

# Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds

2012 Annual Report





# Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds Annual Report

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# I. Executive Summary

This is a report of actions taken by federal agencies on the Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds to satisfy Executive Order 13186: *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*. The Council recognizes the important role that the federal government plays in achieving successful bird conservation in our nation. Millions of federally owned acres, combined with millions of actions carried out or permitted by federal agencies annually, translates to a substantial interface between federal agencies and migratory bird resources. Consequently, a federal agency's decision to reduce impacts and seek conservation opportunities has a potentially significant impact on bird conservation trends. The Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds strives to identify opportunities where the federal family can adopt practices that strengthen a bird conservation culture.

Realizing that bird conservation benefits can be magnified when resources are combined, the Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds focused efforts on building partnerships and increasing education and outreach activities in 2012.

Through partnership efforts, Council agencies were able to work with a diverse group of federal, state, and local governments, as well as private partners and non-governmental organizations, to achieve bird conservation. Federal agencies continue to lead the way in educating the public about the importance of bird conservation through a variety of internal training and public outreach materials. This report celebrates agencies that have not only embraced a bird conservation ethic, but have also leveraged their success by partnering with others.

The Council awards agencies that take extraordinary strides above and beyond their mission to meet the intent and spirit of the Executive Order with an annually bestowed Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award. In 2012, this award was presented to the Bureau of Land Management for their Restore New Mexico project. Restore New Mexico partners are restoring New Mexican grasslands, woodlands, and riparian areas to a healthy and productive state. This project, which was selected from eight competitive nominations, demonstrates how effective partnerships can achieve

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*Starting in 2013, the Council will adopt a multi-year theme approach to more strategically and productively support bird conservation opportunities.*

tangible results to benefit bird habitats across a large landscape.

Starting in 2013, the Council will adopt a multi-year theme approach to more strategically and productively support bird conservation opportunities.

The 2013-2015 theme targeted by the Council is “Facilities Management,” with the goal of making federal facilities more

bird-friendly by identifying and implementing conservation measures that reduce avian impacts.

To learn more about the Council and Council activities, please visit: <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/CCMB.htm>.



Baltimore Oriole. *Photo Credit: Eric Kershner*

# II. Background

Executive Order 13186: *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds* (Order) identifies migratory bird conservation responsibilities of federal agencies pursuant to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other pertinent statutes. Per the Order, “each Federal agency taking actions that have, or are likely to have, a measurable negative effect on migratory bird populations is directed to develop and implement a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) that shall promote the conservation of migratory bird populations.” It further states that “each MOU shall establish protocols for implementation of the MOU and for reporting accomplishments.”

The Order also establishes the interagency Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds (Council) to oversee the implementation of the Order, and identifies four duties for the Council:

- Share the latest resource information to assist in the conservation and management of migratory birds;

| Department/Agency   | Council Member        |
|---|-----------------------|
| <b>Department of Agriculture</b>                          |                       |
| Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service                | William H. Clay       |
| Forest Service  | Anne Zimmerman        |
| Natural Resources Conservation Service                    | Terrell Erickson      |
| Rural Utility Services                                    | John Paladino         |
| <b>Department of Commerce</b>                             |                       |
| National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/Fisheries | Samuel D. Rauch III   |
| <b>Department of Defense</b>                              |                       |
| Army Corps of Engineers                                   | John Conger           |
|   | Timothy Toplisek      |
| <b>Department of Energy</b>                               |                       |
|   | Andres Lawrence       |
| <b>Department of Homeland Security</b>                    |                       |
|   | Dr. Teresa R. Pohlman |
| <b>Department of Interior</b>                             |                       |
| Bureau of Land Management                                 | Mike Pool             |
| Bureau of Ocean Energy Management                         | Alan Thornhill        |
| Fish and Wildlife Service                                 | Dan Ashe              |
| Geological Service  | Anne Kinsinger        |
| National Park Service                                     | Jonathan Jarvis       |
| Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement    | Joseph Pizarchik      |
| <b>Department of State</b>                                |                       |
|   | Dan Reifsnnyder       |
| <b>Department of Transportation</b>                       |                       |
| Federal Aviation Administration                           | Lynne Pickard         |
| Federal Highway Administration                            | Gerry Solomon         |
| Environmental Protection Agency                           | William Jordan        |
| Federal Communications Commission                         | Julius Genachowski    |
| Federal Energy Regulatory Commission                      | Jeff C. Wright        |

- Develop an annual report of accomplishments and recommendations related to this Order;
- Foster partnerships to further the goals of this Order; and
- Select an annual recipient of the Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award for contributions to the protection of migratory birds.

The Council, which consists of 21 federal agencies (Table 1), meets annually and is chaired by the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. A Staff Committee exists to identify conservation opportunities that meet Council goals, and task-oriented subcommittees research issues and develop products required by the agencies to meet Council objectives.

**Table 1.**  
Federal Departments and Agencies Participating on the Council.



# III. Goal and Purpose

*This report provides a succinct view of the overall implementation of the Order by all agencies collectively over time.*

- This report fulfills the requirements set forth in the Order for reporting accomplishments and recommendations related to the Order and agency MOUs. In addition, the Council sought a mechanism to measure progress from year to year in specific areas of responsibility identified within the Order. The goal of the Council Report is to provide a summary of the progress made by Council agencies in implementing the responsibilities outlined in Section 3 of the Order. This report provides a summary of the overall implementation of the Order by all agencies collectively over time. Specific purposes of the Report are to:
  - Report activities associated with implementation of the Order and associated MOUs for the current year;
  - Report agency accomplishments related to migratory bird conservation;
  - Report agency accomplishments related to using partnerships and outreach to improve migratory bird conservation; and,
  - Identify opportunities within agencies and areas for improvement related to migratory bird conservation.



# IV. Subcommittees

Subcommittees are appointed by the Council to complete work required by the Council charter, as well as to meet conservation needs expressed by federal agencies. Subcommittees are staffed almost exclusively by Committee staff, although members can recruit additional agency personnel to provide specific agency expertise.

## Avian Resources

The Avian Resources Subcommittee addresses the Council's data management and decision-support needs. Many agencies on the Council require access to reliable bird population and habitat data to inform land management decisions, best practices for federal actions, and NEPA analyses. In addition, several agencies on the Council have monitoring programs in place, and can share these data to strengthen the Council's avian knowledge base. In 2012, the Avian Resources Subcommittee identified online and network options that can help agencies protect current investments through proper data management, storage, and archiving. Consequently, the committee is developing a migratory bird component within an existing FWS decision-support tool that remotely delivers species- and location-specific conservation

measures ([ecos.fws.gov/ipac](http://ecos.fws.gov/ipac)), which is expected to be in use by the end of 2014. The committee is also working with partners to investigate the feasibility of developing an online interagency data network that will enable agencies to access avian data and tools to inform effects analyses and land management decisions.

## Conservation Measures

The Conservation Measures Subcommittee facilitates bird conservation excellence by seeking and distributing sustainable solutions for bird conservation to Council agencies. While several Council agencies have the ability to directly benefit bird populations and habitats through land management practices, the primary benefit most federal agencies can provide is through the reduction of avian impacts associated with federal decisions. Conservation measures

Figure 1. This seasonal distribution tool is found online, and informs agencies of when the fewest birds are present in their action area. The Avian Resources subcommittee provides access to this and other tools to assist agencies in their efforts to conserve migratory birds.



