partnerships with leaders in emerging fields of research (e.g., Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP)/Environmental Security Technology Certification Program (ESTCP), U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Wildlife Research Center, National Science Foundation).

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