



MISSOURI BIRD CONSERVATION INITIATIVE HABITAT NEWS AUGUST 23, 2013

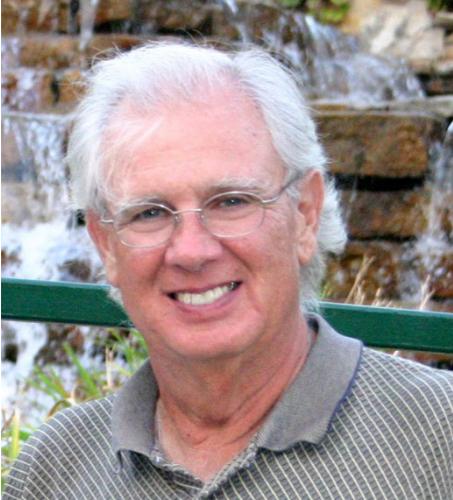
We Care About Birds and Their Habitats!

The Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) is a partnership of organizations that “get excited about birds!” We are an organization of organizations, each caring about bird conservation, with some having formal legal responsibilities for the welfare of birds and their native habitats. The 64 partner organizations of MoBCI are a diverse group of conservation-minded bird watchers, hunters, business owners, academicians, state and federal professionals, and citizens committed to working together to sustain healthy habitats for the benefit of resident and migrant birds in Missouri and for the enjoyment and economic benefit of Missouri citizens.

The MoBCI was formally established August 16, 2003 following the written commitment of 28 organizations to unite in the pursuit of integrated all-bird conservation. A series of communication and consensus building meetings preceded MoBCI’s official formation. MoBCI members realize that our respective organizational interests in birds are varied, but also that these diverse interests, if unified, represent a powerful force of action and voice on behalf of birds and their habitats. Further, member organizations recognize that much more can be accomplished if we jointly engage in what are truly common goals. Moreover, communication and cooperation promote an understanding of our respective individual and organizational interests in birds. Accompanying that understanding is appreciation for the motivations of others.

MoBCI is Missouri’s “step down” of the hemispheric and international integrated bird conservation partnership—the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). The NABCI vision is one where “Populations and habitats of North America’s birds are protected, restored, and enhanced through coordinated efforts at international, national, regional, state, and local levels, guided by sound science and effective management.” Like the NABCI, the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative is about conserving birds across geopolitical boundaries, across taxonomic groups, and across landscapes. MoBCI is a partnership designed for delivery of conservation at the state and local levels. Annually, Missouri Governor’s Proclamations celebrate International Migratory Bird Day and the highly successful MoBCI partnership. A MoBCI Foundation has been formed to even further advance bird conservation efforts in Missouri into the future.

So successful is this partnership that MoBCI received a national award, entitled “2008 Outstanding Contributions to Bird Conservation,” from the NABCI/Association of Joint Venture Management Boards. MoBCI continues to demonstrate how local/state level bird conservation partnerships can be effective and transform opportunities into on-the-ground accomplishments. Perhaps most importantly, MoBCI has created a forum for diverse bird interests to know and better appreciate one another, creating an atmosphere and attitude that so much more can be achieved for bird conservation when working as a team.



Sequester: A New Four Letter Word

By Charley Berwick, Chair

Sequester, or sequestration; I am aware, by now, that most people not only didn't know how to spell it, most of us didn't even know what it meant. Sequestration sounds a lot like castration, and that is not a good feeling in any case. Well, now, whether we know how to spell, or pronounce the word, we do know what it means, and it still doesn't feel good. So, over the past year, we have anxiously waited to see what impact it was going to have on MoBCI's effort to continue to fund bird habitat restoration projects. The organizations we provide funds too were not having a good time waiting either. Some of the proposed projects were new on the ground projects, but several were multi-year projects that were well on the way of accomplishing wonderful, useful habitat restoration. We all shared the same stomach ache medication.

However; there is good news in these weeds. There were a lot of people in MoBCI, and in other Federal, and State government agencies, non-government, non-profit environmental organizations, and other private citizens committed to the objective of acquiring bird habitat restoration funds for this year. As a result of those efforts, though a bit late in this fiscal year, funds did become available, and requests for proposals were sent out for the FY2013 funding of projects. Even more good news, as a result of due diligence by leadership within the Missouri Department of Conservation, funding has already been committed for FY2014.

I remember last year's conference so very clearly. There were personnel changes taking place in the pipeline that directs the funding that comes to MoBCI in order for our partnership organization to be able to provide grants that will support bird habitat restoration to take place. Ms Jennifer Battson, MDC's Acting Wildlife Division Chief was in attendance. During our business session, her hand went up, and she advised our group that she would be an active participant on our Steering Committee. Now that was a great feeling. Since that time, she has been selected as the Chief for the Wildlife Division, and not only that, she very much kept her commitment, and has been a dynamic leader in our group.

At this time last year we also had lost a key person from our committee as a result of Gene Gardner's retirement from MDC. He had been a stellar secretary of our meetings, and the key supervisor within the MDC Wildlife Division that kept the funding, and projects flowing smoothly through all the complex steps that grant funding must go through. However, we were fortunate to have Norman Murray selected to replace Gene and continue the MoBCI grant program without missing a beat!



