

## International Meeting Aims to Set North American Wildlife Conservation Agenda

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Building upon a 70 year record of cooperative efforts in wildlife conservation and management, wildlife professionals from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will meet with counterparts from Mexico and Canada this week to outline a 2011-12 wildlife conservation agenda for shared wildlife resources in North America. This effort will take place under the auspices of the Canada/Mexico/US Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management, established by the three countries in 1995.

At the request of the Government of Mexico, the annual meeting is taking place this year in the state of Oaxaca, in southern Mexico, May 16-20, 2011. Oaxaca is one of Mexico's most important states in terms of biodiversity and provides stopover and/or wintering habitat for a large number of migratory species and is a top priority area for migratory bird conservation. The Service's *Wildlife Without Borders*-Mexico program has funded several grants in this state and will be conducting on-the-ground monitoring efforts during the meeting.

"Mexico and Canada are vital partners to the Service and each other in conserving and managing hundreds of species of internationally shared wildlife. This meeting is vital to our joint efforts to conserve species throughout their ranges in North America," said Acting Fish and Wildlife Service Director Rowan Gould.

The expansive growth of the Trilateral program has resulted in a wide array of attendance from technical experts at U.S. federal and state agencies, as well as top-level Mexican officers and managers from six different Mexican natural resource agencies and their Canadian counterparts.

With the extirpation of several species such as the jaguar and the Sonoran pronghorn antelope from historic ranges in the U.S., remaining Mexican populations represent the last hope of reintroducing these species to former ranges in the U.S.

"Protecting these species and their habitat can only be accomplished with continued cooperation from the Mexican Government. Similarly, it is critical for the Service to work closely with the Government of Canada to address common issues of regional significance," said Teiko Saito, the Service's Assistant Director for International Affairs.

Several of the major accomplishments conducted under the auspices of the international group during the last year include:

- The training of more than 100 Mexican wildlife enforcement officers.
- The reintroduction of several species to historic ranges including the black-footed ferret, Sonoran pronghorn antelope, California condor, as well as successful implementation of recovery efforts dealing with species such as the bald eagle and wolf.
- The establishment of sister protected area networks among the three nations.

Working tables presided by co-chairs from the three countries will address the topics of law enforcement, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), migratory birds, ecosystem conservation, and species of common conservation concern. The meeting participants will identify high-priority projects considered mutually beneficial to the three countries; discuss more effective ways to collaborate and deliver conservation priorities; and identify future priority activities of mutual concern.

Mexico covers one percent of the earth's surface, yet contains 12 percent of species currently known to science. Mexico and the U.S. share 450 species listed under CITES and 119 species listed under the Endangered Species Act, all of which depend on Mexico for survival. The Service's *Wildlife Without Borders*-Mexico program builds Mexico's capacity to conserve and manage species, habitats, and ecological processes of global importance. For more information, visit <http://www.fws.gov/international/DIC/regionalprograms/mexico/mexico.html>

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