

Bird Calls

JULY 2013 | Vol. 17, No. 2

Long-billed Curlew by
Greg Lavaty, texastargetbirds.com

ABC Expands “Full Life-Cycle” Conservation Programs for Migratory Birds

ABC is stepping up an effort to turn three iconic migratory birds into examples of how “full life-cycle” conservation programs work. The birds are the Long-billed Curlew, the Golden-winged Warbler, and the Bicknell’s Thrush. Andrew Rothman, Director of ABC’s Migratory Bird Program, said this relatively new approach to migratory bird conservation treats international and domestic conservation efforts as two sides of the same coin.

Rothman said the Long-Billed Curlew is a good example of why full life-cycle conservation programs are needed. These shorebirds spend the breeding season in the grasslands of the northern Great Plains and Intermountain West and the nonbreeding season predominantly in the desert grasslands of northern Mexico. Over the years, the

grasslands at both ends of this migration have been badly degraded by urban and suburban growth, intensive grazing and agriculture, and invasive plants.

In Mexico, ABC and Pronatura Noreste are hoping to reverse the loss of grasslands by identifying and protecting lands used by the curlew and other birds in winter. A leading showcase for these efforts is the El Tokio Grassland

Priority Conservation Area near the city of Saltillo, in northeastern Mexico. Rothman said additional protected areas are now being created on communal or “*ejido*” lands, adding that the badly damaged grasslands in these areas are also being restored.

Meanwhile, on the curlew’s breeding grounds, ABC has hired a wildlife biologist who will help private and

public landowners manage their properties in “curlew-friendly” ways. To guide that process, a new report on how to manage grasslands for Long-billed Curlews and other birds has been written and is now being reviewed. “One of our goals is to see these practices adopted on a landscape scale,” said Rothman. “Having these practices used on federal lands and supported by the Natural Resources Conservation Service as part of their financial assistance programs for private landowners would be a huge step toward that goal.”

The Golden-winged Warbler is another migrant that is receiving full life-cycle assistance. In North America, ABC and other groups are restoring early successional forests

*...this relatively new approach
to migratory bird conservation
treats international and
domestic conservation efforts
as two sides of the same coin.*



Bicknell's Thrush by Larry Master

continued on page 2

PAGE

5

Study Identifies Pesticides
as Leading Killer of
Grassland Birds

PAGE

11

California Plan to Ban
Hunting with Lead
Ammunition Makes Progress

PAGE

14

Millerbird Population
on Laysan Hits 100

Full Life-Cycle Programs

continued from cover

from the even-aged eastern forests that now dominate the warbler's breeding grounds. In the Appalachians and Great Lakes areas, researchers and private landowners have been restoring "young forest" openings that used to be created by beavers, small farmers, and unsuppressed fires. Rothman said a different kind of restoration is being done in some of the warbler's wintering grounds. In Nicaragua, ABC and the owners of the El Jaguar Reserve have been reconnecting forest fragments with shade coffee plantations and



Golden-winged Warbler by Barth Schorre

reforested areas. The goal of this project is a biological corridor that will connect the forests of El Jaguar with the forests on the Yali volcano.

Bicknell's Thrush is a new addition to ABC's list of migratory birds receiving full life-cycle assistance. On the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola, where most of these birds winter, ABC, Grupo Jaragua, other conservation groups, and government agencies are cracking down on illegal logging and other destructive practices in protected forests used by the Bicknell's Thrush. And in Canada, where this thrush breeds, groups such as QuébecOiseaux and Bird Studies Canada are mapping out key habitats and working with timber companies to log in ways that are beneficial for the birds.

These examples of full life-cycle conservation implementation and many more will be discussed and advanced at the fifth Partners in Flight International Conference and Workshop scheduled from August 25-28 in Snowbird, Utah. Learn more at www.pifv.org.

Join Us: Unite for Migratory Birds at PIV V in Utah, Aug. 25–28



Partners in Flight, the nation's leading coalition of bird conservation groups, will hold its fifth meeting since 1990 in Snowbird, Utah, from August 25-28, 2013.

This year's meeting, "Advancing Bird Conservation in the Americas," is being organized by ABC. Participants will identify projects that link migration studies throughout the Americas.

This is the meeting everyone will talk about in the years to come—the moment when diverse partners united to measurably scale up conservation success for migratory birds. PIF V will be a groundbreaking and dynamic collaboration, building on PIF's traditional science focus to

create blueprints that will guide conservation action across the Western Hemisphere.

The meeting will feature keynote speakers, vendors, social events, a poster session, and a wide range of birding field trips. Space is limited, so prospective vendors and interested bird conservationists are urged to make their plans and reservations promptly.

Program inquiries should go to Terry Rich (terry_rich@fws.gov) or Merrie Morrison (mmorr@abcbirds.org). Logistical inquiries should go to either kim@delaneymeetingevent.com or to victoria@delaneymeetingevent.com.

