



## PARTNERS IN FLIGHT NEWSLETTER

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

July 2009

### Partners in Flight 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

In 2010, PIF will celebrate 20 years of bird conservation activity. We are discussing appropriate events and products to highlight this milestone. PIF will share the spotlight in the IMBD (<http://www.birdday.org/>) theme – The Power of Partnerships. Another event already on the books is a Special Session at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Milwaukee on 22-27 March 2010. If you have ideas and/or time, contact the PIF 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Steering Committee - Alicia King (lead; [Alicia\\_F\\_King@fws.gov](mailto:Alicia_F_King@fws.gov)), Carol Beidleman, Ashley Dayer, Brad Jacobs, David Pashley, Terry Rich and Sue Bonfield ([sbonfield@aol.com](mailto:sbonfield@aol.com)).

### Partners in Flight Tri-national Vision for Bird Conservation

The PIF Science Committee met at the Bird Studies Canada headquarters in Port Rowan, Ontario, Canada on 6-9 July to continue work on Saving our Shared Birds: The Partners in Flight Tri-national for Landbird Conservation. We will be focusing on the idea that Canada, the US and Mexico share responsibility for conserving the 900 species of landbirds that regularly breed in North America. Many of the conservation issues we face are the same, and many of the opportunities we have are shared. We are calling attention to the variety of biological phenomena that these species exhibit, from the hundreds of millions of migrating warblers that pour out of the Boreal Forest every fall to the micro-endemics of Mexico. The Trinational Vision will be produced simultaneously in English, Spanish and French in time for the North American in March 2010. The PIF Science Committee will be making presentations on Saving Our Shared Birds to various AFWA committees in September and in a variety of meetings and conferences before and after AFWA. If you would like to schedule a presentation, contact anyone on the Science Committee.–Terry Rich

### Landbird Threats Assessment

As a part of the Tri-national Vision described above, the PIF Science Committee is conducting a threats assessment of all 900 species of landbirds that regularly breed in Canada, the US and Mexico. The assessment will first address the 221 landbird species of highest priority for conservation action, and will use the

threats taxonomy of Salafsky et al. (2009). The first round will consist of scoring only those threats that are likely to be limiting the species. But our intent is to eventually score all 900 species on a 1-5 scale, as PIF has done for other factors in our Species Assessment Database. In preliminary analysis, and probably not surprisingly, the conversion of habitat for the production of agricultural crops is the #1 threat facing North American landbirds. However, many other threats, such as timber harvest, livestock grazing, and residential development, are affecting large numbers of species. Once completed, this will be the first systematic threats assessment of all North American landbirds.—Terry Rich

### **Landbird Habitat Categorization**

The PIF Science Committee is also categorizing all North American landbirds into habitat categories. While this has been done for various bird groups in various ways over the years, this will be the first time bird experts in the three countries have produced an agreed-upon classification system. As with the threats assessment, this classification will help identify sectors of the avifauna that share particular conservation issues. As we have already seen, the outcomes are not always as conventional wisdom might have it.—Terry Rich

### **4<sup>th</sup> International PIF Conference – Needs Assessment**

The McAllen conference Needs Assessment was completed and distributed in August 2008. The Needs Assessment consists of an 89-page document that spells out the 465 needs identified in the McAllen conference sessions. PIF has now completed a synthesis of the needs across all McAllen session for three categories – Monitoring, Education/Communication/ Outreach, and Research. These reports will be published in the conference proceedings (see next). Everyone is encouraged to peruse these needs to discover how you or your organization may be able to contribute. Our intent also is to proactively pursue the achievement of various needs, given the known mission and capacity of particular partners as well as opportunities that present themselves.—Terry Rich

### **4<sup>th</sup> International PIF Conference – Proceedings**

The McAllen conference proceedings are nearing final form. Authors will be receiving page proofs from Mark Penrose, who is doing the final layout and design for the document. Mark also handles *The Auk* and *Studies in Avian Biology*, among other scientific publications. Authors will have only a few days to respond to the page proofs. The proceedings, along with the Needs Assessments described above, will be around 1800 pages or nearly half again as large as the Asilomar proceedings. We have funding dedicated to producing a limited number of hard copies and are currently in discussions as to how best to handle this enterprise. We expect that most users will access the pdf of the proceedings on the PIF web site to read and download the papers of interest to them.—Terry Rich, Coro Arizmendi, Dean Demarest and Craig Thompson

