



ASSOCIATION of  
FISH & WILDLIFE  
AGENCIES

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## **BIRD CONSERVATION COMMITTEE PART II**

**Chair: Judy Camuso, ME Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife**

**Vice-Chair: Vacant**

**Thursday, 17 March 2022**

**10-12 pm**

*All times are in Pacific Time*

**North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference**

### **Partners in Flight Visioning Update**

*Bob Ford, Partners in Flight Coordinator, US Fish & Wildlife Service*

[See the Partner in Flight Action Brief](#)

The Partners in Flight Steering Committee launched a long and short term visioning exercise to consider obstacles and opportunities for bird conservation for the next 10 – 30 years and to determine desired short term (1-2 years) results. For long term visioning, three working groups were formed: History – successes and challenges, engagement with diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice topics, and future obstacles and opportunities in bird conservation (“Horizon scanning”). PIF Steering Committee held two virtual sessions of three hours each to discuss the desired short-term result. In the next 1-2 years, the PIF Steering Committee will work towards integrating human well-being targets, operating as a multi-national initiative across full annual cycles of birds, and engage with Indigenous communities in all countries across full annual cycles of birds and integrating their knowledge of the land. Make sure human dimensions are integrated into PIF science priorities from the earliest stages to “co-produce” research. The PIF Steering Committee will be working with the USFWS to ensure the Partners in Flight Coordinator position remains a priority in the Service.

### **PIF/Shorebird/Waterbird Working Group Report**

*Eric Gardner, Wildlife Program Director, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife*

This workgroup has been in a state of transition without a Chair and the Vice-Chair would like to step down. This group has been in survival mode. Bob Ford and Brad Andres have announced their retirement. If we didn’t have the engagement that these two have provided to the working group, the content of the working group would be severely diminished. Reports from PIF, US

Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the Waterbirds of the Americas Conservation Plan Council. This working group needs to ensure more State participation in the working group so more State folks might want to step up as leaders in the working group. The 2022 work plan was reviewed and finalized. In order to successfully conduct meetings with international partners, translator services are essential. This working group met before the BCC I. PIF through the working group has put forth at the BCC 2021 meetings and endorsed the conservation delivery specialist model that they are trying to stand up throughout the country. Specifically, to support States when resources become available to do landscape scale conservation for the birds we are losing. John Alexander from Klamath Bird Observatory reported and follows up on Dave's Smith presentation at BCC I, a proposal to the Joint Ventures to engage with opportunity to use conservation delivery specialists to ensure the funding coming through with Infrastructure Law is best leveraged to bring back the western forest bird. This working group is asking for continued State engagement with and support for conservation delivery specialists to help ensure forest restoration efforts to meet conservation efforts in the Western SWAPs. Building and engaging with the 2021 resolution that was passed (in concept) the bird conservation capacity delivery folks that help us tie it to Western Forest Initiative and the role for States to play in that. A couple of things need to play out at JVs before we bring this back to the and several State directors are on JV boards.

### **Southern Wings Progress Updates**

*Eric Gardner, Wildlife Program Director, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife*

*Deb Hahn, International Relations Director, AFWA*

Southern Wings is a partnership of States Fish and Wildlife Agencies that have contributed 3.5 million dollars to the conservation of 81 shared species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) species in 11 countries through 24 projects. Thirty-nine states participated as individuals or as a group in Southern Wings and are about to add Kentucky as a new state in this program with support from the Mississippi flyway. Southern Wings provides a vehicle for States to support conservation action for their priority SGCN migratory birds while on their nonbreeding or wintering grounds. The state agency Southern Wings Technical Committee created a template text and species spreadsheet to assist State agencies to incorporate annual life cycle conservation of priority migratory species into their updates and revisions of the SWAPs. Southern Wings wants to continue enhancing the use of migratory connectivity information to make strategic decisions on where to fund conservation actions. Southern Wings wings is considering applying for a multistate conservation grant to develop a website that would have a page per state that includes information or links on migratory connectivity, maps, and areas to do work.