*“The Avian Resources Subcommittee addresses the Council’s data management and decision-support needs.”*



Rufous Hummingbird. *Photo Credit: Robert Doster*

are largely developed in response to requirements of legislatively mandated laws such as the NEPA, and can be integrated into and implemented through agency plans and guidance. In 2012, the Subcommittee amassed a repository of easily implementable and effective bird conservation practices. This Subcommittee manages that comprehensive list of conservation measures, and mines it for relevant practices that can be used by federal agencies to reduce impacts to migratory birds. The Subcommittee is partnering with the Avian Resources Subcommittee to remotely deliver conservation measures online through a FWS tool; the Subcommittee is also looking across Council agencies to identify the best information and delivery mechanisms to ensure this information is easily available to Council agency personnel.

### **Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award**

The Award Subcommittee was created to manage and administer the Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award. The Subcommittee calls for nominations, compiles the results, and presents the evaluated nominations to the full Council for discussion and vote. The Subcommittee also works to continuously improve the award process; to help the award grow in recognition and prestige; and to leverage the award's utility as an inspiration and motivation to federal agencies to engage in and showcase their important contributions to bird conservation.

# V. Implementation

## MOU Status

The Order provides broad guidelines on conservation responsibilities and requires the development of more detailed guidance in MOUs. Federal agencies are not required to have a completed MOU with the FWS to become a member of the Council. Through the end of 2012, nine MOUs were completed in accordance with the Order (Table 2).

MOUs are a critical tool used to guide federal agencies in implementing the Order. Agencies that have developed an MOU have clarified expectations and clear direction for the best strategies to achieve bird conservation within their mission and mandates. MOUs include recommendations how to implement the various components of the Order, and maximize the benefits of cross-agency cooperation. The cooperative goals identified within MOUs often require the exchange of information, tools, and training that will improve agency bird conservation awareness, ability, and action. In 2012, MOUs between the FWS and the National Marine

Fisheries Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service were completed. These MOUs will provide the foundation for cooperative and coordinated efforts to implement strategies to reduce impacts to birds and their habitats.

## Council Survey

In addition to seeking opportunities that increase the ability of federal agencies to meet the intent of the Order, the Council also facilitates progress and implementation of federal agency responsibilities, as defined by the Order. The Order broadly defines federal agency responsibilities as five distinct elements:

1. Policy and Planning
2. Conservation Actions
3. Partnerships

*“The cooperative goals identified within MOUs often require the exchange of information, tools, and training that will improve agency bird conservation awareness, ability and action...”*

Table 2. Signed MOUs

| Department/Agency                               | Date MOU Signed                           |
|---|---|
| <b>Department of Agriculture</b>                |   |
| Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service      | August 2012                               |
| U.S. Forest Service                             | December 2008                             |
| <b>Department of Commerce</b>                   |   |
| National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration | July 2012                                 |
| <b>Department of Defense</b>                    |   |
|   | July 2006<br>(5-year revision underway)   |
| <b>Department of Energy</b>                     |   |
|   | August 2006<br>(5-year revision underway) |
| <b>Department of Interior</b>                   |   |
| Bureau of Land Management                       | April 2010                                |
| Bureau of Ocean Energy Management               | June 2009                                 |
| National Park Service                           | April 2010                                |
| Federal Energy Regulatory Commission            | March 2011                                |

- 4. Bird Conservation Training
- 5. International Conservation

In 2011, the Council developed a self-assessment questionnaire that addresses the five elements listed above. This survey was distributed nationwide to sample how each agency’s staff perceived their ability to implement the Order. Results are used to assist the Council in defining perceived gaps in bird conservation knowledge, skill, and ability across Council agencies. These gaps can be addressed by: 1) creating helpful resources such as tools, job aids, and training, 2) improving communication routes through improved agency inreach, and/or 3) increasing staff access to existing resources.

This survey constitutes a cross-sectional study, which is a type of observational study that collects data from a representative subset of a population at one specific point in time. Base assumptions associated with this effort are that the same individuals are not sampled year to year, and therefore results cannot be used to observe a pattern or trend over time.

Rather, this survey obtains “snapshots” of agency staff perception to advise where the Council should best

direct concerted effort. For example, results of the 2011 survey revealed that agency staff felt they were relatively strongest in the area of Policy and Planning, and weakest in the areas of International Conservation and Bird Conservation Training (Table 3). As a result, in 2012 the FWS

designated an “Information, Tools, and Training” lead to address the needs revealed by survey results, by developing materials that will clarify a path to success and tools to make bird conservation effective and efficient.

In 2012, the Council used the same 20 question survey to sample agency staff perception of their ability to meet federal bird conservation responsibilities. A total of 1,320 individuals from 16 agencies responded to the survey. The 2012 survey staff perception trends remained consistent with 2011 results, with agency staff feeling they are strongest in the area of Policy and Planning, and weakest in the areas of International Conservation and Bird Conservation Training.

Although the scores vary, the perceived implementation level is the same across years. While cross-sectional studies do not reliably yield pattern data, the decrease in scores emphasized the relationship between raising federal staff awareness of responsibilities and coupling that awareness with information about the resources required to meet those responsibilities. As a result, future efforts will pair increases in awareness with the tools staff require to address the responsibilities outlined, whenever feasible.

The survey results revealed that the Council can improve in the area of bird conservation training for field staff, specifically in the area of MBTA compliance and addressing project-related impacts to birds and their habitats. To respond to this deficiency, the FWS began a complete update

**Table 3. Aggregated scores for Council agencies for 2011 and 2012 for the five Order elements.**

| Category                   | 2011 | 2012 |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| Policy and Planning        | 2.99 | 2.67 |
| Conservation Actions       | 2.81 | 2.49 |
| Partnerships               | 2.66 | 2.38 |
| Bird Conservation Training | 2.03 | 1.77 |
| International Conservation | 1.55 | 0.89 |

**Color Key Score Ranges**

- Implemented (3.10-4.00)
- Partially Implemented (1.60-3.09)
- Not Yet Implemented (0.00-1.59)

of the FWS' Migratory Bird Conservation course. This update was designed to ensure that participants: 1) understand their legal responsibilities for bird conservation, 2) receive the information and tools necessary to implement effective bird conservation strategies, 3) obtain a clear understanding of how to implement effective impact management and conservation planning strategies, and 4) receive the information necessary to contribute to landscape scale bird conservation. The updated training that resulted from efforts in 2012 became available on a limited basis to federal agencies in January 2013.

To address project-related impacts to migratory birds, the Council will focus on specific areas (e.g., facilities management) where agencies can take actions to improve bird conservation within their mission. This process includes identifying areas where federal agencies can take effective, cost-efficient actions that are recommended by the Conservation Measures Subcommittee. These focus areas allow agencies to create partnerships with other federal agencies, non-government organizations, and public and private groups to implement conservation measures and provide specific staff training on the identified issue and outreach on how simple actions can benefit birds. Once implemented, agencies report how these conservation measures are helping them meet their responsibilities under the Order. The Council expects these implementation scores to improve as a result of these focused efforts. As additional agencies complete the MOU process, awareness and support of migratory bird conservation should improve as well.

## Presidential Award

The Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award annually recognizes a single project or action conducted by, or in partnership with, a federal agency that meets the intent and spirit of the Order. Actions may involve reducing existing or potential adverse impacts to migratory birds and their habitats, restoring or enhancing migratory bird habitat, incorporating conservation of migratory birds and their habitat into agency plans, guidance, or other activities. The action should demonstrate leadership in inspiring others to further migratory bird conservation. This could include, but is not limited to, developing and implementing best-management practices, a policy action, or research.