Don't miss out! Join us at PIV V. For more information, visit www.pifv.org

Note to EPA: Modernize the Tests You Run on Pesticides

Editorial by Cynthia Palmer, Pesticides Program Manager, ABC

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a checkered record when it comes to evaluating pesticides. The latest evidence of this appeared in the *Federal Register* in May 2013, when the EPA issued an unconditional registration for sulfoxaflor, a neonicotinoid-like chemical manufactured by the Dow AgroSciences Company to kill certain insect pests on vegetables, fruits, barley, canola, soybeans, wheat, and other crops.

The registration was opposed by ABC and other nonprofit groups concerned with the protection of birds, bees, food safety, water quality, and human health. To say the least, these groups are disappointed by the EPA's decision to approve the use of sulfoxaflor.

A recent ABC report examined the risks posed to birds by these chemicals, known as neonicotinoids or "neonics." (See story p. 5.) Neonics are easily the world's most widely used pesticides, to the point where it is difficult to find a pest-control product that does not contain at least one of these chemicals.

The EPA helped make the neonics best-sellers by approving no less than 595 of these products since the 1990s, even though the agency's own toxicologists were raising red flags about potential environmental threats. In internal reviews conducted by the

EPA, agency scientists voiced concerns about how long it took for neonics to break down, how readily they got into water supplies, and how harmful they could be to pollinators and other wildlife.

We believe those warnings would have been even more dire if the scientists who issued them had gone beyond the agency's antiquated risk assessment

A single seed treated with the neonic imidacloprid can kill a bird the size of a Blue Jay... imidacloprid is the oldest and one of the most widely used neonics on earth.

protocols. But they did not. Instead, EPA scientists measured the toxicity of neonics to aquatic invertebrates by running tests on a single species of freshwater flea that happens to be uniquely insensitive to these chemicals. They evaluated the potential threats to birds by running tests on Mallards and Northern Bobwhites, even though other birds can be ten times more sensitive to pesticides like these.

ABC's review of 200 studies turned up ample evidence that the threats posed



Northern Bobwhites by Gary Kramer, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

by these chemicals are more than theoretical. A single seed treated with the neonic imidacloprid can kill a bird the size of a Blue Jay. This finding is made more disturbing by the fact that imidacloprid is the oldest and one of the most widely used neonics on earth.

In the past, when other kinds of pesticides were dominant, the EPA could rely on early-warning lab tests known as "biomarkers" that helped flag the real-world damage inflicted by lethal pesticides. We believe it would be fairly easy to develop tests like these for pesticides containing neonics. But to our astonishment, that has not happened. Instead, the EPA has authorized hundreds of products containing neonics without once requiring a manufacturer to develop a biomarker.

In April 2013, the European Union announced a two-year ban on neonics. ABC is calling on the EPA to do likewise—to suspend all uses of neonics pending independent review of their effects on birds, terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, and other wildlife.



Cynthia Palmer directs ABC's efforts to address major toxic impacts and pollution threats to birds, ranging from rat poison effects on raptors to chemical disruptions of migratory birds' navigation systems. She coordinates the National Pesticide Reform Coalition and participates on the EPA Pesticide Program Dialogue Committee. Cynthia received her BA, Juris Doctor, and Master of Public Health degrees from Harvard, concentrating in environmental and occupational health sciences and law.

Texas Court Says Cranes Should Get More Water



Whooping Cranes by Laura Erickson

The State of Texas has been ordered to make more fresh water available to the Whooping Cranes that winter near the Gulf of Mexico. These cranes travel 2,500 miles from their nesting grounds in Canada to a pair of bays found on the Texas coast. They comprise the only free-flying wild flock of Whooping Cranes in the world and are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The cranes that fly to Texas belong to what is known as the “Aransas/Wood Buffalo Flock,” which reached a low of 16 individuals in the early 1940s. Since that time, the flock has been recovering slowly, reaching a post-1940s high of 270 in 2008. Then, in 2008-2009, the Aransas/Wood Buffalo

Flock crashed abruptly. A total of 57 Whooping Cranes died during that time, 23 of them on the Texas wintering grounds.

A subsequent lawsuit blamed this crash on decisions made by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, which manages the state’s water resources. Members of the “Aransas Project”—which includes ABC, Aransas County, the Aransas County Navigation District, the Town of Fulton, the City of Rockport, the International Crane Foundation, and the Coastal Bend Guides Association—charged that the state agency had violated the ESA by reducing the amount of fresh water flowing into the bays where the cranes wintered. The lawsuit stated that the low flow of fresh water made the water

in the bays much saltier. It’s believed that this change caused the blue crab population in the area to crash. These crabs are the main food source for wintering Whooping Cranes.

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas eventually ruled in favor of the coalition, concluding that the water management practices of the Texas commission were indeed a violation of the ESA. As a result, the commission must now begin providing more fresh water to the cranes. The commission was also ordered to apply for an incidental take permit for Whooping Crane deaths linked to water flow decisions, which would set an upper limit on the number of cranes that could be “taken” in this fashion.



