

Victory on Gulf Islands Road Reconstruction Plan

ABC along with other groups, notably the Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines at Western Carolina University, has helped prevent the reconstruction of two roads in a manner that would have resulted in significant damage to key shorebird habitat. Gulf Islands National Seashore (GINS) is a low barrier island located off Florida's Gulf coast. Occasional storm surges scour vegetation from barrier islands and create fresh mud and sand flats that are critical for wintering and migrating shorebirds, particularly the endangered Piping Plover. The seashore has been designated by ABC as a Globally Important Bird Area.

Storm surges from Hurricane Dennis in 2005 helped rejuvenate shorebird

feeding areas, but destroyed two major roads—Pensacola Beach to historic Fort Pickens, and the scenic J. Earle Bowden Way. Both roads have been rebuilt numerous times before using federal funds, most recently after Hurricane Ivan in 2004. This time however, GINS staff were informed that in order to receive funding from the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA), they would need to build piling barriers or retaining walls to prevent the same damage from occurring again. Such "hard structures" would certainly hamper the natural regeneration of the shorebirds' habitat.

GINS appealed this condition with FWHA but were unsuccessful, and then, ignoring their own management policies, prepared an Environmental

Continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

Cape Wind Project Moves Forward. Offshore wind farm given tentative approval by state of Massachusetts. Story page 4.

Long Sought-After Bird Spotted in Peruvian Reserve. Long-whiskered Owlet seen in the wild for the first time. Story page 5.



Piping Plover: Ralph Wright.

Long-whiskered Owlet: ECOAN.

Global Warming Solutions Gather Steam. Momentum builds within the U.S. government to address threats posed by warming. Story page 6.

2007 Farm Bill: Helping Farmers Conserve Birds. Bill will continue to help farmers and ranchers protect vital bird habitat. Story page 7.

Court Overturns Bush Administrations Forest Management Rules. Changes in forest management imposed by Administration deemed illegal. Story page 13.

Mountaintop Removal Mining Permits Revoked. Federal court rules that permits for mountaintop mining violated Clean Water Act. Story page 15.

For complete list of stories, see page 2.

Wind Energy Tax Credits Should Hinge on Protections for Birds, Says ABC

Bird protection measures must become mandatory for wind energy projects because voluntary steps are being ignored by the wind energy industry. Tax credits for the industry should only be renewed if these bird protection measures are

implemented. This was the message ABC's Dr. Michael Fry delivered in his May 1 testimony before the House Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans.

"Voluntary efforts to address the impacts of wind projects on birds and wildlife have been a failure," said Dr. Fry. "There has been much discussion and almost no real action on the part of the wind industry to resolve bird collision issues."

The House Ways and Means Committee is currently considering an

Continued on page 2



CONTENTS

Victory on Gulf Islands Road Reconstruction Plan	1-2
Wind Energy Tax Credits Should Hinge on Protections for Birds, Says ABC	1-2
ABC Editorial: Is Collecting Necessary?	3
Cape Wind Moves Forward	4
New Glass Windows May Help Reduce Bird Collisions	4
Long Sought-After Bird Spotted in Peruvian Nature Reserve	5
BCA Members Oppose U.S. Navy Bird Poisoning Plan	5
Global Warming Solutions Gather Steam	6
Team Redstart Enters World Series of Birding to Help Cerulean Warbler	6
2007 Farm Bill: Helping Farmers and Ranchers Conserve Birds	7
Chevron Abandons Plans for Mexican Natural Gas Facility	7
Seabirds Protected from Invasive Species on Lehua Island	8
Maui Man Saves Shearwater Nesting Colony	8
ESA Opponents Attempt Death by a Thousand Cuts for America's Rarest Species	9
New Lawsuit Seeks Delisting of Marbled Murrelet	9
Study Reveals West Nile Impacts on Local Bird Populations	10
Funding Secured to Keep Voracious Snake Out of Another 'Garden of Eden'	10
Next U.S. Species to Go Extinct May be Two Hawaiian Birds	11
Canada's Seabirds to Benefit From First Marine Wildlife Areas	12
Piping Plover to Get Critical Habitat in Canada	12
Court Overturns Bush Administration Rules for Managing Nation's Forests	13
South Monomoy: An Island No More	14
The Ivory Gull: North America's Fastest Declining Bird?	14
Mountaintop Removal Mining Permits Ruled Illegal	15
Pending Legislation Could Help Protect Mountaintops	15
Land Manager's Guide Now Available for Rainforest Birds in Pacific Northwest	16
St. Lucia: Paradise Lost for Endangered Bird	16
Recovery Plan Plays Politics with Spotted Owl's Survival	17
IPCC Report: Global Warming Threatens Many Bird Species	17
Birds in Brief	18-19
Help ABC Keep Wind Farms "Green"	20

Abbreviations

ABC:	American Bird Conservancy
EPA:	Environmental Protection Agency
FWS:	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Victory on Road Plan *from page 1*

Assessment advocating road repair with hard structures as the preferred alternative. ABC objected strongly to this decision, and wrote to Mary A. Bomar the National Park Service Director, asking her to stand behind the agency's policies and not take FWHHA funding if it meant building a road that would be bad for plovers, turtles, and other wildlife. In a strong show of leadership, the Director agreed.

FWS, in formal Endangered Species Consultation with GINS, declared that hardening the road would hinder endangered species habitat renewal through natural overwash, and was therefore environmentally unacceptable.

Wind Energy Tax Credits *from page 1*

extension of tax breaks for wind energy production. To keep the wind industry growing, its advocates are aiming to push Congress to extend a tax credit worth 1.9 cents per kilowatt-hour. Currently, there is no requirement for any action on behalf of the wind energy industry to mitigate its impacts on federally protected migratory birds in order to get this tax break.

"Any renewal of the production tax credit for wind energy should include provisions that require developers to follow best management practices to minimize bird and wildlife impacts," said Dr. Fry.

According to the 2005 Worldwatch Institute Report, *American Energy: The Renewable Path to Energy Security*, the United States led the world in wind energy installations. But according to the National Wind Coordinating Committee, this growing alternative energy source is already killing between 30,000 and 60,000 birds per year, including Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Burrowing Owls, Mourning Doves, and over 50 species of migratory songbirds. Given the projected growth rate of the wind industry,

FWHA capitulated and agreed to release funds to rebuild both roads using environmentally acceptable designs that would allow future overwash—a major victory for birds.

Given that rebuilding the Fort Pickens road by any means would require extensive wetland filling, it may not be possible to rebuild it at all in an environmentally acceptable way. ABC strongly encourages the Park Service to consider not rebuilding this road, opting rather to restore visitor access to Fort Pickens via ferry from Pensacola. For more information, contact Casey Lott, ABC, <clott@abcbirds.org>.

between 900,000 and 1.8 million birds will likely be killed per year by wind turbines by 2030 unless protective measures are implemented.

ABC believes that with proper siting, operation, and monitoring, wind energy can provide clean, renewable energy for America's future with minimal impacts to birds and bats. ABC emphasizes that before approval and construction of new wind energy projects, potential risks to birds and bats should be evaluated through site analyses, including assessments of bird and bat abundance, timing and magnitude of migration, and habitat use.

Sites requiring special scrutiny include areas that are frequented by federally listed endangered species, known bird migration pathways, places where birds are highly concentrated, and locations that have landscape features known to attract large numbers of raptors. Once in operation, monitoring for migrating birds can allow facilities to be temporarily turned off to avoid major impacts. A copy of Dr. Fry's testimony is available at www.abcbirds.org/policy_wind_testimony.htm.

ABC'S VIEWPOINT

Should the last Ivory-Bills be collected?

Millions of dead bird specimens lie in trays in the world's museums. These collections form the foundation of much of today's ornithological knowledge, but recent events have led us to conclude that changes are needed in some specimen collecting activities.

We recently spoke with one of the scientists involved with the Ivory-billed Woodpecker search effort about the problem of collecting extremely rare species as scientific specimens. We were advised not to touch this sensitive issue that has deeply divided some conservationists and scientists. When we replied, "So you wouldn't mind if the last Ivory-bills were collected?" he immediately recoiled and said emphatically, "Yes, I would!" Collecting the last Ivory-bills may sound absurd, but elsewhere in the world, species that are down to tiny populations are still being collected.

ABC believes that from this point forward, the world's rarest birds should not be collected, especially given recent advances in genetics and digital recording media. As an ethical foundation to collecting, the survival of a species or subspecies should take precedence over the reference value of a skin or specimen. We were struck by some recent examples that provoked our thinking on this topic.