In 2012, the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Restore New Mexico project was the recipient of this prestigious Presidential award. In 2005, the BLM launched the Restore New Mexico initiative with the goal of restoring disturbed grasslands, woodlands, and riparian areas on a landscape scale through an ambitious partnership approach. Since then, Restore New Mexico has become a widely-successful restoration and reclamation program involving numerous agencies, organizations, ranchers and industry groups.

A model for rangeland conservation in the western United States, the Restore program has treated more than 1.8 million acres of impaired habitat, starting the transition to healthy, ecological states. The BLM, along with its partners, is rapidly approaching the two-million-acre-treated milestone.

The major objective of Restore New Mexico is to reduce existing invasive and noxious plants, thereby allowing more desirable vegetative species to flourish. In turn, soils in the watershed will stabilize and ultimately forb, grass and favorable shrub production will increase, resulting in improved habitat for a variety of wildlife.



*One of the goals of the Council is to promote collaborative migratory bird conservation efforts among participating agencies.*

American Robin.  
*Photo Credit: Eric Kershener*



## VI. Agency Highlights

# Federal Partnerships

One of the goals of the Council is to promote collaborative migratory bird conservation efforts among participating agencies. Council Agencies often work together to seek solutions and increase understanding of top issues affecting bird conservation today.

### **Making Air Travel Safe for Humans and Birds**

As part of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) public outreach and education effort to increase awareness within the aviation community about wildlife hazards, the FAA co-sponsors the Bird Strike Committee USA (BSC USA). The BSC USA is a volunteer organization which consists of members from FAA, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of Defense

(DOD), aviation industry, airlines, and airports. It facilitates the exchange of information, promotes the collection and analysis of accurate bird strike data.

### **Offshore Environment**

In an effort to gain a better understanding about how birds use the offshore environment, a multi-faceted partnership between the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), FWS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Geological Service (USGS), the College of Staten Island/ City University of New York, and the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences. This partnership is working collaboratively to collect data on marine bird distribution and abundance on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf. Collectively, the partnership is gathering distributional data on marine protected species and oceanographic data to help understand the observed patterns from the Gulf of Maine to Florida. This partnership is also working to test new technologies and develop models relative to time, space, and habitat. These data and results will be critical in assisting with offshore energy



FWS Kodiak. *Photo Credit: Eric Kershner*

development interests to protect the marine environment while meeting the nation's energy demands.

## Removing Threats from the Landscape

The BLM is partnering with the Nevada Division of Wildlife, the Audubon Society, Nevada Conservation Corps, Student Conservation Association, Barrick Mine and Newmont Mine to rectify a threat to birds across the region. This partnership focuses on finding hollow mine markers and removing or capping them. Hollow mine markers are an entrapment hazard for many species of wildlife, including a significant number of birds that go into the marker but then get trapped and die. Since November 2011, the partners have knocked down more than 12,914 markers across more than one million acres in Nevada.



Black-Throated Sparrow.  
*Photo Credit: Dave Krueper*



Florida Scrub-Jay.  
*Photo Credit: Eric Kershner*



*APHIS is a multi-faceted agency with a broad mission area that includes protecting and promoting U.S. agricultural health, regulating certain genetically engineered organisms that may pose a risk to plant health, administering the Animal Welfare Act and carrying out wildlife damage management activities.*

Department of Agriculture

# Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov)

APHIS's policy is to identify, preserve, and protect fish and wildlife populations and habitat on property owned by the Agency and consult with the FWS and state fish and game agencies in developing, implementing, managing, and evaluating plans for fish and wildlife management, as appropriate.

## **2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach**

APHIS partnered with the FWS, the National Park Service, State agencies, and non-governmental organizations to protect piping plovers and least terns from predators in Michigan, Maine, and California. Technical and operational activities to reduce mortality of nesting shorebirds and their offspring from mammalian and avian predators has resulted in increased productivity of these shorebirds in areas of critical habitat.

APHIS partnered with FWS and the Ohio Division of Wildlife to reduce the impacts of double-crested cormorant nesting colonies on other native colonial waterbirds and plant communities on islands within the Ottawa National Wildlife

Refuge. Expanding cormorant populations have damaged vegetation that is used by nesting black-crowned night herons, cattle egrets, and snowy egrets. Management efforts to reduce the size of cormorant nesting colonies are focused on areas critical to other migratory birds.

## **Other Highlights/ Accomplishments**

1) APHIS partnered with the USGS's National Wildlife Health Center to evaluate the ecology of Newcastle Disease Virus (NDV) in double-crested cormorant populations in the Great Lakes Region. This avian disease causes significant mortality in wild birds during episodic outbreaks and is of concern to the poultry industry. Collection and analysis of serological and virological prevalence data from cormorant colonies will allow for the development of a NDV transmission model.

2) A cooperative research effort led by APHIS' National Wildlife Research Center, in partnership with the Minneapolis Airports Commission, Minnesota Audubon, and the University of Minnesota's Raptor Center used satellite telemetry to study the movements of immature bald



eagles that were posing a risk to safe aircraft operations at an airport. This research is part of APHIS' program to develop publicly acceptable methods of managing human-eagle conflicts.

3) The APHIS Asian Longhorned Beetle Eradication Program works collaboratively with FWS to address bird conservation relative to eradication efforts for the beetle. APHIS minimizes tree removals during the nesting season, uses existing trails for equipment to avoid disturbance to pastures/open fields that could be used as breeding sites for ground-nesting birds, ensures constant communication with local wildlife experts, and works with partners to replant trees in areas that have been significantly deforested.



Purple Gallinule.

*Photo Credit: Eric Kershner*

Swainson's Hawk.

*Photo Credit: Eric Kershner*





*The Mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forest and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.*

## Department of Agriculture

# U.S. Forest Service

[www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us)

The Forest Service (USFS) manages approximately 193 million acres of forests and grasslands. These lands provide essential habitat for hundreds of species and millions of birds. In addition to managing habitats, the USFS is helping to develop a science based foundation for conservation actions through its Research and Development Branch.

### **2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach**

Forests and grasslands managed by the USFS are critical to maintaining migratory bird populations. Together they comprise the largest amount of breeding bird habitat under one ownership in the United States. However, conservation is needed nationally and internationally on both privately and publicly managed lands. To address this broader need the USFS has adopted an "all lands, all hands" approach to promote the conservation of migratory bird populations and their habitats. The USFS works at all levels within the agency and with other governmental agencies and private organizations. USFS personnel participate and provide leadership in

collaborative efforts through numerous bird conservation initiatives and partnerships such as the Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds, North American Bird Conservation Initiative, Partners in Flight, Joint Ventures, Wings Across the Americas, Waterbird Conservation for the Americas, and International Migratory Bird Day. USFS employees are also active partners in local and regional conservation efforts and outreach activities across the country and internationally. Collectively, these efforts assist the USFS in protecting, conserving, and restoring migratory bird habitats and populations on millions of acres of the nation's forests and grasslands and "by extension" providing economic benefits and quality environments in rural communities across the Americas.

### **Other Highlights/ Accomplishments**

The USFS takes an integrated and collaborative approach to bird conservation. Throughout the USFS, and in collaboration with our many partners, we develop or employ many new technologies for bird conservation efforts. The USFS is currently assessing species



Cedar Waxwing. *Photo Credit: Eric Kershner*

distribution modeling of priority bird species on USFS lands to determine stewardship responsibility for conservation planning. This effort employs new predictive modeling techniques that are being developed at Cornell University. Cornell modelers will overlay land ownerships and interpolate the percentage of the total species abundance or distribution within each ownership category.

