# BIRDCONSERVATION

The Magazine of American Bird Conservancy

SUMMER 2017

# The Time has Come

*As he prepares to step down, founder George Fenwick reflects on nearly 24 years with ABC—and his notion that a then-new, courageous, and single-minded organization focused solely on saving the birds of the Americas might change the dynamics of conservation.*

It was almost a quarter-century ago, and "Big Conservation" was drifting away from wildlife conservation. Smaller groups lacked the resources to advance much past building the needed science base. Meanwhile, many species were suffering retracting distributions and vanishing numbers.

But we had the optimism of the innocent, and we started ABC to turn the tide. I recalled Victor Hugo's words: "There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come."

I'm proud to say it has been a magnificent run. ABC has outperformed all expectations—year in and year out—for almost 24 years. But this statement is incomplete without praising those who have done so much to make this happen for birds.

First and foremost are our members and supporters. The most unusual and wonderful thing about these generous people is their loyalty to the cause. Some have stuck with us every year since we began in 1994. We are humbled by your constancy and kindness. Thank you!

ABC's ever-changing board—and our board members' spouses and friends—has always been a marvelous lot! Many of you have become our family's closest friends. The board has provided a steady stream of wisdom and tempered my most radical inclinations. And

You and I should look forward to great things to come from ABC.

its members have given and given, then given some more. Thank you all. We could not have done it without you.

One of the great lessons of ABC was learning how many excellent people were devoting their lives to wildlife conservation. Our many partners work hard every day for little salary and less recognition. Watching their work and accomplishments over these years will make one modest. We may not say it often, but we are thankful for our partners every day.

ABC's staff, finally, are the fine example of persistence and dedication that you must suspect they are. They work so hard because they want to. They are the ones about whom we are told, "They punch above their weight class." Yes, we are always trying to improve in every possible way, but I wouldn't trade them for any others.

Thank you all—and especially the dynamo, Rita Fenwick, ABC's longtime head of Development—for making us look so good and doing so much for our birds.

Having the benefit of experience, I want to change my quotation about ABC from Hugo's to one from Calvin Coolidge: "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent." That is ABC.

As I say, the time has come—the time for leadership change at ABC. Rita and I will be stepping down from our roles with ABC as of May 31 this year. You and I should look forward to great things to come from ABC. Our successors are sure to bring new energy and new ideas and I expect even greater conservation achievements very soon. Please welcome them, treat them as friends, and—above all—please stick with and keep supporting ABC! You, and the birds, will be rewarded for it.

George H. Fenwick
President, ABC

ABOVE: Costa's Hummingbird by Takahashi Photography, Shutterstock

COVER: Red-necked Tanager by Glenn Bartley

AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY

ABC is the Western Hemisphere's bird conservation specialist—the only organization with a single and steadfast commitment to achieving conservation results for native wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas.

Summer 2017

# BIRDCONSERVATION

## As Times Change, Conservation Adapts



### DEPARTMENTS



ABOVE: Palila by Jacob Drucker

TOP: Eastern Meadowlark by Gualberto Becerra, Shutterstock


A copy of the current financial statement and registration filed by the organization may be obtained by contacting: ABC, P.O. Box 249, The Plains, VA 20198. 540-253-5780, or by contacting the following state agencies:

Florida: Division of Consumer Services, toll-free number within the state: 800-435-7352.

Maryland: For the cost of copies and postage: Office of the Secretary of State, Statehouse, Annapolis, MD 21401.

New Jersey: Attorney General, State of New Jersey: 201-504-6259.

New York: Office of the Attorney General, Department of Law, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.

Pennsylvania: Department of State, toll-free number within the state: 800-732-0999.

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# A Partnership for the Birds

ABC and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology have come together to launch "Science to Action," a partnership aimed at reversing decades of population declines for migratory birds in the Americas. Bringing together the Cornell Lab's cutting-edge science and ABC's on-the-ground approach to bird conservation, this joint effort represents new hope for hundreds of declining species that journey each spring and fall between their breeding grounds in North America and wintering grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean.

ABC and the Cornell Lab are combining their strengths at a critical moment for migratory birds. Landmark conservation measures such as the Endangered Species Act are being targeted for elimination even as environmental threats grow. As the most recent *State of North America's Birds* report makes starkly clear, fully one-third of our continent's bird species will require concerted conservation efforts to ensure their future.

ABC and the Cornell Lab are combining their strengths at a critical moment for migratory birds.

The Science to Action partnership will focus on how new data and conservation tools can be harnessed to enhance the conservation of migratory birds across their breeding and wintering grounds, as well as stopover sites in between. "The Cornell Lab's dedicated science team and its depth of citizen-science data make it a perfect fit for informing better conservation decision-making," says George Fenwick, President of ABC.

"The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and American Bird Conservancy share common values and complementary expertise for protecting wild bird populations across the Western Hemisphere," says John W. Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of Cornell Lab. "With so many bird species showing alarming declines, it is more important than ever that the Lab work closely with ABC, combining our scientific focus and citizen-science data with ABC's effective conservation actions."

Ken Rosenberg, Applied Conservation Scientist at the Cornell Lab, is leading the new partnership. "Our two organizations will provide a unified voice for bird conservation, applying the best science on the ground at important natural areas and informing policies that affect the future of bird populations," he says.

Learn more online: abcbirds.org/article/american-bird-conservancy-cornell-lab-ornithology-join-forces.

ABOVE: Cerulean Warbler by Ryan Sanderson
BELOW: Blackburnian Warbler by Benjamin Skolnik

# Critical Habitat Protected for El Oro Parakeet and Other Species

In the first quarter of 2017, ABC and our Ecuadorian partner Fundación Jocotoco acquired two parcels of critical habitat to expand the Buenaventura Reserve. Buenaventura currently protects 15 threatened species, including the El Oro Parakeet. These land acquisitions increase the amount of protected habitat set aside for these species by 99 acres.

The first parcel, consisting of 68 acres, was acquired in January 2017. The second site—a 31-acre plot of private land within the reserve boundary—was acquired in March 2017. It is a valuable addition because it eliminates access to the central part of the reserve and is an important foraging site for the endangered Grey-backed Hawk.

These land acquisitions were made possible through the generous support of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, Global Wildlife Conservation, and Diane and Richard Huxtable.

El Oro Parakeets by Dusan Brinkhuizen

# Grey-breasted Parakeet Population Increasing

Since 2010, ABC's Brazilian partner Aquasis has installed 50 nest boxes to support Grey-breasted Parakeets in the Baturité Mountains. In the seven years since, more than 400 chicks have hatched in Aquasis' nest boxes. The population now appears to be expanding in both range and numbers. This is a significant success for the critically endangered species, which biologists estimate had dropped to as few as 300 birds before the start of Aquasis' nest-box program.

Grey-breasted Parakeet chick by Fabio Nunes

The majority of the world's Grey-breasted Parakeets are restricted to the wet forest remnants found in northwest Brazil's Baturité Mountains, where habitat loss and poaching remain their greatest threats. With international support from ABC and others, Aquasis leads successful outreach programs to inspire pride in the birds, encourage landowners to protect habitat on private lands, and reduce poaching and trafficking for the pet trade.

Photo by Aquasis

In addition to doubling the nest-box program, Aquasis and ABC also seek to establish a second population of the birds by relocating 20 to 35 Grey-breasted Parakeets from the Baturité Mountains to a protected area in the Aratanha Mountains, 20 miles away.

ABC is grateful to David and Patricia Davidson, Larry Thompson, and Michael Reid for their generous support of our efforts on behalf of the Grey-breasted Parakeet.

Learn more and donate: **abcbirds.org/save-the-grey-breasted-parakeet**

Grey-breasted Parakeets have readily used artificial nest boxes provided by Aquasis staff, resulting in a signficiant increase in their numbers.

# As Expected, Vikings' Stadium Proves Lethal for Birds

During the 2016 fall migration, Minneapolis Audubon and other local groups conducted a survey to examine bird mortalities and injuries associated with U.S. Bank Stadium, the new home for the NFL's Minnesota Vikings. Their report—*Bird Mortality at U.S. Bank Stadium During Fall Migration 2016*—indicates that 74 birds were found killed or stunned during the survey period.

During the planning and construction of the stadium, ABC and other groups advocated for the use of a bird-friendly building design to mitigate the risk of bird collisions. Unfortunately, no bird-friendly design principles were incorporated. The stadium uses a large amount of glass on its exterior, and the recently published report provides proof that the stadium—which opened July 2016—is killing birds.

ABC's Glass Collisions Program Director, Chris Sheppard, believes the report doesn't capture the total number of birds impacted by the stadium. "For reasons outlined in the report, it is likely that the actual number of birds killed is substantially higher."


During the planning and construction of the stadium, ABC and other groups advocated for the use of a bird-friendly building design to mitigate the risk of bird collisions. Unfortunately, no bird-friendly design principles were incorporated.

Other professional sports franchises currently planning redevelopment of stadiums have the opportunity to incorporate bird-friendly building design techniques to greatly lessen the threat to birds. "We hope that the public outcry created by U.S. Bank Stadium will encourage teams now planning new stadiums to consider birds in their designs," says Sheppard.

To learn more about bird-friendly building design, visit: **abcbirds.org/program/glass-collisions/bird-friendly-design.**

To read the Minneapolis Audubon Report visit: **audubonchapterofminneapolis.org/compendium-of-vikings-stadium-articles-and-information.**

Photo of stadium by Jim Teter

# Join ABC Live on Facebook

We are excited to share that ABC is using Facebook's video streaming feature—Facebook Live—to connect directly with you, our supporters!

