

BIRD CALLS

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New Gulf Coast Project to Protect Beach-Nesting Birds in Five States

One year after the start of the massive Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, ABC announced it will launch a five-state, Gulf Coast conservation effort to identify and implement protective measures for vulnerable beach-nesting birds such as the Least Tern, Black Skimmer, Sandwich Tern, and Royal Tern. Funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the project will reduce impacts on key beach-nesting bird colonies, which are currently vulnerable to accidental disturbance by beachgoers, dogs, and ATVs.



Black Skimmers: Tom Grey

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Three New Protected Areas Established in Mexico's Yucatán Region

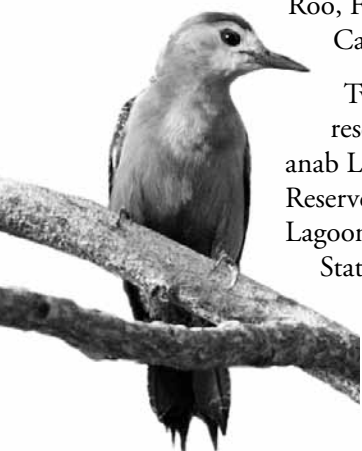
Millions of migratory and resident birds will benefit from the designation of three new protected areas totaling over 76,000 acres on the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico by the outgoing Governor of the State of Quintana Roo, Félix González Canto.

Two of the new reserves, Chichankanab Lagoon State Reserve, and Bacalar Lagoon Ecological State Park will protect important

water sources on the mainland of the Yucatán Peninsula. The 49,000-acre Cozumel Forest and Wetlands State Reserve is being created on the island of Cozumel off the eastern coast of the peninsula to protect forest and wetland resources.

The island of Cozumel is particularly significant, as it is home to three endemic bird species, the Cozumel Thrasher, Cozumel Emerald, and Cozumel Vireo, as well as 15 endemic subspecies, including the Yucatán Woodpecker, Yucatán Flycatcher, and Cozumel House Wren.

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Yucatan Woodpecker: Tom Murray

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If you have questions or would like more information on any of our articles, contact Bob Johns at 202-234-7181, x210, or e-mail bjohns@abcbirds.org

Bird Calls is the newsletter of American Bird Conservancy and is produced for members of ABC and the Bird Conservation Alliance.

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Gulf Coast Conservation Project, from page 1

The project will draw on expertise from partners throughout the Gulf region, including the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, National Audubon Society, the Pascagoula River Audubon Center (and their Audubon Junior Naturalist and "Chick Shelter" programs), and the Mississippi Coast Audubon Society, and the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.

"Beaches are among the most limited and threatened of all bird habitats in the United States. They provide only a tiny sliver of nesting opportunity for birds, and are often heavily used by humans, squeezed by development, and frequented by colonies of feral cats. Consequently, birds that require this habitat face considerable survival challenges. Much of their plight is caused by humans, so it is only fitting that we take steps to fend off some of those challenges and give the birds a fighting chance," said Mike Parr, ABC Vice President.

Habitat to be targeted by the project was directly impacted by the oil spill, both from the oil itself and also as a result of the cleanup effort. Cleanup crews on foot and in vehicles disturbed birds and destroyed nests, while removal of sand from nesting areas to construct protective berms along the tideline caused further damage.



Least Tern: Ralph Wright

Specifically, the project partners, with the help of volunteers, will implement conservation measures such as signage and fencing at critical, unprotected, or insufficiently protected colony sites for beach-nesting birds, to reduce accidental nest destruction and abandonment. These direct protection measures will be supported by a public awareness campaign designed to encourage beach-goers to respect and avoid sensitive nesting areas.

Both the Least Tern and the Black Skimmer are on the U.S. WatchList, which identifies birds that need conservation attention to survive a convergence of environmental challenges, including habitat loss, invasive species, and climate change.



Black Skimmer nesting colony along the Mississippi coast, 2010. Photo, Mike Parr, ABC

ABC'S VIEWPOINT

Cumulative Mortality: How Many Dead Birds Is Too Many?

The cat brings a bedraggled Ovenbird into the house. The bird is already dead. You quietly dispose of it. A Wood Thrush hits your window and dies on the patio. You wince as you give it the same treatment. A Philadelphia Vireo crashes into a communication tower in Mississippi. You might have seen it in Ohio over the weekend, but now you can't. Similar events are played out across the country day in, day out. Each individual case may seem inconsequential to the overall population of a particular bird species, but what about the cumulative effect that these deaths have on birds?

At American Bird Conservancy, we talk with many of the stakeholders involved in activities that harm birds – from people who feed feral cats to representatives of the pesticide industry. Without fail, each one disputes the seriousness of their impacts, and points the finger at some other cause of bird mortality as being the “real culprit.” Cat advocates blame habitat loss, the wind industry blames mountaintop coal mining; a representative of the communication tower industry once suggested to us that the real problem was birds getting drunk from eating fermenting berries along highway medians and crashing into cars. We address each diversion (including the very real issue of poorly planned highway plantings) with patient persistence, carefully researched scientific evidence, and when necessary, legal action.

The top threats that migratory songbirds face are, in fact, natural: severe weather events—especially in the fall, and depredation by native predators. Fortunately, populations of most migratory songbirds have breeding strategies that are designed to cope with these levels of mortality. Most songbirds have high reproductive rates, specifically designed to withstand heavy losses during the



Cat with Ovenbird: Andrew Currie, Creative Commons, October 2009

high-risk strategy of migration. So perhaps these mortality factors are all just fine: a few birds here, a few birds there; a thousand more there, a million more there. So long as the habitat is still there, perhaps they can withstand everything we can throw at them and then some.

At ABC, we have done a lot of thinking about the issue of cumulative mortality recently, in particular in relation to the development of the wind industry. It looks as though wind turbines will be killing somewhere between one million and four million birds each year when the industry is fully built out across the country; a relatively small number when compared to the massive mortality caused by cats and collisions with windows, both of which number in the hundreds of millions, perhaps even billions. Of course cats don't kill many Golden Eagles, and windows don't threaten Whooping Cranes, but in terms of mass casualties, wind is definitely not the biggest threat. But what if we are already close to a tipping point for some bird populations? At some point, particularly in the face of ongoing

habitat loss, an additional million will be a million too many, and populations of even common birds could begin a slow decline towards extinction—and even if not toward extinction, isn't there a point at which we can agree there are fewer birds and higher population risks than we desire?

Nature is not a laboratory; we cannot test these theories in controlled isolation and see what happens. Most bird populations are too hard to monitor, changes often happen too gradually, and they are generally too hard to link to particular threats when many threats are acting concurrently. So rather than just pointing fingers at others, we believe we should minimize all significant causes of bird mortality.

The primary driving factor of private industry is profit maximization, which means that any push for additional environmental safeguards will usually be met with the response that it costs too much and is too burdensome. This tactic is leveraged with the notion that jobs and the economy will be negatively impacted as a result. More often than not, this is a fallacy, but where it is true, it is invariably a short-term consequence. As taxpayers, shareholders, and citizens, we need to demand more from industry. As stewards of the land for the generations that will follow, we have the responsibility of taking the longer view beyond a company's balance sheet for this fiscal year.

The hunting community addressed the declines of waterfowl this way when they set up a major funding program for wetland acquisition and restoration, and just a few decades later this effort is a global model of conservation success. Isn't it time that other interest groups started thinking this way too?

New Protected Areas in Yucatan, from page 1

"The new protected area in Cozumel is one of the most important conservation actions by the state government of Quintana Roo in many years," said Gonzalo Merediz, the Executive Director of the Mexican conservation organization Amigos de Sian Ka'an. "It not only represents a tool to preserve pristine tropical forest and endemic bird and mammal species, it also helps to promote a sustainable development on Mexico's largest inhabited island and the most important cruise destination in the world."

Juan Martinez-Gomez of the organization Endemicos Insulares and the Secretary of the Mexican Alliance for Zero Extinction, agreed, saying "The three new protected areas represent an important step for the conservation of species facing imminent extinction. These reserves were made possible due to the continuous efforts of the groups Amigos de Sian Ka'an and Sacbé."

In 2004 and 2006, ABC supported surveys to locate the Cozumel Thrasher. Although the first expedition proved fruitful, the 2006 expedition failed to turn up any birds, and the species has not been seen since. The creation of this new reserve in Cozumel means that if the thrasher still survives, one of the very few remaining areas it may inhabit is now protected.

ABC, Amigos de Sian Ka'an, and the Yucatán Peninsula Avian Alliance are working together to protect bird habitat in the Yucatán for U.S. WatchList species such as the Reddish Egret, Wood Thrush, Prothonotary Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, and Kentucky Warbler. Most recently, thanks to funding from the Southern Wings program, ABC helped purchase a 650-acre property in the Yucatán for the protection of migratory bird habitat.

