



**The Canada/Mexico/U.S.
Trilateral Committee
for Wildlife and Ecosystem
Conservation and Management**

Monarch butterfly (Danaus plexippus)
USFWS

*Facilitating International
Cooperation to Conserve the Living
Heritage of North America.*



Introduction

Canada, Mexico and the United States share a wide array of ecosystems, habitats, and species. They are also linked by strong economic, social and cultural ties. Each of the three countries addresses wildlife and ecosystem conservation issues through its own domestic programs. However, as a result of the North American region's increasing development, and emerging global problems such as invasive species, wildlife diseases, toxic substances, and climate change, there is also an increasing need for a continental approach to conservation. To more effectively address priorities of continental significance and boost the concerted efforts of the three countries of North America, the Canada/Mexico/U.S. Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management (Trilateral Committee) was established in 1995. The Trilateral Committee is headed by the directors of the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico (SEMARNAT).

The goals of the Trilateral Committee are to foster an integrated continental perspective for cooperative conservation and sustainable use of biological resources, contribute to the maintenance of the ecological integrity of North American ecoregions, and promote biodiversity conservation capacity building and cooperative cross-sectoral activities in the three countries that will contribute to the reduction and mitigation of threats to North American shared species and ecosystems. This is done through coordination, cooperation, and development of partnerships among wildlife agencies of the three countries and other interested parties. Thirty organizations from the three countries currently participate in various activities of the Trilateral Committee, including federal and state government agencies, research and academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and private industry.

As a leading biodiversity conservation entity in North America, the Trilateral Committee provides an effective and efficient mechanism to address conservation and management of natural resources on a continental scale. Equally important are the many intangible accomplishments such as providing a unique forum to better understand the differing factors that influence national policies in each country. Working together, the partner nations comprising the Trilateral Committee can better face the challenges of moving towards a sustainable future for North America.



Sea turtle tagging
USFWS

“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.”

Chief Seattle,
Suquamish and Duwamish Native American Tribes
Washington State, USA



Grizzly bear (Ursus arctos)
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Working Tables

At annual meetings more than one hundred representatives from over 30 organizations from the three countries address a broad array of biodiversity priority issues in six currently active working tables: Executive, Law Enforcement, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Migratory Birds, Ecosystem Conservation, and Species of Common Conservation Concern. The Executive Working Table provides overall guidance and oversight. Over the course of the Committee's history, other working tables have existed on an as-needed basis, including the following: Biodiversity Information; Wildlife Without Borders; Wetlands; Indigenous People & Natural Resource Management; Monarch Butterflies; and Sea Turtles. The Trilateral Committee has been subject to an evolutionary process that has produced the current tables' format which incorporates many former topics as well as new ones.

Ecosystem Conservation

The complexity of conserving North American ecosystems and their biodiversity requires trans-boundary collaboration. This table and its predecessors have worked together to advance an ecosystem-based approach to conservation, focusing in particular on opportunities for trans-boundary cooperation in the planning and management of terrestrial and marine protected areas and on wetland and grassland conservation.

The CWS, USFWS, and the National Commission for Protected Areas (CONANP) are the lead agencies for this table. A variety of other partners have made important contributions to the table's work, including Parks Canada, the U.S. National Park Service, the U.S. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration/National Marine Fisheries Service, and the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (NACEC).

Shared Species of Common Conservation Concern

Shared species of concern under the Trilateral Committee include, but are not limited to cross-border species (species that move across borders or populations that are shared among the countries). This table facilitates dialogue between North American resource managers, allowing them to learn from each other's experience. This is enriched by the participation of state natural resource agencies and non-governmental organizations. This table encourages, supports, facilitates and endorses activities for the conservation of native species and habitats through collaborative, community-based projects for several species, often providing income for local residents while protecting species at risk.



*“At their roots, all things hold hands.
When a tree falls down in the forest,
a star falls down from the sky.”*

Chan K'in
Elder of the Lacandon People
Chiapas, Mexico



Kinkajou (Potos flavus)
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Working Tables

continued

Migratory Birds

This table provides a forum for the three governments to focus their efforts on: implementation of the migratory bird treaties (between Canada and the U.S. and between the U.S. and Mexico); promoting linkages among bird conservation partners; facilitating and enhancing coordination, cooperation, and the development of partnerships among the wildlife agencies of the three countries, and with other associated and interested entities, regarding programs and projects for the conservation of migratory birds; promoting exchanges of information, technology, and best practices; and promoting relevant training to further the conservation of migratory birds.