Our first Facebook Live event took viewers to Mexico's Chihuahuan Desert to discuss wintering grounds and habitat conservation efforts for grassland birds with Mauricio De la Maza Benignos, General Director of our partner Pronatura Noreste. Then, on March 16, ABC Invasive Species Program Director Grant Sizemore talked about the impact of free-roaming cats on birds.

Our Facebook Live events will continue to invite viewers into our offices and out to the field, where we work with partners to protect birds and the habitats they rely on.

"Facebook Live allows ABC's supporters to learn the faces behind our programs, connect with staff on a personal level, and experience our passion for bird conservation," says Aditi Desai, ABC's Director of Multimedia and Assistant Director of Communications.


Visit **@AmericanBirdConserve** on Facebook to view videos of previous events. Follow us to receive notifications when we next go live.

# ABC Is Evolving

## Will You Join Us?

Evolution is a natural, irresistible force—and just as species evolve, so too do organizations. American Bird Conservancy is no exception.

Our evolution has been in direct response to the growing challenges birds face. In nearly 24 years, we've grown from a staff of six with a single partner to a team of 70+ with dozens of partners. We have established protections for more than 1 million acres, planted more than 5 million trees, succeeded in blocking more than 30 dangerous pesticides, and much more—all for the benefit of more than 2,500 bird species. As conservation challenges change and increase, we are prepared to adapt quickly to meet them head on. Simply put—bird conservation is in our DNA.

Today, big changes are afoot at ABC. We are welcoming a new president and board chair, and after nearly 24 years of steady growth and results, are challenging ourselves to take bird conservation to a higher level across a vaster geography.

**To do this we need your help, and right now we have a great opportunity for you to provide it.** Thanks to generous ABC supporters, **all gifts received by June 30 will be matched dollar for dollar, up to $600,000!**

With your help, we can benefit more than 100 endangered bird species that currently do not have protection. We can scale up our Migratory Bird Program and make a greater impact on BirdScapes, those sweet spots where opportunity and important breeding, wintering, and stopover habitats come together. And we can defend the framework of laws and agencies that protect our birds.

**Remember, this challenge match is good only through June 30. Please make your gift today using the enclosed envelope, or give online at: support.abcbirds.org/evolve**

# 24 Years in the Evolution of Bird Conservation

*by George Fenwick*

In 1972, Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge published their theory of "punctuated equilibrium," proposing that evolution is marked by times of rapid speciation separated by long periods of slower change. The evolution of bird conservation follows a similar pattern. Discrete events—"punctuations"—have resulted in rapid change to bird conservation that are spread between periods of slower change. The advent of popular bird field guides is an example of an early punctuation that led to a rapid change in our knowledge of birds.


I have been reflecting on this since learning of the recent death of the great ornithologist, Chan Robbins. His ground-breaking field guide, *A Guide to Field Identification: Birds of North America*, and a personal phone call from him to encourage the 15-year-old me, helped change the course of my life, setting me on the path that would ultimately lead toward the founding of ABC.

Here are five other revolutionary bird conservation punctuations we've experienced during ABC's time.



TOP: Long-tailed Sylph by Ondrej Prosicky

## Punctuation #1: Organizing People

At the time of ABC's founding in 1994, there were more than 900 bird clubs, more than a dozen bird observatories, and a sprinkling of groups dedicated to bird conservation in the United States. Yet, for the most part, these groups and organizations acted independently. Working alone, they each coordinated bird outings, focused on local issues, and/or conducted research or education. They did not yet recognize that the whole of their collective action could be greater than the sum of its parts. Organizing was like, well, herding birds.

This had started to change in the 1980s, when passage of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) in 1989 created the first of an acronym soup of programs designed to bring organizations together to work on common goals. NAWCA was initially supported primarily by waterfowl hunting agencies and nonprofits. But the Act funded the conservation of wetlands important to all birds and ultimately earned the support of all types of bird conservationists.

NAWCA led to the creation of Joint Ventures (JVs), a nationwide (and now international) network of geographically based, multi-partner initiatives whose goals are to bring bird conservationists together to accomplish common priorities. So, where waterfowl enthusiasts might once have worked alone to protect a marsh for Northern Pintails in the prairie pothole region, now they were joined by others who wanted to protect birds such as Sedge Wrens, American Bitterns, and Upland Sandpipers.

In 1990, a community of scientists and educators formed Partners in Flight (PIF) whose purpose was to support the recovery of non-game, upland birds. The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) and North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) followed in 2000 and 2005, respectively, providing federal funding and further organizing the bird conservation movement. Also in 2000, the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) was formed to identify and encourage the protection of the last remaining sites for the most endangered bird and wildlife species on Earth.

By pooling interests and collaborating on mutual priorities, these networks and alliances have improved our knowledge about birds, identified key places to work, and focused more funding on priority needs. From eiders in Alaska to Blackburnian Warblers in Colombia, birds (and birders) across the Americas have benefited from the success of these partnerships.

Common Eiders by Svoboda Pavel, Shutterstock

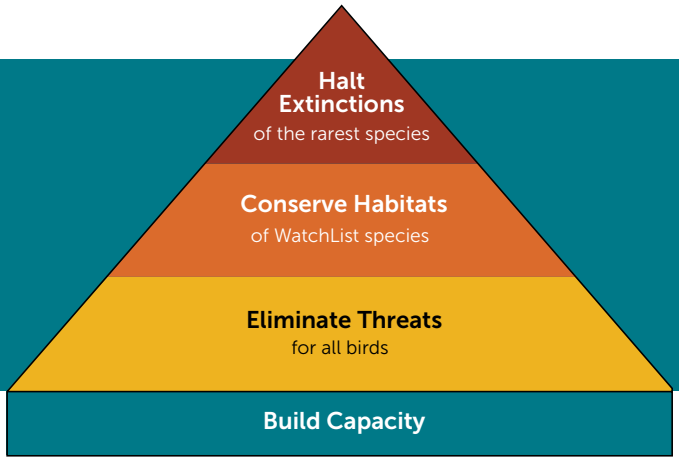
## Punctuation #2: Founding ABC

In a world rife with environmental nonprofits, a common question asked of me when we first launched ABC was: "Is there really a need for ABC?" Now, nearly 24 years later, few would question the need for an organization such as ours, that actively pursues collaborative opportunities to address the most serious problems for birds in the Americas.

From our very beginning, ABC forged alliances to fight for birds. Our partnerships focused on priorities ranging from preventing bird extinctions in Hawai'i to stopping a rocket launch site on an important island for nesting seabirds in the Caribbean; from opposing the eradication of the world's largest Caspian Tern colony in Washington state's Columbia River estuary to developing a reserve network for endangered species in Latin America; from protecting Long-billed Curlews across their full annual range to working with landowners to create winter habitat for migratory songbirds in Central and South America.

Aside from many specific accomplishments, ABC deserves punctuation status for having innovated numerous new or renewed approaches that deserve being part of this evolution story, such as:

- We embrace birds throughout the entire Western Hemisphere. The ABC Conservation Framework clarifies a vision for prioritizing bird conservation for all birds across the Americas.
- We maintain the importance of protecting species for the sake of the species. When ABC launched, the pendulum of environmental interest had swung to primarily focus on the ecosystem services that serve humanity. ABC, through development of the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) and the creation of a 70-reserve network, has renewed interest in species-level conservation. No other U.S. organization was considering the future for the last Marvelous Spatuletail or Lear's Macaw when ABC launched.
- We are fearless in addressing the most challenging issues. While many environmental organizations have general policy or advocacy staff, ABC supports a staff of full-time experts dedicated to specific threats, such as pesticides, free-roaming cats, window collisions, and poorly sited wind farms.
- We speak up for the unusual and forgotten. Out-of-the-mainstream bird issues—such as the decline of seabirds due to fisheries bycatch and nesting ground destruction—deserve and receive our attention. And despite the perilous situation for native Hawaiian birds, ABC is a leader in the effort to recover their populations.
- We innovate. ABC's breakthrough BirdScapes approach to migratory bird conservation is establishing novel, landscape-level goals for protecting American migratory birds.
- We find strength in partnerships. ABC lives the maxim: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. We invest in partnerships and coalitions unlike any other nonprofit. To date, our partnerships include AZE, National Pesticide Reform Coalition, Partners in Flight, NABCI, Joint Ventures, and many others.
- We save birds. The ABC model has proven to be more successful in achieving bird conservation than most others. In a single sentence, it is: Get results with low overhead and high productivity.




The ABC Conservation Framework clarifies a vision for prioritizing bird conservation for all birds across the Americas.

## Punctuation #3: Involving Citizens

For more than 100 years, birders have crisscrossed the world to see billions of birds. Yet, until 15 years ago, this immense resource of observers and data was untapped. Then, in 2002, inspiration hit. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, with help from National Audubon, recognized birders' desire to help conservation, and eBird was born.

Now, with more than 300 million observations from all around the world, the eBird citizen science database of location records for birds promises vastly better-informed conservation decision-making in the near future. Banding records and traditional research can provide incomplete pictures of a species' range and seasonal migration. The immensity of eBird's data addresses this limitation. It tells the true stories of how Indigo Buntings migrate north up the Mississippi River Valley before dispersing east and west; allows us to link the time and place of bird sightings to distinguish between stopover sites and wintering grounds; and provides clues to help determine whether out-of-place sightings might be correlated with patterns of distributional change.

TOP, left to right: David Wiedenfeld (ABC), Juan Cansaya, and Gregorio Ferro (ECOAN) at Abra Málaga Pass, Peru, visiting a field site for *Polylepis* reforestation. Photo by Philip Tanimoto, 2016.

