

**Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Bird Conservation Committee Part I Report**

Meeting of March 24, 2010, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Gordon Myers, Chair

Richard Hatcher, Vice-Chair

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The meeting convened from 1:00pm – 3:00pm, chaired by Gordon Myers. 56 participants were in attendance, including 16 Committee members

**Scheduled Discussion Items**

*Bird Conservation Committee Information* - Gordon Myers introduced the new vice-chair of the Committee, Richard Hatcher, Oklahoma Division of Wildlife Conservation. Chairman Myers also reminded the Committee that the 2011 NCN was submitted in February. It highlighted the importance of data management, quality data sharing and improving the state agencies ability to use and analyze data in order to address management and conservation issues. If the NCN is accepted a request for a Letter of Intent will be solicited in April.

*NABCI Update - 2010 State of the Birds Report* - David Pashley presented on the NABCI 2010 State of the Birds report on Climate Change. The State of the Birds 2010 Report on Climate Change is our nation's first comprehensive assessment of the vulnerability of nearly 800 bird species to climate change. Secretary Salazar released the report on March 11, 2010 in Austin, Texas with other partners such as John Hoskins, U.S. NABCI Committee Chair. Birds in every terrestrial and aquatic habitat will be affected by climate change, although individual species in each habitat will likely respond differently. The analysis indicates which birds are most vulnerable and in need of conservation attention. Oceanic birds are among the most vulnerable species because they don't raise many young each year; they face challenges from a rapidly changing marine ecosystem; and they nest on islands that may be flooded as sea levels rise. All 67 oceanic bird species, including petrels and albatrosses, are among the most vulnerable birds in the United States to climate change. Hawaiian birds, including endangered species such as Puaiohi and 'Akiapōlā'au already face multiple threats and are increasingly challenged by mosquito-borne diseases and invasive species as climate change alters their native habitats. Birds in coastal, arctic/alpine, and grassland habitats, as well as those on Caribbean and other Pacific Islands show intermediate levels of vulnerability; most birds in aridlands, wetlands, and forests show relatively low vulnerability to climate change. The report offers solutions that illustrate how, by working together, organizations and individuals can have a demonstrable positive impact on birds in the U.S. Specifically, the report indicates that the way lands are managed can mitigate climate change and help birds adapt to changing conditions. The Migratory Bird Joint

Ventures, Land Conservation Cooperatives, and public/private partnerships for the conservation of birds, and the actions outlined in every State's State Wildlife Action Plan will be important tools as we tackle the additional threats climate change will place on the birds of our nation.

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

*Southern Wings* – Mike Senn, Arizona Game and Fish Department, presented an update on the status of the Southern Wings program. The Southern Wings effort was stimulated by the knowledge that numerous states are already participating in Latin American/Caribbean (LAC) bird work, and others wish to be involved. Our efforts are founded in the same principles that have proven successful in

the conservation of waterfowl by the States working across the border in Canada and the principles apply equally for birds produced in the states and wintering to the south into the LAC. Seven states are participating in 2009-2010 – Arizona, Arkansas, Iowa, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. They have contributed over \$75,000. The state agency Technical Committee is finalizing projects for funding and will seek final approval for projects from the State Directors at the upcoming regional association meetings. Agreements have been established with MAFWA, WAFWA and SEAFWA to collect and move state funds for the Program. Although economic times are tough, we need to keep common species common and cannot do that without conserving species on their breeding, migrant, and wintering habitat. Additionally, a small amount of funding goes a long way in LAC.