## **El Cielo Biosphere Reserve Bird Conservation Initiative**

A Working Group Meeting for Bird Conservation Partners of El Cielo Biosphere Reserve, Tamaulipas, Mexico will be held 21-24 July 2009 in Ciudad Victoria. The goal is to establish the foundation for a cooperative international working group dedicated to the conservation of birds and their habitats in the biosphere reserve. A conservation strategy and initial plans for cooperative projects will be part of the discussions. There will also be training on BBS methodology and visits to the Reserve. As the PIF Tri-national Vision is being completed, we are eager to engage more and more directly with Mexican partners in Mexican conservation.—Terry Rich

## **Workshop on Developing Regional Population Objectives**

A North American Bird Conservation Initiative Workshop on Developing Population Objectives for Regional Scales will be held in St. Louis on 6-8 October 2009. This workshop is by invitation only because the organizers were convinced that the scientific foundation for this task is not well developed. The goal of the workshop is to improve the Joint Venture/Bird Conservation Initiative community's ability to develop coordinated regional population objectives and the habitat objectives needed to reach them. Participants will discuss methods of setting both continental and regional population objectives and their relationship to one another; the roles and responsibilities of Joint Ventures and the Bird Initiatives in developing them; data and methods used to estimate population sizes and link them to habitat quantity and quality; and approaches that can be used to improve bird population estimates and their associated habitat objectives in an adaptive framework. Target audiences are Joint Venture coordinators and science staff, Bird Initiative coordinators and science staff, and others involved in relevant fields of study. We expect that once the experts have come to some agreement on how best to proceed, that another workshop or conference will be held on the topic that is open to all interested parties.—Terry Rich

## **Decision Support Tools Workshop**

A workshop on the development of Decision Support Tools (DSTs) for bird conservation is being held 13-15 October 2009 in Reno. The workshop is being organized by the Avian Knowledge Alliance and will be by invitation. The Great Basin Bird Observatory (<http://www.gbbo.org/>) is making arrangements. As with the previous workshop, there is a shared sense that a lot of new ideas and approaches need to be discussed among various experts before this type of workshop is ready for broader audiences. The intent is to eventually hold a series of workshops to discuss existing DSTs and how one goes about creating new ones. A good paper on DSTs, for those who are not familiar with the concept, will appear in the McAllen proceedings. The lead author is John Alexander of the Klamath Bird Observatory (<http://www.klamathbird.org/>).

## **Species Vulnerability Assessment**

A group of PIF partners has put in a proposal for USGS funding to conduct a species vulnerability assessment for landbirds, a topic that has appeared in this newsletter several times. The idea is to assemble a variety of species attributes, e.g., clutch size, migration distance, life span, and then to score species on their relative ability to respond to stress based on those characteristics. That stress could be climate change or any other affect. This has been of interest to PIF, the USFWS, and others for some time. PIF will not only use this assessment for the stated purpose but will also be able to refine its TB and TN scores for all species in the Species Assessment Database.

## **Sagebrush Pocket Guide**

Pocket Guides to Birds have been created for Prairie Birds, San Francisco Bay, the Sierra Nevada Foothills, the Chihuahuan Desert (en Español) among others. These guides literally fit in a shirt pocket and provide quick reference to birds for landowners and land managers who are not bird experts. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (<http://www.rmbo.org/v2/web/>) and PRBO Conservation Science (<http://www.prbo.org/cms/index.php>) are preparing the latest pocket guide, one for sagebrush birds. Funds are now being sought to provide for the development, publication, and printing of about 20,000 copies which will include photos, description, and natural history information of approximately 45 species of birds which are obligates/associates of the sagebrush ecosystem. Information on sagebrush habitat, conservation concerns and actions, as well as contact information for local partners who can assist with information and management will also be included. If you are interested in helping with this project, contact Tammy VerCauteren at RMBO ([tammy.vercauteren@rmbo.org](mailto:tammy.vercauteren@rmbo.org)).

## **Nevada Comprehensive Bird Conservation Plan**

Nevada Partners in Flight is currently working with the Great Basin Bird Observatory to develop a comprehensive bird conservation plan for the State of Nevada. In 2007, Nevada Partners in Flight initiated an effort to update the 1999 Nevada Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan (Neel 1999) based on data recently collected for the Nevada Breeding Bird Atlas, Great Basin Bird Observatory's Nevada Bird Count program, and other projects. The goal of the new bird conservation plan is to provide stakeholders and land managers with information on how to incorporate bird conservation into other land management goals and activities.