The USFS has also actively pursued various means of internal and external outreach relating to the responsibilities of the agency to conserve birds and ways the agency can implement bird conservation strategies. The USFS in partnership with the Oregon-Washington, Partners in Flight developed and presented workshops throughout OR and WA on current avian conservation issues and the science based “tools” available for biologists to use to address these issues. The tools can be used for assessing conservation needs, setting quantifiable management objectives, evaluating management alternatives, and monitoring management effectiveness.

The USFS is also collaborating with Environment for the Americas and BLM on Celebra las Playeras (Celebrate Shorebirds), a comprehensive approach to engaging Latinos in natural resource careers and conservation action through Bilingual Communications & Conservation Internships. Celebra las Playeras will 1) train interns in monitoring protocols and education and outreach, 2) engage interns in collecting data about shorebird populations and participating in education efforts, 3) introduce interns to birds, their migrations, and conservation issues that threaten them and their habitats, 4) enable interns to experience diverse career opportunities and interact with USFS staff, and 5) provide Latino role models who will increase awareness of conservation issues and natural resource careers in nearby Latino communities.



Department of Agriculture

# Natural Resources Conservation Service

[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)

*Mission:  
NRCS provides  
products and  
services that  
enable people  
to be good  
stewards of their  
soil, water, and  
related natural  
resources.*

NRCS works with private landowners to restore and protect bird populations by providing food and critical habitat and wildlife management improvement opportunities through its Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative (MBHI). NRCS has enrolled over 470,000 acres of private lands for the MBHI through its Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).

Roseate Spoonbill.  
*Photo Credit: Dave Krueper*

## 2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach

Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) is a new partnership between NRCS and the FWS that uses innovative approaches with farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to voluntarily restore and protect the habitats for three bird species currently listed or proposed under the Endangered Species Act, and one bird species that has exhibited population declines throughout its range. To date, NRCS has worked with landowners to enroll





Federally endangered Wood Stork visiting a wetland in the MBHI project area of Tupelo Bend, Florida.  
*Photo Credit: Arlo Kane, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*

over 150,000 acres of critical bird habitat on private lands for targeted species including the Golden-winged Warbler, Greater Sage-grouse, Lesser Prairie-chicken and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. NRCS and the FWS jointly prepared species recovery tools such as informal agreements, safe harbor agreements, and habitat conservation plans to provide regulatory certainty to landowners. WLFW enables farmers and ranchers to continue managing their lands while implementing conservation practices targeted to declining bird species.

### **Other Highlights/ Accomplishments**

NRCS continues to enhance habitat for over 50 million birds annually migrating south towards

the oil impacted marshes and coastlands of the northern Gulf of Mexico. Through its MBHI project in the Tupelo Bend area in the panhandle of Florida, NRCS provides waterfowl inland and coastal food, clean water and an alternative home, free of oil slick waters. The Tupelo Bend area accounts for roughly 14 impoundments where approved practices focus on planting small grains such as Japanese millet and sorghum to provide food, critical habitat and hold bird populations within structured wetlands. The planting of these grains resulted in an increase of wading birds such as the White Ibis, Snowy Egrets, and herons, and attracted new visitors such as the federally endangered Wood Storks.



*Mission: Science, Service, and Stewardship. To understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts; to share that knowledge and information with others, and to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources.*

Department of Commerce

# National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov)

Seabirds are of interest to and are studied by NOAA Fisheries. NOAA Fisheries has a responsibility through statutory authorities and agency policies to monitor, understand, and minimize the negative impacts of agency actions on seabird populations, including seabird bycatch; monitor and understand the effects of seabird populations on ESA-listed fish species; and manage the coastal and marine habitats, including forage fish stocks, that both seabirds and other aquatic species depend on.

## Partnerships and Outreach

NOAA Fisheries cooperates with many partners to protect migratory birds. Some examples include:

**Washington Sea Grant and Oregon State University**—teamed together to initiate a multi-year project of outreach and pro-active, cooperative research with the U.S. west coast sablefish longline fleet on ways to minimize seabird bycatch. The goal of the research program is to develop practical and effective seabird bycatch mitigation strategies specifically for the variety of fishing gear and vessels typical of the west coast sablefish fishery, as

identified by designated port liaisons and participating fishers. (<http://www.wsg.washington.edu/mas/resources/seabird.html>). This program compliments a NOAA Fisheries Northwest Fisheries Regional Office program providing streamer lines to this fleet at no cost with the goal of enhancing the rate of adoption of seabird bycatch avoidance measures. Funding support has been provided by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the NOAA Cooperative Research Program, and by NOAA Fisheries National Seabird Program.

**World Wildlife Fund**—NOAA supported World Wildlife Fund's Smart Gear Competition in 2011 and the Grand Prize winner was a fishing gear designed to reduce seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries (Yamazaki Double-Weight Branchline). This year that NOAA partnership will also support an international workshop in Mauritius to provide training and demonstrations of practical options for longline fishing vessels to reduce their bycatch of albatrosses and petrels, including use of the prize-winning Yamazaki gear.

**Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST)**— the largest beached bird program worldwide, inspires bird conservation by involving over 800 members of the public in scientific data collection and improving seabird information available to all stakeholders, via requested data summaries, and the COASST annual report. COASST provides specialized seabird identification training, including use of the COASST field guide, annually, for approximately 500 NOAA Fisheries observers on commercial fishing vessels. (<http://depts.washington.edu/coasst/>)

**Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge**—partner to conduct a regional necropsy program to analyze seabird bycatch carcasses from fishery operations—a valuable source of population-level information on demographics, distribution patterns, food habits, and pollution loads. (<http://www.oikonos.org/whatsnew.htm>)

**Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)**—partner with ACAP parties to develop and recommend measures for seabird bycatch reduction in international fisheries. (<http://www.acap.aq/>)

## Other Highlights/ Accomplishments

Additional NOAA Fisheries actions include:

- Signing of MOU with FWS in 2012. The MOU focuses on specific areas of collaboration and cooperation with FWS regarding: seabird bycatch reduction, information sharing and coordination, international policy and diplomacy, and habitat conservation. NOAA Fisheries regions and science centers are implementing the MOU.
- Ongoing evaluation by NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office of fisheries interactions with albatross to better understand ways to reduce these interactions in the Hawaii pelagic longline fishery.
- Continuation of core operations of the NOAA Fisheries Alaska Fisheries Science Center seabird program--- seabird identification training for fisheries observers (over 500 deployed annually).
- Development of analytical methods by scientists at NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center that will be applied to observed-incident takes of seabirds to provide estimates of overall seabird bycatch by fishery and species where there is sufficient data. To date, Great Shearwaters (*Puffinus gravis*) make up the predominate seabird species bycaught in the Northwest Atlantic fisheries managed by NOAA.
- Collection of seabird survey data aboard a NOAA research vessel based with the NOAA Fisheries Southwest Fisheries Science Center. This data collection is a continuation of a time series begun in 1988 that spans the entire eastern and central Pacific from central Peru to the U.S.-Canada border and seaward to the Hawaiian Archipelago. This provides a valuable opportunity to evaluate interannual variation, trends, and seabird –ecosystem relationships in this region, and to compare with other areas in the central and eastern Pacific.



*Mission:  
To ensure that  
all military  
departments  
have access  
to the land,  
sea, and air  
resources  
necessary to  
ensure realistic  
testing and  
training.*

# U.S. Department of Defense

[www.dod.org](http://www.dod.org)

Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans for military installations, prepared in cooperation with FWS and state wildlife agencies, ensure natural resources program are coordinated with military operations, training, and other programs such as master planning, cultural resources management, and the migratory birds MOU with FWS.