Sage-Grouse May Get More Funding to Prevent ESA Listing Than if Listed

On Feb 4, 2011, the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service announced the availability of \$23 million in matching funds to protect the declining Greater Sage-Grouse in three western states: Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming. The funding is designed to prevent the listing of the grouse under the Endangered Species Act, and will be matched by state, local, and tribal governments or non-government agencies.

The money would buy development rights on nearly 50,000 acres of farms and ranches, including approximately 40,000 acres of prime sagebrush in Wyoming, 7,000 acres of working lands in Montana, and roughly 2,000 acres of large, intact sagebrush grasslands in Colorado. The purchases would ensure that the land will be preserved as habitat for sage-grouse.

Cattle ranchers are particularly concerned about the possibility of federal restrictions on grazing should the grouse be listed, as are members of the oil, gas, and wind industries, all of which have a significant focus on the state of Wyoming, where more than half the world's sage-grouse reside. Ironically, the grouse may end up far better funded as a candidate for listing than it would if it were actually added to the list of Endangered Species, since \$23 million

is far more than a listed bird species typically receives in an average year.

As a candidate for listing, several agencies and industries have a vested interest

in helping the species recover, whereas if it were listed, the financial responsibility would fall mainly to FWS, whose budget appears relatively impoverished when compared to other agencies such as the Department of Agriculture.

A wind development company, Renewable Energy Systems Americas, Inc., also recently proposed to establish a \$16 million sage-grouse conservation fund to help mitigate a 170-turbine wind project in Idaho and Nevada. Unfortunately, habitat loss for the grouse is not easy to mitigate for, especially since the proposed project would occupy 30,000 acres of habitat that would never be recovered for grouse. One way to mitigate would be to improve habitat that is currently grazed by reducing the number of cattle. However, that would mean that the ranching community concerns would again come into play.



Greater Sage-Grouse: FWS

Landmark Trial Underway Over Bird-Killing Buildings in Toronto, Canada

Many of the 48 million Americans who enjoy bird-watching will have a strong interest in an unprecedented lawsuit underway in Toronto, Canada. One of the most deadly threats to birds worldwide – building collisions – has, in a sense, been put on trial.

The case pits the owners of three adjoining, 17-19-story glass office buildings – Consilium Place Towers – against two environmental groups – Ecojustice and Ontario Nature. Those groups claim that the buildings, whose exterior faces are almost entirely glass, are responsible for the deaths of about 7,000 birds in the last decade, making them the most deadly in the entire greater Toronto area.

Menkes Consilium Inc., Menkes Developments Ltd., and Menkes Property Management Services Ltd., along with three other companies, have been sued under Ontario's Environmental Protection Act with discharging a harmful contaminant: the light reflected from the windows.



Consilium Place Towers, located in Toronto, Canada, have been responsible for the collision deaths of thousands of birds over the last decade. Wikimedia.org

The lawsuit followed lengthy, failed attempts to negotiate a settlement. The maximum fine under the act is Can\$6 million per day for a first offense. The companies also face a maximum fine of Can\$60,000 under the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

According to researchers, up to one billion bird deaths are thought to occur from collisions with glass on buildings in the United States alone. There are three principal problems

with building windows that lead to bird fatalities: (1) birds try to fly to sky, trees or structures reflected in the glass' mirror-like surface; (2) where windows are situated on opposite sides of a building or perpendicular to each other on building corners, birds try to fly to sky or vegetation seen through the building and (3) birds are attracted to the areas around buildings when lights are left on at night (a major problem in many urban areas in North America).

According to the Canadian non-profit group FLAP (Fatal Light Awareness Program), each year in Toronto, more than one million birds are killed in collisions with building windows, the majority during spring and fall migrations. Toronto is located in a major migratory bird corridor, and has had guidelines in place for a number of years to encourage building owners to take action, including applying transparent window coverings and turning lights off at night.

Proposed Legislation Would Prevent Millions of Bird Deaths

Illinois Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) has introduced legislation in the House that will prevent the deaths of millions of birds that collide with windows at thousands of federal buildings across the country.

The bill, the Federal Bird-Safe Buildings Act of 2011 (HR 1643) calls for each public building constructed, acquired, or altered by the General Services Administration (GSA) to incorporate, to the maximum extent possible, bird-safe building materials and design features. The legislation would require GSA to take similar actions on existing buildings, where

practicable. Importantly, the bill has been deemed cost-neutral by the Congressional Budget Office.

The legislation proposed by Congressman Quigley is very similar to legislation he sponsored in 2008 when he was Cook County Commissioner. That legislation was approved unanimously by the Cook County Board of Commissioners and has been the basis of subsequent bird-safe ordinances across the country.

"The way we live our lives cannot be detrimental to other species and this bill recognizes the importance of that

mission," said Quigley. "I'm proud to continue what we started in Cook County and work with the American Bird Conservancy to do all we can to make sure birds continue to be a part of our world."

Building collisions are arguably the single greatest man-made killer of birds. From one hundred million to one billion birds or more die each year from collisions with glass on buildings—from skyscrapers to homes. While this legislation is limited to federal buildings, it could lead to more widespread applications of bird-friendly designs elsewhere.

Wikimedia.org



Introduced Deer on Hawai'i Pose a New Threat to Native Birds

Following confirmation of the presence of introduced axis deer on the Big Island of Hawai'i, a joint effort has been

launched to survey deer populations and ultimately remove them. The program is being conducted by the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Big Island Invasive Species Committee, and federal natural resource management agencies, with the support of local landowners and citizens.

Conservation agencies are particularly concerned about the deer's impact on native ecosystems and threatened and endangered species. For example, Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge has been largely fenced to keep out feral pigs, making large-scale reforestation possible to benefit the endangered Akiapōlā'au, Ākepa, and Hawai'i Creeper.

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park was a national leader in using fences to remove goats to protect its endangered plants and animals. DOFAW is currently building a fence around Palila Critical Habitat on Mauna Kea, which will be followed by the eradication of mouflon-sheep hybrids from inside the enclosure. If axis deer become established on Hawai'i, existing conservation enclosure fences on the island will have to be raised to eight feet to keep the animals out of sensitive areas.

Axis deer were first introduced to Moloka'i and O'ahu in 1868, Lana'i in 1920, and Maui in 1959. Until now, they had not been introduced to the island of Hawai'i, and their confirmed presence there has grave implications for Hawai'i's native ecosystems and species. The axis deer on Maui have multiplied to more than 12,000, causing significant damage to bird habitat, crops, and trees.

Florida Scrub-Jay Headed for Extinction?

The Florida Scrub-Jay, a bird endemic to that state, is continuing to experience steady population declines despite decades of being listed as an endangered species, according to a new survey.

The 2010 report was based on surveys by 280 volunteers with the Jay Watch Program, run by The Nature Conservancy in collaboration with Archbold Biological Station. It found that of 63 scrub-jay sites studied in the early 1990s, more than half had fewer jays in 2010 and 15 had none.

The scrub-jay's favored habitat of evergreen oak scrub, scattered throughout the Florida Peninsula, has proven ideal for agriculture and development. Combined with fire suppression, this has resulted in the loss of about 93% of the species' historic range.

The Florida Scrub-Jay employs a cooperative breeding strategy, where birds typically mate for life and the offspring stay with parents as "helpers" until a mating opportunity opens up nearby. They are highly territorial, and typically will not travel more than five miles from where they hatched. Their territorial boundaries remain fairly stable from year to year. Unfortunately, this tendency toward site fidelity makes the species ill-adapted to search for new territories when faced with the loss and fragmentation of its habitat.

The Florida Scrub-Jay was designated as Threatened by FWS in 1987 due to this ongoing loss and degradation of its habitat. It is also classed as a Red List (Highest Concern) species on the U.S. WatchList.

Because there can be a lag time of five to 15 years between actions such as controlled burns and the re-growth of ideal scrub-jay habitat, significant portions of potential jay habitat are still in poor condition, even at sites where appropriate habitat restoration actions have been taken.

"It is time that the Florida Scrub-Jay was uplisted from Threatened to Endangered. It is on a downward path, and unless we accelerate conservation for the species it could be headed for extinction," said ABC Vice President, Mike Parr.