This table is led by three co-chairs representing: for Canada, CWS; for the U.S., USFWS; and for Mexico, the National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO).

CITES

In serving also as a regional CITES North America forum, this table coordinates preparation for the meetings of CITES Parties, as well as for technical committees and working groups. This builds stronger positions and participation as the North American region in CITES meetings leading to improved outcomes for common issues of regional importance. Enhancement of communication and information sharing among the CITES Authorities of the three countries facilitates implementation, follow up of commitments, development of initiatives and consolidation of the leadership of the North American Region in the Convention. This table also considers wildlife trade issues related to shared species, species of concern of individual members, and other significant species potentially impacted by international trade.

Since 1997, this table has served to support CITES North American Regional preparations for various CITES meetings including: the Conference of the Parties (CoP), Standing Committee (SC) and Plants and Animals Committees (PC/AC).

Law Enforcement

The Trilateral Committee's Law Enforcement Working Table, also known as NAWEG, coordinates different aspects of wildlife law enforcement, acting as a mechanism for technical and information exchange with other organizations, in particular with the NACEC.



Working Table Mission Statement:

“To foster collaboration regarding designated conservation areas to ensure protection, management, and restoration of North American ecosystems and their biodiversity.”

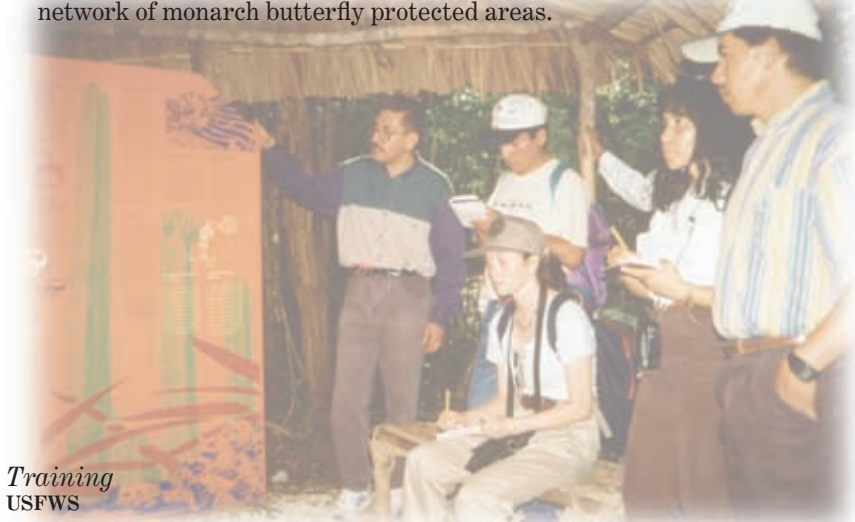


Pronghorn antelope (Antilocapra americana)
Claire Dobert/USFWS

Ecosystem Conservation

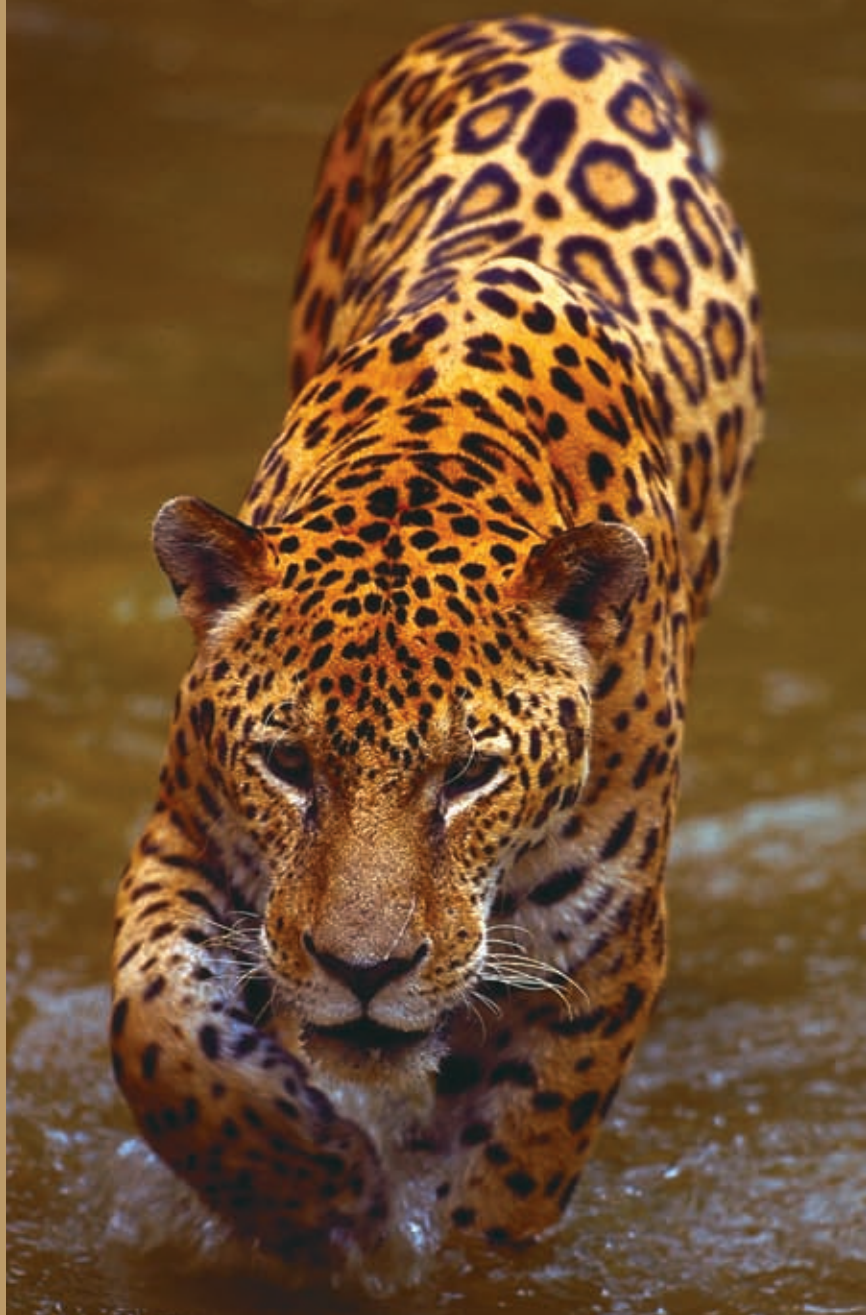
Working Table Highlights:

- Facilitated development and delivery of a wetland conservation training course in 1996 for over 200 federal, state, and municipal officials, NGO's and university students in Mexico, coordinated by the Arizona Fish and Game Department. A Management Manual for Wetlands in Mexico was produced, now in its 3rd edition.