This last year was a year for many more changes as well! As your outgoing Chair, I just want to say what a pleasure it has been to work with so many good folks on the Steering Committee! I want to recognize our MoBCI leadership team for the past year, many of whom will continue their service in the coming year; I mentioned Jennifer Battson earlier, but my sincere thanks also goes to Debra Lee, John Burk, Ted Cooper, Allison Vaughn, Denny Donnell, Dave Graber, Susan Hazelwood, Steve Heying, Doug Ladd, Wayne Morton, Steve Mowry, Frank Oberle, Tony Robyn, Linda Tossing, Kelly Srigley-Werner, and Theresa Davidson. We also want to recognize Jerry Wade, representing the MoBCI Foundation – Jerry is not actually on the Steering Committee, but we still think of him as part of our team!

I would also like to recognize those folks who have worked hard for MoBCI for many years, but will no longer be on the Steering Committee – and we also welcome their replacements . . .

- 1) Mike Currier has retired from Missouri Department of Natural Resources - and we have already welcomed Allison Vaughn to our leadership group in place of Mike;
- 2) Steve Mowry, who represented the Missouri Prairie Foundation, was a founding member of MoBCI and long-standing Steering Committee member – he is being replaced by Rick Thom, who comes to us after retiring from the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation;
- 3) Tony Robyn, who was representing Audubon Missouri, has moved on and we welcome Lane Richter, from the Audubon Center at Riverlands, to represent Audubon;
- 4) Frank Oberle, who represented the Missouri Native Seed Association, was a faithful leader for many years on the Steering Committee, but has decided not to return to service – no replacement has stepped forward from the MO Native Seed Association yet;
- 5) Alan Leary, who was formerly working for Missouri Department of Transportation, took a job with Missouri Department of Conservation, so he had to give up his Steering Committee appointment – Al's replacement has not yet been named from MoDOT;

There have also been some other new additions to the Steering Committee that you might not know about, and we welcome them:

- 1) I already mentioned Gene Gardner's retirement earlier, but he didn't get away! The Missouri River Bird Observatory is a new organization member of the Steering Committee, and Gene is once again going to be on the Steering Committee as the representative for MRBO.

There may be some more surprises or news about the Steering Committee so be sure to remain on the edge of your seats during the General Assembly – which will immediately follow my remarks.

So Sequester, Sequestration, or even Castration, just move out of the way! Throughout these trying and often uncertain times, MoBCI remains a very strong and viable partnership!

Our entire Steering Committee, you might say “new and improved” Steering Committee, and all of our outstanding 60+ member organizations – represented by all of you here this morning – is plowing full steam ahead and we will continue doing GREAT things for bird conservation.

Our four letter word is “BEST” – we have the BEST group of people and organizations of all!



The Partnering Organizations of the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative!

Academy of Science of St. Louis
*American Bird Conservancy/Central Hardwoods
Joint Venture*
Audubon Missouri
Audubon Society of Missouri
Audubon Society, Chariton Valley Chapter
Audubon Society, Columbia Chapter
Audubon Society, Grand River Chapter
*Audubon Society, Greater Kansas City Chapter,
Burroughs Audubon Society*
Audubon Society, Greater Ozarks Chapter
Audubon Society, Midland Empire Chapter
Audubon Society, River Bluffs Chapter
Audubon Society, St. Louis Chapter
Avian Conservation Alliance
City of Des Peres Parks & Recreation Department
*Clay County Dept. of Parks, Recreation
& Historic Sites*
Coldwater Outing and Game Preserve
Conservation Federation of Missouri
Ducks Unlimited
Eleven Point River Conservancy
Forest Park Forever
Forrest Keeling Nursery
Greenbelt Land Trust of Mid-Missouri
Kansas City Wildlands/Bridging The Gap
LaBarque Watershed Stream Team Association
L-A-D Foundation
Litzsinger Road Ecology Center
Mark Twain National Forest, USDA Forest Service
Massasauga Flats, LLC
Missouri Army National Guard
Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation
Missouri Department of Conservation
*Missouri Department of Natural Resources,
Division of State Parks*
Missouri Department of Transportation
Missouri Falconers Association
Missouri Native Plant Society, Hawthorn Chapter
Missouri Master Naturalists
Missouri Master Naturalist, Boone's Lick Chapter
Missouri Master Naturalist, Hi Lonesome Chapter
*Missouri Master Naturalist, Springfield Plateau
Chapter*

Missouri Native Seed Association
Missouri Park and Recreation Association
Missouri Prairie Foundation
*Missouri Quail & Upland Wildlife Federation
Grouse Chapter*
Missouri River Bird Observatory
National Wild Turkey Federation, MO Chapter
*North American Grouse Partnership,
Missouri Chapter*
Ozark Center for Wildlife Research
Ozark National Scenic Riverways
Ozark Regional Land Trust, Inc.
Pheasants Forever
Quail Forever
Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation Inc.
Sierra Club, Ozark Chapter
The Nature Conservancy, Missouri Field Office
*University of Missouri-Columbia,
School of Natural Resources*
*U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
Big Muddy National Fish & Wildlife Refuge*
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
*U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Great River/
Clarence Cannon National Fish & Wildlife Refuge*
*U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
Mingo National Fish & Wildlife Refuge*
*U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
Missouri Private Lands Office*
*U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
Squaw Creek National Fish & Wildlife Refuge*
*U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Swan Lake National
Fish & Wildlife Refuge*
*Watershed Institute, Inc and
The Watershed Land Trust*
Webster Groves Nature Study Society
Wild Birds for the 21st Century
World Bird Sanctuary



All Uncertainty Aside – the MoBCI Grant Program is Solid!

by Kelly Sullens, Missouri Department of Conservation

Although the FY13 federal budget is still uncertain, the Missouri Department of Conservation (Department) committed to funding Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) projects at \$95,000, the same level as previous years, regardless of the reimbursement amount received through State Wildlife Grants. The budget uncertainty caused a delay in the proposal process but seven projects were funded (out of eight proposals submitted with requests for nearly \$120,000). These projects will be conducted during the period of July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014.