To do this, the plan will emphasize bird conservation through habitat management by first summarizing habitat requirements and threats to priority bird species and then integrating this information into a vision for how vegetation communities ("habitat types") can be managed to benefit all priority (and associated) species. The plan will incorporate the priorities of all major bird

conservation initiatives active in the region (e.g., Pacific Flyway Council, the Continental and Intermountain West Colonial Waterbird Initiatives, the Continental and Intermountain West Shorebird Initiatives), as well as local planning efforts (e.g., Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan for Nevada and Eastern California) to develop a comprehensive picture of bird conservation priorities in Nevada.

Funding for this effort was provided to the Great Basin Bird Observatory by Nevada Division of State Lands and by the Nevada Department of Wildlife. Federal, state, local, and non-profit agencies, as well as other organizations and individuals that comprise Nevada Partners in Flight have contributed significantly to this effort through participation in development of the plan and review of draft products. Information on the plan is available at [http://www.gbbo.org/bird\\_conservation\\_plan.htm](http://www.gbbo.org/bird_conservation_plan.htm); draft sections of the plan will be posted on this website when completed. The anticipated completion date of the draft plan is August 2009, and the final plan will be released in early 2010.-- Annalaura (Laurie) Averill-Murray ([annalaura\\_averillmurray@fws.gov](mailto:annalaura_averillmurray@fws.gov))

### **Refining Landbird Population Estimates – The Nevada Bird Count**

As a result of the Nevada Bird Count (NBC) organized and run by the Great Basin Bird Observatory (<http://www.gbbo.org/nbc.htm>), we now have independent population estimates for 180 species, mostly landbirds, from Nevada. Because these data were collected scientifically and systematically, they provide a tremendously valuable comparison for the estimates that PIF produced some time ago ([http://rmbo.org/pif\\_db/laped/](http://rmbo.org/pif_db/laped/)).

In a quick preliminary comparison of the untransformed population estimates, we found  $r^2=0.68$  for species with estimates from both methods ( $n=155$ ). But when the Pair Adjustment Factor is applied to the PIF estimates,  $r^2=0.79$ . The pair adjustment has been explored by Bob Altman of the American Bird Conservancy and is one that we came very close to applying for the 2004 North American Landbird Conservation Plan estimates. We are encouraged by these results and expect the agreement between estimates to improve at least a bit more with the application of other logical adjustments to the PIF estimates.

Of course, there remain certain species where the estimates are very different and these are the cases that need to be examined more carefully. Species with good sample sizes but substantially different estimates include Red Crossbill, Clark's Nutcracker, Gambel's Quail and White-breasted Nuthatch among others. A meeting to look closely at these estimates is being scheduled. For more information on the Pair Adjustment Factor and other adjustment factors, contact Bob Altman ([baltman@abcbirds.org](mailto:baltman@abcbirds.org)). For the Nevada Bird Count, contact Elisabeth Ammon ([ammon@gbbo.org](mailto:ammon@gbbo.org)). And contact me with questions about the preliminary analyses.—Terry Rich

## **Bird Initiative Science Meeting**

In 2000, the NAWMP Plan Committee established a team of individuals from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico to help strengthen the biological foundations of the Plan and facilitate continuous improvement of Plan conservation programs. The NAWMP Science Support Team or 'NSST' is now the Committee's principal technical advisory body with a prominent role in helping achieve the Plan's vision and goals. As part of the ongoing effort to better integrate the conservation activities of the various bird initiatives, the bird initiative coordinators have been invited to participate in the NSST meeting for the first time. This meeting will take place in Calgary on 25-27 August 2009. The goal is to explore ways in which the Science Committees of the four major bird initiatives can work together. Because the amount of data, sophistication of population modeling, and level of dedicated human resources – to name just three factors – varies greatly among species, it is not immediately clear where the greatest synergy will be found.