Read the complete 2010 survey at www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/florida/jay-watch-report-2010.pdf



Florida Scrub-Jay: Larry Master

Legal Action Forces Expansion of Snowy Plover Critical Habitat

In a legal settlement, a new proposal from FWS aims to dramatically increase the amount of land designated as Critical Habitat for the Pacific Coast population of the Western Snowy Plover. The plover breeds primarily on coastal beaches from southern Washington to southern Baja California, Mexico, and is designated as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

In 1999, FWS designated about 19,500 acres as Critical Habitat. However in 2005, that number was

reduced to 12,145 acres following a lawsuit by developers. But a subsequent lawsuit from the Center for Biological Diversity seeking greater protections for the bird, forced FWS to re-assess the designation, resulting in this recent proposal, which would increase the available Critical Habitat from 12,145 acres to 28,261 acres on beaches in California, Washington, and Oregon. Of the total acreage, 9,040 acres are on federal lands, 12,740 acres are owned by states or local agencies, and 6,145 acres are located on private lands. In addition, 336 acres are on tribal lands in Washington.

Critical Habitat designation is a provision under the ESA that identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, and which may require special management considerations or protection.

Federal agencies are required to consult with FWS regarding actions that may affect Critical Habitat, but private landowners do not unless they are in receipt of federal funding or require federal permits for their actions.

The Snowy Plover was listed as threatened in 1991, and biologists estimate that no more than 2,270 breed along the Pacific Coast of the United States, with approximately an equal number breeding on the West Coast of Baja California, Mexico. The largest number of breeding birds occurs from south of San Francisco Bay to southern Baja. The species' decline has been attributed to loss of nesting habitat, human disturbance, encroachment of European beach grass on nesting grounds, and predation.

A final decision on the proposal by FWS is expected later this year.



Snowy Plover: Greg Lavaty, April 2008

New Proposed Plan to Break ESA Listing Backlog Halted

A new plan designed to allow FWS to focus its resources on species most in need of protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was announced in May, then stayed shortly thereafter by a U.S. District Court Judge for the District of Columbia, who ordered more negotiating by the parties through June 20.

FWS had proposed the work plan as part of an agreement with WildEarth Guardians. Had it been approved, the plan would have enabled the agency to systematically, over a period of six years, review and address the needs of more than 250 species now on the list of Candidates Species for protection under the ESA.

The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), which has filed numerous lawsuits that would be affected by

the agreement objected to the plan. CBD had been involved in parts of the negotiations that led to the initial agreement, and contended that the resulting language was not forceful enough and that recently listed Candidate Species may not have been included. Under the judge's order, CBD was brought back into the negotiations.

The Endangered Species Act currently protects more than 1,300 species in the U.S. and about 570 species abroad. The law allows citizens, groups, and government agencies to petition for species to be protected under the ESA, and sets specific statutory timelines for responding to those petitions. Unlike many other federal laws, the ESA contains a broad "citizen suit" provision, enabling groups

and individuals to sue to enforce these deadlines.

The Candidate List was originally envisioned as an administrative tool that would identify species for which FWS would shortly make listing determinations. However, some species have remained on the list for years. In the last four years, FWS has been petitioned to list more than 1,230 species, resulting in numerous lawsuits.

Under the proposed agreement, if FWS determines that listing is warranted for a species, the agency will propose that species for listing and allow the public to review and comment on the proposal before making a final determination. A list of candidate species is available at www.fws.gov/endangered/improving_ESA/listing_workplan.html

ABC Announces Findings in Bird Feed Contamination Tests

ABC has announced the results of its study to test the risk to wild birds posed by pesticides in bird seed. The ABC study involved seed samples randomly taken from four sources across the country: Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Lowes, and Target. Bird seed was then shipped to the California Food Safety Laboratory at the University of California, Davis, where the detailed analyses were conducted. The studies specifically looked for harmful pesticides, such as organophosphate and carbamate insecticides.

“The potential for birds to be unwittingly poisoned by the very people who feed them was something we felt it important to know, so we could either raise the alarm bell or put people’s minds at rest,” said Darin Schroeder, ABC’s Vice President for Conservation Advocacy.

“I am pleased to announce that all the tested bird seed was either free from pesticides or contained residues below levels that would threaten bird health. So, in continuing to

buy their favorite seed, America’s bird watchers should feel assured that the birds they love are getting a healthy food product,” Schroeder said.

The ABC studies were the first of their kind, and resulted from previous, sporadic wild bird seed contamination incidents. “We wanted to make sure that past poisoning cases were behind us, and as far as we can tell, that is the case. The bird seed producers seem to be doing a good job of producing a safe product,” he said.

Schroeder also announced that this round of tests may not be the last. “These tests produced favorable findings, but some form of periodic analysis may be warranted to make sure that we can all continue to buy bird food products with peace of mind, and to ensure that people’s money is spent helping birds, and not unintentionally harming them.”

Arizona Ponderosa Pine Forests to be Restored

A recently signed agreement will facilitate restoration on four National Forests in Arizona, a state which hosts the largest contiguous stands of ponderosa pine in the world, important for several WatchList species such as the Lewis’s Woodpecker and Flammulated Owl. The Forest Service signed a memorandum of understanding with a wide range of stakeholders this February that is aimed at restoring 750,000 acres of public forest land on the Coconino and Kaibab Forests over the next ten years, with an eventual goal of treating 2.4 million acres on the Tonto and Apache-Sitgreaves Forests over 40 years.

Momentum for the agreement was fueled in part by the series of fires that burned across northern Arizona in 2010, followed by severe flooding from the runoff from the bare hillsides. Pressure to address burgeoning fire concerns had been building ever since the massive Rodeo-Chediski fire of 2002, which burned nearly half a million acres. The agreement was welcomed by Arizona communities, land managers, environmental groups, and the logging community as a broad-based commitment to active forest restoration.

The Arizona initiative is one of 31 projects proposed across the country under the Forest Service’s new Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. According to the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the aim of the program is to “encourage the collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration of priority forest landscapes.” Ten projects were

selected for funding in 2009. President Obama included \$4 million for this forest restoration initiative in his fiscal year 2012 budget, although that figure could shrink during the congressional budget process. Continued funding will be crucial to the success of this effort.

The conservation and restoration of ponderosa pine forests is one of the major landscape challenges facing private landowners and land management agencies in the western United States. This habitat, historically maintained by frequent low-intensity fires, was once dominated by open, older stands of large trees, with high snag densities and a mosaic of natural openings and regeneration. But logging of old-growth, grazing pressure, and fire suppression have decreased habitat diversity, increased the density of small trees, and greatly increased the risk of fire.

The restoration effort must now take into account a fire that has been described as the second largest ever in Arizona’s history, and that has consumed over 300,000 acres including parts of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest.



Dave Powell, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org



Supreme Court Rejects Appeal to Keep Deadly Pesticide on Market

The U.S. Supreme Court has rejected pesticide manufacturer

FMC Corporation's last-ditch effort to continue use of its highly toxic pesticide carbofuran (trade name Furadan). ABC has fought for more than a decade for the total cancellation of carbofuran based on its deadly impact to birds and other wildlife.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has found that carbofuran presents an unacceptable risk to birds, other wildlife, and people, and took the unprecedented step of revoking all food tolerances of the pesticide (banning residues of the chemical in any amount on food) for crops grown both domestically and overseas. This effectively prevented U.S. use of carbofuran, as well as use on crops imported

into the U.S. But FMC fought this decision, and went to progressively higher ruling authorities to keep their product alive.

A July 2010 ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia upheld the EPA decision to ban domestic carbofuran food tolerances, but reversed the decision to revoke the import tolerances. ABC, Defenders of Wildlife and several other groups in favor of banning all tolerances had filed a Friend of the Court (*amicus*) briefing to support the EPA decision.

Carbofuran, a carbamate insecticide, is among the most highly toxic pesticides known to birds. A single drop is lethal, and more than fifty species have been documented as having died from carbofuran poisoning, including Bald and Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, and many migratory songbirds.

Carbofuran first came under fire in the 1980s after EPA estimated that over a million birds were killed each year by the granular formulation when used in normal agricultural production. Many of these deaths followed applications of carbofuran that were made with specific attempts to prevent exposure. The granular formation was cancelled in 1994, but the liquid form remained on the market.

In its 2005 ecological risk assessment on carbofuran, EPA stated that all legal uses of the pesticide were likely to kill wild birds and confirmed that carbofuran is also a threat to human health through contaminated food, drinking water, and occupational exposure. Carbofuran has been unavailable for domestic uses on all but two small non-food crops since 2009.

Mice Eradication for Farallones Would Protect Ashy Storm-Petrel But Has Risks

FWS has proposed a project to eradicate the non-native house mouse from the Farallon Islands off the coast of California to aid the globally endangered Ashy Storm-Petrel.

The Farallon Islands (located about 27 miles west of San Francisco) host the largest seabird breeding colony in the United States outside of Alaska and Hawai'i. They are home to 25 percent of California's coastal breeding seabirds (more than 300,000 individuals of 13 species) and support about half of the world's population of Ashy Storm-Petrels. The islands support the world's largest Western Gull colony of more than 25,000 birds. The islands also host many species of migratory birds, and a salamander and cricket

found nowhere else in the world. Additionally, many marine animals forage in the surrounding rich waters.

