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Canadian Program: Updates and Highlights



**Bird Conservation Committee
North American Wildlife and Natural
Resources Conference
Milwaukee, WI
March 2010**



Presentation Outline

1. Environment Canada's Wildlife Program
2. Incidental Take Regulation Development
3. Bird Conservation Region (BCR) Planning
4. Avian Monitoring Review



1. Environment Canada's Wildlife Program

Canadian Wildlife Service

- Regional Directors in place January 2009
- Middle managers in place mid-2009
- Currently staffing biology positions
 - National competition for program biologists underway (BI-02 & BI-03)
- Full staff compliment in 6 months

Wildlife Research Division

- National Director
- Currently staffing 2 Research Manager positions
- 25 research scientists across Canada





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1. *Overview:* Incidental Take Regulations



What is incidental take?

“The killing or harming of migratory birds, and/or the disturbance or destruction of their nests or eggs, resulting from human activities that do not aim to affect migratory birds, nests or eggs.”



Photo Credit: L.-G. de Repentigny



Key Issues



1. **Conservation:** Many birds, eggs, and nests are destroyed each year during routine industrial and other activities.
2. **Legal:** The destruction of nests, eggs, and migratory birds has been prohibited under the *Migratory Birds Regulations* since 1917
3. **The status quo of existing regulations:**
 - focused on individual birds, not bird population conservation
 - minimal recognition / benefit for engaging in migratory bird conservation
 - high risk of non-compliance
4. **EC's enforcement efforts criticized** (Commission of Environmental Cooperation complaint of non-enforcement in Ontario forestry resulting in 2007 release of Factual Record)

Proposed Regulatory Approach



- 1. Amend the *Migratory Birds Regulations* prohibition on destroying nests** to provide for the **granting of permits** in circumstances of incidental take:
 - Existing prohibitions will continue to apply
 - Conditions of permit include compensatory mitigation that addresses conservation of migratory birds and reporting requirements.
- 2. Amend the 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

These amendments would make the *Migratory Birds Regulations* compatible with the permits for incidental effects granted under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*.



Strategy for Implementation

- **Avoidance** to remain the mainstream compliance option (currently the only option)
- When avoidance is **not possible**:
 - a permit may be requested, or
 - a conditional exemption could apply (still to be confirmed)
- Requires:
 - Compliance Strategy and communication material
 - Structures and rules for issuing conditions on permits
- Will be optimized by:
 - Coordination with existing regulations governing federal, provincial and territorial resource and activity management



Timeline for Regulatory Changes

- **Dec. 2007 and on-going:**
 - Preliminary consultations
- **2009 and 2010:**
 - Targeted consultations on key implementation pieces
- **2010:**
 - Release of Regulatory Strategy
- **2012 and 2013:**
 - Publication of Proposed Regulations in the official Government of Canada newspaper (*Canada Gazette*) for public comment and information

Fall 2013: Coming into force



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2. *Overview: Bird Conservation Region (BCR) Planning in Canada*