Citizen scientists are, by definition, untrained in scientific data collection. That can lead to errors in species identification, data recording, and more. This is not insurmountable. Both quality control measures and the sheer enormity of participants—more than 250,000—dampen these fears of inaccuracy. The Cornell Lab has done an extraordinary job bringing this resource to fruition and they are now deep into analysis of how the data can best be used. (See page 20 for more.)

The recently launched ABC and Cornell Lab partnership—Science to Action—will use eBird data and other resources to deliver much-improved, science-based decision making for lesser-known aspects of ornithological conservation, such as delineating full life-cycle, migratory bird wintering and stopover areas.

## Punctuation #4: Uniting with Partners

No article on the evolution of bird conservation in the Americas would be complete without discussion of impressive advances in Latin America and the Caribbean. Most early bird research in these regions was conducted by U.S.- and European-trained ornithologists whose nations had traditions of natural science study. But these researchers engaged enthusiastic young and local biologists. Latin American universities responded by

establishing biology degree programs that encouraged those young ornithologists.

Many young Latin Americans have responded quickly and enthusiastically. Today, I am humbled by the skills of these scientists. Many of these ornithologists match the best I have seen in the United States and have taken on leadership roles to advance the knowledge of avifauna in their countries.

The competency of southern conservation organizations is also rising rapidly. ABC now benefits from a network of approximately two dozen fine groups that are fully capable—not just of science, but also of planning and implementing conservation strategies. For example, ABC helped Fundación ProAves in Colombia get underway by providing its first grant—for Yellow-eared Parrot nest boxes—in 1998. Today, ProAves has an enviable reserve network and dozens of staffers.

Similar success stories can be found throughout the Americas. The rapid growth of our partner organizations from Mexico to Chile may be the most exciting and important punctuation in recent bird conservation. ABC even funded the start of a new bird conservation group in Chile—Picaflor de Arica—whose initial purpose is to save the Chilean Woodstar from imminent extinction.

ABC helped Fundación ProAves in Colombia get underway by providing its first grant—for Yellow-eared Parrot nest boxes—in 1998.

## Punctuation #5: Tracking Technology

When ABC launched in 1994, the most reliable source of location information for birds was banding records. When a bird was leg-banded and then recaptured, found dead, or shot, you could count absolutely on the accuracy of the recovery data. The problem was that your chances of recovering a banded bird were less than one in 100.

The sole exception to this limitation was waterfowl, because hunters shot them and returned the bands to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Thus, waterfowl breeding, staging, and wintering areas were the first to be well known, while nothing at all was known about the wintering locales for many other migratory birds.

Neck collars with codes large enough to be read with a spotting scope were pioneered for Whistling Swans (also known as Tundra Swans) by Bill Sladen in the U.S. in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This allowed location information to be gathered from larger birds without killing or recapturing them. (Incidentally, this program helped me get my start in bird conservation. It is hard for me to imagine a more irresistible introduction to birding and bird conservation than being turned loose with a spotting scope for months at a time on the American plains, looking for wildlife.)

Later, we attached early-generation transmitters on swans and tracked them with small airplanes using radio telemetry. We used hose clamps to mount a large antennae to the wing struts of our aircraft. This was definitely not approved by the FAA. So, when landing strip operators asked about the antennae, we always assured them that they were approved—and then we would take off quickly!

This work literally took me across the North American continent. At one point, I held the record for the longest known tracking of an animal: a swan that flew from Alaska to Minnesota and then to North Carolina. I sat in the back of a Cessna 172 with headphones, listening to the beeping of the swan's transmitter. If the bird went left, I pressed the pilot's left shoulder and so on. We knew we were not just imagining things when, one dawn over Youngstown, Ohio, we spotted the flock flying south, several thousand feet below us.

Today, lightweight data collectors known as geolocators can be carried by very small birds and do not require satellite or radio telemetry tracking. The birds do need to be recaptured, however. And the location accuracy



Yellow-eared Parrots by Fundación ProAves

of these devices is not ideal. Nevertheless, scientists are using geolocator-collected data to unravel many secrets of bird migration. Who knew that Black Swifts from the Pacific Northwest wintered in the upper Amazon Basin?

The newest bird tracking technology uses GPS devices to track birds' exact location on the map. These trackers are slightly larger than the current-generation geolocators and can provide data in real time, which means the birds do not need to be recaptured. Unfortunately, these GPS data loggers can only be used on larger birds at the moment. But this may change soon. With this and other ever-evolving technology, I predict that what we know about where birds travel during migration will increase rapidly.

And as for the problem of recapture? It isn't always this easy, but on a trip with Jeff Larkin and his Indiana University of Pennsylvania students last year, the team recaptured a Golden-winged Warbler with a geolocator that had wintered in South America—now back on its Pennsylvania Pocono Mountain breeding grounds—in just a few minutes with a mist net and song recording!

## Punctuation #6: Looking Ahead

It seems as if everything in our world is speeding up. In effect, all of human civilization is an extended punctuation; one likely to continue until massive change occurs. This could be the complete deforestation of nations, climate change on a scale that life cannot endure, or—we can hope—the dawn of a new appreciation of the importance of nature.

Unfortunately, each advance in our conservation community is at least matched by the advances of the industrialized world. While we learn what the birds are doing with geolocators, others decide where to cut forests or drain wetlands with drone technology.

One could argue that the element of human welfare must be considered before birds, and I would understand. But often the actions that damage birds are also unkind to people. Sustaining people can be a euphemism for cramming more people into unsustainable environmental situations. The better path forward is to protect birds in ways that can also benefit local communities. Once one starts to think in this way, one sees the opportunities for people can be much improved where bird conservation occurs as well. I am counting on it.

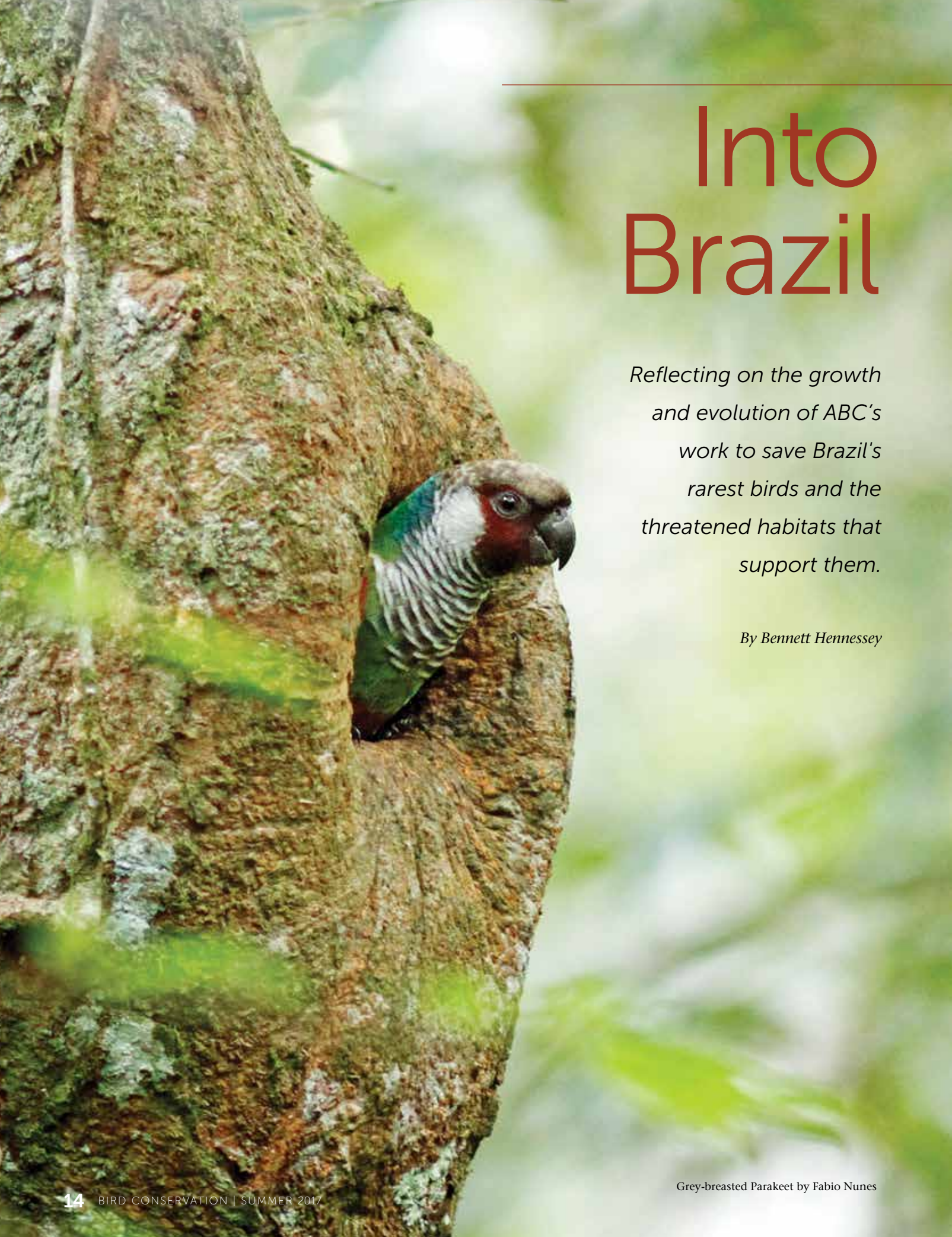

A full history of major events in bird conservation would require a book. In fact, we explore the topic in our 2010 book, *The ABC Guide to Bird Conservation*. Find our book online and elsewhere.

Graduate student Darin James McNeil Jr. releases a Golden-winged Warbler after removing its geolocator. Photo by Aditi Desai

# Into Brazil

*Reflecting on the growth and evolution of ABC's work to save Brazil's rarest birds and the threatened habitats that support them.*

*By Bennett Hennessey*



Grey-breasted Parakeet by Fabio Nunes

The reality is clear: Brazil has the highest number of threatened birds in the world. Nowhere else on our planet will we find as many bird species in need of immediate and effective conservation action.