*Canadian update* - Doug Bliss provided an update on activities of the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS). The CWS Regional Directors were put into place in early 2009 and middle managers were replaced in mid-2009. The CWS expects to be fully staffed in this calendar year. Unfortunately, their budgets will be frozen for the next 3 years with some potential reductions in coming years. CWS started an avian monitoring review in 2007. They are looking at monitoring programs to understand where they are spending money and how they are generating the necessary information. They asked whether they are getting the information they need to make conservation and management decisions. The review will most likely continue for 2 or 3 more years. The early results indicate that there is room for improvement in some surveys and there are a small number of surveys that should be discontinued. They have completed review for 190 surveys. Twenty-seven surveys were identified for more focused review. The review will be conducted by post-doctoral candidates who will review the data and survey design to give an unbiased assessment. They placed surveys into different categories—continue as is, continue pending further analysis, consider major revision, and potentially discontinue (about 14). An internal report will be provided to Environment Canada's (EC) senior management in the next couple of months. They are already starting to make changes to programs that are under the control of EC. Many of the waterfowl monitoring programs were well-designed and of high quality. They want to be sure that they have the appropriate level of monitoring for harvest management decisions also. Other taxa need to have even basic monitoring information. Many programs are conducted in partnership with the U.S. so they will communicate with U.S. partners over the next couple of years to discuss any pertinent findings of programs. Doug Bliss and Richard Elliot are the contacts for this review.

Canada's Migratory Birds Regulations, under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*, strictly prohibit the harming of migratory birds and the disturbance or destruction of their nests and eggs. EC is proposing to amend the Migratory Birds Regulations prohibition on destroying nests to provide for the granting of permits in certain circumstances of incidental take and amend the Migratory Birds Regulations prohibition to kill to cover all cases of incidental take of birds, regardless of intent; and to provide for granting of permits in certain circumstances of incidental take. Avoidance will continue to remain the mainstream compliance option (currently the only option), but where avoidance is not possible, a permit may be requested. It is anticipated that the amended regulations will come into force in the fall of 2013, following both targeted and public consultations and the release of the regulatory strategy. They are developing 25 all-bird conservation plans which are currently targeted for completion by the end of September 2010. Although most Bird Conservation Regions (BCR) in Canada span the border with the United States, our priority is to complete all-bird plans for the Canadian portion. BCR Plans will provide objectives for long-term population conservation (consistent with the purpose of the Migratory Birds Convention), and recommended

actions for species, habitats or other conservation concerns, allowing integrated conservation priorities at several geographic scales.

*State wildlife action plans* – Mark Humpert, AFWA, presented a brief update on State Wildlife Action Plans. There are two critical anniversaries this year that are important for conservation. The State Wildlife Grants (SWG) program celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and has contributed over \$617M to conservation. It is the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of State Wildlife Action Plans. These are both major milestones in conservation history. There will be a celebration for SWG later this year. About half of the states are either undergoing or will undergo revisions of their SWAPs in the next year or two. Climate change is a big factor in the revisions. Last year the \$15M increase from Congress in the SWG program reflected a need to include climate change in the plans. AFWA and other partners developed a guidance document for incorporating climate change into SWAPs and other wildlife plans. There is also a new Working Group under the Teaming with Wildlife Committee that is tackling the issue of measuring effectiveness for SWAPs and the SWG program. They will bring draft recommendations to the September 2010 meeting.

*Migratory Bird program update* – Mike Johnson and Marcia Maslonek (for Bob Blohm) provided updates on the USFWS Migratory Bird Program. The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (Neotrop) received a \$250,000 increase in FY 2010 to \$5M. Eighty proposals were reviewed. The selected projects are being vetted through the USFWS Director and DOI. They will be announced around International Migratory Bird Day. Ten of the projects are in the US and the rest are in Latin America and the Caribbean. Most projects are habitat protection/management, outdoor education or research/monitoring. The Neotrop Advisory Group met for the 6<sup>th</sup> time last week in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Glen Olsen, National Audubon Society is the newest member. They are developing a 5 year strategic plan and are also soliciting recommendations from the major bird groups on strategic direction. Joint Ventures received a \$1M increase in appropriations in 2010. The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) received a \$5M increase in 2010 to \$47.6 M. NAWCA also receives interest from other funds such as oil and gas collections, migratory bird treaty fines, and EPAs Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. With those additions NAWCA reached about \$88 M in 2010. . The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission met on March 10, 2010. Twenty proposals were selected in the U.S. and 11 in Mexico totaling \$22M. They included \$71M in partner funds. On March 17, 2010 the North American Wetlands Conservation Council met and selected 43 small grant proposals in 14 states totaling \$3.1 M They will be matched by about \$7M. Five projects were also selected in Canada totaling \$25M and matched by \$48 M. These projects will be presented to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission at its June meeting. The current Duck Stamp showcases the American Wigeon by Robert Beal. It will be available starting June 25. The next Duck Stamp contest will be in Berkeley, California on October 15-16, 2010. The Junior Duck Stamp Program received its first appropriations of \$250,000. The funding is being used to update the education program. The Junior Duck Stamp contest will be held on April 23. That will be turned into the \$5 stamp and the funds go back into the education program. The reauthorization of the Neotrop Act passed the House but has not passed the Senate. The JV authorizing legislation is also waiting for passage in the Senate. The Senate endorsed the NAWCA fix to allow federal Canadian match and it should be signed by the President soon. In the President's 2011 budgets, USFWS budgets remain flat and JVs, NAWCA and the Neotrop Act lose money. The Division of Migratory Bird Management published new eagle regulations that include permits to take bald and golden eagles and for taking inactive nests. Permit implementation guidance and a Golden Eagle management plan will be developed in the next year or two. The list of migratory birds was updated. The update increased the number of species on the list from 832 to 1007. Notable additions were

