

Integrated Bird Conservation Initiative Workshop Summary
September 14, 2004
Jackson, Mississippi

The Mississippi Integrated Bird Conservation Initiative Workshop was held on September 14, 2004 in Jackson, Mississippi. Fifty-one people participated in the workshop representing government, non-government, timber industry, academia and private land owners. Many more would have attended were it not for Hurricane Ivan barreling down on the coast! A list of attendees and their affiliation is attached.

The workshop began with overviews of the national bird plans (NAWMP, PIF, USSCP, NAWCP, NBCI) and NABCI. Presenters then provided background and specifics of the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture, the Gulf Coast Joint Venture and an introduction to the East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture. During the lunch break, interested participants listened to a presentation on the Planning and Prioritization of Northern Bobwhite Habitat Restoration in Mississippi. After lunch, the focus shifted to the state level with Mississippi Audubon's Important Bird Areas Program and the State Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy.

The workshop ended with an activity where the group identified the most important issues for bird conservation in Mississippi and the top actions to address those issues. The report from that activity is attached.

Overall, the workshop was very successful because it brought together a large number of people, many of whom were not familiar with the different plans and joint ventures, and provided them with an opportunity to network and learn. Feedback from the evaluation forms was positive and there seems to be a lot of interest in continuing the conversation. The overriding message from the workshop evaluations was that there was not enough time to discuss as a group the various issues that were addressed, especially habitat. All of this will be taken into account as I plan the next step in how to proceed with a state initiative.

Report on the group exercise

Identify the most important issues for bird conservation in Mississippi. And, identification of the top actions to address those issues.

Issues		
Priority	Topic	Issues listed in priority order
1	Data	<p>data scarcity (all types)</p> <p>lack of information on loss of habitat types across ecoregions, rate, etc. (historic losses and current changes)</p>
2	Planning B setting priorities	<p>lack of prioritization of bird (other species and conservation goals across ecoregions)</p> <p>lack of prioritization of conservation goals for species and habitats in MS (what is most important, ets - ASTK/top? - HOSP/low?)</p> <p>how to set and evaluate realistic conservation goals</p> <p>no defensible prioritization of avian conservation issues</p>
3	Conservation programs	<p>lack of management flexibility within certain farm bill programs (e.g., WRP)</p> <p>incentives (vs. regulation) for habitat management on private lands</p> <p>integration of bird habitat into Farm Bill programs and other private and public conservation programs</p>
4	Habitat planning	<p>habitat creation/management should emphasize temporal and spatial heterogeneity (not just climax)</p> <p>loss of fire as ecosystem function</p> <p>loss of Longleaf Pine ecosystem</p> <p>pine/grassland (98% lost) and prairie systems (99.99% lost) are imperiled - conservation priorities should emphasize threatened systems</p> <p>no current valid statewide land cover - should be</p>

		seamless with adjacent identifying essential habitat characteristics and its location on the landscape to meet needs of priority species
5	Planning	how do we involve landowners (ag, city, suburban, forest, etc.) Appropriate involvement/representation on bird conservation boards/committees need evaluation of effectiveness of conservation programs
6 tie	Habitat encroachment	lack of habitat (core habitat, functional, trees, water, native grass) - especially along coast and river - urban encroachment
6 tie	Education	most Mississippians don't know about birds
7 tie	private lands	state and federal resource management agencies don't have cogent vision/plan to accomplish conservation on private lands corporate timber strategies (private land programs)
7 tie	monitoring	adequate population monitoring to evaluate trends and management success for priority species no effective statewide monitoring
7 tie	Joint Ventures	establishment and support for East Gulf JV
7 tie	habitat degradation	habitat fragmentation/degradation
8 tie	Habitat modeling	habitat models for sustainable (upland sps) bird populations
8 tie	Invasives and exotics	exotic species
9	Inventory - birds	more attention to nonbreeding season

Actions		
Priority	Topic	Actions listed in priority order
1	Conservation programs	work with state technical committees (FSA/NRCS) to

		<p>integrate bird habitat and management and flexibility into Farm Bill and other conservation programs (private and public)</p> <p>more private lands biologists familiar with farm bill programs</p> <p>influence process/ranking of farm bill conservation programs</p>
2	Planning - setting priorities	<p>conservation priorities should be based on degree of threat and regional importance - needs to account for temporal/spatial heterogeneity</p> <p>prioritization of habitat restoration goals within state</p> <p>identify priority areas within the state</p>
3	Habitat planning	<p>coordination among all stakeholders to develop quality land cover data</p> <p>get more habitat</p> <p>improve existing habitat</p> <p>manage habitat to return/enhance native species</p>
4	Education	<p>conservation education activities: butterfly, hummingbird gardens, BBS math projects, reading!!!</p> <p>public relations campaign - demonstrate how what we're doing benefits and landowners - education</p>
5	Planning	<p>more integration of conservation issues (most bang for the buck - combine dickey bird, waterbird, grassland etc. plans and manage area for several gains</p>
6 tie	Data	<p>data accuracy - GIS Commission or Cooperative - first analyze other state GIS cooperatives</p>
6 tie	Habitat modeling	<p>build models, habitat specific, with sensitivity, to assumptions violations and validity - use these models as college class projects - ensure models address sustainability not only targets</p>
6 tie	Monitoring	<p>develop coordinated, science-based monitoring (will help prioritize needs)</p>

		monitoring - recruit and pay monitors - technological approaches tested
7 tie	Joint Ventures	EGJV - financial and technical leadership from state support the development of EGCPTJV
7 tie	Private lands	develop a program to engage private landowners in conservation
8	Money	conservation activities that pay for themselves