On 6 January 2004, a team of biologists from ABC's Colombian partner group, Fundación ProAves, trapped a distinctive brush-finch during an exploration of the Yarigües mountains. The description of the bird, now recognized as a subspecies new to science, was published in June 2006 in the Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club. The description is noteworthy in that the type specimen was released unharmed after a DNA sample and photographs had

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been taken. It was the first time a live type specimen had been used for the description of a new bird in the Americas, and follows last year's approval of the technique by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature.

By contrast, a collecting expedition conducted by another institution during the summer of 2006 visited a previously little studied region of northern Peru, and following up on reports of the Endangered Jocotoco Antpitta there, collected two of only three known individuals in Peru. Even with the most optimistic estimations of the Ecuadorian population, this represents at least 2% of the species' maximum global population of 200 birds - perhaps much more - and two-thirds of the known, recently-discovered Peruvian population.

In another recent case, approximately seven Recurve-billed Bushbirds were collected in Santander, Colombia, shortly after this Endangered species was discovered there in 2005. The bushbird had been lost to science for forty years, before being rediscovered in western Venezuela in 2004, and

then in Colombia the following year. Despite its rarity, this species is already well represented in the world's museum collections from historical specimens.

Given that habitat loss is the most significant threat to most species, why is it important that we also consider the mortality of what might be only be a tiny fraction of their populations caused by collecting? Firstly, for some species it is not at all clear how large their populations are, and the loss of genetic diversity caused by the removal of even a few individuals could be costly. Also, the most easily accessible sites for rare species are where collections are most likely to take place; these are also likely to be the sites where ecotourism based around these species could help to pay for habitat protection. More importantly though, as demonstrated by the Colombian brush-finch example, the collection of these specimens is no longer necessary to establish the validity of species (ABC believes that potentially new species should be assumed rare until proven otherwise).

ABC and others are investing significantly in the conservation of species, such as those mentioned above, many of which are teetering on the brink of global extinction. It is a philosophical contradiction for national governments and conservation organizations and their donors to invest in protecting these birds while others are shooting them for collections. It is ABC's mission to ensure these species survive. In recognition of the contribution to ornithological knowledge that collecting has made historically, we begin our approach to this issue by calling on our friends in conservation and ornithology to suggest how we might find common ground that both enables us to advance science and protect species. We look forward to hearing from you with your views on this topic.

Cape Wind Moves Forward

Seventeen wind projects are on the drawing board along the Atlantic Coast from Massachusetts to Virginia. Cape May, New Jersey and other areas of the mid-Atlantic region important to migratory birds are also under consideration for new projects. Many of these are on hold until the Federal Minerals Management Service (MMS), which regulates offshore wind energy projects, develops guidelines and regulations to oversee the development and protect the environment, fishing rights, and shipping lanes.

The Cape Wind project, offshore of Massachusetts between Cape Cod and Nantucket Island, has been given a tentative go-ahead by the state, but has not been approved by MMS. Opponents of the project point to the fact that hundreds of thousands of Long-tailed Ducks winter in Nantucket Sound, and that endangered North Atlantic right whales also frequent the area.

The project is scheduled to construct 130 wind turbines that are a maximum

of 440 feet tall, with rotor blades 182 feet long. It is not yet known whether Roseate Terns, Northern Gannets, or sea ducks will be impacted by the turbines. MMS will require extensive environmental studies to determine whether the sea ducks will be disturbed on their feeding grounds within the construction area.



Long-tailed Duck: Michael Stubblefield.

Puerto Rico Wind Farm Raises Questions about FWS Oversight

FWS recently granted an incidental take permit to allow destruction of endangered Puerto Rican Nightjar habitat at a proposed wind farm site at Guayanilla in southwest Puerto Rico. Fewer than 1,700 Puerto Rican Nightjars exist; the species has been listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act since 1973.

Two things are troublesome about the project and the take permit: The Department of Energy lists the site as poor to marginal in terms of wind resources, meaning that it is unlikely

that an economically successful wind project can be constructed on this site; and secondly, the incidental take permit does very little to mitigate for the destruction of approximately half of the 46 known breeding territories of nightjars in the area. The proponent of the project, WindMar, has agreed to restore part of a quarry within the area, but this will contribute little habitat for the nightjars. ABC and other conservation groups are objecting to this plan and the Governor of Puerto Rico has not yet approved the permit needed for construction to begin.

New Glass Windows May Help Reduce Bird Collisions

Organizations and individuals across the globe are working to address the problem of millions of bird deaths at windows. Two initiatives are showing great promise: The “Lights Out” efforts in Toronto, New York, and Chicago have a proven track record of saving birds and saving energy, and the introduction of a new type of glass that is more visible to birds could further dramatically reduce the number of collisions.

The Bird-Safe Glass Working Group is a recently formed task force charged with the goal of creating and promoting the development and use of a new type of glass that will be transparent to people but visible to birds. The group includes bird advocacy and conservation organizations from across North America, as well as architects, planners, scientists, and glass engineers working to find funding for the cutting-edge science that will produce a long-term solution to this major threat to migratory birds.

Out of the working group the Bird Safe Glass Foundation (a new Bird Conservation Alliance member) was formed to

develop educational materials for builders and consumers about the bird-glass issue. Recently New York Audubon Society worked with the Bird-Safe Glass Working Group and the Bird-Safe Glass Foundation to publish Bird-Safe Building Guidelines. This document addresses new building construction as well as retrofitting old buildings to be bird safe. It is available at www.nycaudubon.org.

Toronto is a leader in mitigating bird collisions with glass—over 80 buildings are participating in the “Bird-Friendly Building Program” (www.toronto.ca/lightout/index.htm). In January 2006, the Toronto City Council unanimously adopted a resolution that will protect migratory birds through controlling light from buildings, public education, and bird rescue. For all new buildings in Toronto, the resolution specifies “that the needs of migratory birds be incorporated into the Site Plan Review process with respect to facilities for lighting, including floodlighting, glass, and other bird-friendly design features.” For more information, visit www.flap.org.

Long Sought-After Bird Spotted in Peruvian Nature Reserve

The extremely rare Long-whiskered Owllet, a species that was not discovered until 1976, and until now only known from a few specimens captured in nets after dark, has been seen in the wild for the first time by researchers monitoring the Area de Conservación Privada de Abra Patricia–Alto Nieva, a private conservation area in northern Peru. Photos taken of the Long-whiskered Owllet are available at www.abcbirds.org/whiskeredowlpic.htm.

“Seeing the Long-whiskered Owllet is a huge thrill,” said David Geale of Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos (ECOAN), who was part of the research team. “Its population is estimated to be fewer than 1,000 birds, and possibly as few as 250. Due to the rapid destruction of its forest habitat and its tiny range, it is inferred that the species is in serious decline. Until recently, the owl’s key habitat was completely unprotected.”

The species is among the world’s smallest owls. It is so distinct that it has been given its own genus: *Xenoglaux*, meaning “strange owl”, due to the long wispy feathers or whiskers that stream



One of the first photographs of a Long-whiskered Owllet, taken at the Abra Patricia Reserve in northern Peru. Photo: ECOAN.

out from its wild-looking reddish-orange eyes. The owl inhabits the dense undergrowth of mountain forests in a remote part of northern Peru.

“The creation of the Abra Patricia reserve provides much-needed protection for the Long-whiskered Owllet,” said Hugo Arnal, ABC’s Tropical

Andes Program Director. “By establishing a reserve and protecting the owl’s forest habitat, ABC and its partner ECOAN are also protecting other areas of biodiversity.”

The northeastern section of the Peruvian Yungas (tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf rainforest on the eastern slope of the Andes in Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru) comprises habitat for 317 resident bird species, 23 of which are considered globally threatened. The conservation area also protects much of the known habitat for the endangered Ochre-fronted Antpitta, and has been declared a priority by the Alliance for Zero Extinction. Other endemics in the area include an endangered hummingbird called the Royal Sunangel, the rare and recently-described Johnson’s Tody-Tyrant, and the endangered Ash-throated Antwren.

Birdwatchers wishing to search for the owl should contact Hugo Arnal, harnal@abcbirds.org. Access is limited to small groups and the chances of success, though better than in the past, are still considered very low.

BCA Members Oppose U.S. Navy Bird Poisoning Plan

The U.S. Navy has released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement proposing the use of Avitrol, a toxic pesticide, to control birds in the vicinity of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina, as part of a plan to construct an aircraft landing field. The refuge is an ABC Globally Important Bird Area, and one of the most significant waterfowl wintering areas in North America. Thanks to growing opposition in North Carolina and action by Bird Conservation Alliance members, the House Armed Services Committee has included language to the Defense

Authorization bill’s Committee Report prohibiting construction of the proposed landing field at that location.