Invasive house mice on the Farallones are altering the food web by attracting numerous migrant Burrowing Owls to the islands. When the mice numbers decline in winter, the owls turn to the petrels for food. About 40 percent of the predation of the Ashy Storm-Petrels comes from Burrowing Owls. Mice also feed on native invertebrates, and spread invasive plant seeds.

The eradication of the mice would be achieved using the rodenticide brodifacoum, which would be aerially applied. The use of brodifacoum is controversial because it poses significant poisoning risks to non-target

species, particularly Western Gulls. Two small pellets can kill a gull.

FWS is planning the mouse eradication for the fall when fewer birds are on the island and when mice are at peak numbers. The Burrowing Owls on the island will be translocated elsewhere, and hazing and other protection techniques are being explored for other birds that will be present at the time of the eradication to prevent them being poisoned. Nevertheless, use of other kinds of poison and bait stations on the ground could be alternatives to aerial application of brodifacoum, but these are not currently under consideration.

Ashy Storm-Petrel: Glen Tepke



Trumpeter Swans Dying from Lead Poisoning in Northwest U.S. and Canada

One of North America's most iconic birds, the Trumpeter Swan, is dying in unusually high numbers from lead poisoning in the northwest United States and southwest Canada according to the Northwest Raptor and Wildlife Center (NRWC) and the Canadian Wildlife Service in Delta, British Columbia.

"We have personally treated at least six cases of fatal lead poisoning in Olympic Peninsula Trumpeter Swans just this winter, which is likely only a fraction of the number of poisoning cases in the wild," said Matthew Randazzo of the NRWC, a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organization located in Sequim, Washington on the Olympic Peninsula.

"All of these swans were shown to have ingested lead ammunition, which is poisonous across a wide range of species. If these swans had died in the wild, it's likely that their carcasses would have been consumed by scavengers such as Bald Eagles, who then could have been poisoned as well," he said in a recent interview with the Seattle Post *Intelligencer* newspaper.

The Canadian Wildlife Service also reports that in the Vancouver area, four times as many swans have died from lead poisoning this year compared with the same time last year. Of the 2,500 swans that have died in the region since 1999, most were killed by lead shot poisoning.

The use of non-toxic shot for waterfowl hunting has been required in the United States since 1991, and Canada banned the use of lead shot for all migratory bird hunting in 1999. However, spent lead shot continues to remain in the environment, where it can be picked up by swans, loons, and other birds that mistake it for grit that they use to grind up food in their gizzards. Additional lead also continues to be introduced to the environment through upland hunting for species such as pheasants and doves.



Trumpeter Swan suffering from lead poisoning. Although this bird was treated by skilled wildlife rehabilitators, it did not survive. Marge Gibson, 2008.

"Hunters are one of the mainstays of conservation in this country, yet many do not realize the impacts of spent lead in poisoning wildlife. We encourage these conservation leaders to learn more about the problem and to voluntarily switch over to non-toxic ammunition, which is widely available. The price is still higher than lead, but the bullets are more accurate and they will save many Bald and Golden Eagles, Mourning Doves, swans, and diving birds," said Michael Fry, ABC's Director of Conservation Advocacy.

At least 75 species of birds have been documented with lead poisoning. The birds slowly succumb to kidney failure, central nervous system malfunction, and gastrointestinal complications. Many of the symptoms, such as seizures and loss of motor control, are similar to those inflicted by pesticides long since banned in the United States.

According to Martha Jordan of the Trumpeter Swan Society, "No one knows why we have seen this upturn in lead poisoning. We could speculate, but we really need the science. That is something we hope to get an answer for through studies we want to carry out if funding can be made available."



Common Loon: Alan Wilson

...spent lead shot continues to remain in the environment, where it can be picked up by swans, loons, and other birds that mistake it for grit.

Three More Condors Poisoned by Lead Ammo; New Study Reveals Lead is Primary Factor Limiting Recovery

Three more California Condors, among the most endangered birds in the world, have died from poisoning from lead ammunition, while three others were spared probable death by emergency, life-saving treatment, according to The Peregrine Fund's Condor Recovery Program in Arizona. This brings the total number of condors killed by lead in the last 11 years to 19 out of a current wild population of just 191.

Condor Deaths Confirm Study Findings

The deaths were reported just weeks after a new study was announced at the Society of Toxicology's Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. that points to lead ammunition as a primary factor limiting the survival and recovery of condor. The study was conducted by scientists at the University of California, Santa Cruz, the University of Wyoming, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service.

"This study is especially important and unique because not only does it cite lead as a major factor, but it identifies lead ammunition specifically. While many field studies have suggested that lead ammunition was the source of often fatal lead poisoning in these birds, skeptics had demanded highly specific data to identify the source(s) of lead poisoning. We now have that information in the form of sound science that connects the dots between condor deaths and lead ammunition," said Michael Fry, Director of Conservation Advocacy for ABC.



Susan Haig, 2007

"This study is especially important and unique because not only does it cite lead as a major factor, but it identifies lead ammunition specifically."

Michael Fry,
Director of Conservation Advocacy, ABC

History of Condor Recovery in the U.S.

California Condors were decimated as a species, reduced to just 22 wild individuals by 1982. There followed a captive breeding and release program that has seen the wild population rise to 191 condors in the wild (California: 97, Arizona: 74, and Baja California, Mexico: 20), but despite substantial management efforts to reduce lead exposure risk, California Condors continue to be poisoned on a regular basis. For example, in 2009, almost 50% of the condors monitored at the release site in Pinnacles National Monument had to be treated for lead poisoning.

Most Wild Condors Exposed to Lead From Ammunition

The recent study analyzed blood collected from 17 pre-release condors exposed to "background" sources of lead and 70 free-flying condors in California. This blood analysis was compared with an analysis of a representative selection of 71 lead-based ammunitions. The results demonstrated that the chemical signature of the lead found in free-flying condors is different from that of captive birds, and based on that signature, that about 90% of free-flying condors had been exposed to lead-based ammunition.

The study also found that out of 760 condor blood samples collected in California between 2004 and 2009, about 35% of free-flying condors are chronically exposed to lead levels well-known to be toxic.



ABC Partners with BirdNote

ABC is delighted to be partnering with the producers of BirdNote®, a daily radio series about birds broadcast on National Public Radio stations around the country. BirdNote shows are two-minute vignettes that incorporate the rich sounds of birds with stories that illustrate the interesting—and in some cases—truly amazing abilities of birds.

ABC-BirdNote stories focus on conservation issues facing birds and what ABC is doing to resolve those issues—ranging from Hawaiian songbirds to Cerulean Warblers to King Rails. You can listen to previous shows or download podcasts at www.birdnote.org. If it doesn't already, ask your NPR station to carry BirdNote!

Seabird Losses on Midway Far Exceed Early Estimates

In addition to the tragic loss of human life, the March tsunami in Japan took a heavy toll on albatrosses and other seabirds nesting on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. Water swept over most of Eastern Island, while flooding was restricted to more coastal areas on the larger Sand Island, which has coastal bluffs and more elevation inland. Chicks were swept from their nests and buried in mud and debris. The adults fared better, but many were soaked and battered, making it impossible for them to swim or fly. At least 110,000 Laysan and Black-footed Albatross chicks (about 22 percent of the year's productivity) and more than 2,000 adult albatrosses were lost.

Other species also sustained heavy losses. The Bonin Petrel, a smaller burrow-nesting bird, lost nearly all of its young on Eastern Island, where most nests were flooded. It is hoped that many adults were at sea when the wave hit, but a full assessment of the impact on the populations will be possible only over the years to come.

Wisdom, a 60-year-old Laysan Albatross and the world's oldest known wild bird, was raising a chick this year with her mate, as was the first endangered Short-tailed Albatross to have a chick hatch on U.S. soil. The Short-tailed Albatross chick was swept about 40 yards away, but a biologist found it the next day and returned it to its nest. Some



A Bonin Petrel mired in its burrow by debris deposited by the powerful tsunami that struck Midway. This bird was lucky – many petrels were buried alive and perished. Pete Leary, March 2011, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

good news came on March 21, when biologists confirmed that Wisdom had returned to her nest. By mid-April, the male Short-tailed Albatross had also been seen feeding its chick. In June, wildlife refuge biologists at Midway banded the five-month-old Short-tailed Albatross chick to track its movements after it fledges.

ABC's work to protect seabirds, particularly albatrosses, from mortality threats is more important than ever in the face of this catastrophe, including efforts to eradicate invasive species in Hawai'i, eliminate bycatch and intentional take of albatrosses in Ecuador and Peru, and ensure that the United States signs on to the Agreement for the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP).