But there is another reality we cannot ignore. Brazil's wealth is just one-fifth of other developed nations, while Brazil's investment in conservation is barely one-twentieth of those same nations. Why the difference? Some say this is because Brazil's charity-minded individuals tend to support organizations that address poverty rather than conservation and other issues. Others suggest that a lack of conservation awareness stunts giving. Or, perhaps conservation philanthrophy has simply not yet caught up with Brazil's economic emergence.

Whatever the reasons, Brazil's wildlife is in dire need of conservation action.

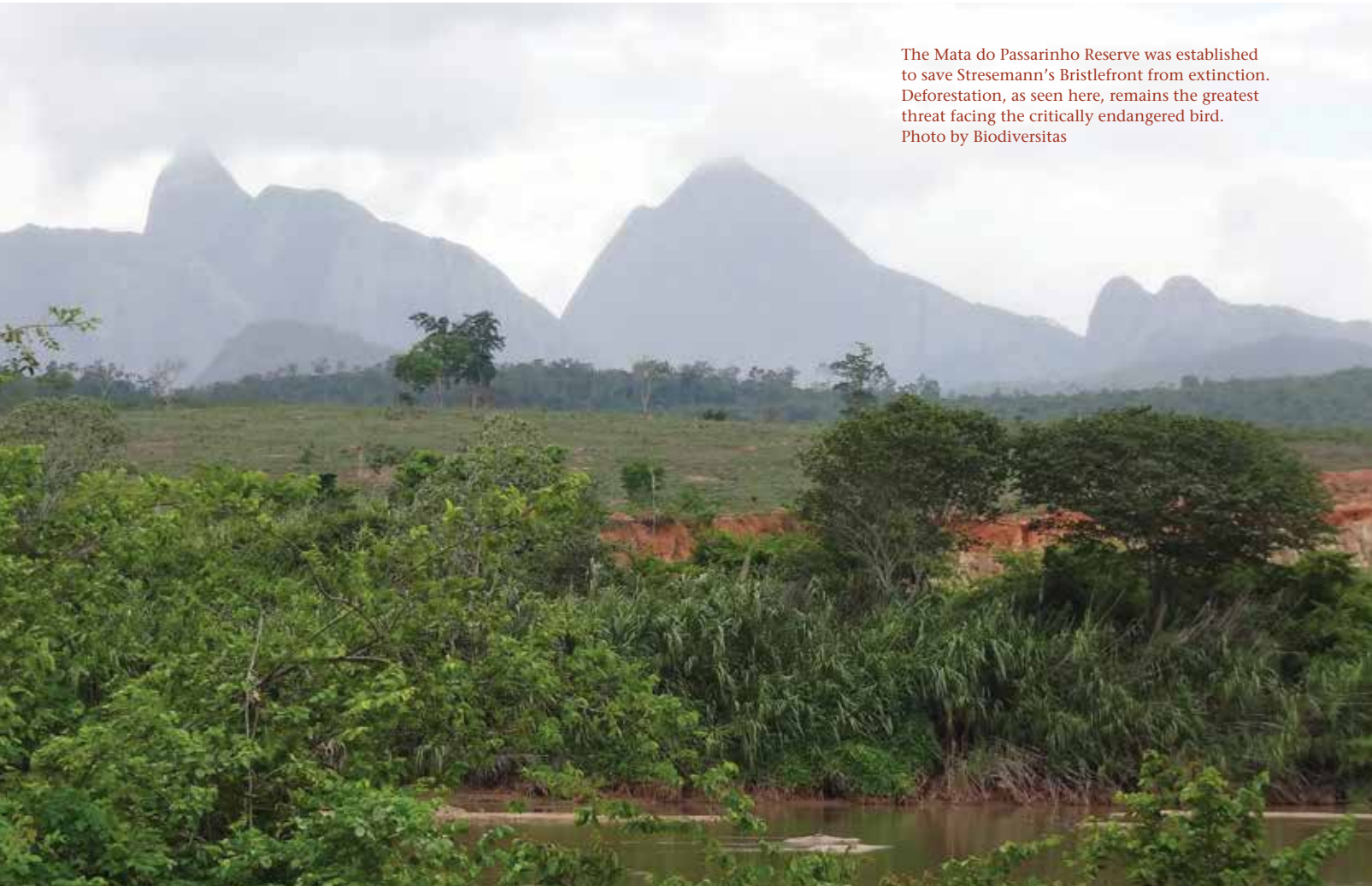
## The Long Road to Brazil

Twenty years ago, I knew none of this. I was not yet involved with ABC—which George Fenwick had founded only a few years prior—and had just moved to Bolivia. I wanted to contribute to conservation, and believed the best way to do this was to live in the country where the action would be happening. I also wanted to work in a country that would benefit from my work, and where I would not be taking away a job from a citizen of that country.

Bolivia was a perfect fit. The country was home to numerous threatened birds, and yet there was very little happening for bird conservation at the time. Brazil, with its comparative wealth, did not need my help. Or so I thought.

At the time, Brazil seemed well prepared to address its own conservation issues. The country was more developed than many of its neighbors. It had a larger pool of people trained in biology and conservation. And Brazil was in the midst of an economic boom that should have ultimately helped support conservation measures.

But as the years moved on, both I and American Bird Conservancy—still working independently—started to notice that Brazil's economic growth was being matched by the expansion of their list of threatened birds. Greater wealth was not translating into more conservation.



The Mata do Passarinho Reserve was established to save Stresemann's Bristlefront from extinction. Deforestation, as seen here, remains the greatest threat facing the critically endangered bird. Photo by Biodiversitas

Lear's Macaws by Maggie Forrester

## Luck, Sleuthing, and a Plan

In 2012, a fortunate serendipity arose between ABC and me.

A chance trip brought me to Dulles International Airport, near ABC's headquarters in The Plains, Virginia. And so I took a trip out to meet the Fenwicks and talk about our mutual interest in Brazil. At the time, ABC's involvement in Brazil centered around three main projects: establishing the Mata do Passarinho Reserve for the critically endangered Stresemann's Bristlefront and expanding the Canudos Biological Station Reserve for the critically endangered Lear's Macaw, both with partner Biodiversitas; and strengthening land protection at the Guapi Assu Ecological Reserve (REGUA). But by the end of our conversation, George agreed it was time for ABC to greatly increase its investment and we decided to try an experiment: Working as a contractor, I would develop a Brazil bird conservation strategy with ABC over the next six months.

The assignment turned into detective work for me to uncover the hidden secrets of Brazil's bird conservation priorities. I found that the accessible, English-published literature only scratched the surface with regards to the complexities of Brazil's threatened birds. So much more information was unpublished, residing securely in the heads of Brazilian ornithologists, bird guides, and birdwatchers.

I also discovered that the information published in Portuguese had been overlooked by global threatened species assessments. For example, I found that the Murici Ecological Station—which we thought had been responsibly protected since 2001—had been basically ignored for 13 years, with all of its land still held in private ownership, and half of it still grazed by cattle. It was the birdwatchers who noticed the problem.

After six months of sleuthing, we had enough information to know one thing for sure: Brazil's birds needed ABC now more than ever. We could not let any more birds slip away into extinction without anyone taking notice. And so we extended my contract with ABC so that we could work together to make a difference for the many other rare bird species found in Brazil.

## Getting to Know Brazil

In a country where 24 species are considered critically endangered, it is important to deeply understand the species at stake—including their habitat needs and the threats they face—and prioritize accordingly.

Brazil is home to an almost unbelievable abundance of biodiversity. Its plentiful rain and warm climate help sustain the world's largest and most biologically diverse rainforest—the Amazon Rainforest—which harbors one-tenth of all the species found in the entire world, including nearly 1,300 known species of birds. Much of Brazil's coastline once supported a second expansive forest—the Atlantic Forest—which has now been reduced to a fragment of its historic range. Despite the extensive habitat loss, the Atlantic Forest still supports more than 900 species of birds, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. Overall, Brazil is home to 13 percent of all known species, and yet some biologists estimate that 50 percent of these species could become extinct by 2020.

ABC developed a strategy based on this knowledge and the extinction patterns in Brazil—especially those seen in the highly fragmented Atlantic Forest, where we would ultimately invest most of our energy. Because, although the Amazon Rainforest is better known, it is actually much less threatened and home to far fewer endangered birds than the Atlantic Forest. We would identify those species that most need our help, find and protect their essential habitat, and forge strong alliances with Brazilian conservation partners wherever possible. And, of course, we would continue the important work that ABC had already begun.

## Partners, Preserves, and Promise for the Future

In 2013, ABC began to seriously expand our work and investment in Brazil. Over the 18-year period prior to 2013, ABC's investment in Brazil totaled $735,000. In the four years since, we have doubled that number.

With our new strategy in place, we continued our efforts with Biodiversitas and also forged new partnerships with two nonprofits: SAVE Brasil and Aquasis. Together with these partners, we began to ramp up real, on-the-ground conservation for Brazil's birds and their essential habitat.

Brazil's Araripe Oasis Reserve includes riverside habitat used by the critically endangered Araripe Manakin. Photo by Fabio Nunes

Araripe Manakin by Ciro Albano

We recently more than doubled the size of the Araripe Oasis Reserve, connecting it with the much larger Araripe National Forest.