Thirty-six Bird Conservation Alliance member organizations signed onto a letter to leaders on the House and Senate Armed Services Committees expressing their concern over the Navy’s plans, and urging Congress to move the proposed airstrip to an alternative site. Copies are available at www.abcbirds.org/pocosinltrs.htm.

On April 19, North Carolina Senator Elizabeth Dole sent a letter to Secretary of the Navy, Donald Winter, opposing

the proposal to build the landing field and calling on the Navy to withdraw its recommendation for building at that site. Senator Dole stated that “In the best interests of both North Carolinians and the service, the Navy must withdraw its recommendation... and focus on operationally viable sites in North Carolina where environmental and other problems are very limited, and where residents are more receptive to such a facility and its potential for long-term economic development.” For information contact Alicia Craig, acraig@abcbirds.org.

Global Warming Solutions Gather Steam

Momentum within the U.S. government on the issue of global warming has now shifted towards action after decades of debate. Global warming, and whether or not the conservation of forests and other carbon fixing habitats takes place as a mitigation measure, will have a profound effect on bird populations, whose ranges are already being affected by rising global temperatures.

In early April, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the federal government has existing authority to regulate greenhouse gasses, such as carbon dioxide, under the Clean Air Act. The EPA had previously declared that it did not have jurisdiction to regulate global warming-causing pollution, but environmental groups contested this claim, taking their legal action all the way to the country's highest court.

On Capitol Hill, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi announced the formation of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, calling for action on a bill by July 4.

A number of climate change bills, some with bipartisan support, are already being introduced in both the House and Senate. The Lieberman-McCain cap-and-trade program would reduce carbon emissions to 67% below 2004 levels by 2050, and cover 85% of U.S. industry. A draft bill by Senator Bingaman would only regulate power plants, and cuts emissions relative to economic growth rather than require an outright cap. Legislation proposed by Senators Bernie Sanders and Barbara Boxer is the most aggressive of the bills under current consideration. Their bill would strengthen the Clean Air Act, cut carbon emissions by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, provide mandates for renewable energy sources, and regulate standards for new automobiles. The Kerry-Snowe

bill is similar to the Sanders-Boxer bill but leaves it up to the EPA to determine which specific industries would be regulated. In addition it mandates that every gas station in the country would have to be equipped to sell ethanol blended fuel (E85) by 2016.

Despite all these broad legislative proposals, Senator Boxer has voiced an opinion shared by many that it is unlikely that a single bill will succeed in tackling climate change. "More than likely, there'll be a number of [separate] bills that address the question of global warming," she said in a recent interview with Environment and Energy Daily.

ABC's fact sheet on global warming (www.abcbirds.org/global_warming_report.pdf) details seven North American warbler species whose ranges have already shifted significantly farther north in the last two decades. Seabirds such as the Sooty Shearwater have shifted their migration route towards the cooler waters of the Pacific in response to rising sea temperatures off the coast of California, and 20 species of migratory birds are arriving ever earlier at their U.S. breeding grounds as temperatures rise. This includes long-distance migrants such as the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Barn Swallow. Similarly, Tree Swallows are now nesting up to nine days earlier than 30 years ago, corresponding with an increase in average spring temperatures. Visit www.abcbirds.org/climatechange for more information.



Tree Swallows are nesting up to nine days earlier than they did 30 years ago, a shift that corresponds to the increase in average spring temperatures. Photo: Tom Grey.

Team Redstart Enters World Series of Birding to Help Cerulean Warbler



International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) and Partners in Flight (PIF) formed an international team of birders, the Redstarts, to compete in New Jersey Audubon's annual World Series of Birding. Team members Denis Lepage, John Sterling, Carlos Bethancourt, and Todd Easterla gathered in Cape May on International Migratory Bird Day (May 12) to begin the 24-hour birdathon.

Funds raised will be directed to three Cerulean Warbler projects: to ABC for additional land acquisition at the Cerulean Warbler Bird Reserve in Colombia, to Fundación ProAves for public education programs, and to the Cerulean Warbler Technical Group to assist with studies on the bird's stopover sites.

Cerulean Warbler populations have plummeted by almost 70% since 1966. Deforestation on its wintering and breeding grounds, lighted communication towers along its migration routes and mountaintop mining on its breeding grounds all pose hazards and contribute to the species' decline.

For more information about the birdathon, visit www.birdday.org/wsb.htm. To learn more about how you can help protect the Cerulean Warbler, visit www.abcbirds.org/international/cerw.htm.

2007 Farm Bill: Helping Farmers and Ranchers Conserve Birds

ABC has been informed that both the House and Senate are moving to pass a farm bill before they adjourn for their month-long August recess. The renewal of federal farm and food policies this year, which currently include \$4.4 billion for the conservation of natural resources, creates an opportunity to better assist more farmers and ranchers when they take steps to protect or enhance vital bird habitats.

The best researched and documented farm bill conservation program has been the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Introduced in 1986, this program has converted millions of acres of cropland to grass cover across the prairies, and to grass or forest cover in the Southeast. CRP removes eroding cropland from cultivation and protects it with perennial vegetation under 10-15 year contracts.

While some grassland birds are able to nest in croplands, their nests have high rates of failure. CRP fields are

much more beneficial to a wide variety of breeding birds than the croplands that they replace. Populations of Sedge Wrens, Grasshopper Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows, Dickcissels, Lark Buntings, Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Yellowthroats, Clay-colored Sparrows, and Bobolinks have been shown to utilize CRP lands, with associated increases in reproductive



Grasshopper Sparrow: Tom Grey

rates and population gains. This is good news considering surveys of bird populations over the past 35 years have documented the decline of more

grassland species than any other group of birds.

Tracts of untilled native prairie are also tremendously important to grassland birds, supporting many species that rarely, if ever, use cropland or even CRP fields, such as the Burrowing Owl, Sprague's Pipit, Baird's Sparrow, and Chestnut-collared Longspur. While CRP is a beneficial program, maintaining extant native prairie should be a high priority for the conservation of birds. It is therefore critical that farm programs do not directly or indirectly encourage conversion of native prairie to cultivation.

American Bird Conservancy has been working with members of Congress to make certain that forthcoming legislation promotes leaving native prairie in tact, and to assure that each acre of CRP land addresses the country's truly important wildlife goals, particularly for at-risk birds. Contact Darin Schroeder, ABC, <dschroeder@abcbirds.org> for more information.

Chevron Abandons Plans for Mexican Natural Gas Facility

Conservation groups are celebrating the announcement by Chevron that the corporation is abandoning plans to build a liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility near the Coronado Islands, a biodiversity hotspot just south of the U.S. border.

"This is a big win for endangered wildlife," said George Fenwick, President of ABC. "A facility that would have been devastating for the Xantus's Murrelet, will now not be built."

Chevron's decision to cancel the project follows a recent ruling by the Secretariat of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), a tri-national environmental commission

set up pursuant to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which rejected a request by Chevron to suspend an investigation into whether Mexico violated its own laws in approving the facility.

In 2005, U.S. and Mexican conservation organizations, led by the Center for Biological Diversity, filed a formal petition with the CEC to challenge the Mexican government's granting of permits to Chevron to build the LNG terminal just 600 yards east of the Coronado Islands. The Coronado Islands, 11 miles south of the U.S. border, provide critical nesting habitat for six threatened or endangered seabird

species and ten other species of plants and animals found nowhere else in the world.

The Xantus's Murrelet is currently under consideration for protection under the Endangered Species Act, and is extremely sensitive to disturbance and light pollution according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The Coronado Islands house the largest remaining breeding colonies of the species. The original petition to the CEC was submitted by the Center for Biological Diversity, American Bird Conservancy, Greenpeace Mexico, Alfonso Aguirre, Shaye Wolf, Los Angeles Audubon, Pacific Environment, and Wildcoast.

Seabirds Protected from Invasive Species on Lehua Island

Island Conservation declared Lehua Island, one of the largest seabird colonies in the Hawaiian chain, free of feral rabbits in December 2006. Now that Lehua is rabbit-free, some native plants are already beginning to return naturally and others will soon be re-introduced. Recovery of vegetation destroyed by rabbits will provide more nest sites for boobies and frigatebirds, and help prevent erosion and burial of seabird burrows during heavy rains.

