



ASSOCIATION of  
FISH & WILDLIFE  
AGENCIES

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**BIRD CONSERVATION COMMITTEE PART II**

**Chair: Gordon Myers, NC Wildlife Resources Commission**

**Vice-Chair: Tony Wilkinson, NY State Department of Environmental Conservation**

**25 September 2018**

**8:00-10:00 am**

**Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Annual Meeting**

**Kellogg I, InterContinental Saint Paul Riverfront Hotel**

**St. Paul, MN**

**Bird- and Fish-Related Conflicts Working Group Report**

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

Through multiple conference calls and in-person meetings, members of the Bird- and Fish-Related Conflict Working Group (WG) have been working to fulfill the scheduled list of four activities from our annual Work Plan. All WG activities are derived from direction contained within our draft charge that reads;

*“Federal and State Agency members representing the bird and fisheries management disciplines will develop an adaptive approach to identify opportunities for most efficiently addressing the challenges of managing piscivorous birds and affected fishery resources and promote a common understanding of their interactions. The WG reports to the Fisheries and Water Resource Policy Committee and the Bird Conservation Committee. The WG may advance issues to the FWRPC and BCC from which information and requests can be developed and presented to state directors.”*

All four scheduled activities for the prior year were accomplished and included:

1. Focal areas and goals were finalized and are divided into three categories – 1) Communication, 2) Science Assessments and Needs and 3) Recommendations.
2. WG leadership (Co-Chairs and Vice-Co-Chairs and AFWA staff) were invited by the USFWS Migratory Bird Program staff to participate in an in-person Cormorant/Fisheries Technical Core Team meeting (March 2019) at their Falls Church, VA, headquarters to review a summary of state input from regional workshops (August 2018), better define and describe the scope of the conflict issues, and provide input into development of a list of potential management options for double-crested cormorants and their predation on fish (aquaculture and wild and/or stocked fish).
  - a. WG leadership drafted a letter, signed by AFWA President Ed Carter (dated 8/20/19) and addressed to Principle Deputy Director, Margaret Everson, expressing appreciation for USFWS participation in the WG and for providing WG leaders (and thereby state-agency) representation during these discussions.
3. The WG held a 2-day in-person meeting in July 2019 in Boise, ID, and accomplished the following:
  - a. Began addressing the needs and challenges surrounding communication and the state of science,
  - b. Identified and discussed values-based differences between the bird-conservation and fisheries-management disciplines,
  - c. Began building trust among members, and
  - d. Identified and prioritized WG deliverables and action steps for our first two focal areas/goals.

4. The WG members worked to identify other opportunities to host conversations surrounding bird- and fish-related conflicts.
  - a. WG leadership and members organized a special symposium to be held at the 2019 (October 1<sup>st</sup>) joint meeting of the American Fisheries Society and The Wildlife Society (AFS-TWS) in Reno, NV. Eleven presentations within the WG's scope will be provided, followed by a panel discussion.

To continue progress, the group will work to expeditiously fill a WG Central Flyway representative vacancy, execute our AFS-TWS special symposium, and implement the identified action items and deliverables in our focal areas and goals document. A primary emphasis will be in seeking clarity and offering recommendations relevant to goal 1.a.ii. and 1.a.iii., which focus on more structured, intentional, and pro-active intra-agency communication between state-agency fisheries and bird program leaders (including Flyway Council representatives) to inform a more unified and coordinated perspective and voice in piscivorous bird policy-making decisions.

The working group has no actions to bring to the committee at this time.

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

*Sara Schweitzer, Wildlife Diversity Coordinator, NC Wildlife Resources Commission*

Thirty-four (34) people attended the WG meeting representing 13 state agencies, 4 federal agencies, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and 8 nongovernmental organizations.

Ken Rosenberg (Cornell Lab of Ornithology) provided a preview of the State of the Birds Report, as well as a discussion of the article in the journal *Science*. This paper has precipitated exceptional news coverage of the decline in bird populations from the 1970s to 2019, as well as 7 key actions people can take to help reverse this trend. We drafted a resolution to be considered by the BCC, and it was voted on and approved. The resolution will be presented at the AFWA Business meeting for review and a vote.