- Hosted a monarch butterfly conference in 1997 to address conservation and development opportunities for communities inside Mexico's Monarch Biosphere Reserve. Protection of the monarch butterfly and its habitat is a priority activity for this table: The monarch's amazing life history has served as a unifying symbol for collaborative action by the North America's countries.
- Supported efforts to establish a wetlands classification system for Mexico to aid in the delineation of important habitat for migratory and resident aquatic birds. A first inventory of wetlands was produced in 2003, based on work conducted by Ducks Unlimited initiated in 1994, and with financial support of Wetland International and other organizations.
- Provided a forum for the three North American signatories to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance to develop and promote a continental approach to the implementation of Convention agreements. This table advanced the 2004 designation of the Laguna Madre ecosystem as a Ramsar site and facilitates work with other important wetlands in the area, in particular Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, in the U.S.
- Coordinated a plenary session in 2004 on the preservation of North America's grasslands, which sustain 13 species identified of common interest to the three countries, including: ferruginous hawk, burrowing owl, and black-tailed prairie dog. A series of key collaborative conservation actions in the areas of land use management, socio-economic incentives, education and research have been identified.
- Implemented the first tri-national protected areas workshop in 2005, which was attended by 24 protected areas managers and practitioners from CWS, USFWS and CONANP. The workshop provided opportunity for these agencies to discuss shared management challenges and strategies, and identify opportunities for collaboration and training needs.
- Developed in 2005, a framework for Trilateral Committee recognition of "Sister Protected Areas" networks to link land management expertise and habitat conservation efforts between protected areas in the three countries that share common ecosystem features, wildlife populations, or other similar resources or management interests, including a tri-national network of monarch butterfly protected areas.



Working Table Mission Statement:

“To promote cooperative, comprehensive strategies and implementation of trilateral actions for the conservation of native wild plants and animals of concern and control of invasive species across North America.”