Located 20 miles west of Kauai, Lehua is a steep, crescent-shaped volcanic island with a dramatic series of weathered ledges and caves used by nesting seabirds. Approximately 50,000 seabirds nest there, including Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses, Red-tailed Tropicbirds, Great Frigatebirds, and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. The island hosts the largest breeding colonies of Brown and Red-footed Boobies in Hawaii. Three of Hawaii's

most endangered seabirds—the Band-rumped Storm Petrel, Hawaiian Petrel, and Newell's Shearwater—have been recorded, and may breed there.

Rabbits, a non-native species present on the island since at least the 1930s, competed with seabirds for burrows, forcing some birds to abandon their nests. Rabbits also ate vegetation on the island, causing soil erosion and eliminating nesting habitat. Populations of two seabirds that prefer nesting in taller vegetation—the Red-footed Booby and Great Frigatebird—were likely limited by lack of suitable nesting sites.



Great Frigatebird: AK Kepler.



Brown-footed Booby: AK Kepler.

Rabbit removal began in fall 2005 and concluded in late 2006. The project is part of a collaborative effort by the state of Hawaii, the U.S. Coast Guard, FWS, USDA Wildlife Services, the Offshore Island Restoration Committee, the Wildlife Society, and Island Conservation to restore the island's ecosystem by removing destructive alien species and re-introducing native species. Lehua now has the potential to become a safe haven for many more of Hawaii's seabirds, plants, and insects. Contact Brad Keitt, Island Conservation, <Brad.Keitt@islandconservation.org>.

Maui Man Saves Shearwater Nesting Colony

After finding 22 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters killed by predators at his favorite fishing spot on Hawea Point, Maui resident Isao Nakagawa began a one-man campaign to save the remaining birds and their nesting colony. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, which live most of their lives at sea but come ashore to nest in burrows, are particularly vulnerable to attack by

introduced predators such as dogs, cats, mongooses, and rats. A single cat can wipe out an entire shearwater nesting colony in one or two nights.

Wedge-tailed Shearwaters are known in Hawaiian as 'ua'u kani, or "moaning birds," for their ghostly nocturnal vocalizations. They spend most of their lives on the open ocean, coming ashore

in the spring to nest in burrows in the sandy soil and rocky crevices and between tree roots. It takes four to five years for Wedge-tailed Shearwaters to reach sexual maturity, and each pair lays only a single egg per year.

Nakagawa, with permission from local landowners, began to trap feral cats around the nesting colony, removing them to a local humane society. He also posted signs and erected fencing around the area to keep fishermen, dog walkers, and hikers from the area.

Wildlife officials say that with Nakagawa's help, the number of surviving fledglings each season has grown from zero to the 100-plus young birds that were banded in 2005. His efforts have inspired other volunteers to adopt Wedge-tailed Shearwater colonies elsewhere on Maui, where similar successes are being reported.

For related information about ABC's *Cats Indoors!* campaign for safer birds and cats, visit www.abcbirds.org/cats.



Wedge-tailed Shearwaters: Thomas Dove.

ESA Opponents Attempt Death by a Thousand Cuts for America's Rarest Species

The last national election results ended one of the most aggressive assaults on the Endangered Species Act (ESA) seen to date. However, the Administration is still seeking to weaken this landmark act, now through administrative rule changes rather than legislation.

The Administration has pursued a rule change all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court that would exempt the Environmental Protection Agency from complying with provisions of the ESA when taking action under the Clean Water Act. If the court decides in favor of the rule change, it would significantly erode the ESA requirement that all federal agencies must consult with FWS to ensure their actions do not harm endangered species or destroy their habitat.

In another attempt to erode the ESA, the U.S. Department of Interior Solicitor's Office recently issued an opinion that seeks to narrowly limit the definition of an endangered species to only those on the brink of extinction throughout their entire range. It is unlikely that the listing and subsequent recovery of the Bald Eagle would have occurred in the Lower 48 States if

this policy had been in effect because of thriving populations in Alaska. The Center for Biological Diversity has stated that they believe adoption of this new policy would effectively remove 80% of the nearly 1,300 currently listed species because most have at least one population stronghold that is doing well. Several members of Congress have threatened to block the Administration's effort by prohibiting the use of federal funds to carry out the new provision.

...the Administration is still seeking to weaken this landmark act, now through administrative rule changes rather than legislation...

In addition, a leak in April revealed the Administration is planning to rewrite the ESA through regulatory changes. One change included in the draft would make it more difficult for a species to gain protection by scaling back the timeframe in which to consider whether it is likely to become extinct. Instead of looking far enough ahead to be able to reasonably determine whether a species could be heading for

extinction, the new regulations would drastically shorten the timeframe to only 20 years or ten generations, at FWS' discretion.

Finally, an Inspector General's investigation of Julie A. MacDonald, Interior Department Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, found she failed to both designate new species as endangered, and to protect imperiled animals' habitats by diluting or deleting the scientific conclusions and recommendations of government biologists. In one example, Ms. MacDonald changed the radius of the nesting range of the endangered Southwest Willow flycatcher from 2.1 miles to 1.8 miles. The investigators noted in their report that this change would keep the nesting range from extending into California, where her husband maintained a family ranch. In addition, a review of her email account turned up several exchanges with lobbying organizations that have challenged endangered species listings to give them advanced information not available to the public on ESA decisions and other Interior Department policy. Ms. MacDonald resigned her post on April 30, rather than face a congressional oversight hearing about her activities.

New Lawsuit Seeks Delisting Of Marbled Murrelet

The Pacific Northwest population of the Marbled Murrelet breeds in old growth forests of California, Oregon, and Washington. The species is now being threatened by a lawsuit filed in March by the American Forest Resources Council, a timber lobbying group, which is seeking to remove Endangered Species Act protections for the threatened seabird.

In 2004, a status review, prompted by an initial lawsuit brought by the same lobbying group, found that Marbled

Murrelets in the Pacific Northwest are distinct from those in Canada and Alaska. However, FWS officials ignored their own scientists' findings, and declared that the Pacific Northwest murrelets did not qualify as a "Distinct Population Segment" and so did not merit protection.

The new suit argues that given this decision, the species should lose its threatened status. If that were to happen, rules to protect its old-growth forest nesting habitat could be eliminated.

"A recent status review by the U.S. Geological Survey found that over the last 25 years, Marbled Murrelet populations have declined by some 70% in Alaska and British Columbia, regions once considered strongholds of the species," said Bob Altman, ABC's Northern Pacific Rainforest Bird Conservation Region Coordinator. "Clearly, this species is threatened throughout its range, and needs all the protection that the ESA can provide." Contact Bob Altman <baltman@abcbirds.org>.

Study Reveals West Nile Impacts on Backyard Bird Populations

West Nile virus caused severe declines in seven common bird species including the American Robin, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina and Black-capped Chickadee, Blue Jay, American Crow, Eastern Bluebird, and House Wren according to a new study published in *Nature* by the Smithsonian Institution's Migratory Bird Center and the Consortium for Conservation Medicine.

Researchers set out to determine whether the disease had caused regional declines in 21 species of North American birds, and which birds were most affected. According to the results, several species suffered regional declines of almost 50%. Blue Jays and House Wrens are showing signs of recovering after the intense epidemics of 2002 and

2003, but thus far, the other affected species have not.

"Our work demonstrates the broad and potentially devastating impacts that an invasive pathogen can have on our native wildlife," said Dr. Shannon LaDeau of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. "Crows are among the hardest-hit species overall, showing declines up to 45% in the mid-Atlantic."

Dr. LaDeau used a new statistical model to analyze data from the Breeding Bird Survey, an ongoing citizen science project, which may have applications for analyzing population impacts from pesticides and other threats. The study: *West Nile Virus Emergence and Large-Scale Declines of North American Bird Populations* is available from *Nature* at www.nature.com.



Blue Jay (top) and Tufted Titmouse (above), are among the common backyard species that have been hit hard by West Nile Virus. Blue Jay: Bill Hubick, Tufted Titmouse: Tom Grey.

Funding Secured to Keep Voracious Snake Out of Another 'Garden of Eden'

Thanks to the efforts of Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI), the Air Force and Navy will temporarily continue funding inspections to prevent the spread of the Brown Tree Snake to Hawaii. The newly elected Democratic majority in Congress suspended the practice of adding special-interest provisions, known as earmarks, to spending bills. While the overall effort is laudable from an accountability standpoint, an unfortunate result was that one beneficial earmark which paid the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to search military cargo and crafts departing Guam for Hawaii for brown tree snakes was cut.