We received updates from the landbird, shorebird, and waterbird conservation initiatives. John Alexander of Klamath Bird Observatory (KBO) provided the update from Partners in Flight:

- The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of PIF will be in 2020 and this celebration will be shared at many events and meetings. The theme of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration will tie-in with that of the 2019 World Migratory Bird Day – “Birds Connect the World.”
- 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary planning is underway and will be the focus of the October 15-18 meeting of the PIF Steering Committee in Ashland, Oregon. This meeting will also highlight PIF's decision-support tools for public lands management and conservation. A Public Lands Partner Field Day will be a part of the Fall Meeting.
- A new Eastern PIF Working Group held its first planning meeting in April 2019, and 3 work focus topics were selected: full annual cycle modeling; decision-support tools; and data management. A second meeting is being planned for 2020.

Sara Schweitzer (NCWRC) provided a summary of U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Partners and Council activities.

- A report of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan achievements and plans will be completed in 2020;
- The Council and Partners were successful in getting the French Parliament to uphold a recently-passed law requiring shorebird hunters in Guiana to obtain licenses; and in holding a workshop on the sustainable management of shorebird hunting in the Atlantic Americas Flyway in Guadeloupe in July 2019. The workshop was organized under a MOU among the U.S., Canada, and France on shorebird conservation.
- AFSI and PACI achievements were reviewed, and a Midcontinent Initiative is being planned;
- The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group and USSCP Council will meet in Panama from October 24-28, 2019.

Melanie Steinkamp (USGS) summarized work underway to reinvigorate the Waterbird Council that is responsible for the Waterbirds of the Americas Conservation Plan. An 8-person team is working to

contact former Waterbird Council members to ask that they reactivate the Council and begin work to review and update the Waterbirds of the America's Conservation Plan, as well as to work with the USFWS to fill the vacated Waterbird Coordinator position. This team will report on their activities at the winter NABCI meeting. We ask that the AFWA BCC support this work with people's time and a letter to the USFWS expressing the significant need for a Waterbird Coordinator.

John Alexander (KBO) and Sara Schweitzer (NCWRC) reviewed results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Avian Conservation Data Management Workshop held at the NCWRC headquarters in Raleigh, NC on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Fourteen people participated and focused on the project to incorporate the USGS Colonial Waterbird Database into the Avian Knowledge Network. The Mississippi and Pacific Flyways' CWB data are within the AKN. Participants in the Workshop will continue work on integrating CWB data into the AKN, and develop tools for data compilation, analysis, and visualization. Participants and colleagues are also working to develop a data hub that would manage multiple types of avian databases and avoid duplication of effort.

John Alexander (KBO) described the Short-eared Owl landscape study as an example that is using the AKN to collect, manage, and analyze data from multiple states. The proposed Yellow-billed Cuckoo rangewide occupancy assessment project plans to use the AKN for data management and analyses.

The Work Plan was reviewed and edited and will be completed in October.

### **Feral and Free-Ranging Cat Work Group Report**

*Sara Schweitzer, Wildlife Diversity Coordinator, NC Wildlife Resources Commission*

Twenty-seven (27) people attended the WG meeting representing 12 state agencies, 5 federal agencies, and 3 nongovernmental organizations.

The WG reviewed the Work Plan and accomplishments achieved such as:

- 1) A comprehensive compilation of states' regulations and policies that may apply to feral or free-ranging cats;
- 2) A survey of state agency wildlife attorneys to evaluate accuracy of regulation compilation;
- 3) A compilation of municipal, state, and federal legal cases and policies associated with feral and free-ranging cats;
- 4) A survey that asked states about the magnitude of this issue in their state, methods used to remove feral and free-ranging cats from conservation lands, and other inquiries;
- 5) A request of information from states and other bird conservation partners about successful partnerships between wildlife advocates and cat advocates; few, if any, long-term successful partnerships exist;
- 6) A comprehensive bibliography of reports and scientific literature on feral cats;
- 7) Posting our products on our WG web page within the AFWA web site.

The remaining task for the WG is to complete a Tool Kit or Beneficial Practices report that provides options for agencies and others to consider when predicting that feral and free-ranging cats may become a management challenge and when cats have become a management challenge.

A skeleton draft of this product has been completed and was reviewed during the meeting. A cat management decision tree was drafted and will be used to guide the organization of the report. Participants at our meeting selected topics to focus on and will work with others from the WG to complete a full draft by 2020.

### **Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Group (MSUGBWG) Report**

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

Action Items for the Working Group

- Evaluate where states are on secretive marsh bird surveys.