MoBCI has agreed to return the proposal process to occur in the fall as usual. Proposals will be considered and ranked and the number of projects funded will be determined once the Department's budget is finalized. Thanks to all who submitted proposals and we hope you and others continue to help MoBCI enhance Missouri's bird habitat through this opportunity. Thanks also to the Department for providing funding to allow the MoBCI successes to continue to increase.

Below are summaries of the projects that are funded for the next year:

Current River State Park Woodland and Glade Restoration Project

MoBCI Grant \$7,000: Matching Funds estimated \$5,000

Partnering Organizations: Department of Natural Resources (lead), Audubon Society, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

Current River State Park (831 ac.) is located in the deeply dissected and heavily wooded Current River valley near Eminence. The project would provide funds to hire a four person AmeriCorps crew for five weeks to conduct cedar removal in a nine acre dry dolomite woodland-glade complex, and will provide funding for fireline installation and implementation of prescribed fire at Current River State Park.

Lake of the Ozarks State Park Upland Flatwoods Restoration Project

MoBCI Grant \$6,800: Matching Funds estimated \$2,400

Partnering Organizations: Department of Natural Resources (lead), Columbia Audubon Society, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

Lake of the Ozarks State Park (approx. 17,600 ac.) is located in the northern reaches of the Ozark Highlands in the Osage River Basin in Osage Beach, spanning Miller and Camden Counties. This project would provide funds to hire two stewardship crew members for 320 hours each to conduct small brush removal from a 252-acre upland flatwoods woodland system at Ozark Caverns in Lake of the Ozarks State Park. Crew members will also assist with prescribed fire implementation at the park. Funding will allow for the purchase of chainsaw chains, herbicide, 2-cycle oil and bar oil during the duration of the project.



Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge – Bottomland Forest Habitat Improvement and Restoration Project

MoBCI Grant \$18,800: Matching Funds estimated \$27,430

Partnering Organizations: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (lead), Grand River Audubon Society, Missouri Western State University Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is located in Chariton County near Sumner, Missouri, within the Lower Grand River Conservation Opportunity Area. The NWR contains more than 11,000 acres of bottomland forest, grasslands, and wetlands within the Grand River floodplain of north central Missouri. The funding will be utilized to restore native bottomland forest habitat for birds and other important wildlife that migrate through or reside at Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Restoration will be accomplished by eliminating undesirable, shade-tolerant species to encourage oak and hickory regeneration, which will provide food and habitat for target species. Poor quality trees will also be removed to increase light infiltration into the understory for young oak and hickory tree regeneration and forb growth.

Bird Habitat Restoration at Stilwell Prairie in the Marmaton/Wah’Kon-Tah Conservation Opportunity Area

MoBCI Grant \$20,000: Matching Funds estimated \$21,920

Partnering Organizations: Missouri Prairie Foundation (lead), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Missouri Private Lands Office, Audubon Society of Missouri, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

Stilwell Prairie is in west-central Vernon County and lies within the Marmaton/Wah’Kon-Tah Conservation Opportunity Area. Funding will allow the Missouri Prairie Foundation to improve prairie and other native grassland habitat by continuing the on-going, assertive restoration work at its 376-acre Stilwell Prairie.

Grassland Management to Improve Habitat and Survivability for Greater Prairie Chickens and other Declining Grassland Bird Species at Dunn Ranch

MoBCI Grant \$20,000: Matching Funds estimated \$22,500

Partnering Organizations: The Nature Conservancy (lead), Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Blank Park Zoo, The Nature Conservancy in Iowa, Iowa State University, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

The project area is the 70,000-acre Grand River Grassland (GRG) located in northern Harrison County, Missouri and southern Ringgold County, Iowa. Funding will be utilized to implement the suggestions made by MDC’s Prairie Chicken Recover Team to improve the habitat for and reduce the mortality of greater prairie chickens and other grassland dependent bird species.



Savanna and Open Woodland Restoration in Northeast Missouri and Southeast Iowa

MoBCI Grant \$6,000: Matching Funds estimated \$6,000

Partnering Organizations: National Wild Turkey Federation (lead), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

The project area includes portions of Adair, Putnam, Schuyler and Sullivan Counties and also contains the Mystic Plains, Thousand Hills and Union Ridge Conservation Opportunity Areas. The purpose of the project is to sustain a successful private lands cost share program that has been providing funding for habitat enhancement practices that favor the restoration and maintenance of savanna and open woodland habitat types since 2009. This project will hopefully continue to create interest in, and development of a true bi-state initiative involving multiple agency and organizational partners in Missouri and Iowa.

River Hills Forest Habitat Project

MoBCI Grant \$20,000: Matching Funds estimated \$15,000

Partnering Organizations: Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation (lead), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, Enterprise Leasing, and Missouri Department of Conservation.