Red Knot Population Crashing; Listing Urgently Needed

ABC, Defenders of Wildlife, and several other conservation groups are calling on FWS to take immediate steps to list the *rufa* Red Knot under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) following the release of a new report that shows further alarming declines in the bird's population. This action is ABC's latest in its extensive history of advocating for listing of this bird.

The report by Amanda Rey, Larry Niles, Humphrey Sitters, Kevin Kalasz, and Guy Morrison determined that a decrease of at least 5,000 Red Knots from the previous year had occurred at key wintering grounds in Tierra del Fuego, Chile. Populations in other locations declined as well. The estimated current total population for the migratory shorebird is now likely fewer than 25,000.

Listing the subspecies under the ESA would initiate the development of a recovery plan and require federal agencies whose actions affect Red Knots to consult with FWS. Listing would also require the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries

Commission, housed under the National Marine Fisheries Service, to consult with FWS on the regulations it establishes for the horseshoe crab fishery. Horseshoe crab eggs are a crucial part of the knot's diet during the short period it stops on Delaware Bay beaches to refuel during its northward migration. The decline in Red Knot numbers elevates the importance of implementing stronger protections at the Bay and elsewhere along the mid-Atlantic.

"People who want to see this bird in the wild best make plans in the near future because the way things are going, it will be gone sooner rather than later," said Darin Schroeder, ABC's Vice President for Conservation Advocacy.

The report concludes that despite horseshoe crab harvest restrictions put in place over the past decade "there is still no evidence of recovery of the horseshoe crab population." Restrictions to date have only been enough to stop the population from declining further, are insufficient to recover the population, and will continue to be insufficient unless the harvest is greatly reduced.

Appalachian Reforestation Project Recognized

The Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) has been honored in the first Presidential Migratory Bird Stewardship Award, announced by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar on May 25, 2011. The award is designed to promote efforts and partnerships in federal agencies that lead to better migratory bird conservation. This first award was presented to the Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE), which coordinates the ARRI initiative with major contributions from a variety of groups including ABC, the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture, the Cerulean Warbler Technical Group (CWTG), the Golden-Winged Warbler Working Group, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and The Trust for Wildlife.

Created by OSMRE in 2004, ARRI focuses on restoring native hardwood

forests on areas where surface coal mining has occurred or is currently ongoing. These areas include the Appalachian breeding ranges of many species of neotropical migratory songbirds, notably the Cerulean Warbler, which depends on intact interior forests. To date, the coalition has planted more than 70 million trees on over 100,000 acres of mined land that might otherwise have been reclaimed to non-native grassland that is poor-quality habitat for the native birds of the region.

Following the implementation of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, regulators focused on stabilizing the landforms created by mining in lieu of restoring diverse, native forests. Regulators wanted to solve problems such as severe erosion and sedimentation often seen on pre-act surface mines. As a result, excessive

soil compaction became common on surface mines, and aggressive grasses and other non-native ground covers were generally planted. There are an estimated 750,000 – 1,000,000 acres that have been reclaimed to grasses and other undesirable vegetation (e.g., autumn olive), contributing to both forest fragmentation and the spread of non-native plants. The ARRI effort is targeting projects to remedy these issues, while also reducing erosion and sedimentation.

In addition to the reforestation efforts, the Presidential Award also recognized ABC's Colombian partner, Fundación ProAves, for their work with ARRI and CWTG in a pen-pal program that links high school students from the coal fields of the Appalachian Mountains with students in the Andean coffee-growing region of Colombia, South America.

First Predator-Proof Fence in Hawai'i Completed

The predator-proof fence around the Ka'ena Point Natural Area Reserve at the northwest tip of the island of O'ahu (*Bird Calls* Vol. 15, No. 1) was completed in March of this year, and will benefit native seabirds such as the Laysan Albatross and Wedge-tailed Shearwater. The project to exclude predators from a 59-acre area of key bird habitat has been a very successful cooperative effort involving Hawai'i's Department of Lands and Natural Resources, the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service, the Hawai'i chapter of The Wildlife Society, and local communities.

Dogs, cats, and mongoose had threatened ground-nesting seabird populations in the area, killing up to 15% of the chicks each year. Rats have also had an impact, eating seabird eggs and chicks, and even attacking adult birds. Rats and mice also eat native plants and seeds, causing additional habitat degradation.

The 6.5-foot-high, 2,040-foot-long fence, which will not affect public access to the area, is the first of its kind in the United States. The fence provides a combination of features including fine mesh, a rolled hood at the top, and a skirt buried underground, designed to prevent animals from jumping or climbing over, squeezing

through, or digging their way under the fence and into the protected area. The result should be an increase in the population of breeding seabirds, greater numbers of invertebrates, and regeneration of native habitat.

Following completion of the fence, predator removal began and has proceeded swiftly. Project workers report that there have been no signs of dogs, cats, mongooses, or rats on the point for over a month, and only a few pockets of mice remain. For more information visit the Ka'ena Point Ecosystem Restoration Project, www.restorekaena.org.



Mouse: Wikipedia.org



New predator-proof fence at Ka'ena Point on O'ahu.
Lindsay Young, Pacific Rim Conservation

Drug-laced Mice Used To Control Brown Tree Snakes on Guam

For over 15 years, it has been well-known that acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol, is acutely toxic to the brown tree snake, an invasive species to islands such as Guam, where it has created environmental havoc. An 80 mg children's dose will kill a tree snake in approximately three days. The trick is getting snakes to ingest the drug. Most snakes only eat prey they kill themselves. However, the brown tree snake is also a scavenger, and U.S.D.A. Wildlife Services has developed a technique that takes advantage of this behavior: dropping dead mice carrying lethal doses of acetaminophen into the forest canopy. Dead mice filled with the drug are affixed to cardboard strips and dropped from a helicopter over target areas. Paper streamers tangle the mice in the canopy vegetation, where they are found and consumed by snakes.

On September 1, 2010, a small-scale experiment was conducted to refine the application method. About 200 mice were dropped over 20 acres in the vicinity of the Guam Naval Base, where snakes can get onto cargo planes and risk being transported to other islands. Some of the mice had tiny tracking devices attached to them that allowed researchers to track their fate and make estimates of how many were eaten by snakes.

Automation of the technique should eventually allow the control of snakes over larger areas. While it is impractical to expect that Guam will ever be snake-free, use of toxicants in combination with other methods has promise for creating management areas where snake populations could be maintained at low-levels so that birds could be re-established.



Wikimedia.org

...attention has been focused on preventing brown tree snakes from reaching other islands, especially others in the Marianas Archipelago and Hawai'i, where the snakes could deal a crippling blow to an already-beleaguered avifauna.

The brown tree snake was accidentally imported to the island of Guam, a U.S. territory in the western Pacific, from the Solomon Islands immediately following World War II. It took only about 20 years for the snakes to cause the extirpation of nine of Guam's 11 forest-dwelling birds. They also cause electrical outages, slow international shipping and transportation, cause agricultural damage, and increase health care costs. While Guam's forests have fallen silent, much of the attention has been focused on preventing brown tree snakes from reaching other islands, especially others in the Marianas Archipelago and Hawai'i, where the snakes could deal a crippling blow to an already-beleaguered avifauna.

Between the costs of damage and control on Guam, biosecurity measures in Hawai'i, and research into control methods, the annual costs associated with the brown tree snake are estimated to be in excess of \$12 million. The Department of Lands and Natural Resources of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, north of Guam, reports that two snakes have been captured on Rota, five sighted on Tinian, and 76 sighted and 11 captured on Saipan. Since 1981, eight tree snakes have been found in Hawai'i, but it is not known to have become established.

To date, control on Guam has focused on spot-lighting and capture, use of snake barrier fencing to create exclosures and enclosures, trapping, and canine inspections.



View of Apra Harbor, Guam. Photo: wikipedia.com



Audubon's Shearwater: Glen Tepke



Bristle-thighed Curlew: Michael Walther

Biggest Rodent Eradication Effort in History Shows Promising Early Returns

What many believe is the biggest rodent eradication effort in history – targeting perhaps up to one million Norway rats – is taking place on South Georgia Island in the Pacific, where rats have decimated the populations of many of the island's birds. Chicks of ground-nesting seabirds such as albatrosses and petrels are favorite targets of the rats that eat them. Other impacted birds of concern include the South Georgia Pipit, the most southerly songbird in the world and the South Georgia Pintail, a duck endemic to the island.

In the first phase of the project, led by the South Georgia Heritage Trust, helicopters dropped 50 tons of rodenticide over the targeted area in March

covering an estimated 13 percent of the total area that is rat infested. The island is well suited to a phased approach since glaciers have created isolated, ice-free areas on the island. Glaciers should prevent rats in neighboring, untreated areas from re-infesting newly created, rat-free areas. Two seasonal applications will probably be necessary to achieve full eradication.