The brown tree snake, whose secretive behavior predisposes it to stow away in ships and airplanes, was accidentally introduced to Guam from its native range in New Guinea and Australia

in the 1950s. The impact of the brown tree snake has been the utter devastation of the island's bird life, as well as major disruptions of electric power transmission, telephone service, military operations, computers, and tourism. Like Hawaii, the indigenous birds of Guam evolved in a snake-free habitat and consequently lacked the protective behaviors of other birds, making them easy prey for the brown tree snake. Preying on eggs and birds alike, the snake has caused the extinction of nine of the 11 native land bird species on Guam.

In a comprehensive report on the brown tree snake, FWS held out far more hope of preventing dispersal to other islands of the Pacific than of eliminating the snake once it establishes a foothold. According to the report, as well as most experts, if the snake were to become established on one



The brown tree snake could wreak havoc on already endangered Hawaiian bird species. Photo: Wet Tropics Management Authority, North Queensland, Australia.

island, its spread to the other islands in the chain would likely be inevitable given the snake's behavior and the heavy traffic between the islands.

ABC raised the alarm with Congress and at the highest levels of the Pentagon, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and FWS, and will continue to work with these agencies to find a dedicated source of funding to ensure the continued inspection of aircraft leaving Guam for Hawaii. For more information contact Darin Schroeder, <dschroeder@abcbirds.org>.

Next U.S. Species to Go Extinct May be Two Hawaiian Birds

A dramatic drop in sightings of the Akekee and the Akikiki, two very rare birds on the Hawaiian Island of Kauai, is raising concern that these species may be on the brink of extinction. Beginning this month, the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources will conduct population surveys of forest birds on Kauai to assess the situation, which appears bleak.

“The strongest available measures such as captive-breeding, invasive species control, and emergency listing under the Endangered Species Act, are all necessary due to the recent history of Hawaiian birds in similar circumstances going extinct,” said George Fenwick, President of American Bird Conservancy.

Hawaii leads the United States in the total number of endangered and threatened species, with 329, and in extinctions, with over 1,000 plants and animals disappearing since humans colonized the islands. When Captain Cook landed on the islands in 1778, there were at least 71 endemic bird species. Since then, 26 of those species have gone extinct, and 32 more are now listed under the Endangered Species Act as threatened or endangered. Several Hawaiian bird species, including the Poouli and the Ou are assumed to have recently gone extinct before captive-breeding or other protection measures could be implemented.

David Kuhn, Doug Pratt, and Alvaro Jararillo, who lead birding tours on Kauai, recently alerted scientists, state officials, and FWS to their concerns about the drop in sightings of the once relatively abundant Akekee.

“I and others paying attention to Kauai’s endangered endemics have supposed that the Akikiki would be the next species to disappear – now it is more like a race to the finish,” said



Akikiki (top) and Akekee (above), two of the most endangered bird species in the United States. Photos: Jim Denny.

David Kuhn. “While the Akikiki depopulation and range contraction has been linear and relatively slow, the Akekee is suddenly crashing. At this point both species can still be found with assiduous listening and searching—how long this might be is anyone’s guess.”

The Akikiki, a small, grayish bird that lives in wet montane forests in central Kauai, has fewer than 1,500 remaining individuals, and now occupies less than 10% of its former range. Surveys indicate that the population declined 64% in its core area in the Alakai Swamp from 1970 to 2000 due to habitat loss and alteration, the introduction of invasive species, mosquito-borne diseases such as avian malaria and pox, and the impacts of hurricanes. In 2005, FWS designated the Akikiki as a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act, but declined to move forward with the listing for budgetary reasons.

The Akekee, a small yellow and green bird that lives in the high-elevation rainforests of Kauai, was until recently

thought to have a stable population, estimated at 20,000 individuals. Like the Akikiki, the Akekee is threatened by habitat loss, invasive species, and disease.

Of particular concern is the possibility that rising average temperatures could allow mosquitoes to survive at higher elevations, exposing birds to the deadly diseases. Researchers for the U.S. Geological Survey have concluded that even a small increase in temperatures will eliminate much of the mosquito-free safe zone that once existed for Kauai’s birds. No research is currently being conducted on temperature levels in the mountains, nor to discover if the mosquitoes are surviving at higher elevations. Visit www.pbs.org/news-hour/bb/science/jan-june04/climate_4-21.html for more details.

Welcome New BCA Members

- ❖ Council for Environmental Education
- ❖ Great Basin Bird Observatory
- ❖ Lower Cape Fear Bird Club
- ❖ Greenville County Bird Club
- ❖ Birmingham Audubon Society
- ❖ Alabama Ornithological Society
- ❖ Bird-Safe Glass Foundation, Inc.

Your organization can join BCA and become a part of this important bird conservation coalition.

Contact Alicia Craig, ABC,
acraig@abcbirds.org.



Common Yellowthroat: Tom Grey.

Canada's Seabirds to Benefit From First Marine Wildlife Areas

The Canadian government has allocated \$19 million for the creation of the first of three Marine Wildlife Areas (MWAs) under the Canadian Wildlife Act. However, political negotiations over oil leases may hold up the final designation of one of them, a key seabird nesting island chain in southwest Canada.

The Scott Islands are a collection of five uninhabited, rocky islands off the northwestern tip of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Over two million seabirds nest on these remote outcrops; twelve species of which occur in globally or nationally significant numbers. These include 90% of the nation's Tufted Puffins, and the world's largest colony of Cassin's Auklets, which totals 55% of the global population. Other species of national significance include the Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel, Leach's Storm-Petrel, Pelagic Cormorant, Black Oystercatcher, Glaucous-winged Gull, Common Murre, and Pigeon Guillemot. Triangle Island, the largest in the chain, is the only breeding site in western Canada for Thick-billed Murres and Northern Fulmars.

The islands have been designated by the province as an Ecological Reserve since the mid-1990s, but the Canadian Wildlife Service has been trying to enact broader federal



Cassin's Auklet: FWS.

protection for the region. The new MWA will encompass the islands themselves and their surrounding waters. Although the exact size of the area has yet to be finalized, a Study Area has been drawn up that extends over nearly 6.6 million acres. This will afford protection for both the seabirds' nesting and foraging grounds, particularly from ship-borne pollution.

Although the MWA is a federal designation, approval from the respective provinces and First Nations is preferable. One potential stumbling block to the completion of the Scott Islands designation is the province's desire to lift a 35-year ban on oil and gas exploration in the region. Federal approval is required to lift the ban, and Canadian Natural Resources Minister Gary Lunn stated that this is not being considered. Nevertheless, environmentalists are concerned, and more negotiations are needed before the designation can be signed and the islands' seabirds fully protected.

Along with the Scott Islands, Sable Island in eastern Canada, and Lancaster Sound in the eastern Arctic are slated for MWA designation; six other sites are under consideration. For more information, visit www.pyr.ec.gc.ca/scottislands/index_e.htm.

Tufted Puffin: Ralph Wright.



Piping Plover to Get Critical Habitat in Canada

In response to a lawsuit filed last December by a coalition of conservation groups led by Nature Canada, the Canadian government has agreed to amend its Piping Plover Recovery Strategy. The groups filed the lawsuit against Environment Canada for its refusal to identify Critical Habitat for the species, a violation of the Species at Risk Act. With Recovery Strategies for 200 other species due for completion in the next year, the lack of Critical Habitat designation for the plover set a dangerous precedent.

The government had initially argued that the criteria for identification of Critical Habitat had not been established, but in a reversal of position, announced in February that

it would amend the document to include identification of Critical Habitat for the plover on the prairies. The announcement is being hailed by members of the coalition as a constructive move toward settling the court case.

As noted in the Recovery Strategy, the Piping Plover has a small population with a wide range. Fewer than 1,500 individuals remain in Canada, and the population continues to be threatened by predation (including by domestic cats and dogs), habitat loss, and human disturbance. The government has also announced that it will address a backlog on recovery planning for over 50 endangered species. For more information, visit www.naturecanada.ca.

Court Overturns Bush Administration Rules for Managing Nation's Forests

Bush Administration regulations removing nationwide forest protections established under President Reagan were adopted illegally, according to a March 2007 decision by a U.S. District Court in San Francisco. This decision is good news for the Northern Spotted Owl and many other declining bird species whose habitat is found primarily in National Forests.

Two years ago, the Bush administration drastically modified forest management rules, virtually eliminating longstanding protections for fish and wildlife in favor of a rule-free approach more amenable to logging and oil and gas drilling. The Administration removed a requirement that the Forest Service maintain viable wildlife populations across their range, ensuring wildlife populations are not destroyed in the process of managing National Forests. This requirement was the basis of a landmark court decision in 1992 protecting the Northern Spotted Owl's old growth forest habitat in the Pacific Northwest.