Some of our work is guided by species. For example, we've identified the highly threatened Araripe Manakin as a priority. Fewer than 1,000 of these spectacular red-and-white birds remain in the wild, and all of them are found in only one location: a narrow strip of forest on the slopes of Brazil's Araripe Plateau. The species is threatened primarily by a lack of suitable breeding sites. In an effort to aid their recovery, ABC helped Aquasis purchase 140 acres of prime breeding habitat for these birds in 2014, establishing the Araripe Oasis Reserve. We repeated the feat in 2016 with the purchase of another 170 acres, more than doubling the size of the existing reserve and connecting it with the much larger Araripe National Forest.

Aquasis' Araripe Manakin project—coordinated by the wonder duo of Weber Silva and his wife Karina Linhares—should be the standard for conservation projects designed to save a species from extinction. Through meticulous research, Aquasis now knows where the species lives, and its preferred habitat, food, and nesting sites. Thanks to Aquasis' dedicated team, we now know every ingredient necessary to ensure the health of this species, which includes intricate management of streams and planting the right kind of vegetation to create an optimal breeding environment. Their efforts guided our land acquisition choices in 2014 and again in 2016, and will continue to guide our efforts to protect the Araripe Manakin in the years to come.

Other species-focused conservation efforts include Aquasis' amazingly successful conservation program with the Grey-breasted Parakeet (a community-based nest box program that has doubled the size of the population; see page 5) and SAVE Brasil's work to conserve the critically endangered Cherry-throated Tanager and São Paulo Marsh Antwren—all of which have been supported by ABC. Most recently, we've supported SAVE Brasil's actions to create an emergency conservation plan for the Alagoas Antwren, a species whose population has dwindled to the point that the last remaining birds live in only one small forest fragment in Murici, a municipality in Brazil's coastal state of Alagoas.

In other cases, we and our partners focus our efforts on specific ecosystems—which will of course ultimately support the birds as well. SAVE Brasil, for example, has always focused its attention on Brazil's highly threatened Atlantic Forest. Today, biologists estimate that less than 10 percent of the ecosystem remains, all of it in scattered fragments of forest surrounded by

Other species-focused conservation efforts include SAVE Brasil's work to conserve the critically endangered Cherry-throated Tanager (left) and Alagoas Antwren (right).

agriculture and development. No other tropical forest has suffered as much devastation as this little-known and once-vast ecosystem.

SAVE Brasil is alone among Brazil's conservation groups to insist on improved conservation measures for the Murici region's Atlantic Forest fragments, where the last of the world's Alagoas Antwrens find shelter. The group is also working to expand protections for another important Atlantic Forest fragment at Serra do Urubu by investing in reserves, assessing the surrounding areas, and assisting with the long-term sustainable management of the reserve. ABC is honored to support these efforts, most recently with a successful campaign that raised more than $200,000 to support the expansion of the Serra do Urubu reserve. (Read more here: **abcbirds.org/into-serra-do-urubu-brazils-forest-of-hope.**)

It was less than five years ago that George Fenwick first agreed to the six-month test-run that would ultimately evolve into a much larger involvement in Brazil for ABC. Though my own involvement with ABC has evolved since then, I continue with my sleuthing, always seeking to learn more that will help us help Brazil's birds. Most recently, this includes ABC's support of a well-coordinated and ongoing search by the Instituto Butantan for the Kinglet Calyptura, a "lost" species that has not been seen in the wild since 1996. Findings from this work may help save this and other rare species—a new protected area could be on the horizon.

And so we and our partners continue, one species and forest fragment at a time. With the help of our partners, we may ultimately add another entry to Brazil's list of exceptional statistics: that of being the country that has saved more rare birds than anywhere else in the world.

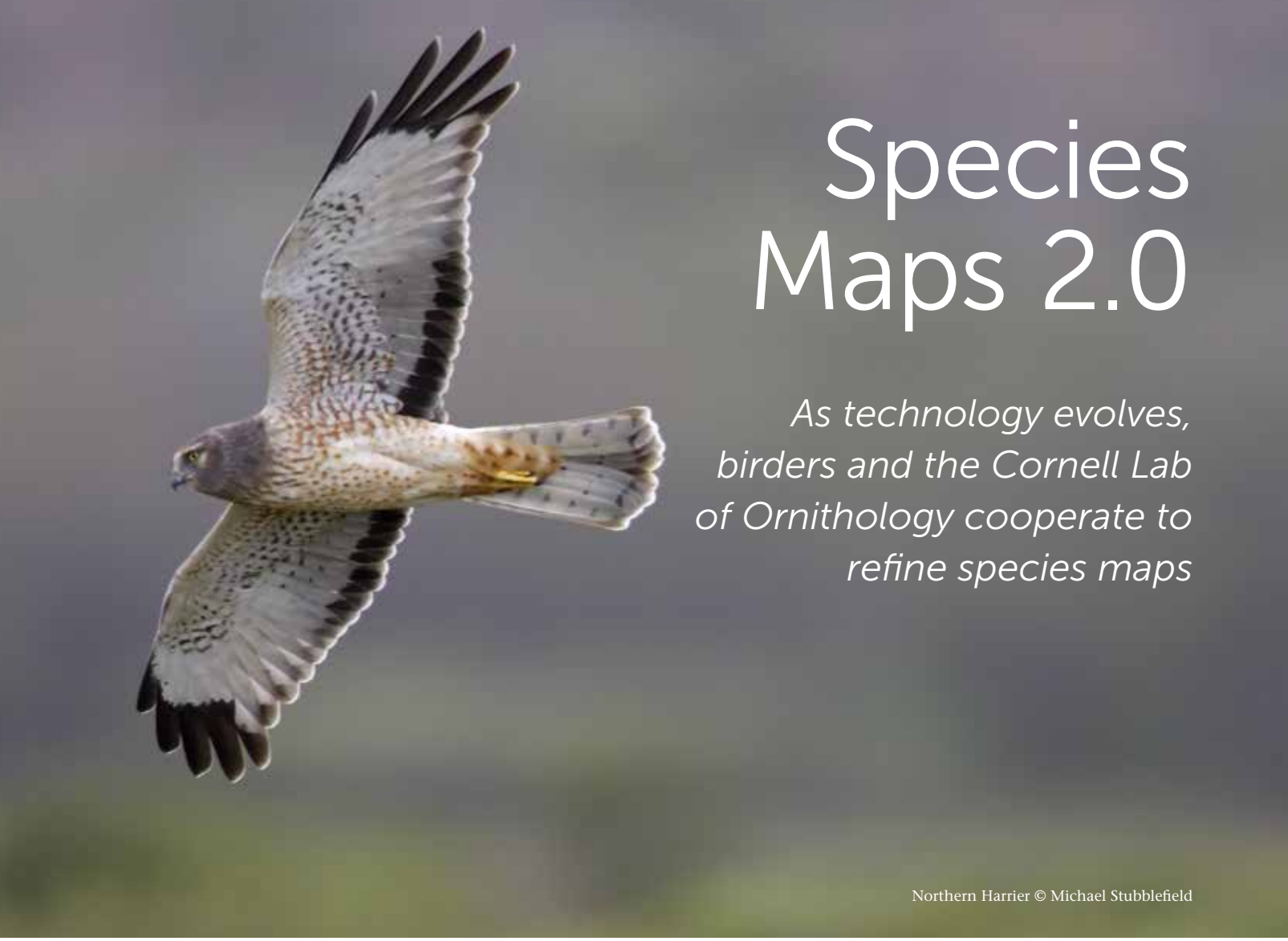
**Author's Note:** *Our successes in Brazil—and indeed, everywhere we work—would not be possible without our generous members and supporters.*

*Since the start of our involvement in Brazil, your donations have helped us raise more than $2 million in support of conservation projects in Brazil. Those donations allow us to support creative, productive, and strategic projects that we hope will ultimately halt bird extinctions in Brazil.*

*Thank you. Your support sustains us and the birds.*

*Bennett Hennessey is an independent contractor representing ABC in Brazil since 2012, where he works to establish and manage conservation projects with ABC's Brazilian partners. Prior to his work in Brazil, he did field work in the Congo, and spent 20 years working and living in Bolivia. Bennett lives with his wife in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, where he also works for ABC's Bolivian partner Asociación Armonía and pioneers new bird feeding techniques in his backyard.*

TOP LEFT: Cherry-throated Tanager by Ciro Albano;
TOP RIGHT: Alagoas Antwren by Ciro Albano



# Species Maps 2.0

*As technology evolves, birders and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology cooperate to refine species maps*

Northern Harrier © Michael Stubblefield

*by Jennifer Howard*

Look up Kentucky Warbler or Wood Thrush in a traditional field guide and you'll find a range map that indicates where the bird is likely to be found in the region covered by the guide. It's a handy feature but a limited one, only as good as the data available when the field guide went to press.

Many birds, however, are always on the move. And their ranges may also shift under pressure from habitat change, climate change, and other factors. To address this, Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird project has created a new and flexible way to understand the fluid nature of bird movement and migration. The program is supported by a huge and growing number of individual bird sightings made by citizen scientists and then uploaded by them to a public database.

As that database grows, it feeds increasingly sophisticated models that let us see migration happen in more or less real time—and may even eventually grant us the ability to understand how migration changes over time. Those insights can be put to use in the field by American Bird Conservancy and its partners as we work to conserve birds throughout their life-cycles.

That as-it-happens knowledge makes all the difference. "Birds are moving and adapting to the landscape," says Marshall Iliff, one of the eBird project leaders at the Lab. "To truly understand how bird ranges are changing, it has to be real-time."

## Quality Control

A database is only as robust as the data it contains. Since 2002, when eBird launched, more than 250,000 participants have contributed sightings. Some 15,000 to 20,000 people submit data each month. To make sure eBird contains the most reliable information, a team of about a thousand mostly volunteer reviewers checks submissions for accuracy.