## **2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach**

The Department of Defense (DoD) is collaborating with the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, Institute for Bird Populations, and other partners in full life cycle conservation. By identifying where birds migrate and overwinter once they leave their DoD breeding grounds, DoD and its partners can isolate the limiting factors in the annual cycle of these birds and work with partners in Latin America and the Caribbean to reduce these threats to bird populations. DoD also works with state and private partners in the desert southwest to determine critical breeding and wintering areas for species such as Golden Eagle, Le Conte's Thrasher, and Burrowing Owl to better inform wind and solar energy siting decisions. These partnerships help DoD maintain maximum flexibility to use its

lands for mission testing and training while also ensuring the long-term health of its natural resources. DoD's continued participation in International Migratory Bird Day educates DoD personnel about migratory birds, and also informs the public about DoD's commitment to conserving migratory birds and their habitats on and near DoD lands.

## **Other Accomplishments**

DoD is funding a multi-year project to study declines in Western Burrowing Owl populations across their range in the United States, Mexico and Canada. The information gathered will allow partners to develop species-specific management plans. This is particularly important because Western Burrowing Owls often select habitats adjacent to runways on military airfields. In addition to Burrowing Owls, other grassland bird species will benefit from this work. This project is a tri-national collaboration of diverse partners, and illustrates how birds and other species can benefit from great research and partnerships. So far more than 30 military installations and an additional 25 agencies and organizations from all three countries are involved.

In order to better coordinate bird monitoring on military



lands and align with other regional monitoring, DoD collaborated with USGS to develop and publish Coordinated Bird Monitoring: Technical Recommendations for Military Lands. The recommendations address survey and monitoring design, data collection, and data entry into national repositories such as the Avian Knowledge Network to allow analysis of monitoring data in a regional context.

The partnership with the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center is focusing on identifying full life-cycle aspects of species such as Wood Thrush and American Redstart. The Wood Thrush study involves military installations on the breeding grounds and the Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education on the non-breeding grounds. Radio transmitters allow researchers to track thrushes locally and recapture birds to download light-level geolocator data. These data help map migration routes and identify stopover sites that may be limiting to Wood Thrush survival.

Military air fields use a variety of methods to reduce the potential for bird-aircraft collisions. Shown here: Falconry at Travis AFB in California. *Photo Credit: Richard Fischer*



Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, CA protects coastal scrub habitat for Greater Roadrunners. *Photo Credit: Eric Kershner*



Marine Corps Base Hawaii-Kaneohe Bay and the Pacific Missile Range Facility support nesting Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. *Photo Credit: Chris Eberly*





*The mission of the Department of Energy (DOE) is to ensure America's security and prosperity by addressing its energy, environmental and nuclear challenges through transformative science and technology solutions.*

# U.S. Department of Energy

[www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)

DOE sites identify and address the effects of operations and activities on migratory birds and their habitat through environmental management systems (EMSs). DOE uses the NEPA process to evaluate potential environmental effects of proposed Federal actions, including potential effects to migratory birds, and to consider reasonable alternatives to those actions.

## **2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach**

DOE addresses adverse environmental effects of energy technologies through interagency collaboration, research, and development activities, including serving on FWS's Wind Turbine Siting Guidelines Federal Advisory Committee. The **Richland Operations Office** conducts ecological monitoring in collaboration with FWS, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Hanford Natural Resource Trustee Council – a consortium of State and Federal agencies and local tribes. The **Oak Ridge National Lab** coordinates with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) by supporting two TWRA wildlife managers on-site in the management of areas for the conservation of

migratory birds. At DOE's **Fernald Preserve** in Ohio, DOE has converted a former uranium-processing industrial facility into a publicly accessible nature preserve. Portions of the Preserve are integrated into regional ecosystems, using native vegetation, and actively managed to promote migratory bird habitat. Over seven miles of trails and four overlooks provide a variety of viewing opportunities for migratory birds.

In 2012, the Purple Martin Outreach Program at **Pantex Plant** banded more than 371 nestling Purple Martins throughout northwest Texas and western Oklahoma. The Outreach Program educates and involves local communities in the banding, tracking, and conservation of Purple Martins each year

## **Other Accomplishments** *Policy and Planning*

The **Lawrence Livermore National Lab** uses an EMS approach to strengthen its migratory bird conservation activities and enhance collaboration between DOE and FWS. At the **Los Alamos National Lab** biologists work with emergency operations

managers to conduct large-scale fuels reduction programs outside of the migratory bird breeding season, protecting migratory birds and their nests while improving wildlife fire safety.

### ***Innovative Conservation Actions***

A nest box program was initiated by **Sandia Site Office** to enhance nesting and roosting opportunities for Barn Owls and reduce impacts to the site’s activities while eliminating disturbance to the nesting birds.

The **Golden, CO, Field Office** initiated the Avian Alert Collision Avoidance Project to address bird collisions with glass at the **National Renewable Energy Lab**. Five glass bus shelters were retrofitted with an external film that nearly eliminates reflections on the outside of windows. At a new parking facility with glass stairwells, fritted glass, a product with frosted lines oriented horizontally, was selected to break up glass reflectivity and transmissivity, thereby making the glass more visible to birds.

### ***Training***

The **Richland Operations Office** provides ecological sensitivity training to diverse groups of DOE and contractor personnel. Hundreds of employees receive direct training while several thousand receive site-wide notifications about the need and importance of migratory bird protection. The **Golden, CO, Field Office** conducts training sessions on an as-needed basis to inform project managers of their responsibility to conduct nesting bird surveys, when they are required, and what actions to take when nesting birds are found within a project area.

### ***International***

The **Pantex Plant** initiated surveys of plots for wintering and migrating raptors, as well as habitat types during the breeding season. This includes radio- and satellite-tracking of Swainson’s Hawks from local sites to their wintering grounds in South America.



Redhead Ducks taking off from the former K65 Silos pond at DOE’s Fernald Preserve in Ohio. The habitat was developed during the Fernald Preserve cleanup in 2006 and further enhanced for wildlife use. *Photo Credit: Fernald Preserve, DOE*



Recently hatched Barn Owls utilizing one of Sandia National Laboratories’ Barn Owl boxes. *Photo Credit: Sandia National Laboratory, DOE*



Bus shelter at DOE’s National Renewable Energy Lab retrofitted with Colidescape to reduce bird strikes. *Photo Credit: National Renewable Energy Lab, DOE*



# Department of Homeland Security

[www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)

*Mission:  
The Quadrennial Homeland Security Review identifies the five homeland security missions as: 1) Prevent terrorism and enhancing security; 2) Secure and manage our borders; 3) Enforce and administer our immigration laws; 4) Safeguard and secure cyberspace; and 5) Ensure resilience to disasters. DHS is comprised of 29 operational and support components, several of which have multi-mission roles and responsibilities.*

DHS does not have established Departmental policy or guidance on compliance with E.O. 13186. Migratory bird resource issues that arise in the planning and implementation of operational activities are addressed primarily through DHS and Component procedures for implementing NEPA. Four of the 29 DHS operational and support components are highlighted in this Annual Report.

## **2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach**

U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) CEU Providence, Warwick, RI, provides funding to FWS for Piping Plover monitoring at Sandy Point, Block Island, RI. USCG Cape May is in the process of developing partnerships via a natural resources management plan. The beach has restricted access during breeding season for endangered species and migration of shorebirds. Nocturnal audio recording of migrant neotropical birds is installed each fall.