Jaguar (Panthera onca)

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Shared Species

of Common Conservation Concern

Working Table Highlights:

- Supported activities for the reintroduction, re-establishment, restoration, and/or recovery of species of common conservation concern in North America, such as the California condor, the black-footed ferret, the black-tailed prairie dog; the Mexican wolf, several species of native fish, the Tarahumara and Chiricahua leopard frogs, and the Sonoran pronghorn.
- Provided important advice to law enforcement divisions on high priority conservation issues such as sea turtles' nesting beach conservation, as well as cross-border transport of culturally significant items from golden and bald eagles.
- Developed and implemented a wide array of educational and public outreach activities in support of conservation efforts related to species such as the thick-billed parrot, several species of bats, and the monarch butterfly, as well as other species.
- Conducted field activities in partnership with other entities, to promote the conservation of key species and their habitats, including the Kemp's ridley sea turtle, the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl, the leopard frog, jaguar, and cacti.
- Supported on-the-ground activities towards the conservation of species such as the burrowing owl, as well as towards the conservation and management of shared habitats such as grasslands. This has been done through land protection, restoration and management, and in collaboration with partners throughout North America, including NACEC.
- Addressed common emerging threats to North America's biological diversity, including wildlife diseases, such as West Nile virus and avian influenza, as well as invasive species, such as cactus moth, guineagrass, buffelgrass, and Brazilian pepper.
- Other activities of this table include those in support of the conservation and management of other important species, including the following: white-winged dove; piping plover; humpback whale; masked bobwhite quail; pink-footed sheerwater; burrowing owl; leatherback, loggerhead and hawksbill sea turtles; gray whale; ocelot; golden and bald eagles; light-footed clapper rail, and others.



Pronghorn reintroduction
USFWS

Working Table Mission Statement:

“To foster collaboration for the conservation of North American migratory birds to ensure the health and sustainability of shared bird populations while contributing to the conservation of biodiversity.”



Kestrel falcon (Falco sparverius)

Migratory Birds

Working Table Highlights:

- Played a central role in providing direction for the development of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), an undertaking to conserve native birds within North America. This culminated in the signature in 2005 by ministers in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico of the Declaration of Intent for the Conservation of North American Birds and their Habitats. This enhances trinational cooperation to deliver comprehensive bird conservation in North America.
- Facilitated the formation of the Sonoran Joint Venture, a U.S.-Mexico partnership to promote NABCI in the Sonoran region. This table also facilitated the establishment of regional conservation mechanisms in México by supporting the establishment of a Regional Alliance in Marismas Nacionales.
- Facilitated continental management of migratory bird populations through initiatives such as: convening experts to provide assistance and advice on the methodology for conducting migratory bird surveys in Mexico; coordinating the establish of the North American Bird Banding Program; establishing a 1-800 number in Mexico to facilitate the reporting of bird band information; coordinating permit issuance across borders for migratory bird researchers; and launching game-bird harvest surveys.
- Improved coordination and communication among the three countries' programs. Key examples include the development of the Texas–North East Mexico white-winged dove strategy and the completion of bird species assessment in Mexico.
- Supported amendments to the migratory bird treaties to address subsistence harvest, hunting of murrelets in Newfoundland, and to modernize and increase consistency in treaty obligations.
- Provided a focus among researchers on species of common concern such as burrowing owls, white-fronted geese, snow geese, black brant, loggerhead shrikes, and painted buntings. In particular, this table facilitated agency coordination on the management of overabundant snow geese and the reintroduction of California condors in México.
- Shared information, set up workshops and working groups to bring expertise to address threats to bird populations, which has led to: development of improved practices for reducing the electrocution of birds in Mexico on utility lines, a workshop on techniques to remove invasive species from islands, and promotion of trilateral focus on impacts of pesticides on birds.



Working Table Mission Statement:

“Through North American collaboration and cooperation on CITES, this table works to exchange information, strengthen regional implementation and scientifically based decision making, in order to protect endangered species of wild fauna and flora against over-exploitation through international trade.”



Sea otter (Enhydra lutris)
David Menke/USFWS

CITES

Working Table Highlights:

- Established stronger positions and participation of the North American region in CITES meetings leading to improved outcomes on issues of common importance to the region (e.g., active participation and close coordination on the Criteria for Amendments to CITES Appendices review, exchange of information and ideas on how to interpret, implement, and establish scientifically based export quotas for different taxonomic groups, ensure regional conservation of shared hawksbill turtle populations, etc.).
- Provided consultation on CITES species amendment proposals and proposed resolutions and decisions from members of the region and sometimes joint preparation and submission of documents to the CoP or the Committees (e.g., Painted bunting proposal to CoP, documents on Review of the Zero Export Quota and Enforcement for Illegal Trade in Tiger Parts and Derivatives for CITES Standing Committee).
- Enhanced communication and information sharing among the CITES Authorities of the three countries. As a consequence, exchange of information and ideas between Management and Scientific Authorities of the three countries regarding the implementation of CITES has been facilitated. This has taken into consideration tools, methodologies, and resources needed to face common or shared problems and to improve CITES implementation at both national and regional levels.
- Provided consideration of trade issues on shared species (e.g., bobcat, bald eagle, painted bunting, pronghorn antelope), species of concern to individual members (e.g., Morelet's crocodile, cacti, falcons, parrots, hawksbill turtle), and other significant species potentially impacted by trade (e.g., bigleaf mahogany, big cats, elephants, cetaceans).
- Facilitated the organization of international technical workshops with the North American region serving as the coordinating entity and host (e.g. seahorses, scientific authorities). The workshops were developed primarily to assist participants in identifying national management and monitoring strategies that could be implemented in their countries to promote sustainable harvest and to properly implement CITES.
- Achieved mutual capacity building in all aspects of CITES implementation.
- Held a workshop, in conjunction with VII Trilateral meeting, April 2002, to exchange experiences among scientific authorities, looking for opportunities for capacity building and information exchange.