## **Grassland Bird Working Group Report**

*Bill White, Community and Private Land Conservation Branch Chief at Missouri  
Department of Conservation*

At the AFWA 2020 meeting, this working group requested approval to work on five different tasks and Bill will share the progress of these tasks. Tammy Vercauteren shared about the Central Grassland Roadmap and some highlights are their tri-national scope. They are planning a Grasslands Road Summit in May 2022 and hoping to get 2-3 people from each state to attend, including directors. Greg Link with the North Dakota (ND) Fish and Game Dept gave a step down example of landscape scale effort in ND called the Meadowlark Initiative. Jim Giocomo with American Bird Conservancy provided an overview of the Mississippi Flyway Grassland Roadmap and the results of the gap analysis created a couple of years ago. Jim also gave a short update on the North American Grasslands Conservation Act. Bill White will be stepping down as Chair because of retirement in summer 2022. There is a prospective Chair. This working group appointed a small group to look into applying for a multistate grant to further help implement the grasslands roadmap. Ted Koch gave an update on the American Grouse partnership. Bill White sought approval from the BCC Chair, Judy Camuso, to apply to be on U.S. NABCI's Committee. Judy stated her support for this process to begin and be presented at the next NABCI meeting.

## **Bird- and Fish- Related Conflict Working Group Report**

*Scott Anderson, Bird Conservation Biologist, NC Wildlife Resources Commission*

This working group was formed to bridge a gap between two disciplines centered around the issue of the management of piscivorous birds. The past six months have been focused on Double-crested Cormorants. The Cormorant rule came into effect in February 2021 the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has been working to address the lack of population scale data. FWS work has resulted in cross flyway team producing and reviewing monitoring strategy report that is still in draft form. Lesley Kordella and Rachael Pierce (FWS) provided a presentation to the working group and had a discussion on how this working group can effectively engage in the continued development and implementation of that monitoring plan. The flyways are also involved in this effort. The next step for the 2022 work plan is to develop a white paper outlining best practices for communication among wildlife and fisheries staff within agencies. Translating lessons learned and working across disciplines and from different perspectives to make more meaningful progress on issues like this. Looking to develop and administer a survey instrument on how existing permits are meeting stakeholders' needs. Justine Hasz from Wisconsin DNR will bring a human dimensions specialist to help with that task. Reviewed working group roster and looking for ways to backfill representation.

## **National Flyway Council Report**

*Gray Anderson, Wildlife Division Chief, VA Department of Wildlife Resources*

With unique scheduling with this conference, the National Flyway council met after the BCC II meeting A preview of the meeting and updates on the Flyway meetings that had occurred. The National Flyway Council has two new members (Ryan Scott, Alaska and Rob Hussler, Delaware). There have been some concerns with some reward banding studies and Form 889 sent out to hunters that were reporting harvested birds with reward bands and being asked to fill out a form and essentially become a “contractor” and very strange paperwork and how it might influence hat the hunters might be doing with reporting rates. The flyway technical groups were going to pull together a workgroup to try to address that issue. Another issue in the western portion of the flyways, Canada Goose banding changes that were made, and the bird banding lab expressed the need for national support. Another big item on tomorrow’s agenda is the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) situation in the North American flyways. Some flyway concerns are trying to find consistent messaging on what’s going on (specifically the definition of the term ‘outbreak’) and why the response is different from Canada’s response to HPAI. The only response from the bird banding lab is to not band birds using bait in the spring but that has a major impact on current projects. Another item on the agenda for tomorrow is the Golden Eagle depredation permit allocation. There have been some concerns over if it is the take of six eagles or the opportunity to take six eagles.

## **Resident Game Bird Working Group Report**

*Shaun Oldenburger, Small Game Program Director, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department*

The first item on this working group’s agenda was Scott Taylor, the national wild pheasant plan coordinator. The working group discussed the implementation of small game R3 assessment resolution from AFWA in 2019. As a working group, attempt to gather harvest surveys and harvest participation information on resident game birds and conciliate across the U.S. If looking at hunter declines in the U.S., it has been small game hunting where the largest decline has occurred. This working group would like to provide some higher level information across the landscape and across states to R3 coordinators. Updates from Pheasants Forever included the high turnover rate from the large hiring from NRCS. This working group also talked about the work in the west, sage grouse in the wet meadow, forest grouse, and the new Infrastructure Law. Discussions on how to implement the Infrastructure Law to work with districts on thinning programs. Mark Hatfield shared (National Wild Turkey Federation) that they have their annual meeting that occurred in Nashville. National Wild Turkey Federation has restored 4.4 million acres and opened access to 670,000 acres to public hunting. They have also retained and recruited one million hunters. Kelly Myers from FWS shared about the [Midwest Landscape Initiative](#), which is somewhat like regional SWAPS. The Initiative took 1817 species narrowed

down to 340 species in 13 taxonomic groups (30 birds on the list). The realities are not to focus on a specific species list but more habitat focused.