Photo and audio technology make the vetting process easier than it would have been 20 or 30 years ago, when bird identification relied on an observer's memory

or impressions and field notes. “A photo or an audio recording that conclusively proves the species is kind of the gold standard,” Iliff says. “Lacking that, a description of the bird and its plumage and vocalizations can suffice.” By partnering with the Lab's Macaulay Library, eBird data can now be reinforced by sound recordings and photographs, which also become part of Macaulay's extensive collections.

## A Global Endeavor

Cornell’s eBird collects sightings from all over the world, though some regions have plenty of gaps left to fill. “Africa’s a pretty big blank spot,” Iliff says. “We’re seeing a lot of exciting growth in new areas,” such as Brazil and India. Taiwan has an active group while the rest of China is lagging behind, probably because of internet restrictions there.

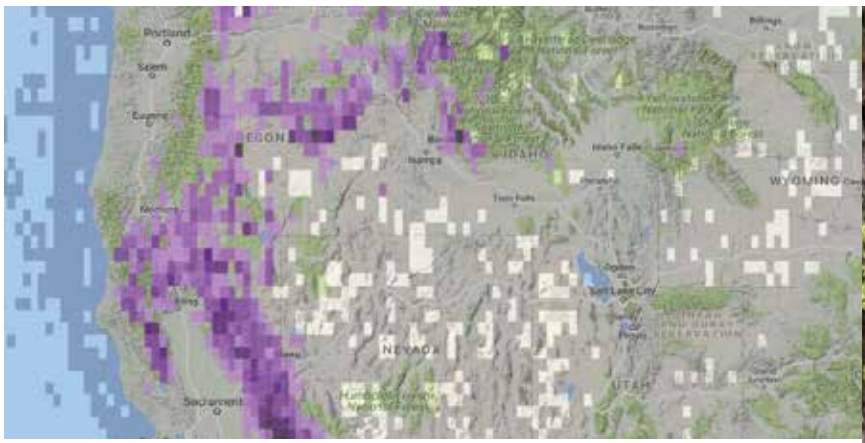
Language is not a barrier. The eBird website can handle about 15 different languages now, thanks to volunteer translators. “That’s obviously really important for engagement around the world,” Iliff says. “The next challenge for us is Hebrew, which is going to be our first right-to-left language.”

Eventually, given enough contributors sharing enough data from enough places, eBird will give us a comprehensive picture of birds’ distributions and migratory patterns around the world, how those ranges and patterns are shifting over time, and where the biggest pressures on different species are. That knowledge will boost ABC’s on-the-ground efforts to protect both resident species and migratory birds.

Cornell’s eBird collects sightings from all over the world, though some regions have plenty of gaps left to fill. There's a lot of exciting growth in new areas, such as Brazil, India, and Taiwan.

Forest Owlet of India by Ian Merrill

White-headed Woodpecker by Ashok Khosla




eBird data demonstrated that 80 percent of the White-headed Woodpecker’s distribution is on U.S. Forest Service land.

Northern Gannet by Jacob Spendelow

As ice disappears, Atlantic species such as Northern Gannets are using the Northwest Passage to move back and forth. Gannets have turned up in the Pacific in the last few years. Note the purple blocks near San Francisco—these indicate Northern Gannet sightings.

## Real-Time Data for Real-Time Change

"Probably now more than ever, bird ranges are not static," especially given the enormous, landscape-scale shifts we've seen over the last 50 to 100 years, Iliff says. "Birds are colonizing new areas" as habitats change and old barriers disappear or new ones arise. As an example, he cites the movement of open-country birds, including some hawk and heron species, which have traveled north from parts of South America into Central America as the once-contiguous forests that blocked their path have disappeared.

"Collectively our minds continue to be blown by the mobility of birds and the unusual things we see," Iliff says. "One thing we've started to see that's very clearly related to climate change is more interchange between the Pacific and the Atlantic." As ice disappears, birds are using the Northwest Passage to move back and forth. For instance, Northern Gannets, an Atlantic species, have turned up in the Pacific in the last few years, while Tufted Puffins, a Pacific species, have been spotted in Maine.

Such patterns will become clearer and easier to analyze as eBird grows. "We're right on the cusp of being able to assess trends with eBird data," Iliff says.

## Mapping for Conservation

One of the most exciting things about eBird is its ability to do what Iliff calls "fine-grained habitat mapping." Traditional range maps aren't good at that. The Cornell Lab has been able to develop migration maps based on eBird that can predict how abundant certain birds will be at certain times in certain habitats, which provides much more accurate information on where conservation needs to happen.

Ken Rosenberg, Applied Conservation Scientist at the Lab, is leading ABC and Cornell's Science to Action partnership (see page 4). He says the next challenge will be to connect eBird's data with ABC's BirdScapes initiative, which identifies landscape-level areas for conservation emphasis. "The idea is that the datasets and the models can really help us drill in and define BirdScapes—and identify some that we don't even know about yet," Rosenberg says.

The knowledge gleaned from eBird has already informed major conservation reports and planning. Recent *State of the Birds* reports, for instance, have drawn on it, and Rosenberg says the Lab used eBird data to develop reports for federal agencies that showed the distribution of protected species on public versus private lands. The data demonstrated, for example, that 80 percent of the White-headed


This eBird map generated on April 26, 2017, shows the extent of Kentucky Warbler distribution—including northward migration—for the month, as of that date. Each purple block indicates one or more sightings, with more frequent sightings represented by darker purple coloring.

Kentucky Warbler by William Leaman, Alamy Stock Photo

Woodpecker's distribution is on U.S. Forest Service land. "That was very compelling to the agencies," Rosenberg says.

Another model revealed that Wood Thrush are 24 times more concentrated in the winter than in the summer. "It emphasized how magnified the threats are in the winter," Rosenberg says. Armed with that knowledge, conservationists can deploy their resources to the birds' best advantage.

Migration maps and models built with eBird data are "revolutionizing how we think about bird distributions," Rosenberg says. "Those animations showing birds going up and down the continent are so new and different and compelling, and I think we're just scratching the surface of what we can do with that information."

## eBird

**You can be an eBirder!** To join, simply visit **ebird.org** and click on "My eBird" to create an account and begin logging your observations.

*Jennifer Howard is ABC's Director of Public Relations. A former reporter for The Chronicle of Higher Education and a former contributing editor of The Washington Post, she has published journalism and fiction in a variety of publications. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her family, including two indoor-only cats.*

Wood Thrush by Ed Schneider

AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY

# POLICY WATCH

*by Steve Holmer*

We rely on a suite of environmental laws and regulations to support the conservation and management of wildlife, public lands, and natural resources throughout the United States. Now, however, these laws and regulations face an uncertain future. The Trump administration and the 115th Congress have put forth a number of proposals that would roll back or eliminate progress on environmental restoration, land management, and bird conservation.

We are launching this new feature, "Policy Watch," as an occasional special section that will track these policy and legislative threats. Read on for the policy issues we are tracking as of late spring 2017—and information on how you can help.

## Administration's Budget Would Slash Funding for EPA, Interior, Agriculture

President Trump's proposed 2018 budget would gut major programs and protections for birds and for America's public lands, putting decades of conservation work at risk. Three agencies essential to protecting birds and habitats would be among the hardest hit.

The Department of Agriculture would be cut by $4.7 billion—a 21 percent decrease from 2016. At risk is the ability of USDA to implement programs such

Yellow-billed Cuckoo by Larry Thompson
TOP: Rufous-tailed Hummingbird by William Berry, Shutterstock

as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and Working Lands for Wildlife, among others, all of which help landowners and farmers conserve and restore habitats.

The Department of the Interior would lose $1.5 billion—a 12 percent decrease from 2016. That would put at risk essential migratory bird conservation programs including the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, State Wildlife Grants, the North American Wetland Conservation Act, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. More funding, not less, is required if we are to turn the tide for migratory birds and endangered species.

The Environmental Protection Agency would be cut by $2.6 billion—a 31 percent decrease from 2016. Such a severe cut would undermine the agency's ability to function effectively. The agency would be forced to implement extreme staff reductions, significantly reducing its capacity to protect birds and other wildlife from neonicotinoid pesticides and other harmful chemicals, among many other things.

In addition, the proposed budget places a heavy emphasis on energy development on public lands. This threatens current efforts to conserve and restore sagebrush habitat, late-successional forests, and desert streams. The latter are essential for the conservation of declining species such as the threatened Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.

## Chlorpyrifos on Track to Poison Birds and People for Next Five Years

Chlorpyrifos, one of the most-used pesticides in the United States, has been killing birds and poisoning the environment for the past half-century—and we at ABC have been calling for a ban for years. EPA scientists agreed and were on course to ban the pesticide. EPA's draft biological evaluation on threatened and endangered species found that chlorpyrifos is "likely to adversely affect" 97 percent of all wildlife, including more than 100 listed bird species.

But EPA chief Scott Pruitt rejected the conclusion of the agency's own pesticide experts, who had recommended that EPA forbid use of the pesticide permanently at farms nationwide. Rebuffing a petition filed by environmental groups a decade ago, Mr. Pruitt took "final agency action" to reverse the ban, which may not be revisited until 2022.

Photo by BBrown, Shutterstock

## Executive Order Rolls Back Climate Protections

On March 28, President Trump signed an executive order rescinding many Obama-era climate protections, effectively weakening environmental protections meant to regulate the energy industry and curb greenhouse gas emissions.

We're extremely concerned that further deregulation of energy development, especially of the rapidly growing wind energy industry, will be a major setback for bird conservation. Wind energy development must be done using bird-smart strategies that avoid risky locations and mitigate potential impacts.