Since 2009, the Federal Law Enforcement Center (FLETC) campus at Glynco, GA have partnered with the Coastal Georgia Audubon Society to hold a Winter Bird Count and a Spring/Summer Bird Count. The results of the

Bird Counts are posted on the FLETC Campus Internet Site for the Environmental and Safety Division under Natural Resources. FLETC also provides the Audubon Volunteers with the final count list. FLETC's best partnership is with the Audubon Society. An annual Earth Day Celebration in April is hosted at FLETC. Audubon always sets up a booth, as does Okefenokee and other USFWS representatives. The Georgia Forestry Commission participates in our Earth Day and they are crucial partners in a prescribed burning program at FLETC campus which benefits migratory bird habitat.

## **Other Highlights/ Accomplishments**

USCG is entrusted with the use and management of lands and waters throughout the U.S. Through Commandant Instruction M5090.3 "Natural Resources Management", the USCG is mandated to act responsibly for the stewardship of natural resources, and to ensure that actions and activities are conducted in an environmentally sound manner that are in compliance with applicable Federal, state, and local regulations. USCG shore units are mandated to be responsible for ecosystem management,

protection, and enhancement on USCG-owned or USCG-managed lands.

USCG may encounter animals transported contrary to Lacey act, and intercept/interdict accordingly.

In the course of its normal operations the Coast Guard capitalized on the opportunity to support conservation of migratory birds by tending to animals found hurt and injured, and properly routing enforcement cases suitable for follow up by FWS or local authorities. Specific examples include: 1) AIRSTA Barbers Point affirmative response to FWS request for support transporting Hawaiian Nene birds from Lihue to Hilo Hawaii via C-130. (15MAR12); 2) AIRSTA Kodiak H60 developed a case package regarding a fishing vessel that appeared to be setting longline gear without necessary seabird avoidance gear (07May12); 3) CG Cutter Blue Shark responded to a report of a Bald Eagle in Puget Sound. FWS was notified and arrangements were made to collect the injured animal and transport to shore for care/rehabilitation.

USCG completed NEPA reviews including addressing migratory birds identified as part of affected environment in Great Lakes Dry Cargo Residue and the National Ballast Water Discharge Standard EISs. USCG regularly provides training and information resources for compliance with E.O. 13186.

**Customs and Border Protection (CBP)** has developed policies and procedures on how to comply with E.O. 13186 and protection of migratory birds. Effects on migratory birds are always considered in the NEPA process including measures that avoid or minimize impacts to migratory birds and best management practices for protection of migratory birds. CBP partners with other federal agencies, landowners and/or other stakeholders to conserve and promote migratory birds. CBP developed training material, including a pocket guide for field personnel, and conducted training for employees on the E.O. 13186 compliance and protection of migratory birds.

CBP is working diligently with FWS to establish programmatic guidance for compliance with

the E.O. 13186. This includes exploring the development of an MOU. CBP has established a programmatic approach to documenting pre-construction survey activities; implement standard contracting language, including best management practices designed to minimize impacts to sensitive species including migratory birds. When projects require mitigation of offsetting measures, CBP considers opportunities which promote conservation, research, and recreational activities as appropriate.

**Federal Law Enforcement Training Center** campus located in Glynco, GA provides training to Land Management Agencies and contains areas which are forested and provide migratory bird habitats. When new facilities are built on campus, the NEPA process is used to determine the environmental effects of the project. However, our Environmental Division has input on plantings that around the building(s) and requests to minimize clearing. When new construction is planned, the project always goes through the NEPA process which includes the MBTA, etc. FLETC does not engage in activities that would “take” or kill migratory birds. Firearms Training is conducted in Indoor Firing Ranges and all ammo (lead is rarely used) is captured and recycled. Outdoor exercises are done with nonlethal ammo (example: paintball) which is meticulously cleaned up by cleaning crews after the exercises. This type of exercise is not done in natural environments on campus.

The Environmental and Safety Division is in charge of prescribed burning and deer population control. Both of these benefit migratory bird habitat restoration. Located in an urban environment, the prescribed burning can only be done under exacting conditions, however. There is no stocking of live exotic animals and new plantings are reviewed to prevent importing invasive plants to the campus. The Environmental and Safety Division is notified if there is a take of any animal. This almost always involves deer or (State of Georgia stocked) Canada geese.

**Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC)** installed and maintains Osprey platforms on its facilities in New York.



*The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.*

## Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management

[www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)

The BLM fulfills bird conservation through partnerships and also operates under various Memoranda of Understanding (MOU). These efforts are consistent with the BLM's multiple-use approach to managing the public lands, including for wildlife habitat to support bird populations.

### **2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach**

The BLM's 7,843-acre Atwell Island Project (AIP), which established new upland and wetland habitat in the San Joaquin Valley in California. Upland restoration began in 2003 and wetland construction and restoration began in 2009. The AIP began with 30 acres of existing wetlands and has since restored an additional 269 acres of Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wetland Reserve Program Easement lands, and is now restoring another 150 acres of wetland habitat. This project benefits many bird species, including the Swainson's Hawk, Mountain Plover, Tricolored Blackbird, Burrowing Owl, Greater Sandhill Crane, Fulvous Whistling Duck, and White-faced Ibis. More than 220 bird species have used the AIP area, which is a 10 percent

increase species using the site since the project began. In the second project, targeting hollow mine markers, BLM-Nevada partnered with the Nevada Division of Wildlife, the Audubon Society, Nevada Conservation Corps, Student Conservation Association, Barrick Mine and Newmont Mine. Since November 2011, the partners have knocked down more than 12,914 markers, which can entrap and kill cavity-nesting birds, across more than one million acres in Nevada

### **Other Highlights/ Accomplishments**

In 2012, BLM policies and Best Management Practices (BMPs) remained in line with the agency's continuing efforts to promote healthy bird populations on the public lands.

In December, the BLM published policy to help prevent bird mortality in fluid mineral practices, titled *Fluid Minerals Operations – Reducing Preventable Causes of Direct Wildlife Mortality* (IM 2013-033). The BLM fluid minerals program, the BLM fish and wildlife conservation division, and the FWS collaborated on the policy. The policy covers



such hazards as open pits and tanks, exhaust stacks, and wire enclosure fences.

In Montana, the BLM's Miles City Field Office worked with a FWS biologist to minimize take under the MBTA. These measures, which apply to externally driven projects, include the following BMPs to minimize take: scheduling projects outside the nesting season; rendering project proposal areas unsuitable for nesting before the nesting season; or the survey-buffer-monitor method. Under the latter method, a proposed project area is surveyed and buffers to nesting birds are established. Project proponents have a week to disturb the area if no nests are found.

The practices, developed in 2011-2012, also recommend that some agency projects, such as those associated with fuels, range, and habitat improvements, be done outside of nesting season. While exceptions may be made for projects that improve habitat over the long term, the BMPs recommend measures to minimize disturbance and short-term impacts. The BMPs meet the intent and spirit of MBTA, Executive Order 13186, and the MOU for Conservation of Migratory Birds between the FWS and BLM.

*Sandhill Cranes. Photo Credit:  
Rob Doster*



*Mission:  
Working  
with others  
to conserve,  
protect, and  
enhance fish,  
wildlife, and  
plants and their  
habitats for  
the continuing  
benefit of the  
American  
people.*

Department of Interior

# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

[www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

The FWS is the lead federal agency for migratory bird conservation. The goal of the FWS is to protect, manage, and restore bird populations and habitats for long-term sustainability and socioeconomic benefits. Many FWS programs contribute to habitat conservation, population monitoring and assessments, and reducing impacts by managing stressors through policy, planning, action, and partnerships.