- Work with the USFWS on updating webless research on their website

#### Updates:

Webless Research Funding from USFWS: They will be accepting applications for funding every other year so there will be \$100,000 available (every two years). A committee of representatives from each flyway are able to review the proposals. 10 proposals were received, 4 were accepted for funding:

*Evaluating timing, connectivity, and stopover of American Woodcock migration in eastern North America*

PI: Erik Blomberg, Univ Maine, \$29,680 (this is total from webless funds)

*An integrated population model for guiding sustainable harvest of mourning doves*

PI: David Koons, Colo State Univ, \$26,527 (webless funds)

*Clapper Rail (Rallus crepitans) Population Connectivity, Introgression, and Effective Population Sizes*

PI: Greg Shriver, Univ Delaware \$16,409 (webless funds)

*Molt timing for determining origin of purple and common gallinules in Louisiana*

PI: Bret Collier, LSU, \$28,905 (webless funds)

#### Update by the Dove Task Force-

- IPM coming soon hopefully by 2020
- Reward Banding study starting July 1, 2019 (3 year project)- banding seems to be off to a good start
- More information on the modified call count research at the next WG meeting
- Meeting in a few weeks in Ft. Collins

#### Woodcock Task Force gave an update on their meeting

- Reconvening the Woodcock Harvest Management Team to look at the thresholds that trigger liberal to moderate seasons
- Ruffed Grouse/American Woodcock Society has also been granting money to the eastern woodcock research project and is happy to work with any states on other research projects

#### Other Updates

- Continue participation in the Grassland Bird Work Group including the upcoming summits
- Develop strategies to engage the USFS and State Forestry groups in the young forest initiatives
- Continue to work with the HIP WG to finalize the draft implementation plan
- Continue participation on the Dove priority needs document
- Other updates on HIP and NABCI-Bird Crisis
- Avian Conservation Assessment and Landbird Population Estimates Database update by Tammy V. of BCC

### Harvest Information Program Working Group Report

*Karen Waldrop, Deputy Commissioner, KY Department of Fish and Wildlife*

One major issue with the HIP was third party vendors. KY designed an in-house data system that allows hunters to enter data themselves and eliminates third-party data entry. KY had over 90% compliance in their first year because of the front-end outreach they did. The HIP WG is developing a national pilot to improve HIP, that is based on KY's strategy and modifications, and KY will work with pilot states to provide outreach tools. WMI is working with pilot states representing each of the Flyways, and is working to address questions of hunter privacy and law enforcement. Pilot states include LA, AZ, KS, MT, MN, and CT, and some will start during the 2020 hunting season. The next step is to take results from the initial pilot, present these results to the Directors, and see if other states want to make similar modifications to their HIP data collection system. The goal of the HIP modification project is to achieve a national database where all information is collected in the same way.

The group will also discuss with USFWS the potential to simplify HIP questions, since research has shown that there will be little loss of key information if questions are simplified. This will be

discussed at the North American. Chris Smith at WMI is the point of contact for questions about the pilot.

## **Resident Game Bird (RGB) Working Group Report**

*Karen Waldrop, Deputy Commissioner, KY Department of Fish and Wildlife*

The RGB WG is working on national translocation template and anticipates a draft by January to bring to the Bird Committee for a vote. The group is also considering other options to support translocation efforts; for example, the RGB WG could provide peer-review and endorsement for groups that want to do this. The translocation guidance document will include information about data states should collect when translocating birds, and the RGB WG is working on a scope of need for a database to keep track of translocation documents; the group will present this scope of needs at North American.

## **Waterfowl Working Group Report**

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

### **Legislative/Budget Priorities**

*Jen Mock Schaefer* provided an update on relevant federal legislation. Gildo Tori, DU, was recognized for his work on “the hill.” His tenure there is ending on September 30.

### **2019-20 Work Plan Review / Links to AFWA Strategic Plan 2020-2025**

*Craig LeSchack, DU Inc.* reviewed the draft 2019-2020 work plan and asked for feedback by mid-October.

### **NAWCA 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Resolution**

*Jeff Ver Steeg, CPW* reported that the Resolutions Committee meets before BCC-2, thus requiring BCC action at BCC-1 (yesterday). The BCC approved the resolution yesterday. The WWG endorsed or ratified the BCC action. The resolution will proceed to the Resolutions Committee this afternoon.

### **NAWCA 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Communications**

*Dean Smith, AFWA / Dave Case, DJ Case & Associates* reported that efforts were underway to celebrate and communicate about the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NAWCA and that outreach could continue into the first part of 2020 (the 30<sup>th</sup> year actually begins on December 13, 2019). An event is being scheduled for December 10, 2019 in D.C. at the end of AFWA’s Executive Committee meeting.

### **DU International Conservation Plan**

*Tom Moorman, DU Inc.* provided an overview of the recently completed model to help identify priority areas for conservation.