Role of BCR Plans

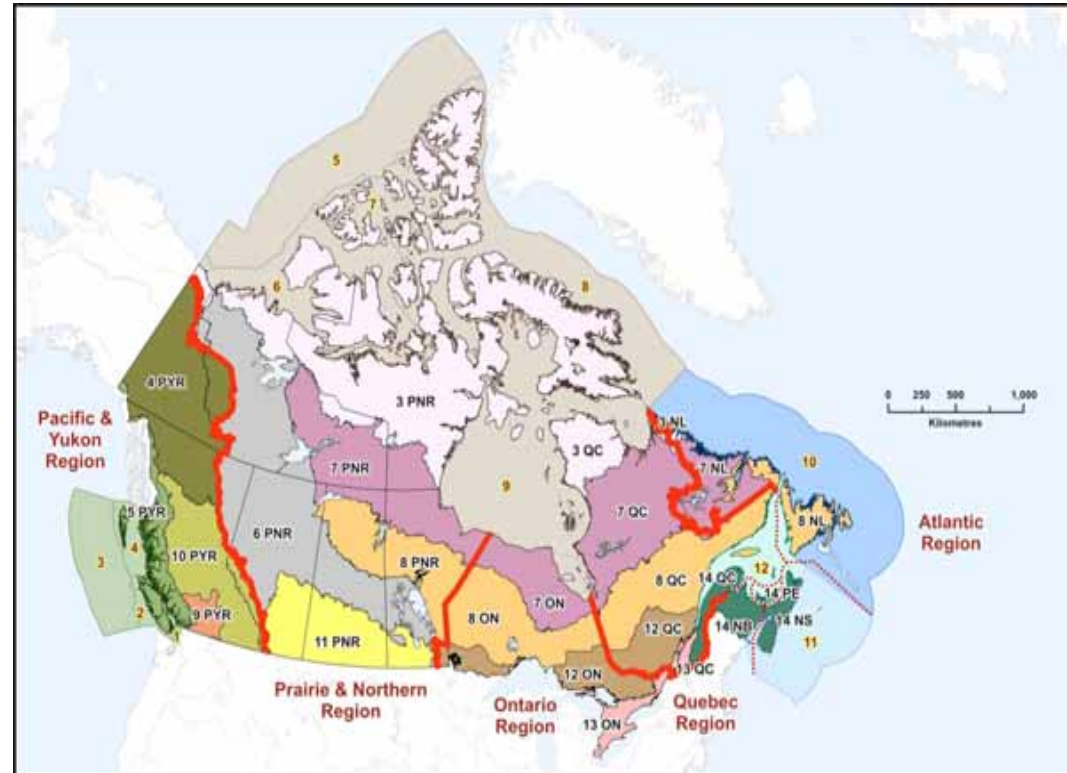
- A nationally consistent conservation framework
 - A component of Canada's commitment to NABCI
 - A cohesive and transparent basis for migratory bird conservation in Canada
 - An essential context for developing incidental take permit conditions
- All-bird plans that integrate information and conservation needs across different bird groups
 - *Includes birds under provincial/territorial jurisdiction*

BCR Plans **DON'T provide details of implementation (e.g., \$, partners, deadlines, or other commitments). These will be developed by JVs and other implementing partners**



Canada has 12 Bird Conservation Regions

- Preparing plans for 25 BCR units in Canada
 - BCRs subdivided into regional/provincial sections (red lines)
 - Marine ecoregions usually integrated into terrestrially BCRs (but sometimes presented separately)



Draft technical plans will be completed by end September 2010, and will be finalized following consultation

Proposed standards for BCR plans

1. Identify priority species across all bird groups
2. Identify BCR-specific habitat requirements for priority species
3. Develop quantitative population objectives for priority species
4. Threats assessment and ranking

These 4 elements are species-specific.



BCR Standards (cont'd)

5. Develop measurable conservation objectives

- Habitat-based and non-habitat-based, both within and outside planning unit

6. Identify recommended actions including:

- Direct conservation
- Policy/management tools
- Education/awareness/information
- Knowledge/information tools (e.g., research & monitoring)

These elements are often for multiple priority species that face common threats and benefit from similar actions.





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4. Update: Environment Canada's Avian Monitoring Review

AFWA Committees & Flyway Councils
North American Wildlife Conference, Milwaukee
March 2010



Context for the Monitoring Review



- Ensure monitoring effectiveness and linkages to program information needs
 - Are we collecting the appropriate monitoring information?
 - Are current survey programs results-oriented, cost-effective, and scientifically rigorous?
 - Do they provide accessible results that are applied in management decisions?
 - Are we using the best approaches and protocols for obtaining and making use of this information?

- Many of the needs for monitoring data appear to have changed
 - incidental take vs. directed kill (harvest)
 - importance of linking habitat change to population conservation
 - considering Canadian and international conservation issues



The Review Process



- The review is following a step-wise approach:
 1. Describing EC's current and anticipated bird-related monitoring information needs
 2. Reviewing present bird-related monitoring programs undertaken by EC and its partners
 3. Assessing the degree to which these programs meet EC's bird monitoring needs
 4. Identifying any gaps, redundancies and inefficiencies
 5. Recommending changes to improve the focus and effectiveness of the overall suite of existing programs
 6. Developing and implementing new programs to fill key monitoring gaps