"These regulations were designed by a former timber industry lobbyist," said Sean Cosgrove of the Sierra Club, one of the 15 environmental groups who sued. "They would have silenced the voices of citizens in local forest planning and allowed projects harmful to wildlife to move forward with little oversight."

But the district court ruled that when the Bush Administration issued the rules, it failed to include the environmental protection measures mandated by Congress in the National Forest

Management Act. The district court also found that the Administration failed to consider the environmental impacts of its far-reaching regulatory changes and neglected to offer the public an opportunity to comment on these changes. The Administration has announced it plans to initiate an Environmental Impact Statement on their proposed rule to comply with the judge's ruling. The ruling is available online at www.savenationalforests.org.

...when the Bush Administration issued the rules, it failed to include the environmental protection measures mandated by Congress in the National Forest Management Act.

"If Judge Hamilton had allowed the Administration's forest rules to stand, it would have likely meant the loss of species," said Peter Frost, an attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center.

This ruling follows other decisions overturning recent anti-conservation forest policies that favored resource extraction over wildlife protection. In September 2006, a federal district court reinstated protections for roadless areas in National Forests. The Administration is appealing this decision, and has announced plans to reduce protections for some of Idaho's 9.3 million roadless acres.

In March 2007, a federal judge overturned a rule that would have allowed more logging of old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest by removing protections for salmon streams. The



The Northern Spotted Owl will benefit from the latest ruling on forest management, which will allow conservation of its habitat to continue. Photo: FWS.

judge found that the Forest Service had illegally suppressed and misrepresented the findings of dissenting scientists when it eased logging restrictions. "Here, the dissenting views of responsible scientists were neither set forth in substance, nor their import discussed [as required by the National Environmental Policy Act]," Judge Martinez wrote.

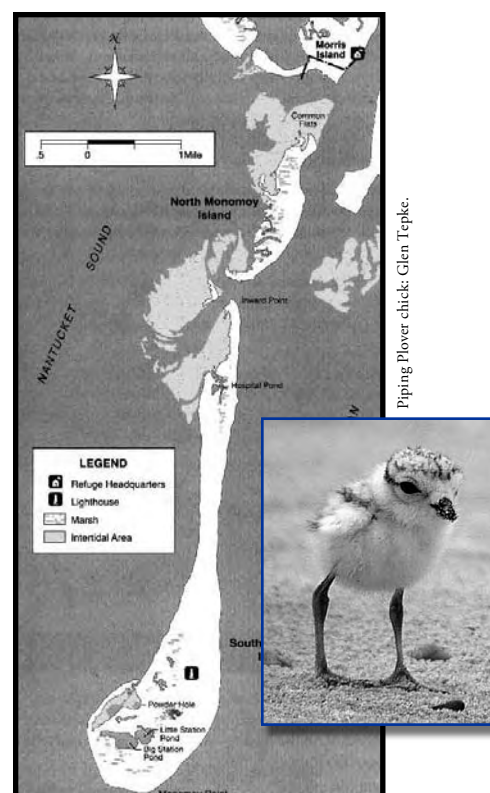
In April 2007, a federal judge ordered the Forest Service to rewrite its forest plan for the Tongass National Forest in Alaska because it overestimated the demand for timber and failed to explore other options besides logging in the forest's pristine roadless areas. As a result of the decision, nine timber sales in roadless areas were withdrawn by the agency, resulting in habitat protection for the Northern Goshawk and Marbled Murrelet. Contact Steve Holmer, <sholmer@abcbirds.org> for more information.

South Monomoy: An Island No More

A storm over the Thanksgiving weekend last year has dramatically altered the landscape around South Monomoy Island off the coast of Massachusetts. South Monomoy was formerly one of two barrier islands that form Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge off the southern tip of Cape Cod. The Refuge is an ABC-designated Globally Important Bird Area that is home to the largest breeding tern colony on the Atlantic Coast, including thousands of Roseate Terns. The island also boasts several dozen pairs of breeding endangered Piping Plovers.

The storm eliminated several dune complexes, reducing available nesting habitat for the birds, but the most significant impact was the creation of a land bridge that now joins the island to the mainland. This means that mammalian predators that had been eradicated from the island will now have access to the breeding bird colonies. One fox has already been spotted on the island.

The creation of the land bridge is part of an ongoing geological cycle (the last time the island was connected to the mainland was in 1958), and so the Refuge managers have decided against dredging out the land bridge. Instead, they are opting for enhanced predator control efforts, and stepped up education and enforcement aimed at preventing the public, who can now walk to the refuge across the bridge, from further damaging habitat. See www.fws.gov/northeast/monomoy.



Piping Plover chick: Glen Tepke.

The Ivory Gull: North America's Fastest Declining Bird?

The delicate, pure white Ivory Gull is without doubt one of the most beautiful of all North America's birds. Alarming recent data also indicate that it is North America's fastest declining bird species. Reasons for this decline are unclear.

Aerial surveys by the Canadian Wildlife Service indicate that the species has undergone a decline of approximately 90% since the mid 1980s, with the Canadian population dropping from an estimated 2,400 birds to no more than 200 in 2005. Many previously occupied colonies have also been abandoned, and Inuit residents at Resolute Bay, a small outpost in the Canadian Arctic which bills itself as the "gateway to the North Pole," report that Ivory Gulls have disappeared from the area where many birds were banded in the early 1980s.

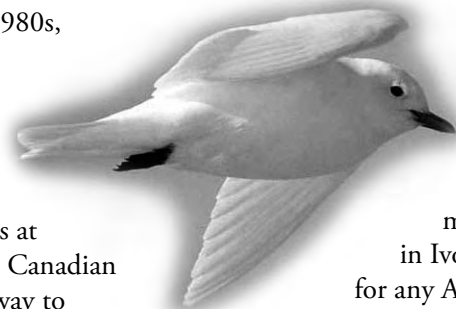
Ivory Gulls depend on pack ice for roosting close to their foraging sites. Scientists report that Arctic sea ice declined by as much as 3% per decade between 1978 and 1998. The gulls may also depend on the declining Polar Bear, as they are regular scavengers at Polar Bear kills of seals and small whales such as Belugas. Although increased predation, disturbance, oiling, and hunting (especially in

Greenland) have also been suggested as potential threats to the gull, recent reports from Environment Canada of elevated mercury levels in Ivory Gull eggs also give cause for serious concern.

Airborne mercury, which is generated by coal-fired power plants, waste incineration, and mining, is now approximately three times natural rates.

When mercury enters the food chain, it is converted to toxic methyl mercury, which bioaccumulates and can cause neurological degeneration and other problems.

Although mercury occurs naturally in many fish species, the increasing levels found in Ivory Gull eggs are among the highest detected for any Arctic seabird. It is too early to determine whether Ivory Gull declines are resulting from this newly identified threat however, as some marine organisms that Ivory Gulls consume also carry a high selenium load which can neutralize toxic methyl mercury. What does seem certain, however, is that Ivory Gulls are declining rapidly and face a potentially wide array of serious problems, despite the apparent isolation of their Arctic habitat. Fortunately, Canada recently listed the species as endangered. Whether this will halt the species' decline remains to be seen. Visit <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/CW69-14-13-2006E.pdf> for more information.



Ivory Gull: Bruce Macraish/USGS.

Mountaintop Removal Mining Permits Ruled Illegal

A federal court ruled in March that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers violated the law by issuing permits that permanently buried vital headwater streams near five mountaintop removal coal mines in West Virginia. The Corps failed to demonstrate that mountaintop removal/valley fill mining operations can comply with the Clean Water Act without strict limits on the destruction of streams and rivers.

Mountaintop removal mining is an extremely destructive form of coal mining where entire tops of mountains are removed and dumped in neighboring valleys, threatening birds such as the Cerulean Warbler that depend on interior forests. The practice has already permanently buried more than 1,200 miles of streams, mainly in West Virginia and Kentucky. In September 2005, a lawsuit brought by Earthjustice on behalf of the Ohio Valley Envi-

ronmental Coalition, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, and Coal River Mountain Watch challenged five West Virginia mountaintop removal

The lawsuit contended that the Corps violated the Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Policy Act by claiming these mines will cause "no significant impact."

permits. The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia found those permits violated the Clean Water Act, and ordered the Corps of Engineers to withdraw them.

"This decision puts in doubt the Corps' ability to permit mountaintop removal mines without wholesale destruction to these vital headwater streams," said Earthjustice attorney Steve Roady.