## **Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis**

The subject report, dated June 2009, "...provides up-to-date information so birders and policy makers can make informed decisions regarding the management of birds and their habitats." Data come from the wildlife-watching section of the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. ***The big challenge remains. How do we get the 48,000,000 birders in the US to engage in bird conservation action!?*** See [http://library.fws.gov/Pubs/birding\\_natsurvey06.pdf](http://library.fws.gov/Pubs/birding_natsurvey06.pdf) for the full report.—Terry Rich

## **Joint Venture Implementation Plan Reviews**

PIF has provided reviews on Implementation Plans for the Oaks and Prairies JV and the Rio Grande JV. These newest JVs provide coverage of some of the last "white spaces" in the US. And both play particularly important roles for both breeding and wintering birds. We look forward to seeing these JVs funded and staffed up.

## **MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES**

### **Montana Bird Conservation Partnership**

The Montana Bird Conservation Partnership will meet in Malta on 21-22 July 2009. Objectives are to 1) provide information on Joint Venture and Fish, Wildlife and Parks directions and opportunities for avian conservation, 2) provide information on conservation delivery programs and planning tools, and 3) build a framework for integrating conservation delivery in Montana with Joint Ventures. For an agenda and more information, contact Catherine Wightman ([cwightman@mt.gov](mailto:cwightman@mt.gov)).

## **U.S. NABCI Committee – Joint Venture Meeting**

The US NABCI Committee will meet 4-5 August 2009 in Arlington. In August 2008, the US NABCI Committee began looking strategically at where the Committee needs to focus its activities over the next 3 to 5 years. Supporting and collaborating with the Joint Ventures was identified as a priority. It was also clear that a face to face meeting between JV coordinators and management board members and the U.S. Committee is necessary to define JV priorities and U.S. Committee tasks to help meet those priorities. So, this meeting will include a special section on Joint Ventures as well as discussions of other current action items.—Deb Hahn ([dhahn@fishwildlife.org](mailto:dhahn@fishwildlife.org))

## **Western Field Ornithologists 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**

Western Field Ornithologists will meet in Boise on 10-13 September. Details are available at <http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org/conference.php>.--Dave Krueper ([dave\\_krueper@fws.gov](mailto:dave_krueper@fws.gov))

## **AFWA and National PIF Meetings**

The next national PIF committee meeting will be held in conjunction with the annual conference of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in Austin, TX on 12-16 September 2009. Details will be posted at <http://www.fishwildlife.org/> and circulated as usual via PIF listserves. Note that this year's AFWA conference will be condensed somewhat. Committee meetings will begin on Monday rather than Tuesday.—Terry Rich

## **Diversity in Outdoor Recreation: The Many Faces of Conservation**

The subject conference will take place on 26 September 2009 in Toledo, OH. The board and staff of Black Swamp Bird Observatory believe that more diversity would be a good thing. As America becomes more ethnically diverse, the same thing will have to happen to birding and outdoor recreation if we're going to continue to have broad support for conservation. Therefore, we are proud to be co-sponsors of a one-day conference featuring people who are doing something about this issue. See [http://www.bsbo.org/diversity\\_conference.htm](http://www.bsbo.org/diversity_conference.htm) for details.

## **Landscape Ecology in Latin America: Challenges and Perspectives**

This conference will be held 4-7 October 2009 in Campos do Jordão, Brazil. In the last IALE meeting in Wageningen (July 2007) we decided to organize the first Latin American IALE meeting in Brazil. This meeting will be an important step for the consolidation of the Landscape Ecology science in the continent, and for a more widespread application of this science in the

solution of the severe environmental problems of the region. You can see more information in the site <http://www.eventus.com.br/ialebr2009> or you can also access a PDF file at the US-IALE webpage (<http://www.usiale.org>).

### **25<sup>th</sup> International Ornithological Congress 2010**

The 25<sup>th</sup> International Ornithological Congress will also be held in Campos do Jordão, Brazil, 22-28 August 2010. The Scientific Program Committee (SPC) has been formed and a web page is in place (<http://www.i-o-c.org> or <http://www.ib.usp.br/25ioc>). The call for contributed papers will come in early 2009. Inquires may be made to the General for the Congress at [ioc2010@ib.usp.br](mailto:ioc2010@ib.usp.br) or to Carol Vleck ([ioc2010@iastate.edu](mailto:ioc2010@iastate.edu)).

### **Ornithological Society Meetings**

Details on the annual conferences of the six major ornithological societies in North American can be found at <http://www.osnabirds.org/>.

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The next newsletter will be issued on 1 October 2009. Items are due 15 September 2009 to Terry Rich ([terry\\_rich@fws.gov](mailto:terry_rich@fws.gov)).