While some impacts to birds and other animals from the rodenticide are expected, steps have been taken to keep them to a minimum by creating pellets of a particular shape, color, and size that will be less attractive to non-target species and applying the poison outside the breeding season.

FWS is moving forward with a similar eradication effort for rats on Palmyra Atoll in the central Pacific, in conjunction with The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i and Island Conservation. Rats present a great threat to nesting seabirds on this island, compete with native land crabs for food, limit native plant recruitment, and disperse the seeds of introduced, invasive plants.

Many species of breeding seabirds have been extirpated by rats on Palmyra, including Audubon's, Christmas Island, and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Phoenix and Bulwer's Petrel,



Wandering Albatross: Mark Jobling

White-throated Storm-Petrel, Blue Noddy, and Gray-backed Tern. Conservationists hope that these species will begin to return once the rat eradication program gets underway.

The eradication effort involves an aerial broadcast of a rodenticide called brodifacoum. The native land crabs are not at risk of being poisoned as they are immune to the effects of the chemical. However, any animals that consume the crabs would be at risk. Therefore, in order to minimize the effects of the bait on non-target species, FWS proposes to capture the shorebirds on the island and temporarily house them to keep them from consuming crabs and bait. FWS is particularly interested in the Bristle-thighed Curlew, a WatchList shorebird that will be present in low numbers on the island at the time of application. Only about 3,500 breeding pairs of this species remain in the world.



stock.xchng

State of the Birds Report Finds Public Lands Essential for Hundreds of Species

A coalition of groups coordinated by FWS and including ABC has released the 2011 *State of the Birds Report*, which finds that public lands provide essential habitat for the survival of hundreds of bird species. More than 300 of the 800 bird species inhabiting the United States have at least 50% of their distribution on public lands and waters, underscoring the importance of a number of pending policy and spending decisions affecting public lands that the Obama Administration is now weighing, and which could have far-reaching effects on bird populations.

“The *State of the Birds Report*, describing the importance of public lands to our birds, comes at a time of tremendous budgetary challenges and underscores the importance of maintaining support for the management of our precious public lands,” said George Wallace, Vice President of American Bird Conservancy. “For example, in the state of Hawai’i and in the U.S. Pacific island territories, some of the country’s most imperiled bird species depend almost exclusively on public lands managed by federal, state, and territorial agencies. Especially in Hawai’i, it is an ongoing challenge to ensure that management of extensive public lands is focused on the conservation of unique bird species in imminent danger of extinction.”

In addition to the funding challenge, many policy issues are also pending. The Administration must soon decide how strong the wildlife protections will be on the 193-million-acre National Forest System. The U.S.D.A. Forest Service is currently accepting public comments on a proposed forest management rule that scientists say weakens existing wildlife protections.



Read the entire *State of the Birds* 2011 report at www.stateofthebirds.org

Public Lands Provide Habitat for Imperiled Species:

- 97% of the endangered Kirtland’s Warbler distribution is on public lands.
- 79% of Gunnison Sage-Grouse distribution is on public lands.
- Sage Sparrow and LeConte’s Thrasher have more than 75% of their distributions on public lands during the breeding season.
- Almost 46% of the distribution of the California Gnatcatcher, a threatened species, is found on Department of Defense lands such as Camp Pendleton.
- Publicly owned islands support more than half of the entire global nesting populations of 16 ocean bird species.
- Among declining Hawaiian forest birds on Kaua’i, an average of 78% of their distribution is on public land owned by the state.

LeConte’s Thrasher: Glen Tepke

Update on ABC's Bird-Smart Wind Power Campaign

Working Together to Protect Birds

America Bird Conservancy's bird-smart wind power campaign continues to grow. As this issue of *Bird Calls* went to press, 57 groups have endorsed the campaign statement, including the American Birding Association, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Center for Biological Diversity, and many Audubon Society chapters.

These groups have recognized that mandatory federal standards for the wind industry that include bird-smart principles are the best way to protect birds while still encouraging wind energy development.

Update on U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Wind Energy Guidelines

The public comment period on the draft Wind Energy Guidelines has now closed. With the help of our bird-smart wind partners, ABC's call for public involvement generated more than 21,000 comments (out of the 29,000 that FWS says it received). If you or your organization sent in a comment, thank you!

Now the waiting begins. While FWS is evaluating the public comments, the guidelines will undergo a peer review process conducted by The Wildlife Society to help the Service ensure high-quality science. The Wind Turbine Guidelines Federal Advisory Committee may also reconvene to consider recommending changes to the guidelines. There is no official date for when the final document will appear.

Dramatic Video Shows Bird Strike at Wind Turbine

In March, ABC showed TV news watchers in the Washington, D.C. area what it can look like when a large bird collides with a wind turbine. Our bird-smart wind power advertisement ran when federal decision makers were watching the news more than usual, waiting to hear if the federal government would shut down due to the budget fight between Congress and the President.

The dramatic video, provided to ABC courtesy of instantlyviral.com, was filmed in Crete by an American tourist in the area. It shows a Griffon Vulture striking a large, modern wind turbine similar to those commonly in use in the United States. The bird suffered a broken wing and has been in rehab for over one year, still unable to fly.

You can watch the ad at www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/110405.html.

Bird-Smart Wind Power Campaign Statement

Wind power can be an important part of the solution to global warming, but wind farms can also kill birds—including eagles, songbirds, and endangered species—through collisions with turbines and loss of habitat. By 2030, there will likely be more than 100,000 wind turbines in the United States, and these are expected to kill at least one million birds each year—probably significantly more. Wind farms are also expected to impact almost 20,000 square miles of bird habitat, and another 4,000 square miles of marine habitat, some of it critical to threatened species. Bird-smart wind power is carefully sited, and employs

operational and construction mitigation, monitoring, and compensation to reduce and redress any unavoidable bird mortality and habitat loss from wind energy development. These are issues that should be included in mandatory federal wind standards. All wind farms should employ bird-smart principles and comply with relevant state and federal wildlife protection laws.

Are you part of a group that would like to endorse the bird-smart wind campaign statement? If so, please contact Kelly Fuller, ABC's Wind Campaign Coordinator at (202) 234-7181, ext. 212 or kfuller@abcbirds.org.

Golden-winged Warbler May Be Proposed for ESA Listing

On June 2, FWS announced the results of a 90-day finding on a petition submitted to list the Golden-Winged Warbler under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service determined that listing the species may be warranted, and is now initiating a status review of the Golden-Winged Warbler. FWS is requesting scientific data and other information from the public.

The Golden-winged Warbler's breeding range is scattered across wide areas of early-successional forest in the eastern and central United States, and as such, listing the species would require the designation of large swaths of Critical Habitat. This could prove controversial, as it would potentially bring the bird's needs into conflict with energy, agricultural, and other development interests.

Populations of the Golden-winged Warbler have experienced alarming declines due to loss, degradation, and modification of its preferred early-successional habitat.



Golden-winged Warbler: Bill Hubick

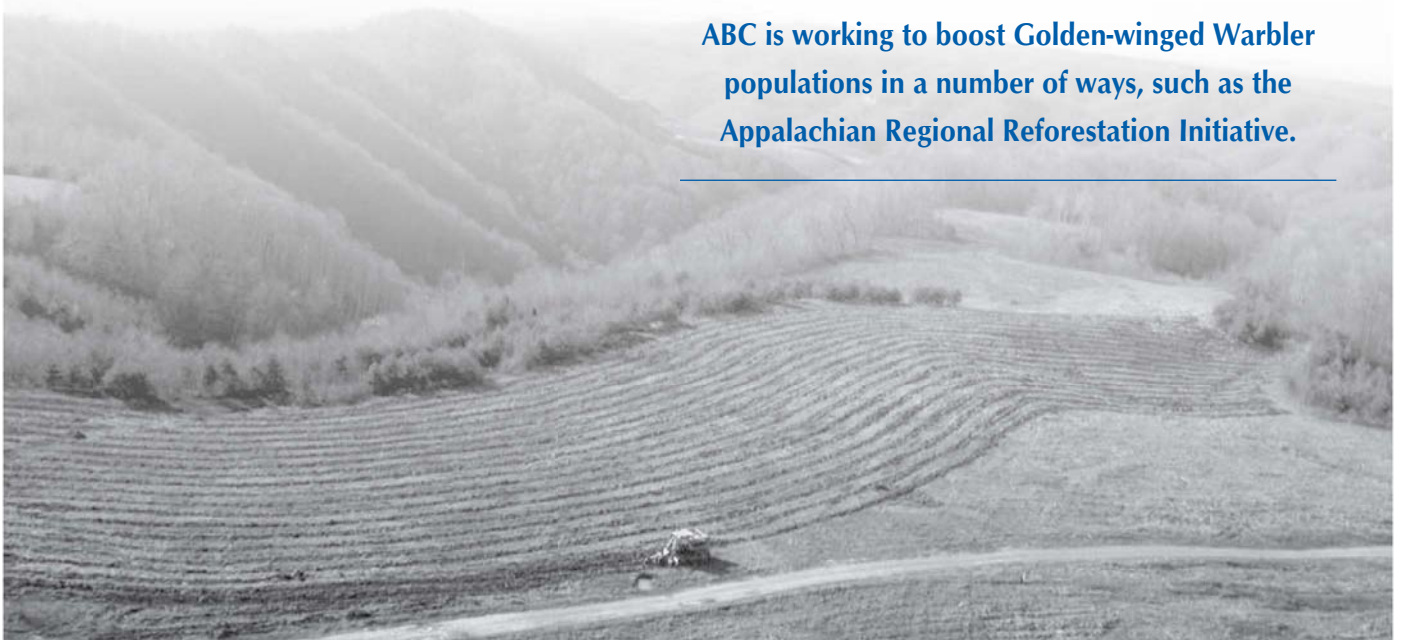
Hybridization with the closely-related Blue-winged Warbler and nest parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds are also factors in this species' decline, as is deforestation on its wintering grounds in Central and South America.