Progress of the Avian Monitoring Review



- Began process in June 2007
- Completed initial assessment of all 190 surveys in which Environment Canada is involved, by June 2009
- Have completed several detailed scientific investigations of specific surveys or suites of surveys (more under way)
- Early results indicate:
 - there is some room for protocol changes to make many surveys more effective or efficient
 - a small number of surveys can be discontinued
 - funds saved by increased efficiencies and discontinued surveys are not enough to fund new programs needed
 - there is a need for consistent ongoing governance of avian monitoring within EC



Establishing Frameworks for Monitoring Programs



- Consider monitoring programs that deliver trend information on:
 - population abundance, population distribution and key population parameters (e.g. productivity and survival)
- Frameworks for each of 5 bird species-groups
 - Waterfowl, Landbirds, Shorebirds, Seabirds, Inland Waterbirds
- Framework structure for each species-groups is based on:
 - *primary (flagship) monitoring program(s)*: relatively high-level, long-term programs usually at national or continental scale
 - e.g. Breeding Bird Survey, Atlases, Breeding Waterfowl Population Surveys, Arctic PRISM (shorebirds)
 - *supplementary programs*: provide additional trend information, either:
 - to address geographical or species-related gaps in information provided from flagship programs, or
 - to provide other information for a specific species-group which is needed for program needs (e.g. waterfowl harvest)



Status of the Review



- Completed 190 individual survey reviews (April-May 2009)
- Identified 27 monitoring programs for major, more focused review
 - Some considered individually, others as suites of surveys
- Detailed reviews undertaken by experts in survey design, population monitoring and statistical analysis (3 postdocs hired)
- Reviews involved statistical analysis, scenario testing, etc.
 - Reviews completed: Prairie Waterfowl Surveys (BPOP), Greater Snow Geese, Shorebird Migration Monitoring and Arctic PRISM
 - Reviews underway: Eastern Waterfowl Surveys, Swan Surveys, Arctic Goose Banding, Boreal Landbird Monitoring (including Migration Monitoring Network)
- Internal (EC experts) review of many other suites of surveys.
 - e.g. Common Eider and Scoter surveys



Distribution of Initial Review Assessments: by Bird Group



<i>Species group (No. of surveys reviewed)</i>	NA	Continue as currently delivered	Continue pending further analysis	Consider major revision	Potential to discontinue
<i>Landbirds (59)</i>	24	13 (37%)	15 (43%)	6 (17%)	1 (3%)
<i>Shorebirds (13)</i>	1	0 (0%)	6 (50%)	5 (42%)	1 (8%)
<i>Waterbirds (36)</i>	6	10 (33%)	16 (53%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)
<i>Waterfowl (84)</i>	9	11 (15%)	49 (65%)	4 (5%)	10 (13%)

Consistent Review Findings (Species Groups)



- **Waterfowl:** Surveys usually very specific, often monitoring at level of sub-population management units
 - Need to ensure appropriate level of monitoring detail for harvest management decisions
 - Not always the case, especially for overabundant or increasing species
- **Other species groups:** Monitoring for shorebirds, inland waterbirds and many landbirds rarely provides minimum information needed for basic conservation decisions
- Regional seabird monitoring programs often developed independently, with limited power to infer national trends
- **Species at risk:** Many species-at-risk surveys lack rigorously-designed protocols to develop beyond annual inventory programs



Next Steps



- Internal EC milestone report in April 2010
- Continue detailed assessments into mid-2010
- Minor changes to some surveys totally within EC control will start in 2010-11
- As recommendations of Review are accepted, detailed discussions will be undertaken with partners
 - ongoing process for the next 1-3 years
- Important monitoring gaps will remain even after optimizing delivery of current surveys and internal re-investment, including:
 - geographical gaps (e.g. Boreal, Arctic)
 - taxonomic gaps (e.g. marsh birds, shorebirds)
 - program gaps (e.g. surveys to support incidental take)



Relevance to US Agencies



- EC goal is to optimize our monitoring investments in support of our management needs
- Recognize that US agencies are essential stakeholders with interest in outcome of Avian Monitoring Review
 - Interactions to date reflect high interest and potential concern within partnerships
- As scientific assessments and conclusions are finalized, we will share results with interested US agencies, to:
 - explain EC perspective and recommendations
 - consider implications for US (and other) partners
 - seek agreement on ways to implement changes with minimum negatives effects
- We understand the key importance of ongoing discussions



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Thank You!