Photo by Panksvatouny, Shutterstock

AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY

# POLICY WATCH

Greater Sage-Grouse by Tom Reichner, Shutterstock

## Sage Grouse Conservation at Risk

Two recently introduced bills—H.R. 527 and S. 273—would have a far-reaching and harmful impact on conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse, up-ending progress made to date. The bills are essentially identical: They would halt federal conservation plans for the grouse, create a 10-year exemption from the Endangered Species Act, gut National Environmental Policy Act protections for projects on federal lands in sagebrush habitat, and potentially grant state governors the management control of nearly 67 million acres of federal lands.

## Congress Curtails Public's Right to Comment on Public Land Use

Congress has voted to block the Bureau of Land Management's new land-use planning rule—Planning 2.0—which would have granted the public additional opportunities to comment about land management decisions on 245 million acres of public land. President Trump has also signed a resolution to abolish the rule.

*Steve Holmer, ABC's Senior Policy Advisor, has more than 20 years of experience working to conserve endangered wildlife including the Northern Spotted Owl, Marbled Murrelet, and Greater Sage-Grouse. He directs the Bird Conservation Alliance, a network of more than 200 groups that builds support for bird conservation programs.*

# *TAKE ACTION FOR BIRDS*

Your voice makes a difference. Already, public pressure has forced the withdrawal of a bill put forth by Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) that would have sold off 3.3 million acres of public land. By speaking up and reaching out, we may be able to accomplish similar victories against the legislative threats outlined here or others yet to come.

### Contact Your Elected Officials

- Find contact information for your representative and senators at govtrack.us/congress/members
- Call the Capitol Building Switchboard and ask to be connected to your representative and senators: 202-224-3121
- Use your cellphone to fax your representatives. Simply text the word ***resist*** to 50409 to get started. Learn more online at www.resistbot.io

### Stay Informed

- Follow ABC on Facebook and Twitter
- Check our blog for updates: abcbirds.org/birdcalls
- Subscribe to *Inside Bird Conservation*, our monthly policy and action update. Email sholmer@abcbirds.org to subscribe

### Tips for Effective Communication

Keep in mind that most representatives and senators maintain multiple offices—one in D.C. and one or more in their home state or district. For best results, you may want to contact your elected representatives at all their office locations.

Phone calls are the most effective way to express your concerns. Although email can be used, postcards, letters, and faxes are more effective. Postcards may be preferable over letters, because the non-enveloped postcards will not be delayed for security screening.

Remember, whether calling, writing, or faxing, be sure to specify that you are a constituent and that bird conservation matters to you!

# TEN BIRDS *and* Where They've Led Us

**From tiny seabirds to powerful raptors, these 10 species have been pivotal in the evolution of American Bird Conservancy.**

Bicknell's Thrush by Jacob Spendelow

## Bicknell's Thrush

An increasingly rare thrush is at the heart of our new BirdScapes approach to migratory bird conservation. For several years, we've been working with partners in the Dominican Republic to conserve winter habitat for Bicknell's Thrush. Farther north, we're now collaborating with the International Bicknell's Thrush Conservation Group to better understand and conserve this species' breeding habitat in eastern Canada.

ABC's emphasis on full life-cycle conservation of Bicknell's Thrush and other birds led to the 2016 launch of BirdScapes, through which we're identifying and conserving habitat where birds need it most. As a start, we've identified more than 50 active and planned BirdScapes throughout the Western Hemisphere—many in places where our partners are taking critical on-the-ground action for priority birds.

## Piping Plover

All Piping Plover populations are threatened or endangered. That's why we're going to great lengths on behalf of the species in New York, and how we have come to test out a new tool for our Cats Indoors Program: legal action.

We sued the New York Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation last year after discussions failed to convince them to find new homes for the feral cats living at Jones Beach State Park. The cats pose a threat to the Piping Plovers that nest nearby—a violation, we believe, of the Endangered Species Act.

It is now up to the courts to decide. If successful, this lawsuit should give pause to other officials who permit threats to endangered birds to go unchallenged. And it will give our 20-year-old Cats Indoors Program a powerful new voice when it comes to debates about feral cat colonies and their management.

## Palila

Things looked dire for the Palila, a rare Hawaiian bird, when ABC launched its Hawai'i Program in 2009. The state had become the bird extinction capital of the world, with many species going extinct—or nearly so—before the adoption of the Endangered Species Act. It was feared the Palila might be the next species to go extinct.

Thanks to the work of ABC and our many partners, the Palila is still flying wild today. This success is due to reforestation and predator removal programs, as well as the construction and maintenance of 47 miles of fence to safeguard the species' remaining habitat.

Sadly, Hawai'i remains the world's bird extinction capital, and there is much more to be done. We're working with local partners to protect the last 500 Maui Parrotbills by establishing a new population—building on our successful 2011 and 2012 translocation of 50 endangered Millerbirds to the island of Laysan, where the Millerbird's population more than doubled in two years.

## Military Macaw

ABC sprang into action in 1997 when the construction of a logging road threatened to destroy one of the last mesa oak and pine forests in western Mexico, razing habitat for Military Macaws and other birds. With partner Bosque Antiguo, we protected the area and achieved our first international victory—and launched our International Program.

With more than 30 partner conservation organizations, as well as numerous governments and local communities, we've created more than 70 reserves, multi-use areas, and conservation easements for birds spanning the United States and 14 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, totaling more than 1 million acres. To ensure the long-term sustainability of these reserves, we teamed up with the March Conservation Fund in 2015 to launch the Latin American Reserve Stewardship Initiative (LARSI), which provides funding and ABC mentoring to partner bird conservation organizations. This expands upon partner capacity building efforts already begun with Jeniam Foundation and blue moon fund.

Royal Cinclodes by Valère Claverie

## Royal Cinclodes

When we received reports in 2001 about the destruction of native *Polylepis* forests in the high Andes of Peru, and its disastrous impact on Royal Cinclodes and other native bird species, we began working with our Peruvian partner ECOAN and local communities to find alternatives to cutting the trees for fuelwood. Expanding from one community to 20, this project has resulted in the planting of more than 1 million trees to restore these slow-growing forests, providing local people with alternative sources of fuelwood.

We have gone on to undertake significant habitat restoration work in other countries. Since 2004, our restoration work has expanded to tree-planting projects in Hawai'i and nine Central and South American countries, where with partners we have planted more than 5 million trees and shrubs. ABC also now works to restore and protect grasslands in the United States, Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador, and elsewhere.

*We're pursuing a major expansion of our ponderosa pine work and aim to improve 1.25 million acres for Lewis's Woodpecker and other species in need.*

## Lewis's Woodpecker

Lewis's Woodpecker populations have declined by about 60 percent since the 1960s, likely due to the loss or alteration of suitable nesting habitat. This decline inspired ABC's decade-long effort to restore ponderosa pine forests that support Lewis's Woodpecker, along with Flammulated Owl and Williamson's Sapsucker, in the western United States.

Along with issuing several publications to help landowners contribute to ponderosa pine conservation throughout the West, we recently supported the Columbia Land Trust in the purchase of an important tract of land. This 2016 acquisition was the final parcel in a 418-acre wildlife corridor that shelters prime Lewis's Woodpecker habitat in north-central Oregon.

Now, we're pursuing a major expansion of our ponderosa pine work and aim to improve 1.25 million acres for Lewis's Woodpecker and other species in need.

Lewis's Woodpecker by Maria Jeffs, Shutterstock

LEFT PAGE FROM TOP: Piping Plover by Bill Hubick; Palila by Robby Kohley; Military Macaw by Greg Homel, Natural Elements Productions

## Lear's Macaw

ABC has always focused on "safeguarding the rarest" bird species from extinction, like Brazil's Lear's Macaw. In 2007, ABC helped Fundação Biodiversitas expand the Canudos Biological Station from 321 acres to 3,385 acres, protecting 90 percent of Lear's Macaw nests from trappers at this single colony. Thanks to these and other conservation efforts, the population of Lear's Macaw has increased from 60 birds in the 1980s to about 1,300 today.

The ABC-led Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) has undergone a major expansion, too. Launched in 2000 to increase awareness and conservation action for Earth's rarest species, the consortium now numbers more than 90 conservation-minded organizations around the world. Several AZE birds—like Lear's Macaw—are still with us today thanks to ABC, AZE, and a laser focus on preventing extinctions.

Lear's Macaws by Ciro Albano

## Interior Least Tern

In the mid-1980s, little was known about river-nesting Least Terns except that they were rare. These "Interior Least Terns," which nest more than 50 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, eventually received an endangered listing under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA). And they got help in 2002, when ABC teamed up with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Army Corps of Engineers to use a little-known part of the ESA—Section 7(a)(1)—to write a conservation management plan that would make it easier for the Corps to do its job of keeping waterways navigable without impacting high-priority species such as the tern.

Least Tern and chicks by Ray Hennessy, Shutterstock

In 2017, we're now preparing to employ the same conservation management strategy to protect the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, which is also dependent upon riparian ecosystems for its survival.

## Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Glass collisions kill nearly 1 billion birds each year in the United States, but few people are aware of the problem. This despite the fact that one of our most well known and beloved birds—the Ruby-throated Hummingbird—is among the most frequent victims.

In 2009, we launched our Bird Collisions Program to help hummingbirds and other birds. Since then, we have collaborated with two research centers, developed a protocol to evaluate glass and window films, and tested dozens of products. One outcome is our Bird-Smart Glass product page—**birdsmartglass.org**—where we list recommended products for home and architectural use.