This species is listed as being of the Highest Concern on the U.S. WatchList. ABC is working to boost Golden-winged populations in a number of ways, such as support of the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (a coalition of federal and local agencies, citizens, and other groups dedicated to restoring forests on reclaimed mine sites in the eastern United States). These restored forests can provide much-needed habitat for the Golden-winged Warbler and other early-successional species such as the American Woodcock (see article on page 13).

To restore essential wintering habitat for the Golden-winged Warbler, ABC and partners in Latin America are working with local communities, coffee growers, and ranchers to promote bird-friendly practices such as silviculture and shade coffee. ABC is also working to restore native forests by planting thousands of trees to restore wintering habitat for the Golden-winged Warbler and other neotropical migrants.

To submit information to FWS prior to their August 1 deadline, visit www.regulations.gov and enter docket number FWS-R3-ES-2011-0028. For this review, FWS is seeking only data and information to assist with the status review. General letters of support/opposition will not be considered at this time.

ABC is working to boost Golden-winged Warbler populations in a number of ways, such as the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative.



"Ripping" compacted soil to prepare land for reforestation, September, 2009. Richard Davis, Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy

First Endowment to Aid Community-Owned Bird Reserves Established In Peru

In June 2011, a \$2.0 million endowment fund was established by Fondo de las Américas del Perú (FONDAM), Conservation International's Global Conservation Fund (GCF), Conservation International-Perú, and ABC for *Polylepis* forest conservation projects near Machu Picchu.

"The establishment of the first endowment for Private Conservation Areas is great news for Peru. This support will ensure not only the sustainability of these areas, but also the conservation of the biodiversity of such an important ecosystem as Vilcanota, in a collaborative work with local communities," said Luis Suarez, executive director for Conservation International in Peru.

Thanks to funding from The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, Marshall Reynolds Foundation, Inter-American Foundation, and other donors, ABC and its Peruvian partner ECOAN have worked since 2001 with indigenous communities in the Vilcanota Mountains of the Andes to protect and restore high altitude *Polylepis* forests on community-owned lands.



Juvenile Royal Cinclodes: Kazuya Naoki

ECOAN estimates only 127 Royal Cinclodes occur in the Vilcanota area out of a global population that may number fewer than 200 birds.

These forests support threatened bird species, including the Royal Cinclodes, White-browed Tit-Spinetail, and Ash-breasted Tit-Tyrant. ECOAN estimates only 127 Royal Cinclodes occur in the Vilcanota area out of a global population that may number fewer than 200 individuals. These forests also protect important watersheds which drain into the Amazon basin.

To date, participating communities have protected over 15,000 acres in seven Private Conservation Areas recognized by the Peruvian national government, with more reserves currently being created. Over half a million *Polylepis* saplings and other native species have been planted to restore forests, and many areas have been fenced to protect saplings from grazing animals and promote regeneration.

"The project has benefitted more than 8,000 people in over 20 communities by planting 150,000 trees that provide a sustainable fuel wood supply so people do not need to cut down *Polylepis* forests to cook," said Constantino Aucá, President of ECOAN. The project has also provided nearly 6,000 fuel-efficient clay ovens to reduce fuelwood needs, erected solar panels to provide electricity and hot water, helped build greenhouses to provide healthy food to the communities, and funded health and educational services.

ABC and ECOAN have also provided communities with technical assistance to improve pasture management, wool production, textile marketing, and the development of sustainable nature tourism at the private Conservation Areas. A new visitor center opened this February at the Abra Málaga Thastayoc-Royal Cinclodes Private Conservation Area.



Vilcanota mountains, July 2008: Mike Parr ABC



Plant nursery, Vilcanota. ECOAN, 2010

Years of Land Negotiations Benefit the Endangered Chestnut-capped Piha

ABC's partner Fundación ProAves has secured the purchase of land vital for the long-term protection of the Critically Endangered Chestnut-capped Piha in the central Andes of Colombia. Called the San Benigno property, it will, along with several other key acquisitions, expand the Chestnut-capped Piha Reserve from 1,700 acres to 5,300 acres thanks to the timely support of ABC and World Land Trust-US.

"The diligence and persistence of ProAves to do the hard work on the ground to protect land for endangered species is to be commended. Because of their efforts, all of us can visit the Chestnut-capped Piha in its montane forest habitat in Colombia," said Benjamin Skolnik, ABC's International Program Officer in charge of Colombian projects.

First discovered in 2001 by ProAves, the piha was quickly listed as Critically Endangered due to its small population and threats to its remaining habitat. It also qualifies as an Alliance for Zero Extinction species because its global

distribution is limited to a single, small patch of remnant forest. In 2006, ProAves, with support from ABC and Conservation International, established the Chestnut-capped Piha Reserve to help stabilize and increase the population of this species.

The reserve is a huge boon for the piha as well as other endemic, endangered species, including the Red-bellied Grackle, Black Tinamou, and Multi-colored Tanager; migrants such as the Cerulean Warbler; and 11 globally threatened species of amphibians. Surveys to determine the abundance of the piha on the recently acquired properties are an immediate priority.

The Chestnut-capped Piha Reserve is ideal for ecotourism. Lodging, trails, feeders, and observation towers are all available and well-maintained. The new property offers further opportunities for tourism development, with a 19th Century ruin that was formerly a gold repository, as well as numerous artifacts and structures made by the now-extinct, indigenous Nutabes people. Future work will entail refurbishing the fort, restoring the lakes, and possibly building new visitor cabins and a restaurant.

Chestnut-capped Piha Reserve, 2011. Benjamin Skolnik, ABC



Chestnut-capped Piha: Fundación ProAves, www.proaves.org



Lodge (top) and hummingbird garden (above) at the Chestnut-capped Piha Reserve, April 2011. George Fenwick

Threat Status Lowered for Rare Ecuadorian Bird; More Conservation Needed to Prevent Extinction

The Pale-headed Brush-Finch, one of the world's rarest birds has been downlisted from Critically Endangered to Endangered on the IUCN Red List of globally threatened birds after of more than a decade of sustained conservation action.

The announcement came following news that the brush-finch has increased in number from fewer than 40 to over 100 pairs today thanks to an international conservation collaboration involving Ecuador's Fundación Jocotoco, ABC, World Land Trust-U.S and others.

"We are indebted to our partners and individual donors in making these remarkable gains," said Zoltan Waliczky, Executive Director of Fundación Jocotoco. "For a long time, everyone thought that this bird was extinct. When it was rediscovered in 1998, conservationists realized we had been handed a unique second chance and were determined not to waste it. Sustained, focused international cooperation is what has made the difference."

"While the news that the Pale-headed Brush-Finch is being downlisted is encouraging, it by no means signifies the end of the struggle to save it, nor an opportunity to relax. Rather it proves that we can succeed given sufficient resources, and should serve as a call to redouble our efforts," said Sara Lara, ABC's Vice President of International Programs. "Any species whose entire global range is limited to just one site of a few hundred acres faces particularly difficult challenges. This bird still perches precariously on the knife edge between survival and extinction, and its survival totally depends on continuing conservation actions."



Pale-headed Brush-Finch at nest: A. Sornoza

"While the news that the Pale-headed Brush-Finch is being downlisted is encouraging, it by no means signifies the end of the struggle to save it."

Sara Lara, VP, International Programs, ABC

The Pale-headed Brush-Finch has likely always been a rare bird with a tiny range, restricted to two arid rainshadow valleys in the Andes of southern Ecuador. In the late 1960s, however, agriculture began to destroy its limited habitat, and the species was not seen for more than 30 years.