The River Hills Project Area in Central Missouri includes portions of Callaway, Montgomery and Warren Counties. The funding will be used to continue to encourage private landowners in the River Hills Habitat project area through cost share funding and educational efforts to help achieve a goal of maintaining 10-15% of the project area in a regenerating oak-hickory forest condition. Currently, approximately 3% of the forest in the project area is in this age class state.

**Locust Creek Wetland Restoration Project –
A Welcome Addition to
Pershing State Park**

**By
Christopher Crabtree
Natural Resources Steward
Missouri Department of Natural Resources**



Missouri Department of Conservation Photo Gallery

The Locust Creek Wetland Restoration Project, one of eight MoBCI grant funded projects of 2012, is working to establish a mosaic of wet bottomland prairie, marsh, shrub swamp and forest within recently acquired lands adjacent to Pershing State Park, and to preserve these existing natural community types within the park. Lying within the Central Dissected Till Plains of north-central Missouri, Pershing State Park stands as a thriving reminder of the pre-settlement landscape that comprised the wide river bottoms of the northern prairies. The park is in close proximity to Fountain Grove Conservation Area, Yellow Creek Conservation Area, and Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge, which together create the core of the Lower Grand River Conservation Opportunity Area. This area, known for its abundant waterfowl, is one of the largest remnant riverine wetland systems remaining in Missouri. It is home to rare and endangered species as well as natural communities. From *Carex arkansana* and the western massasauga at home in the last of the wet prairies to the ostrich fern unfurling in dappled sunlight and the Indiana bat swiftly maneuvering between the canopy within and around the bottomland forest of an unchannelized section of stream, all are part of the diverse nature of north Missouri, and all are holding on in small refuges.

At approximately 5,400 acres, Pershing State Park hosts a rich display of natural communities. One of the many great features of the park is Locust Creek Prairie, roughly 900 acres of wet and wet bottomland prairie that is one of the last and largest in the state. This prairie, dominated by prairie cordgrass, sedges, bulrush, bur-reed, and tall-flowering forbs, is awe-inspiring in its extent. The park also contains Locust Creek Natural Area, 330 acres of bottomland floodplain woodlands and forest with associated oxbow sloughs along Locust Creek. Other portions of the park rise in the landscape and are composed of dry and dry-mesic woodlands and savanna. In total, these areas represent the historic landscape of north Missouri.

Prior to the 2012 MoBCI grant, approximately 1,449 acres that border the park was purchased for better floodwater management, protection of the park's natural resources, and for the opportunity to expand the existing natural communities within the floodplain. This newly acquired land, once known as the Zell Farm, consists of two parcels located on northwest and southeast sides of the park (1,147 and 302 acres respectively). Shortly after the purchase, work began to reclaim the lands that were long under agricultural production and form them back to a more natural floodplain topography with minor



depressions, terraces, remnant oxbows, and meander scars. Minor flood control structures were also installed to mitigate heavy sedimentation of the area. The next step was to begin the arduous task of re-vegetation in conformity with the micro-topography, hydrology, soils, and site specific floral communities. Both portions of the restoration areas will contain a mosaic of bottomland prairie, marsh, shrub swamp and bottomland forest.



During the late summer of 2012, more than 60 lbs. of wet prairie and marsh seed were harvested from areas of Pershing State Park. This seed, composed of numerous *Carex* species, common bur-reed, and *Polygonum* species, was sewn during winter on portions of both Zell Tracts. After a very wet spring that saw Locust Creek at near-record flood stage, AmeriCorps crews were able to get to work for multiple weeks transplanting prairie cordgrass plugs onto the northwest Zell Tract and cutting woody species that were encroaching into the wet prairie.

This work was made possible with funding from the MoBCI grant. This summer and fall, the grant will allow us to make additional seed collections, continue prairie cordgrass plantings, construct fire-lines, and work on invasive tree removal.

Already the restoration areas are being populated by numerous species, birds especially. During field trips this past spring, Paul McKenzie, US Fish & Wildlife Service, documented western sandpiper, Baird's sandpiper, pectoral sandpiper, white-rumped sandpiper, least sandpiper, American golden plover, greater and lesser yellowlegs, fish crow, and many more. American bitterns were observed by Missouri State Park staff and this past winter and early spring, thousands of ducks were using the deeper pools throughout the area. Steve Buback, MDC natural history biologist, found *Carex arkansana* already establishing itself on the area in mid-June. It is with proper planning, management, and continued perseverance in restoring this floodplain that we will continue to see these organisms emerge and these communities begin to take form.

In this area that is shaped by flood and fire, some of these communities will naturally and easily take hold while others, such as the wet prairie, will need much attention to control woody and exotic species invasion during this initial phase. In these first years, unwanted invaders will be managed mechanically, chemically, and with fire as the plant communities sort and establish themselves. As prairie vegetation becomes well established and creates continuous and densely packed fuels, prescribed fire will become the main management tool for the area.





These restoration efforts could not be done without the assistance of a MoBCI grant, matching funds from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and additional funding from Audubon Society of Missouri. The Locust Creek Wetland Restoration Project will have long-term benefits not simply for Missouri State Parks, but for the Locust Creek watershed, Lower Grand River Conservation Opportunity Area, Audubon's Lower Grand River Important Bird Area, the western massasauga, the Indiana bat, numerous shorebirds, songbirds and waterfowl, all of the other biota that interacts to create a floodplain prairie and forest system, and the citizens of Missouri.