The lawsuit contended that the Corps violated the Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Policy Act by claiming these mines will cause "no significant impact." By making this claim, the agency ignored 'mountains' of scientific evidence confirming that destroying mountains and burying streams permanently harms the environment.

The Court agreed, saying: "The Corps believes that once the ditches are connected and channels reshaped, they will transform into streams and supply the same structure and functions as the destroyed streams. However, the Corps offers little experience or scientific support for this belief. The Corp's witnesses conceded that the Corps does not know of any successful stream creation projects in the Appalachian region," wrote U.S. District Judge Robert S. Chambers.

Pending Legislation Could Help Protect Mountaintops

Some members of Congress are responding to the environmental hazards created by mountaintop removal mining by backing legislation that protects streams from being buried under tons of rock and debris. The Clean Water Protection Act, (H.R. 2169), was recently reintroduced in the House of Representatives. This bipartisan bill, championed by Reps. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Christopher Shays (R-CT), aims to re-establish the original intent of the Clean Water Act prior to a 2002 rule change that redefined "waste" to exclude mountaintop debris. This change cleared the way for coal companies to dump millions of tons of rock and rubble into nearby streams. HR 2169 would reclassify the debris and require disposal to be regulated.

"I'm proud to have reintroduced this bill, which protects streams and watersheds, and addresses a serious environmental justice concern," said Representative Frank Pallone. "The federal government should protect the environment and the people living around mountaintop mining operations, not give massive mining companies a free pass to dump fill into waterways."

ABC is supporting this important legislation and urges all bird conservation activists and organizations to contact their Representatives in support of the Clean Water Protection Act. See www.ilovemountains.org/action/write_your_rep/ to contact your Representative.

Land Manager's Guide Now Available for Rainforest Birds in Pacific Northwest

A new guidebook, published jointly by ABC and the U.S. Geological Survey, assists land managers interested in conducting conservation and management activities to benefit breeding birds associated with young conifer forests in the Pacific Northwest. Audiences targeted by the guide include land trusts, watershed councils, non-commercial private land owners, forest products companies, land-managing conservation organizations, government agencies, tribes, and First Nations.

The guide provides information on the suitable habitat conditions and response to management of approximately 90 breeding bird species associated with young conifer forests, including priority species such as the Band-tailed Pigeon, Hermit Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Sooty Grouse. The guide will also be a valuable tool to support any of the variety of reasons to manage for bird habitat in young conifer forests (for example, regulatory, biodiversity, bird conservation, and forest certification standards). You can download a copy at pubs.water.usgs.gov/sir20065304/.

St. Lucia: Paradise Lost for Endangered Bird

A sprawling development project is underway on the Caribbean island of St. Lucia that is destroying habitat for the largest surviving population of the globally endangered White-breasted Thrasher. The thrasher, locally known as le Gorge Blanc, is almost entirely restricted to St. Lucia. Of the 1,122 individuals that occur on the island, one third are found within the proposed development site for the Le Paradis Hotel and Golf Course complex, being constructed by DCG Properties for the Westin chain.

In 2005, the project was put on hold due to concerns over the destruction and fragmentation of thrasher habitat. The developers then undertook an Environmental Impact Study (EIS), which established a baseline population estimate of the thrasher in the construction area and recommended mitigation measures. These included leaving some vegetation corridors and creating habitat elsewhere to be set aside as nature reserves.

Construction has resumed, and despite the EIS, significant amounts of forest essential for the species continued survival are being destroyed. Several forest patches remain in between the golf course fairways, but DCG plans to build residences in many of these, resulting in further habitat loss.

The resort developers present a rosy picture of the situation, however. In a letter to concerned parties, the Managing Director of DCG Properties dismissed concerns about habitat fragmentation caused by the project, saying "the White Breasted Thrasher can survive successfully despite the forest being fragmented" as long as "sufficient natural vegetation corridors remain."

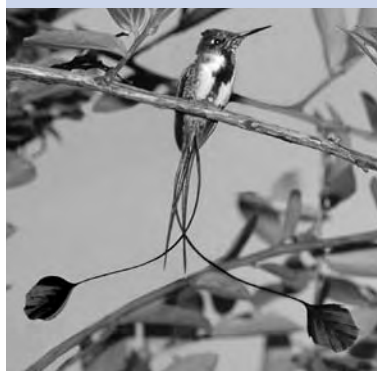
But a graduate student studying the project under Dr. Robert Curry of Villanova University is already recording a rise in the thrasher population in marginal areas just outside the development zone, as birds move away from their now

fragmented former habitat. Other birds that were banded in previous years appear to have disappeared altogether. Dr. Curry has also reported a very high nest failure rate in these outlying areas that will certainly have long-term consequences for the species.

"We strongly doubt claims that this globally important population of the thrasher will be anything but seriously harmed by the vast hotel and recreational complex at Praslin Bay," said Dr. Paul Salaman, Director of ABC's International Programs. "This project is proving disastrous for a species that is already teetering on the brink of extinction." For dramatic photos, see www.leparadisstlucia.com/construction/gallery.html. Contact Paul Salaman, ABC, <psalaman@abcbirds.org> for more information.

Rare Hummingbird Courtship Display Caught on Film

In April 2007, ABC released the first ever film of the spectacular courtship display of the Marvelous Spatuletail, a highly endangered hummingbird that lives in the mountains of northern Peru.



The video was shot by wildlife filmmaker Greg R. Homel of Natural Elements Productions. To view, visit ABC's website, www.abcbirds.org.

Photo: Heinz Plenge.

Recovery Plan Plays Politics with Spotted Owl's Survival

The administration has released a draft recovery plan for the threatened Northern Spotted Owl that has scientists who worked on the recovery team crying foul. In testimony before the House Resources Committee, Dr. Dominick DellaSala, a member of the Spotted Owl Recovery Team, stated that administration officials had interfered with the scientists' work and that the preferred option in the draft plan that makes habitat protection optional was not the product of the recovery team.

The Owl Recovery Team's original draft was a science-based plan maintaining the management requirements of the Northwest Forest Plan that protects 7.7 million acres of old growth forests. However, administration officials on the team's oversight committee rejected it and ordered the group to devise a second alternative that ignores the best available science to refocus Spotted Owl recovery away from habitat protection.

The new alternative, imposed by administration political appointees with no expertise in Spotted Owl management including Julie MacDonald (see article page 9), requires no fixed habitat protection. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management would have discretion to determine if any habitat protection is necessary. This alternative would likely lead to the elimination of the old growth reserves created under

The new alternative, imposed by administration political appointees with no expertise in Spotted Owl management...requires no fixed habitat protection.

the Northwest Forest Plan because they would no longer be deemed necessary for owl recovery.

"We repeatedly expressed our opposition to the administration's oversight committee's preferred option to the



The Spotted Owl's survival is now being threatened by political maneuvering. Photo: Shane Jeffries/USDA Forest Service.

point we felt we were banging our heads against the wall," said Dr. DellaSala to the Medford Mail Tribune.

FWS ignored requests to conduct peer review on the habitat provisions of the plan prior to public release of the document. The public can view the draft plan at www.fws.gov/pacific. You can submit comments until June 25 at <http://audubonaction.org/campaign/spottedowl>.

IPCC Report: Global Warming Threatens Many Bird Species

Between 20 to 30 percent of all species are threatened by an increased risk of extinction if average temperatures increase more than 1.5-2.5°C., according to the report *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability* (www.ipcc.ch/SPM6avr07.pdf). The analysis by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) also found that an important way to mitigate the impacts of global warming is to protect existing forests, grasslands, and wetlands, which store carbon and provide essential habitat for imperiled wildlife.

"Two of Earth's most serious environmental problems, global warming and the loss of species, have a common



Photo: stock.xchng.

solution: stopping the loss of Earth's forests and other natural carbon fixing habitats," said George Fenwick, President of American Bird Conservancy. "At least 20% of greenhouse gas emissions result from deforestation which causes carbon stored in forest biomass, deadwood, litter and soil to be released to the atmosphere."

The by-product of a global program to reduce greenhouse emissions through forest conservation would be the protection of large numbers of Earth's threatened species, and preservation of ecosystem services such as watersheds. "Avoided deforestation", in which payments are provided to countries or projects that protect existing forest, can be financed by carbon taxes, a global trust fund, or by carbon credits purchased by polluters to offset emissions. Congress is now considering global warming legislation that includes provisions to encourage storing carbon in forests and other habitats.