## **2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach**

Though the Migratory Bird Program is charged with leading bird conservation, other FWS programs achieve bird conservation goals through successful partnerships. The National Wildlife Refuge System achieves bird conservation by protecting and managing over 150 million acres of public lands for wildlife and promoting recreation and wildlife observation on these lands. Partnerships with federal parks and forests, state natural resource agencies, and local organizations and interest groups are integral to achieving conservation goals on these

landscapes. The FWS Partners Program encourages citizens to create habitat for birds and other wildlife by providing technical and financial assistance to landowners for habitat conservation or restoration. The FWS's Schoolyard Habitat Program works with schools to benefit wildlife by improving habitat, providing teaching opportunities for students, and instilling a sense of conservation stewardship in students.

Within the Migratory Bird Program, partnership opportunities achieve bird conservation through population management, habitat partnerships, education, and citizen empowerment. Four Conservation Plan Partnerships empower partners with information and tools to achieve effective bird conservation and management. For example, the Shorebird Plan Partnership recently produced a conservation strategy highlighting actions necessary to recover high priority shorebirds along the Atlantic coast from the Arctic to the southern tip of South America. The Waterbird Conservation for the Americas partnership developed a targeted conservation campaign to improve the status of Reddish Egrets (*Egretta rufescens*)



across its international range. In 2012, the Partners in Flight organization updated the status assessment for 800+ bird species, which is critical for monitoring landbird population trends. Finally, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan worked with partners to integrate human dimensions considerations in a 2012 revision to the Plan. All of these accomplishments relied upon and strengthened partnerships with government agencies, non-government organizations, academic institutions, and private stakeholders.

The Migratory Bird Joint Ventures (JVs) are partnerships comprised of diverse entities that together design and deliver landscape-scale habitat projects. In 2012, several JVs partnered with the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service Working Lands for Wildlife program to conserve Greater Sage-Grouse (Intermountain West JV), Lesser Prairie Chicken (Playa Lakes JV), and Golden-Winged Warbler (Appalachian Mountain JV) habitats. As a result, 20.5 million acres of habitat have been conserved for the benefit of these and other bird species.

Citizen empowerment and education is another conservation partnership focus of the Migratory Bird Program. The Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds is a grant program that empowers municipal governments and local partners to conserve birds that occur in U.S. cities by emphasizing education, habitat improvement, and threat reduction. One of our most successful education ventures to date is our partnership with Environment for the Americas and other non-profit organizations to sponsor International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), which is the largest bird conservation-focused educational program in the Western Hemisphere. The 2012 IMBD *Connecting People to Conservation* campaign reached over 500,000 participants at 350 events. The success of these events and partnerships both advance bird conservation and inspire other partnerships to form, as well.



Northern Shrike. *Photo Credit: Katie Koch*



Crested Caracara. *Photo Credit: Rob Doster*



Merlin. *Photo Credit: Eric Kershner*



*The mission of the National Park Service is “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”*

*(16 U.S.C. 1)*

## Department of Interior National Park Service

[www.nature.nps.gov](http://www.nature.nps.gov)

The NPS promotes and regulates the use of units within the National Park System to “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

### **2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach**

A 2006 Interagency General Agreement led to cooperative seabird colony surveys to assess the status, distribution, and abundance of breeding seabirds along the eastern coast of the Kenai Peninsula in Kenai Fjords National Park (KEFJ) and the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge (AMNWR). Since 2007, KEFJ staff has continued these annual surveys, at some level, in KEFJ and AMNWR. Beginning in 2011, NPS began intensively monitoring select colonies as part of a 3 year, cooperative interagency project with AMNWR and University of Alaska Fairbanks to expand on these surveys to identify the spatial and temporal variability

of these colonial seabirds and to refine survey protocols to maximize efficiency and funding. For example, in 2011 and 2012 biologists counted the number of birds present on each colony on multiple days to compensate for the varying daily number of adult birds present on a colony. These repeated counts will help determine the minimum number of times a colony needs to be counted to obtain an accurate estimate of the number of breeding birds. Colonies are also divided into sections so that in the future, if it is not feasible to count entire colonies, these smaller plots could be used to determine trends in colony size.

### **Other Highlights/ Accomplishments**

Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park constructed an exclusionary fence to protect a remote colony of endangered Hawaiian Petrels (*Pterodroma sandwichensis*) from predation by feral cats. The fence encircles the largest active site among the few known Hawaiian Petrel subcolonies remaining on Hawai‘i Island. The fence will protect the highest concentrations of active burrows, plus numerous



Predator fence construction at Hawai'i Volcano National Park. *Photo Credit: National Park Service.*

abandoned burrow sites that could support recolonization. Predation by feral cats is the primary threat to these ground-nesting birds. Live-trapping is inadequate to protect remote subcolonies, as cats return and depredate additional birds. The park had previously tested and implemented an effective cat-proof fence design for protection of the endangered Nēnē (*Branta sandvicensis*); and has evaluated and modified this design for high elevation sites to minimize potential adverse effects on low flying birds. The project was a collaborative effort funded by the NPS, FWS, American Bird Conservancy, and the Hawaiian Natural History Association.

Redwood National and State Parks implemented a monitoring program to determine whether park management actions are effective at decreasing the density of corvids in high use visitor areas. Corvids are attracted to human foods intentionally or inadvertently provided by park visitors,

resulting in artificially high corvid populations. Corvids are a primary nest predator of the Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), a federally threatened and California state endangered, seabird that nests in the park's old growth forests. Higher densities of corvids result in unacceptably high rates of Marbled Murrelet nest predation. The results from the corvid monitoring are used to trigger additional conservation measures and park management actions aimed at decreasing corvid densities in and around park high use visitor areas.



*Mission:  
To carry out the  
requirements  
of the Surface  
Mining  
Control and  
Reclamation Act  
in cooperation  
with the States  
and Tribes.*

## Department of Interior Office of Surface Mining

[www.osmre.gov](http://www.osmre.gov)

The Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement (OSMRE) is responsible for establishing a nationwide program to protect society and the environment from the adverse effects of surface coal mining operations, under which OSMRE is charged with balancing the nation's need for continued domestic coal production with protection of the environment. OSMRE and its partners are also responsible for reclaiming and restoring lands and water degraded by mining operations. OSMRE works with colleges and universities and other State and Federal agencies to further the science of reclaiming mined lands and protecting the environment, including initiatives to promote planting more trees and establishing much-needed wildlife habitat.

### **2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach**

Major Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) partners include notable bird conservation organizations such as the American Bird Conservancy, the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture, the Cerulean Warbler Technical Group,

the Golden-Winged Warbler Working Group, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, The Trust for Wildlife, and many other conservation / environmental groups and international associations. International Conservation ARRI signed an MOU in 2008 with the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) establishing a goal to plant 38 million trees on reclaimed coal mines in three years. This was part of a larger UNEP goal to plant 300 million trees in North America and seven billion trees worldwide. The commitment by OSM through ARRI was the largest North American pledge for the UNEP Campaign.

### **Policy and Planning**

To promote proper mine land reforestation on active mine sites, ARRI (created in 2004) advocates using a set of best management practices called the Forestry Reclamation Approach - a five step process on all ARRI planting sites. A variety of native, high-value hardwood seedlings are planted, which often include disease-resistant American chestnut trees.



Royal Tern. *Photo Credit: Dave Krueper.*

## Conservation Actions

The focus of ARRI is restoring forests where deforestation by surface coal mining has occurred, which coincides largely within the Appalachian breeding range of neotropical migratory song birds, notably the Cerulean Warbler. Virtually all of the land being surface mined for coal in Appalachia was woodland or forest at the time it was mined. The resultant forest fragmentation has environmental impacts, reduces carbon sequestration, limits the land's economic value, and reduces habitat for neotropical migratory songbirds that depend on intact interior forests. The positive results of ARRI's actions in reducing existing and potential adverse impacts to migratory birds and their habitats have been nationally and internationally recognized.