the Hawaiian honeycreepers. Muscovy ducks are also added to the list. They are working to address issues that have arisen for those who raise and sell Muscovy Ducks. The 2001 Executive Order number 13186 required the development of MOUs between USFWS and other federal agencies. DoD, DOE, USFS, and MMS have signed MOUs. NPS and BLM will be signing MOUs in the near future. MOUs with FERC and NRCS and others should be signed this summer. The first meeting of the federal agency council to conserve migratory birds was held in December. The Council will help implement the MOUs.

*Landscape Conservation Cooperatives* – Paul Schmidt provided an update on the states of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). LCCs are applied conservation partnerships between the USFWS and USGS and other DOI Bureaus, as well as other partners. They were modeled after Bird Habitat JVs. Each LCC will have a steering committee, a LCC Coordinator, a science and technology coordinator, and a GIS technician. In many areas there are interim coordinators. Eight of the 21 LCCs are being developed in 2010. The LCCs established in 2010 include the following Arctic, California, Great Northern, Great Plains, Gulf Coastal Plains & Ozarks, North Atlantic, Pacific Islands, Plains and Prairie Potholes and the South Atlantic. The LCCs in the planning stages include Appalachian, Desert, Great Basin, Upper Midwest and Great lakes, Great Plains, Gulf Coast, North Pacific, South Florida, and the Southern Rockies. The LCCs will take advantage of the resources in the SWAPS. States are critical partners and need to be full partners. The USGS is also developing 8 Climate Science Centers across the national (AK, NW, and the SE in 2010), in FY 2011 in SW and North Central Regions. They will work in concert with the LCCs. For more information visit the following website. <http://www.fws.gov/science/shc/lcc.html>.

*Increasing Biological Capacity to Implement the Farm Bill Conservation Programs* – Deb Hahn and Jen Mock Schaeffer gave the Committee a presentation on the importance of increasing the number of partner biologists on the ground to implement Farm Bill conservation programs. NRCS continues to lose biologists and the state wildlife agencies, in a recent survey, have indicated the need for 260 additional partner biologists across the country. Partner biologists bring specialized fish and wildlife knowledge and habitat management skills, market the fish and wildlife aspects of the Farm Bill programs, facilitate timely implementation of planning, contracting, and practice implementation, and are locally involved and maintaining landowner trust. A white paper and 2-pager are available on the NABCI website ([http://www.nabci-us.org/pvtlands\\_biocapacity.html](http://www.nabci-us.org/pvtlands_biocapacity.html)). They highlight the need for an increase in Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) biologists and partner biologists. More resources are needed to help state agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and NRCS enter into creative agreements to put “boots on the ground” throughout the country to implement conservation programs.

### **Action Items:**

Action items will be identified in the Bird Conservation Committee Part II meeting report.

Submitted by: Gordon Myers and Richard Hatcher