In 1998, ABC funded an expedition led by experts from Jocotoco and Aves y Conservación that found a tiny population of the brush-finch in a 60-acre patch of scrub woodland in the Río

Yunguilla Valley. Fundación Jocotoco moved quickly to purchase the land, establishing the Yunguilla Reserve. Several years of intensive research revealed that the brush-finch population was suffering not only from habitat degradation, but also from parasitism by Shiny Cowbirds, which have become more numerous due to land fragmentation and increased food supply due to agriculture.

Following establishment of the reserve, and with management of the cowbirds and restoration of the habitat, the brush-finch population began to slowly increase. Thanks to the generosity of several benefactors, including the Barakat Foundation and Robert Wilson, more than 370 acres are protected and actively managed, helping maintain habitat for the brush-finch, and the threatened Little Woodstar, the rare Buff-fronted Owl, and many species of amphibian.

Birds in Brief

Second Oldest Alaskan Bald Eagle Killed by Power Line

The electrocution death on Kodiak Island, Alaska of the second oldest known Bald Eagle in the entire state – and perhaps one of the ten oldest ever recorded – highlights the threat large birds face from power lines. The risk comes in two forms: electrocution when a large bird comes into contact with two lines or a line and a pole simultaneously; and collisions with the hard-to-see lines. This issue is of particular concern as the nation looks to increase wind energy generation. To meet the 2030 goal for increased wind power, the nation will need to produce about 12 times more wind energy than in 2009, which will dramatically increase the number of power lines required to bring that electricity to the grid and the commensurate threat to birds such as the Bald Eagle.

A band retrieved from the dead eagle confirmed that it was the second oldest on record in Alaska. It was first captured in 1989 soon after

Whooping Crane: Greg Lavary



the Exxon Valdez oil spill. The oldest known in the United States was a 32-year-old Bald Eagle from Maine.

Whooping Cranes Returning to Louisiana After 60-Year Absence

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, working with FWS, the U.S. Geological Survey, the International Crane Foundation and the Louisiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, has begun a 15-year project to restore the species in that state. The first ten cranes arrived in Louisiana this February from the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland, where the birds were hatched and raised.

The initial reintroduction site is the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area, where cranes were historically documented nesters. The birds will live in a protective pen at first, then slowly transition to the wild. If all goes well, more cranes will be introduced to the initial flock each year for the next ten years.

This Bald Eagle, which was electrocuted on a power line in Alaska, was the second-oldest known eagle in the state. Electrocution on and collisions with power lines continue to take their toll on eagles and other large bird species. February 2011, FWS



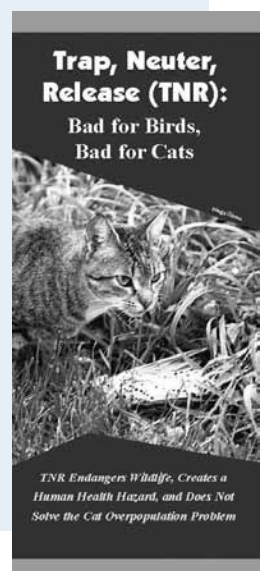
New 'Bird Friendly Design' Class Approved

ABC has developed an approved American Institute of Architects (AIA) class entitled Bird Friendly Design – Green Construction's Next Dimension, which aims to educate architects and other construction professionals about bird collisions caused by buildings and the architectural techniques that can help reduce them. The class can be taken to fulfill the annual requirement for continuing education credits necessary for architects to remain certified. ABC is now a registered provider of this continuing education, and is also able to authorize others in both the U.S. and Canada to teach the class. Studies have shown that in the U.S., up to one billion birds may die each year from collisions with buildings. For more information, visit: www.abcbirds.org.

TNR Brochure Available

ABC is ramping up its Cats Indoors campaign to keep up with the rising numbers of both outdoor pet and feral cats. A new brochure *Trap, Neuter, Release: Bad for Cats, Bad for Birds* and an updated brochure, *Cats, Birds, and You*, have been created to raise public awareness about the impact of feral and outdoor cats on bird populations.

You can order printed copies of the brochures and they are also available to download at www.abcbirds.org/cats.





Birders in Chile Likely Discover New Bird Species

Based on two years of follow-up research, scientists have concluded that the birds Jeff Gilligan, Gerard Lillie, and four Irish friends saw from the deck of their cruise ship off the coast of Chile are likely members of a new species of storm-petrel. The men, who are all serious birders, spotted what they thought were Wilson's Storm-Petrels. On closer inspection, however, they noticed several features not consistent with that species, such as bellies that were too white and distinctive whitish wing bars.

In February 2011, a team led by recognized international seabird expert Peter Harrison captured 12 of the birds, and took blood and feather samples and a variety of measurements. Harrison is now working on a peer-reviewed paper officially describing the new species. If accepted for publication, it will mark the first new seabird species in 55 years, and the first new storm-petrel in nearly 90.

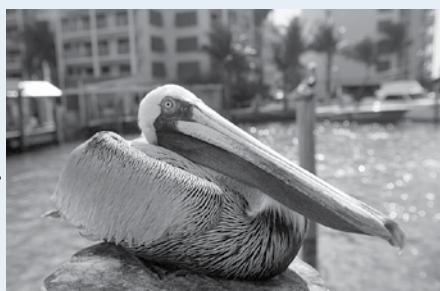
Second Wave of Pelican Deaths in North Carolina

A second wave of mysterious pelican injuries and deaths occurred at Topsail Beach in North Carolina in May of this year, following earlier incidents about six months prior in which some 250 pelicans died as a result of still-undetermined causes.

Necropsies in the fall of 2010 performed at the University of Georgia on the first group of Brown Pelicans were inconclusive as to cause of injury though there was no evidence of toxicological causes such as poisons. The newly found birds have also been sent to the university for analysis.

This recent incident involves about 30 pelicans that washed up on the shores either dead or so badly injured that they had to be euthanized.

A taskforce, including officials from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, FWS, and state officials, was formed to investigate the



Brown Pelican: ClipArt.com

deaths, but so far has not determined a cause. The first dead birds began washing up on shore in November.

\$5.4 Million Settlement in Wyoming Oil Spill Case

The Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has reached a \$5.4 million settlement agreement with the Sinclair Wyoming Refining Company after oil from the refinery's waste water system ended up in outdoor ponds, killing 147 birds and coating another 224 birds that needed treatment.

In late April of 2010, DEQ was notified of an ongoing release of oil and associated waste at the Sinclair refinery near Rawlins, Wyoming. Migrating birds landed in the contaminated evaporation ponds and became oiled.

The refinery has a history of DEQ-related violations. In 2009, Sinclair paid a fine of \$660,000 for another spill of about three million gallons of gasoline. In 2009 and 2010, there were eight separate violations that were settled or will be settled with fines. This latest settlement includes an \$850,000 penalty payment and an additional \$4,500,000 commitment from Sinclair to upgrade equipment and conduct waste minimization activities at the refinery, and to provide wildlife rehabilitation training.

Welcome New BCA Members!

Bald Eagle: Ralph Wright

Conservation Council for Hawai'i
Detroit Audubon Society
Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium

Check out BCA's updated website and campaign center:
www.birdconservationalliance.org

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HELP PROTECT AMERICA'S BIRDS FROM DEADLY TOXINS!



Bald Eagle suffering the effects of lead poisoning, February 2010. Despite treatment, this bird ultimately perished. Marge Gibson

As you have read in this issue of *Bird Calls*, three more endangered California Condors have died from lead poisoning caused by ammunition. Trumpeter Swans are dying in unusually high numbers from lead poisoning in the Northwest U.S. and Southwest Canada. Up to 10 million birds and other animals, including Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, Loons, and doves, die each year in the United States after consuming lead bullet fragments, spent lead shot pellets, or lost fishing weights. Meanwhile, the manufacturer of carbofuran went to the U.S. Supreme Court just this year to fight for the continued use of this pesticide, known to be the most toxic to birds since the 1980s.

Toxins in the environment remain one of the gravest threats to birds, causing them to suffer painful deaths, reduced breeding success, physical malformations, or impaired ability to migrate or avoid predators. ABC has

led the way in the bird conservation community to help reduce bird deaths from pesticides from as many as 60 million per year to as few as 15 million per year, and to protect the environment, birds, farm workers, children, pets, and wildlife from harmful pesticides. This year, ABC has launched a new campaign to promote the use of non-toxic, lead-free hunting ammunition and fishing weights.

We need your help to eliminate these deadly hazards to birds. Donate to ABC's Pesticides and Birds program and you will support projects such as efforts to ensure that the most dangerous pesticides, including carbofuran, are banned, and work to replace lead hunting ammunition and fishing gear with safer alternatives.

Please use the enclosed envelope to make your gift, or save a stamp and give online at www.abcbirds.org.