To be effective, these products must be used. To that end, we have also worked with more than 30 state, county, and city jurisdictions to enact bird-friendly legislation; led the development of a Green Building Council LEED Pilot Credit for incorporating bird collision deterrence into new buildings; published our *Bird-friendly Building Design* guide; and advised federal agencies on ways to consider birds in their operations.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Patrick Jennings, Shutterstock

*As threats to birds increase, ABC adapts and improves its approach to achieve conservation successes for birds throughout the Americas.*

Swainson's Hawk by Sarah Jessup, Shutterstock

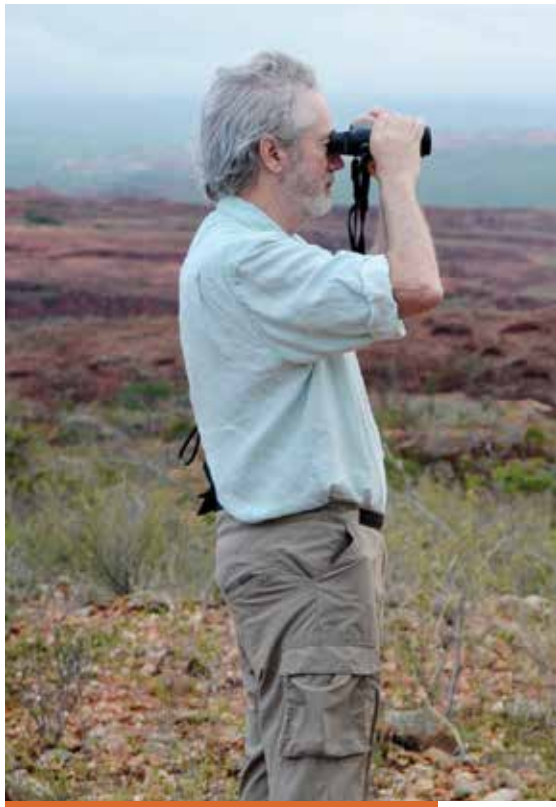
## Swainson's Hawk

When a pesticide killed thousands of Swainson's Hawks in Argentina in 1998, we didn't hesitate to intervene. We convinced CibaGeigy (now Novartis), the world's largest pesticide manufacturer, to stop selling monocrotophos in Argentina. The result? Populations of Swainson's Hawk stabilized—and ABC's Birds and Pesticides Program was born.

Since then, our Pesticides Program has prevented countless bird deaths by helping to ban or restrict the use of more than 30 pesticides. In the 1990s, we led a coalition of 50 groups to block the use of carbofuran, which had killed millions of waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, grassland birds, and songbirds. More recently, we've focused on neonicotinoids, today the most widely used insecticides on Earth. After publishing a study in 2013 exposing the threat these insecticides—commonly known as "neonics"—pose to birds, we helped persuade retailers such as Home Depot and Lowe's to phase out sales of neonic-treated plant products.

# Tributes, Thank Yous,

*In this era of change at ABC, we asked some of ABC's best friends to share their memories with us. Here are their perspectives. See more on ABC's Bird Calls blog:* **abcbirds.org/farewell-fenwicks**



(Above) George birding in Canudos, Brazil. (Below) George and Rita Fenwick.

Photos by David Harrison

## *From Jonathan Franzen*

Because ABC wouldn't exist without him, it's safe to say that nobody in the world has done more for birds in the past quarter-century than George Fenwick (though Rita Fenwick may come close). ABC's huge conservation achievements accrue directly to George, but you wouldn't guess it if you met him in person. He's an extremely funny guy, sometimes a very silly guy, and he's unfailingly self-deprecating and self-critical—always more mindful of what he hasn't yet accomplished than of what he has.

George is a pretty skilled birdwatcher, too, though you'll never catch him admitting it. The first time I birded with him was in Bolivar Flats, Texas—an enjoyable excursion for which I later had to pay by serving for nine years on ABC's board. We've also birded together in Bolivia and Colombia, seeing some of the endangered species that ABC and its partners have helped safeguard: the Blue-throated Macaw, the Palkachupa Cotinga, and the many endemics of the Santa Marta Mountains.

Only on one of those trips did I nearly succeed in killing George. We were walking on the paved road below the El Dorado reserve, a highland jewel created by ABC and its Colombian partner ProAves. The road cut across the side of a precipice with some mature fruiting trees clinging to it. As we were passing underneath one of them, I caught a glimpse of an unfamiliar bird, something sort of vireo-like. I raised the alarm, and George hurried over to try to see it. We started backing up the road, to get a better angle on the tree. George kept his eyes on where I was pointing, and he took one backward step too many—onto a spot where rain had taken a large bite out of the pavement. He sailed backward off the precipice. I ran to the edge, pretty sure I'd killed him. But somehow he'd made a soft landing, fifteen feet below, in a small tree growing sideways out of the hillside. A small miracle for a worker of large ones for birds.

*By Jonathan Franzen, novelist, essayist, journalist, translator, and ABC board member*

# and Fond Farewells

## From Adrian Forsyth

The U.S. Government's Small Business Administration claims "starting a nonprofit can be an extremely rewarding entrepreneurial experience." That sounds lovely, but my experience of starting a nonprofit is that it is more akin to starting a family: It's a demanding job you can't quit and one that will go on for decades. It will keep you awake at night and cause you to worry about things you never knew existed. However, while millions of years of evolution have prepared people to start and complete the rearing of family, relatively little will prepare one psychologically for starting a nonprofit.

You will discover that it is much easier to be an employee than to have employees. There will be many days when philanthropy seems populated by donors who are whimsical, imperious, irrational, and have the attention span of gnats. Yet sometimes you will be overwhelmed by the generosity and vision of your supporters. Sometimes your employees will be as precious to you as your children. Not surprisingly then, many nonprofits fail in their infancy because their founders do not have the commitment and ability to ride this start-up roller coaster.

That the Fenwicks created ABC right when they were also raising a clutch of their own says much about the depth of their work ethic and ability. Few could have accomplished what they have achieved in building one of the finest organizations doing real conservation at a grand scale.

I first encountered ABC at the dawn of the millennium when the pleasantly persuasive Mike Parr convinced me to share office space in a DuPont Circle row house. For the better part of a decade I cohabited with ABC's downtown crew in two successive places. I was also trying to rear two environmental nonprofits. This helped me understand the challenges George and Rita faced in working both domestically and partnering with local bird conservation groups active in remote parts of Latin America. They were doing well in no small part because they hired and empowered good people who shared their obsession with saving birds. That sounds easier than it actually is—both to find such people and then to let them run with it.

My day job was to be on the philanthropic side of the nonprofit fence, making foundation grants to nonprofits active in Latin America. I never had any hesitation about funding ABC because I knew intimately that their employees would not be lollygagging on Facebook but working hard at their mission. That attitude flows from the top.

After stints working in much bigger conservation organizations it was also refreshing to see an organization that continuously supported small partner nonprofits in Latin America and never attempted to steal their thunder. This is in no small part due to the self-effacing character of the Fenwicks. Their true partnership attitude is much of what has allowed ABC to raise the profile and build the capacity of Latin American bird conservation groups.

The Fenwick's transparent modesty and approachability also made it easy to beg from them. They were so good at fundraising that I started to see them as potential donors to my causes. George was never an easy sell but horse-trading with him was always fun because he is ever witty, humorous, and holds nothing but conservation as the currency of debate. Rita has proven to be that rarest of birds in the nonprofit sector: someone who will actually connect you with one of her donors.

Over the years the Fenwicks helped me with grants both large and small. As a result some key conservation landscapes and a birder's pantheon of exquisite species enjoy a good future. Thank you, George and Rita.

*By Adrian Forsyth, Executive Director, Andes Amazon Fund*

## *From Wendy Paulson*

My association with George began at The Nature Conservancy many years ago, when he directed ecosystem conservation and served as Acting Director of Science. I always appreciated our conversations and learned a lot from them.

When George founded ABC, I wondered about the prospects of another organization focused on birds. But it became clear almost immediately that ABC would focus on areas neglected by other bird-centric groups. The organization quickly earned my respect and that of many other conservationists.

George has been fearless in addressing difficult issues—cats, pesticides, windows, and towers that kill. He's been persistent and insistent in developing measures and programs to mitigate those threats and that has placed ABC in a unique and important position among conservation groups.

I've also appreciated and admired George's steady focus on saving species and habitat when the trend in many conservation organizations has been to move away from those goals. I've had the privilege of visiting some of the conservation birding lodges ABC helped establish with local partners, and see them as a model conservation tool. This quarterly publication, *Bird Conservation*, is one of the very few I read cover to cover—and always appreciate the learning experience it offers.

When we lived in D.C., George visited regularly to give me updates on ABC's work and my admiration only grew for the organization's clear-eyed focus on areas not attended to by others. He kept me regularly informed about the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels treaty—information that I was able to use to advocate for U.S. support (still pending). It was fitting—and meaningful—to be able to participate with George in an event at Patuxent Research Station in Maryland where then-President George W. Bush announced collaborative plans for increasing stopover habitat for migratory birds.

Though I've worked only indirectly with Rita, I know that she and George operate as a team. What a fine and effective organization they've built and led for over 20 years! I'm confident both will continue to be leading and effective voices for birds and conservation in the years ahead.

*By Wendy Paulson, Chair, Bobolink Foundation*

George Fenwick. Photo courtesy ABC


Laysan Albatross and chick by Warren Cooke


# That would be such a dreary place.

You can keep the world vibrant and full of birds when you include American Bird Conservancy in your estate plans, and join our **Legacy Circle**. The need is great. Threats such as habitat loss, invasive species, pesticides, and climate change continue to increase. Help ABC make the world a better place for birds now and for future generations.

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If you would like more information on how to create your legacy of bird conservation with an estate gift, or if you have already included ABC in your estate plans, please contact Jack Morrison, ABC Planned Giving Director, at **540-253-5780**, or **jmorrison@abcbirds.org**.

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Prairie Warbler by Tessa Nickels