### **State Contributions to Canada**

*Dave Kostersky, DUC* reported that 43 states were now participating. This is a record number of states and the second highest annual total financial commitment. We are still well below the goal \$10 million per year. It will soon be time to reaffirm or develop new goals. Dave also unveiled a draft version of a logo for the program of habitat conservation in Canada through state contributions under NAWMP (“Fall Flights” – Giving Wings to Cross-border Waterfowl Conservation). He received constructive feedback and began work on another iteration. It will be shared with the NFC at the SRC meeting the second week of October. The goal is to ask AFWA’s Executive Committee to review it and either provide feedback or approve it at its December 2019 meeting.

### **NAWMP Plan Committee Update**

*Jerome Ford, USFWS* reported on the recent Plan Committee meeting in Vancouver and emphasized the Committee's intent to be more communicative and transparent.

### **NAWMP – HDWG-PET/R3**

*Dave Case, DJ Case & Associates* presented for *David Cobb, NCWRC*. Lots of data have yet to be analyzed. Will be invaluable to inform future decision-making.

### **NAWMP Integration Coordinator**

*Diane Eggeman, DU Inc.* is the new NAWMP Integration Coordinator (as of a few weeks ago). She will work 50% time and is paid by both the FWS and DU, Inc.

### **Duck Symposium – Co-chair's Recap**

*Dave Howerter, DUC* gave a brief recap of the successful meeting in Winnipeg last month (August). The next meeting will be in Portland, OR.

### **MBTA – Incidental Take BMP Review - M-Decision**

*Judith Scarl, AFWA*, provided an update on the brand new AFWA BMPs. She also provided copies of a hot-off-the-press supplement/insert for the recent report on The State of the Birds 2019.

### **3-Splash Rule – Information ONLY**

*Tony Leif, SDGFP*, provided a conceptual explanation and rationale for a “two-tiered” experimental duck bag limit/season to address reactivation and recruitment of waterfowl hunters in South Dakota and Nebraska. The Central Flyway Council will be presenting the proposal to the SRC in early October.

### **Duck Stamp**

*Dave Case* presented for *Suzanne Fellows (USFWS)* who was busy preparing for the Duck Stamp contest being held later this week.

### **Action Items Review & Other business**

*Craig LeSchack, DU Inc.*, reviewed the list of action items for the WG:

1. Send comments on annual work plan to Craig by mid-October
2. Endorsed NAWCA 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary resolution
3. WWG was supportive of the Fall Flights branding name. Dave Kustersky will take feedback on Fall Flights logo & tag line changes and share a revision by the SRC meeting (Oct 8).

Jeff Ver Steeg moves that the BCC offers support for the continued development of logo, with the ultimate goal of seeking approval from Executive Committee. Sara Schweitzer seconds, and the motion carries.

### **BCC Grassland Work Group Report**

*Bill White, Private Land Services Division Chief, MO Department of Conservation*

In 2017, the WG developed a survey to pilot a gap analysis for grassland projects in the MS Flyway. They received responses from four states and realized that more staffing was needed to complete a more thorough analysis. On behalf of the WG, the American Bird Conservancy submitted and received a Multi-State Conservation Grant to hire a coordinator to finish the gap analysis and develop a report. In addition to the gap analysis, the WG will help with 2 Summits, one for the MS Flyway (US and Canada) and one for the Central Flyway (US, Canada, Mexico). These Summits will help to build off the gap analysis to chart a course for grassland conservation for the next 10 years, and will serve as a platform to ask for prioritization of grassland conservation efforts. The group anticipates a draft report for BCC review by the end of 2020. In early 2020, the WG will request that AFWA directors support staff participation in Central Grasslands Roadmap Summit, and the MS Grasslands Summit, which will be held in August 2020.

**Gordon Myers presented the following report to the Directors at the AFWA Business Meeting on 25 September 2019:**

**ACTION:** The Bird Conservation Committee requests that the Directors accept the report entitled “Addressing Incidental Take of Migratory Birds: Options for State Action and Leadership”.

**Update:** Grasslands WG will organize a Central Grasslands Roadmap Summit and a Mississippi Flyway Summit in August 2020

**Update:** The BCC advanced three Resolutions:

- Addressing the Long-Term Decline in Small Game Hunter Participation in the United States and Mitigating its Effects on Habitat Conservation Delivery
- Recognizing the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act
- Promoting a Coordinated Response to the Pervasive Loss of North American Birds

Director Myers also presented a slide on the 2019 State of the Birds release and the “3 Billion Birds” crisis.