A Celebration of Migratory Bird Day

2013 Governor's Proclamation
Recognizing the Trumpeter Swan

Proclamation Presented by
First Lady, Georganne Wheeler Nixon

BIRD CONSERVATION DAY IN MISSOURI (May 11, 2013)

By Debra Lee

In celebration of Migratory Bird Day, the second Saturday in May, Governor Jay Nixon signed a Proclamation recognizing the Trumpeter Swan as the official “Bird of the Year” for Missouri. First Lady Georganne Wheeler Nixon presented the proclamation to several members of the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative Steering Committee that were on hand for the event at Ha Ha Tonka State Park. The event was held in a glade that had been restored with grant-funding provided by MoBCI. It was a great opportunity to share a bird watching experience with Missouri's First Lady and to showcase work that is made possible by a cooperative effort of many entities utilizing MoBCI grants. The “early bird” Steering Committee and other invited guests met at 7:00 a.m. at the Acorn trailhead parking lot, Ha Ha Tonka State Park, for a “Birds and Botany” field tour and to view MoBCI-funded glade restoration projects on the Oak Woodland Natural Area, Spencer Creek Glade, and Hiembaugh Hill Glade.

This year the steering committee selected the Trumpeter Swan to be the migratory Bird of the Year for the remarkable conservation successes to recover this species and the wetlands it depends on, as well as the magnificent beauty it brings to Missouri. Migratory Bird Day is celebrated in May in the U.S. and Canada and in October in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean each year. For more information on Migratory Bird Day, please visit:

<http://www.fws.gov/birds/documents/CelebratingIMB D05.pdf>



MoBCI administers a competitive Grant Program (with funds from Missouri Department of Conservation and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and matching funds from private and non-profit organizations), with a

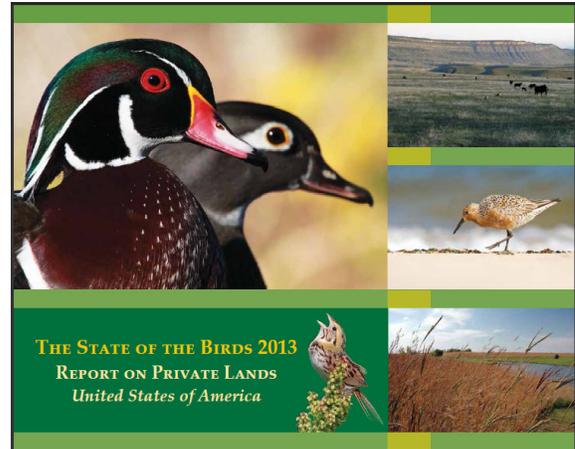


total investment in the grant program that has resulted in more than \$4M of on-the-ground habitat work since 2004. See the projects for 2014 described above.

REPORT NOW AVAILABLE

The State of our Nation's Birds on Private Lands

*This fourth State of the Birds Report
highlights the enormous contributions
private landowners make to bird and
habitat conservation.*



Source: <http://mobci.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/The-State-of-the-Birds-2013-Report-on-Private-Lands-United-States-of-America.pdf>

*"When land does well for its owner, and the owner does well by his land; when both end up better by reason of their partnership, we have conservation."
—Aldo Leopold*

The Farmer as a Conservationist

Legendary conservationist Aldo Leopold began his career in the U.S. Forest Service in the Southwest, where he learned about resource management on public lands. But as he returned to the Midwest where he was raised—and observed the tragedy of the Dust Bowl and a raft of New Deal programs aiming to restore farmlands—he came to understand how conservation of complete ecosystems is inextricably linked to conservation on private lands. Leopold wrote, "All the regulations in the world will not save our game unless the farmer sees fit to leave his land in a habitable condition for game." Today Leopold's words could be adapted more broadly to all private landowners and all wildlife, especially for birds. Half of the more than 200 American bird species analyzed in this report have 50% or more of their distributions on private lands. About 90% of the Prairie Pothole Region (our nation's most productive waterfowl breeding grounds) is in private ownership. The story is similar for grasslands and eastern forest lands—both 85% privately owned, with greater than 80% of bird distributions on private lands.

This fourth State of the Birds report is the nation's first review of bird distribution and conservation opportunities on private lands. In this report, you'll read about threatened bird populations supported almost entirely by private landowners, like the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler of central Texas. You'll also read about new models of win-win conservation on working lands, such as the Sage Grouse Initiative, where more than 700 landowners have joined an effort to manage ranchlands across 2 million acres in ways that conserve habitat—and create more nutritious forage for livestock in the process. This report celebrates the many landowners across our nation who are exemplary stewards of habitat for birds, as well as clean air and water for their fellow Americans. Our report comes at a time when private



lands conservation policy and funding is being considered for the future, and we hope our information and analysis will contribute to those efforts.

Private lands conservation takes many forms, such as incentives from government programs, technical assistance from university extension services, and easements brokered by nonprofit groups. In all cases, though, the most crucial component is the eager, conservation-minded landowner. Thankfully, private landowners are volunteering to protect and restore the habitat functions of their lands. The demand from landowners willing to partner in conservation efforts is so great, in fact, it far outstrips the current availability of programs and initiatives. Government budgets may be tight, but this report demonstrates that private lands conservation is cost-efficient. Indeed, when government resources are paired with local and private resources in partnership with landowners, the result on the ground is often magnified— that ideal outcome where $1+1=3$. This report appeals to America’s land ethic. “The landscape of any farm is the owner’s portrait of himself,” wrote Leopold. This report shows that private lands have critical conservation value, and that landowners can measure their yield not only in bushels and head and cords, but also in bluebirds, hawks, and canvasbacks.