Bird in Brief

G8 Endorses Alliance for Zero Extinction

Environment Ministers of the G8 countries and the five major developing nations met in March to discuss climate change and the loss of biodiversity. The ministers agreed to endorse measures to reduce the loss of biodiversity by 2010, including protection of sites identified by the Alliance for Zero Extinction. National targets and strategies to achieve the 2010 target will now be developed and implemented. The meeting's conclusions are available at http://unfccc.int/files/application/pdf/g-8_potsdam_conclusion.pdf.

California Condors Nest in Mexico

A California Condor egg found in an abandoned eagle nest in Mexico marks the first breeding record in that country in over 75 years, and another indication of the successful recovery of a species that nearly went extinct. The egg was found by researchers from the San Diego Zoo in the Sierra San Pedro de Martir National Park.

Only 22 California Condors remained in their North American range by the 1980s; the last documented condor sighting in Mexico was in the 1930s.

Following intensive conservation efforts, California Condors now number about 280. Working with the Mexican government, biologists reintroduced captive-bred birds to Mexico in 2002.

Report: Illegal Trade Threatens Mexico's Parrots

In January, Defenders of Wildlife released *The Illegal Parrot Trade in Mexico: A Comprehensive Assessment*.



Military Macaw: Fundación ProAves.

It thoroughly analyzes the threat posed to Mexico's 22 parrot species by illegal trapping, and proposes comprehensive policy solutions. An estimated 65,000 to 78,500 parrots are captured each year in Mexico. The overall mortality rate for trapped parrots before they reach market exceeds 75%. This translates to about 50,000 to 60,000 bird deaths annually. Law reform, increased law enforcement, and efforts to change the behavior of the buying public are essential if wild populations of these beautiful birds are to be stabilized and restored. As the primary audience is Mexican, the printed version of the Defenders' study is in Spanish. An English version is also available from <DTucker@defenders.org>. Contact Defenders of Wildlife, México Office, <jccantu@defenders.org> for more information.

Arizona Cats Indoors Brochure Published

The Arizona Game & Fish Department recognizes that free-roaming cats can be significant predators of birds and other wildlife. A new brochure, *Keeping Cats Indoors—Good for Cats, Good for Arizona's Wildlife*, developed by the department's Arizona Bird Conservation Initiative in conjunction with ABC's *Cats Indoors!* Campaign, is available at

Arizona Game & Fish offices and online at www.azgfd.gov/pdfs/w_c/abci/KeepingCatsIndoors.pdf.

What's in Your Tackle Box?

Nine nonprofit organizations, including BCA member Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, are working together to reduce lead fishing tackle and shotgun pellets in Wisconsin's waterways. The organizations are spreading the word with a display card highlighting the lead poisoning issue and promoting alternatives. The free card, *What's in Your Tackle Box?*, is available at: www.wisconsinbirds.org/leadpoisoning.htm.

Birds to Benefit from Wildlife Without Borders Grant

Pronatura Noroeste, an ABC partner group, will conduct workshops for children, teachers, and tourism industry representatives, develop curricula for schools, and train community leaders and students to protect four nature reserves on the Baja California Peninsula, which benefit a host of shorebirds. This project was made possible by a FWS award of nearly \$300,000 for a variety of wildlife conservation projects in Mexico as part of the Wildlife Without Borders program.

Brown Pelican Delisting

In May 2006, FWS released a finding that the California subspecies of the Brown Pelican had recovered to the point that it could be removed from protection under the Endangered Species Act (*Bird Calls* Vol. 11, No. 1). In early February 2007, the Service released its Five-year Review of the species, in which it recommends delisting *all* populations still covered by the Act. This recommendation is due to remarkable recoveries throughout the

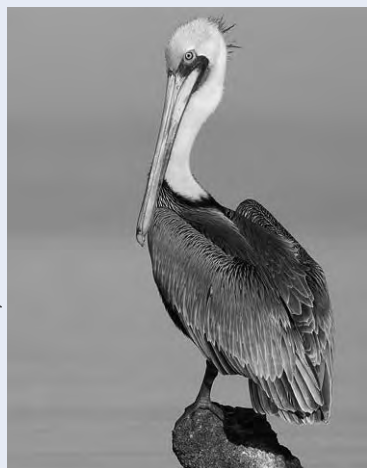
KEEPING CATS INDOORS



Good for Cats

Good for
Arizona's Wildlife

pelican's range, mainly following the ban on DDT, which caused severe declines in their populations and those of several other species during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. There are three approved recovery plans for various Brown Pelican populations, though these do not cover the species' range outside the United States. The plan for the eastern United States does not include delisting criteria. The Service is now working on an official proposed rule, which will be followed by a public comment period. See www.fws.gov/endangered/wildlife.html.



Brown Pelican: Tom Grey.

Woodpecker Rediscovered – but not in Arkansas

Although intense searches in the swamps and forests of Arkansas have failed to find conclusive proof of the continued existence of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, researchers in Brazil have fared better with the Caatinga Woodpecker. Known only from a single specimen collected in 1926, the new sighting was made 80 years later by Brazilian ornithologist Advaldo do Prado while surveying the Tocantins region of Central Brazil, some 200 miles away from the original location. Once considered a subspecies of the Rufous-headed Woodpecker, this bird was given full species status after a 2003 review. It will likely

be granted critically endangered status by the IUCN when they add it to the Red List. The new finding comes in the wake of a number of recent bird rediscoveries in Brazil, including the Golden-crowned Manakin and Cone-billed Tanager.

More of Alaska to be Opened for Oil Drilling

The government has opened up Bristol Bay, in Southwest Alaska, for oil exploration. The bay encompasses 5.6 million acres of open water, world renowned for commercial salmon fishing. The estuaries along the coast of the bay are also major migratory stopover sites for waterfowl. Arctic and Aleutian Terns, Glaucous-winged Gulls, and Common Eiders also nest on sand spits and islands, and sea ducks winter in the ice-free waters of Port Moller.

The bay is thought to have up to 200 million barrels of oil beneath it, but the risk of oil spills prompted President Clinton to mark the area off-limits to drilling in 1998, when he added the bay to an existing executive order by his predecessor, President George H. W. Bush. If the leases do go through, drilling is not expected to occur before 2010, by which time the political and economic climate may have changed.

Superfunds for Playa Lakes

New Mexico partners in the Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV) have been identified as the favored alternative to receive mitigation money under a Superfund settlement. The settlement came in late 2004 in the case of contamination by a wood treatment plant in Clovis, New Mexico. In addition to cleanup costs, the site operator (Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company) agreed to pay \$459,000 for habitat restoration in the affected area. If FWS and the Superfund



American Avocet: Ralph Wright.

trustees choose their preferred alternative, the mitigation money will go to the Curry County Playa Restoration Project to start a program that would pay private landowners to enroll playas in 10- to 30-year conservation easements.

Playas are shallow, seasonal wetlands occurring from Texas to Nebraska. They are vital stopover sites for migratory ducks and shorebirds, including ABC Green List species such as the American Avocet, Wilson's Phalarope, Long-billed Curlew, and Solitary and Western Sandpipers.

Petition Filed to Relist Pygmy-Owl

The Center for Biological Diversity and Defenders of Wildlife have filed a petition with FWS to return the Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl to the Endangered Species List. The petition asserts that the Service ignored scientific evidence provided by its own biologists when it delisted the owl in May 2006. FWS determined that the pygmy-owl population in Arizona does not constitute a "Distinct Population Segment," by Endangered Species Act definition, because the owls do not differ genetically from others of the western subspecies of Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. Fewer than 20 of these tiny owls remain in Arizona. Although populations of the owl exist in Texas and Sonora, Mexico, they are also declining in those places. According to researchers at the University of Arizona, pygmy-owls in northern Sonora have declined by 26% since 2000.



Photo: flickr.com.

Help ABC Keep Wind Farms “Green”

Wind farms are being hastily built across the country, producing more and more clean electricity. But birds are paying the price.

Studies show that thousands of birds are dying each year in collisions with wind turbines. Rapid growth in the industry has conservationists alarmed that millions of birds could be at risk unless regulations are put in place to protect birds.

ABC is the foremost national bird conservation group representing the interests of birds on the National Wind Coordinating Committee, before Congress, and with the industry itself. ABC has testified on Capitol Hill, demanding strong legislation to protect birds at wind farms, and is working with federal agencies to develop guidelines and mitigation measures for both onshore and offshore wind projects.

Wind energy represents a burgeoning threat to birds, and an example where ABC's flexibility in addressing important new issues is key – but we need your help to succeed.

Please support ABC in planning for wise, careful development of wind energy that doesn't kill birds—use the enclosed envelope today to help!

Thank you,

George Fenwick
President, ABC

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