Working Table Mission Statement:

“Through established operational and administrative structures, the North America Wildlife Enforcement Group (NAWEG) contributes to strengthening regional capacity to implement national laws and international agreements regarding wildlife, particularly CITES.”



Gila monster (Heloderma suspectum)

Law Enforcement

Working Table Highlights:

- Orchestrated during the period 1995 to 2005 capacity building training for 600 officers from the different Customs and Wildlife Enforcement agencies. This was done through seminars and formal courses within the three countries depending upon the topic.
- Organized six seminars on species identification (i.e., birds, hunting trophies, corals, reptiles, plants, and skins) to ensure enforcement officers understanding of the entire aspect of the trade. Collaborators included industries and NGOs related to the use and trade of species, as well as wildlife parts and products.
- Held two seminars addressing forensic techniques with the participation of experts from different federal, state, and provincial institutions, as well as universities and academic institutions. The seminars were directed at enforcement officers and forensic experts.
- Planned and implemented a seminar for law enforcement managers on public participation, with the participation of NGOs from the three countries, to promote public involvement in law enforcement activities.
- Planned and implemented a training seminar on intelligence issues for law enforcement personnel from Canada, Mexico, and the U.S., to establish a network of individuals involved in research and intelligence related to flora and fauna.
- Developed, published and distributed an array of educational and outreach materials to targeted audiences which reinforced inspection and monitoring activities in the three countries, including:
 - o An Internet site containing technical information for rapid search and quick references for inspectors and the public in general (www.cec.org/naweg);
 - o CITES identification guides on birds, turtles, hunting trophies, and tropical woods;
 - o A technical document to identify and analyze wildlife specimen samples, as part of case development;
 - o A technical document on the use of DNA analysis, its limits and potentials in the investigation of illegal wildlife trade; and
 - o A directory of forensic labs and capabilities.



Fence installation
USFWS

Great egret
(*Casmerodius albus*)
© Corel



Malachite butterfly
(*Siproeta stelenes*)
© Corel



Black-tailed rattlesnake
(*Crotalus molossus*)
© Corel



Collard peccary
(*Tayassu tajacu*)
© Corel



North American porcupine
(*Erethizon dorsatum*)
© Corel



Wolf
(*Canis lupus*)
© Corel



Manatee
(*Trichechus manatus*)
Jim P. Reid/USFWS

Conclusion

North America hosts a wealth of economically important, ecologically essential, and highly cherished terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Indeed, these natural resources are our life support in this planet. Nevertheless, a great deal of North American biodiversity is in peril. Natural communities, the ecological services they provide, and the sustainable use of living natural resources are at risk and the three North American countries are seeking new means to protect the richness of life in this continent.

In order to do this, the Trilateral Committee addresses the conservation priorities of each country, while developing, launching, coordinating and reviewing specific cooperative actions, and facilitating communication on issues that span international boundaries. At annual meetings, during plenary sessions, the Trilateral Committee addresses emerging issues relevant at the continental level, including invasive species, wildlife diseases, North American grasslands conservation, conservation and use of wildlife in private lands, and marine issues.

Biodiversity loss generally has a cascading or rippling effect on species, ecosystems, and economies, first felt locally, then nationally and regionally. Since biodiversity loss has strong local impacts, the solutions must also involve participation of local communities and resource users. The three countries are moving towards greater involvement of local stakeholders and are making significant investments to advance sustainable development in the region. Despite these remarkable precedents of joint action, much more remains to be done trinationally to identify and act upon biodiversity matters of continental significance, and effectively catalyze the concerted efforts of the countries of the North American bioregion.

For more information on the Trilateral Committee, please see our website at: <http://www.trilat.org>



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