Overview

The State of our Nation’s Birds on Private Lands, this fourth State of the Birds report, highlights the enormous contributions private landowners make to bird and habitat conservation, and opportunities for increased contributions. Roughly 60% of the land area in the United States (1.43 billion acres) is privately owned by millions of individuals, families, organizations, and corporations, including 2 million ranchers and farmers and about 10 million woodland owners. More than 100 species have 50% or more of their U.S. breeding distributions on private lands. Birds are important indicators of the health of our environment. To assess bird populations and conservation opportunities on private lands across the nation, we combined the latest eBird distribution data with land ownership data from the Protected Areas Database of the U.S. As in past reports, we focused on species dependent on a single primary habitat, or habitat obligates. Our results emphasize the high dependence on private lands among grassland, wetland, and eastern forest birds, with important conservation opportunities existing in all habitats. Many conservation programs available to private landowners offer win-win opportunities to implement land management practices that benefit birds and landowners. The success stories highlighted in this report demonstrate that voluntary private landowner efforts can yield real and meaningful bird conservation results.

Included a Special - Thank You to eBird Volunteers

Each State of the Birds report has relied on bird monitoring data collected by volunteers throughout the U.S. Our understanding of bird distributions has greatly improved thanks to the thousands of bird watchers who have contributed observations to www.eBird.org. This effort is especially important for tracking seasonal and fine-scale changes in bird distributions, which is not possible with other bird monitoring programs. However, even this massive observation network provides only imperfect information for assessing the year-round status of birds in remote parts of the U.S., including Alaska, Hawaii, and island territories.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Source: American Bird Conservancy, March 2013



The Impact of the Nation's Most Widely Used Insecticides on Birds

By Dr. Pierre Mineau and Cynthia Palmer

As little as 1/10th of a corn seed per day during egg-laying season is all that is needed to affect reproduction with any of the neonicotinoids registered to date.

SYNOPSIS

First introduced in the 1990s in response to widespread pest resistance as well as health objections to older pesticides, the neonicotinoid insecticides quickly sailed to the top slot in global pesticide markets. Now the most widely-used insecticides in the world, it is difficult to find pest control commodities that do not contain one or several of the neonicotinoid insecticides. California alone has registered nearly 300 neonicotinoid products.

Neonicotinoids' toxicity to bees and other insects has brought them the most attention so far and has dominated recent concerns of regulatory institutions worldwide. In the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency's registration review of the neonicotinoids is focused on the threat to insect pollinators. The seriousness of this issue should not be underestimated, as one-third of the U.S. diet depends on these insect pollinators.

But much more is at stake. The environmental persistence of the neonicotinoids, their propensity for runoff and for groundwater infiltration, and their cumulative and largely irreversible mode of action in invertebrates raise environmental concerns that go well beyond bees. This report reviews the effects on avian species and concludes that neonicotinoids are lethal to birds as well as to the aquatic systems on which they depend. A single corn kernel coated with a neonicotinoid can kill a songbird. Even a tiny grain of wheat or canola treated with the oldest neonicotinoid, imidacloprid, can poison a bird. As little as 1/10th of a corn seed per day during egg-laying season is all that is needed to affect reproduction with any of the neonicotinoids registered to date. Birds depend heavily on the aquatic systems at the bottom of the food chain. But neonicotinoid contamination levels in surface and groundwater in the US and around the world are strikingly high, already beyond the threshold found to kill many aquatic invertebrates. EPA risk assessments have greatly underestimated this risk, using scientifically unsound, outdated methodology that has more to do with a game of chance than with a rigorous scientific process. Major risk concerns raised by scientists both inside and outside the agency appear to have gone unheeded in agency registration decisions. The older insecticides that the neonicotinoids largely replaced – including organophosphates such as diazinon and chlorpyrifos, and carbamates such as carbofuran and methomyl – were highly damaging to people and wildlife. What is so disturbing is that in their rush to register alternatives, regulators have approved more and more neonicotinoid products for

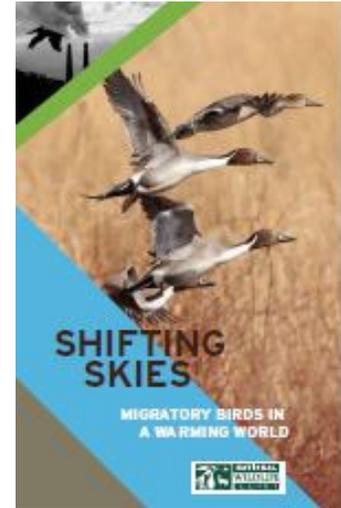


an ever-growing number of uses without regard to the red flags raised by their experts concerning this persistent, cumulative, irreversibly-acting new class of pesticides. Neonicotinoids are currently under registration review by EPA. The Agency's decision to approve, restrict, suspend, or cancel these powerful insecticides will have profound environmental and economic impact. We have a small window of opportunity in which to act; EPA's next review of this class of pesticides will not occur for at least 15 years, and the damage done in those intervening years will be irreversible. The results of this study and others have led American Bird Conservancy and partners in the National Pesticide Reform Coalition to urge the EPA to take the following actions:

The neonicotinoids represent a relatively new group of insecticides. They were introduced in the early 1990s to counter widespread resistance in insect pests and increasing health and safety objections to the organophosphorous insecticides. Although of lower acute toxicity to vertebrates than the latter, the neonicotinoids' longer persistence, high water solubility, runoff and leaching potential as well as their very high toxicity to pollinators are placing them under increasing public and political scrutiny, especially now that they have become the most widely used pesticides in the world. Their toxicity to pollinators has brought them the most attention so far and has dominated the recent concerns of regulatory institutions worldwide.