*Mission:  
The Federal  
Aviation  
Administration's  
mission is  
to provide  
the safest,  
most efficient  
aerospace  
system in the  
world.*

Department of Transportation

# Federal Aviation Administration

[www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov)

The FAA addresses conflicts between aviation safety and wildlife through its regulations and guidance. FAA's wildlife hazard management program has been in place for more than 50 years. This program focuses on working with airport sponsors to reduce hazardous interactions between aircraft and birds on or near airports through habitat modification, harassment technology, and research.

## **2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach**

As part of the FAA's public outreach and education effort to increase awareness within the aviation community about wildlife hazards, the FAA co-sponsors the Bird Strike Committee USA (BSC USA), through an MOU signed May 2012 and participation as a member of the Steering Committee. The BSC USA is a volunteer organization which consists of members from FAA, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), DoD, aviation industry, airlines, and airports. It facilitates the exchange of information, promotes the collection and analysis of accurate bird strike data, promotes the development of new technologies for reducing

aircraft/bird hazards, promotes professionalism in wildlife management programs and is a liaison to similar organizations in other countries.

The FAA entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), FWS, and the USDA to address Aircraft-Wildlife Strikes. The MOA establishes procedures necessary for each agency to coordinate their missions to more effectively address existing and future environmental conditions contributing to aircraft-wildlife strikes throughout the U.S.

The FAA is expanding its partnership with the FWS through an MOU regarding implementation of the Executive Order. This MOU meets the requirements under section 3 of Executive Order 13186 (66 FR 3853, January 17, 2001) concerning the responsibilities of Federal agencies to protect migratory birds.

## **Other Highlights/ Accomplishments**

FAA routinely works with other agencies and private entities to research efforts to encourage the coexistence of aviation and migratory birds. The research



Merlin Radar System to track bird movements. *Photo Credit: Eric Kershner.*

partnership between the FAA and USDA at the National Wildlife Research Center in Sandusky, Ohio is currently investigating avian visual perception and the efficacy of various light schemes on aircraft to reduce bird strikes. Preliminary data indicates pulsating lights can be detected more quickly by avian species than non-pulsating lights. Earlier detection provides more avoidance time and thus reduces strikes.

The FAA is currently engaged in an extensive research effort to determine the efficacy of using radar and other sensors to detect and track birds. Radar systems are deployed at Whidbey Island Naval Station, Seattle Tacoma International Airport, Chicago O'Hare International Airport, John F. Kennedy International Airport and Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport as part of the overall study to assess the performance of commercially available bird detection radar systems. The FAA continues to evaluate the performance of bird radar systems through its multi-year agreement with the USDA, the National Wildlife Research Center, the National Center

of Atmospheric Research, and Indiana State University.

FAA's Alaskan Region works with airport sponsors and the FWS to establish regional timing windows during nesting season during which construction contractors are not allowed to disturb nesting habitat. In other FAA Regions, nest surveys are often required prior to ground-disturbing activities.

In 2012, FAA worked with Operation Migration to grant an exemption to allow for the use of an ultralight plane to help guide a population of Whooping Cranes from Wisconsin to Florida in an attempt to re-introduce a flyway east of the Mississippi. FAA continues to work with Operation Migration to come to a long-term solution to allow for the migration. Today there are more than 100 Whooping Cranes that migrate with the ultralight plane. This is the first flock to use this pattern since the 1870's.



*EPA's mission is to protect human health and safeguard the environment.*

# Environmental Protection Agency

[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) licenses pesticide products for sale and distribution under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). Before OPP registers a pesticide product, it must determine that use of the product will not result in unreasonable adverse effects to the environment or human health. EPA is not a land management agency, or a resource conservation agency.

OPP conducts assessments that consider the potential risks to birds from pesticide exposures. EPA is an active participant on the Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds and the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. OPP and the FWS have drafted EPA's first MOU for the conservation of migratory birds.

## **2012 Theme - Partnerships and Outreach**

EPA's Office of Research and Development is working with OPP and the European Union to develop an avian population model for use in pesticide risk assessments for birds. OPP is working to

improve incident data sharing with its non-governmental partners. OPP works with the USDA to implement research, demonstration, and education programs to support nationwide adoption of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM is intended to provide pest control through non-chemical and chemical techniques and helps to ensure selection of pesticides is carefully considered in light of the nature and extent of the pest pressure. OPP assists FWS and other federal agencies in applying IPM techniques and approaches for pest management activities and supports efforts to promote IPM through federal procurement and regulatory policies. OPP promotes a variety of partnerships related to pesticide use, including the Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program a voluntary private and public partnership dedicated to reducing pesticide use and risk, and the IPM in Schools Program. OPP launched a new webpage providing information on reducing pesticide impacts to wildlife, including birds at <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/ecosystem/wildlife.html>.





Curved-billed Thrasher. *Photo Credit: Dave Krueper.*

## Other Accomplishments

OPP's risk assessments have resulted in the cancellation of products containing the following pesticides: azinphos-methyl, carbofuran, disulfoton, fenamiphos, methamidophos, methidathion, aldicarb, endosulfan, lindane, methyl parathion, and molinate. EPA has initiated the cancellation process for rodenticide products whose manufacturers have not adopted new safety measures intended to protect children, pets, and wildlife. Rodenticide products can result in the secondary poisoning of birds. OPP's actions to remove these pesticide products from the market place benefit migratory birds and all wildlife. OPP's Council staff have taken the FWS' Migratory Bird Conservation course and will extend this training to their colleagues per the draft MOU.

Under the Clean Water Act (CWA), EPA's Office of Water implements the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permitting program and develops recommended water quality criteria, including aquatic life criteria. Aquatic life criteria help to protect aquatic habitats important to migratory birds (and other wildlife). Under the CWA, EPA also reviews and approves or disapproves state water quality standards, which are often based on EPA's recommended water quality criteria. EPA also supports the Five Star Restoration Program that brings together students, conservation corps, other youth groups, citizen groups, corporations, landowners and government agencies to provide environmental education and training through projects that restore wetlands and streams.



# VI. Conclusion

The Council believes that successful bird conservation can be achieved in this nation through partnership, sustainable practices, and collaborative endeavors that seek to build flexibility for bird populations across the landscape. As the Council continues to work towards building leadership standards and conservation measures, it will develop online resources that make this information accessible across the federal government and to the public. It is through this consistent application of solutions that systemic threats to bird conservation can best be managed.

Council agencies have taken a leadership role in bird conservation by working with a wide variety of domestic and international partners to adopt new and creative practices that benefit birds. The diversity of these partnership approaches includes testing new technologies, restoring habitat, embracing practices that reduce impacts across the landscape, funding or executing bird monitoring, raising awareness in agency staff and the

general public of the economic and recreational value of birds, and promoting bird conservation. These accomplishments help cultivate our nation's conservation ethic and represent a significant achievement for conserving migratory birds and their habitats.

The Council is committed to working collaboratively across the federal government and with partners to continue strengthening our bird conservation culture in the years ahead. From 2013 – 2015, the Council will embrace a “Facilities Management” theme, and focus efforts on identifying opportunities to implement sustainable practices for federal facilities management. Continued commitment to partnerships, innovation, and sustainable solutions will play a key role in making the Council an effective voice for advancing bird conservation in federal agencies.

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**COUNCIL FOR THE CONSERVATION  
OF MIGRATORY BIRDS**



[www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/CCMB.htm](http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/CCMB.htm)

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