### **Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Group Report**

*Alicia Hardin, Wildlife Division Administrator, NE Game and Parks Commission*

This working group had a migratory bird program update from Ken Richkus from USFWS that focused on webless. The 2022 surveys are on track. Ken stated there will be a new call out for webless funding next November so we will have more updates at the AFWA annual meeting. Brad Bortner gave a presentation on the harvest information program (HIP) communication plan. Alicia shared the NABCI strategic plan process. The working group talked about the woodcock taskforce and how many folks have retired or moved on. Reviewed work plan. The working group is thinking about having a discussion about the use of lead for hunting migratory shorebirds in particular. In order to find out how much lead is being used for rails and snipes first. Looking at what other pollutants are being added to the wetland environment.

### **Harvest Information Program Working Group Report**

*Karen Waldrop, Chief Conservation Officer, Ducks Unlimited*

This working group had Brad Bortner present on the status and the movement on the communication plan that is being developed with DJ Case and Associates. One year ago, this working group identified that in order to deal with some of the data quality issues with HIP, besides working with States to eliminate third party data entry, they needed to improve communications to hunters. Brad Bortner and DJ Case and Associates have developed a communications plan. They have developed prototypes that they would like to test out with hunter focus groups (both migratory bird hunters and non-migratory bird hunters). Once the products are finalized they would create a tool kit for all the states to use to communicate in a consistent manner about HIP. The tools would have the flexibility to be tailored for each State. This working group will apply for a multi state grant for the implementation of the HIP communication plan. Brad met with all the flyways and the flyways sent support letters to continue moving forward.

Alicia Hardin moves that the Bird Conservation Committee support the HIP Communications Plan and supports the HIP working group to apply for a multistate grant to provide support to states for multi-state projects. Shaun Oldenburger seconds, and the motion carries.

## **Waterfowl Working Group Report**

*Jeff Ver Steeg, Assistant Director, CO Parks and Wildlife*

Andy Radecke presented on the Duck Stamp Task Force. The task force conducted a survey of state agency license system managers. They head back from all 49 states that offer waterfowl hunting. They also sent surveys to hunters in 13 E-stamp States and had 6,611 E-stamp purchasers' replies and 5,382 physical stamp purchasers' replies. Andy shared highlights and recommendations of the [Federal Duck Stamp Stakeholder Survey Results report](#) and the [Federal Duck Stamp Task Group Report](#). The purpose of the duck stamp task force has been to better align the federal duck stamp program with the NAWMP and state license sales systems while maintaining strong connections to wildlife art traditions by improving the implementation, use, and enforcement of the e-stamp program and increasing the marketing and sales of the federal duck stamp to hunters and non-hunters. The first task force recommendation is to increase capacity for marketing the federal duck stamp and use of duck stamp customer data to support waterfowl hunter R3 efforts outreach to diverse audiences reaching wildlife art enthusiasts to generate more funds for wildlife conservation. The second recommendation is focused on the artist and artwork contest, growing support from diverse audiences for the Federal Duck Stamp Program with a focus on the artwork contest. The third recommendation is to increase funding for the USFWS Duck Stamp Office via the appropriations process and/or other means. Increased funding to make sure there are funds to facilitate the transition to a digital Duck E-stamp platform. The fourth recommendation is to encourage the National Wildlife Refuge System to work with the NAWMP community to enhance communications with hunters, birdwatchers, and other outdoor recreationists to better inform them about the Refuge area acquired using Federal Duck Stamp funding and encourage stamp purchasers to access Refuges for waterfowl hunting and wildlife viewing. The fifth recommendation is focused on the E-stamp. This task force is advocating eliminating the 45-day expirations and making E-stamp valid for the entire season. This would require the physical stamp would arrive after the waterfowl hunting season. In addition, encourage and make sure all states have adopted E-stamp by 2028. For the long term, develop a national E-stamp program to facilitate marketing across scales.

Jeff Ver Steeg moves that the Bird Conservation Committee endorse the Federal Duck Stamp Task Group report and the five recommendations within it and the BCC advances these to the AFWA Business meeting. Shaun Oldenburger seconds, and the motion carries.

## **Adjourn**