The intent of this report is to review the risk that neonicotinoids pose to birds. Birds have borne more than their fair share of impacts from pesticides – from the early issues of eggshell thinning with DDT to the extensive mortality caused by the organophosphorous and carbamate insecticides that followed. Some researchers have suggested that birds may already be affected by neonicotinoids and that, at least in Europe, bird population declines can be blamed on these popular insecticides. The main products reviewed here are acetamiprid, imidacloprid, thiacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam. Minor compounds include dinotefuran, nitenpyram and nithiazine. For the sake of comparison, this report will discuss, where appropriate, a number of older insecticides that the neonicotinoids have replaced. This includes the organophosphorous insecticides diazinon, chlorpyrifos, malathion, terbufos and methamidophos, the carbamate insecticides carbofuran, methomyl, the pyrethroids tefluthrin and deltamethrin as well as the seed treatment insecticide carbathiin.

Report: Climate Change Threatens
Migratory Birds with Shifting Skies
Urgent Action Needed to Protect Birds
and their Habitats



Source: <http://www.nwf.org/News-and-Magazines/Media-Center/News-by-Topic/Global-Warming/2013/06-18-13-Climate-Change-Threatens-Migratory-Birds-with-Shifting-Skies.aspx>

Climate change is altering and destroying important habitats that America's migratory birds depend on and urgent action is needed to change that dangerous flight path, according to a new report released today by the National Wildlife Federation. *Shifting Skies: Migratory Birds in a Warming World* details how a warming climate could lead to a decline in some bird populations and even some extinctions if action is not taken to curb carbon pollution and adopt climate-smart conservation strategies.

"From waterfowl to songbirds to shorebirds, the climate crisis is the most serious threat this century facing America's migratory birds," said Larry Schweiger, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation. "We need urgent action at the local, state and federal levels to cut carbon pollution and confront the changes we're already seeing."

Shifting Skies explains that migratory birds face unique challenges because each season they require different places to live, often thousands of miles apart, to raise their young, migrate and overwinter. At least 350 species in North America fly to South or Central America every fall and return in the spring. The report describes how climate change is adversely affecting bird behavior and includes specific examples in many regions of the U.S.:

- Birds' ranges are shifting and in some cases, contracting. 177 of 305 species tracked have shifted their centers of abundance during the winter northward by 35 miles on average in the past four decades.
 - Coastal wetlands and beach habitats, home to birds like king rails and piping plovers, are disappearing, inundated by sea level rise.
 - Global warming is exacerbating pests and disease, such as mountain pine beetle epidemics that have devastated many western forests.
 - Changing precipitation patterns threaten the Midwest's prairie pothole region, known as "America's duck factory." Many ducks such as mallards and pintails face disappearing breeding habitat.
- "A key example of a bird vulnerable to climate change is the red knot, a common shorebird on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts," said Doug Inkley, the National Wildlife Federation's senior scientist. "Some



migrate as far as 9,300 miles from their Arctic breeding grounds to the southernmost tip of South America where they overwinter. But in Delaware Bay, where virtually the entire Atlantic red knot population goes to fatten up on horseshoe crab eggs for the energy they need to finish their arduous journey back to their Arctic breeding habitats, there are signs climate change is throwing off that critical timing between red knot arrival and horseshoe crab egg laying. That's what we're worried about here. Break just one link of the chain and the entire species is in grave danger."

The National Wildlife Federation report recommends concrete steps to curb climate change and its impacts on migratory birds, such as sea level rise, wildfires, drought and more extreme weather events.

- Reduce carbon pollution under the Clean Air Act. While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's authority to regulate industrial carbon pollution has been approved by the Supreme Court and repeatedly upheld by Congress, the Obama administration has not yet set carbon pollution limits. It's time to act.
- Invest in clean energy and reduce dependence on dirty fuels. Properly-sited wind, solar, geothermal and sustainable bioenergy will reduce our consumption of carbon-polluting fuels like coal, oil, tar sands and natural gas, which are driving climate change.
- Protect and restore natural carbon sinks. Restoring the ability of farms, forests and other natural lands to absorb and store carbon provides increased benefits to birds and other wildlife by providing important habitat, as well as helping to mitigate climate change.
- Use climate-smart conservation strategies to protect sensitive habitats and restore degraded areas. Land and water protection efforts increasingly will need to take future climate projections into account to ensure long-term value to birds and other wildlife. Degraded landscapes need to be restored, and citizens can take action to provide important habitat through backyard and schoolyard habitat programs.

"From backyard wildlife watchers to hunters in their duck blinds, unless we take action now, Americans across the country are going to be asking 'what happened to all the birds,'" said Dr. Alan Wentz, retired chief conservation officer of Ducks Unlimited and current board member of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. "We know the steps we need to take to safeguard not just birds but all wildlife, our communities, and current and future generations of Americans from climate change. Now it's time for action."

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), 2012 was America's hottest year on record. Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels hit 400 parts per million in May, a concentration not seen on Earth for 3 million years.

"Targeted investments in climate-smart conservation strategies can deliver huge returns for America's communities and wildlife," said Lynn Scarlett, former Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer of the Interior Department from 2005 to 2009. "We'll need to work together to solve these challenges, not just across local, state, and federal boundaries, but across party lines."

In January, the National Wildlife Federation issued a report on how the climate crisis is impacting America's wildlife. Read *Wildlife in a Warming World* at NWF.org/ClimateCrisis.



*PEREGRINE FALCON NESTS
IN KANSAS CITY AREA
PRODUCE 13 YOUNG BIRDS*

BY BILL GRAHAM

Photo by Jim Rathert, courtesy Missouri Department of Conservation.

Source: <http://mdc.mo.gov/newsroom/peregrine-falcon-nests-kansas-city-area-produce-13-young-birds>

Kansas City, Mo. – Peregrine falcons nesting high atop buildings and power plant smokestacks in the Kansas City area produced 13 offspring this spring. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and cooperating partners monitor five sites in the metro area where nest boxes are placed on structures.

A falcon pair used a nest box on a ledge at Commerce Tower in Downtown Kansas City to raise three chicks. They fledged (flew for the first time) in June. One young bird glided to the sidewalk. The falcon was found and recovered by Joe DeBold, an MDC urban wildlife biologist. DeBold banded the bird and released it again atop the skyscraper. It successfully flew on the second try.

The public was able to watch the falcon nest at Commerce Tower via a camera and web link. Viewers saw parents sheltering eggs and newborn chicks through sleet, snow and rain. Yet the chicks survived. Parents would arrive at the nest and feed the young. DeBold said plans call for the nest to be offered for web viewing again next year.

The Kansas City Power & Light Co. provides nest boxes on smokestacks at the Iatan, Hawthorne and Sibley power plants that are near the Missouri River in the metro area. Four chicks fledged at the Iatan site and three chicks fledged at Sibley. Eggs at the Hawthorne site did not hatch. But that nest has been successful in the past and DeBold expects it will be again in future years.

A video is available on You Tube of biologists removing peregrine falcon chicks from the nest at the Iatan Power Plant and placing leg bands on the young birds. It is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlizWc7tYqE>. The leg bands help biologists track peregrine falcon movements and survival as adults.



Falcons nesting in a box placed atop the American Century Investments building near the Country Club Plaza produced three chicks that fledged successfully.

Ledges on cliffs and bluffs were the original nesting sites of peregrine falcons. They can dive at more than 200 mph when full grown, plucking birds from the sky or rodents from the ground for food. The high-flying raptors are endangered in Missouri. But restoration programs like the nest boxes placed on tall structures is helping them recover. The recovery program began in Kansas City in 1991.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Getting Kids Involved
Explore the World of Birds with
Books & Related Activities



Source: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/education/kids>

Resources for kids, families, & anyone who wants to learn more about birds and science.

This site is a great resource for books and book activity pages, listed by topic, on Migration, Conservation (Endangered Birds, Habitat), Reproduction (Nests, Eggs), Adaptations (Beaks, Wings), Fables from Other Cultures, Poetry, and much more.

The provide some wonderful tips for helping kids learn to identify birds and suggest ways to get kids outside to watch birds for fun—and contribute to science!



*Our Neighbors in
Nebraska are
“Pecking Away”
at Bird Education and
Awareness for Kids!*

Source: <http://www.projectbeak.org/index.htm>

NEW to Nebraska! Bird Education and Awareness for Kids

What is Project BEAK?

Project BEAK is an interactive, web-based curriculum that contains scientifically accurate information about avian conservation, avian form, function and other adaptations that help birds survive, Nebraska’s unique avian biodiversity, Nebraska’s threatened and endangered birds, plus video clips, interactive games, quizzes and diagrams, additional resources and links, and classroom lesson plans. The curriculum is presented in modules, each containing subsections and assessment tools, which are targeted at the 5-8 grade level. However, anyone can glean information from the units, whether it’s from the unit covering Adaptations, Habitats, Birds and Humans, or Threatened and Endangered Species.

Coming to a classroom near you!!

A pocket guide to bird species of concern, containing photographs, range maps, and a brief life history description will be available in spring of 2010. Species descriptions will be written and targeted at the 5th grade level, but suitable for the general public as well. The pocket guide will be a great resource for conservation organizations to distribute to interested/participating landowners, and will also be used as an incentive for school teachers to utilize and evaluate the curriculum.

How did this get started?

The Education Workgroup of the Nebraska Bird Partnership (NBP) felt that the more students understand and are connected to the places where they live, the more they would care about what happens on the land. Youth and adults need to understand that they can make a difference for bird conservation and as educators it is our responsibility to show them how.

The NPABC Education Workgroup consulted with educators about how best to meet the need for more educational materials related to Nebraska’s eco-regions and native species. Educators were most interested in interactive materials and classroom activities designed to meet State Teaching Standards.

The Education Workgroup, in cooperation with Nebraska Educational Television, with funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Nebraska Wildlife Conservation Fund (Nongame Check-off), designed and created Project BEAK. Members of the NBP



Education Workgroup, including teachers, resource professionals, ornithologists, and Educational Service Unit (ESU) staff, assisted in the development and/ or reviewed content for Project BEAK.