Least Tern and chick by Bill Dalton

Your Legacy of Bird Conservation

You can help secure a better future for birds by including ABC in your estate plans. Naming ABC as a beneficiary of your will, retirement plan, trust, or life insurance policy is a simple way to ensure that we will always be a champion for native birds and their habitats.

If you have already included ABC in your estate plans, or if you would like more information on how to join our Legacy Circle, please contact Planned Giving Director Jack Morrison at 540-253-5780, or jmorrison@abcbirds.org.

Thank you for your support of bird conservation and of ABC.

**Your bequest to ABC will create a legacy of bird conservation.
Together we will protect the birds of the Americas for years to come.**

FOCUS ON
PESTICIDESStudy Identifies Pesticides as
Leading Killer of Grassland Birds

Acutely toxic pesticides may now be the leading present-day threat to North American grassland birds such as the Mountain Plover; Horned Lark; Vesper, Baird's, and Cassin's Sparrow; and Ferruginous Hawk. That is the gist of a study published in *PLOS One*, an online, peer-reviewed scientific journal. The findings in this study challenge the widespread belief that the loss of grassland habitat is the primary cause of the broad decline of grassland birds in the United States and Canada.

The study was led by Pierre Mineau, recently retired Senior Research Scientist at Environment Canada and former Head of Pesticide Evaluation with the Canadian Wildlife Service. After reviewing more than 20 years' worth of data on pesticide use, habitat changes, and bird declines in the United States, Mineau and his

research team concluded that lethal pesticides were nearly four times as likely to be associated with bird declines than the changes in cropped pasture, which was the next most likely cause.

The states with the most declining grassland bird species are Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, and New York. The study found that grassland birds were much more likely to decline in states with high use of insecticides known to be lethal to birds, and that birds can be harmed when only small portions of farmland are treated with pesticides. Birds in natural grasslands were found to be vulnerable to pesticides that drifted out of adjoining croplands.

Mineau said he did not want to minimize the importance of habitat conservation programs to declining grassland birds. Instead, he said, "What this study suggests is that we need to start paying a lot more attention to the use of pesticides if we want to reverse, halt, or simply slow the very significant downward trend in grassland bird populations."

Cynthia Palmer, Manager of ABC's Pesticides Program, called the study "a reminder that pesticide problems like the ones Rachel Carson wrote about 50 years ago are by no means things of the past. We need to rein in the use of lethal pesticides in agriculture, and we need to be especially careful about the new pesticides we introduce into these ecosystems."

The study looked at pesticide data from 1980 to 2003, when a class of toxic pesticides known as organophosphates was in widespread use. In recent years, those pesticides have been largely replaced by a group of agricultural chemicals known as neonicotinoids, or "neonics." Unfortunately, these new pesticides pose their own threats to birds and wildlife, according to a toxicological assessment funded by ABC. (See story p. 7.)

"...we need to start paying a lot more attention to the use of pesticides if we want to reverse, halt, or simply slow the very significant downward trend in grassland bird populations."

*Pierre Mineau, Senior Research Scientist, Ret.
Environment Canada*



Western Meadowlarks by Greg Homel, Natural Elements Productions

To Bird Seed Makers: Don't Treat Seeds with Pesticides

ABC has sent letters to two of the nation's largest manufacturers of wild bird seed, Scotts Miracle-Gro Company and Kaytee Products, seeking assurance that the company supply chains remain free of neonicotinoid insecticides, which can be poisonous to birds.

"Our recently completed scientific assessment concluded that these insecticides routinely are incorporated into seeds and that those are lethal to birds," said the letter. "We want to ensure that these insecticidal treatments are never found on the bird seed that your companies sell." As this issue of *Bird Calls* went to press, neither of these companies had responded to ABC.

"It is important that the seeds marketed for home bird feeders remain free of these chemical treatments," said Cynthia Palmer, ABC's Pesticides Program Manager. "It would be wretched if bird watchers were unknowingly poisoning the very birds that they seek to nurture and enjoy with their families."

Bird seed makers have treated their seeds with other kinds of pesticides in the past. In response to previous contamination incidents, ABC has randomly tested major brands of bird seed for a range of older pesticides. In the letter sent to the bird seed makers, ABC said that neonics are a candidate for future testing.



American Goldfinch at feeder, www.backyardchirper.com

d-CON Rat Poison Manufacturer Defies EPA Cancellation Order

The company that manufactures d-CON rat and mouse poisons continues to defy a federal order to remove these products from the marketplace, even as the other makers of these products are complying with the ban. The fight between Reckitt Benckiser and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began in 2008, when EPA concluded that certain rat poisons pose an "unreasonable risk" to people, pets, and wildlife. At the time, EPA ordered the companies making these poisons to stop selling some of them on the consumer market and to start enclosing others inside tamper-proof bait stations.

Most manufacturers, including the leading competitor, Bell Laboratories, did what the EPA requested. But Reckitt Benckiser—maker of products ranging from Woolite and Lysol to French's mustard—chose to fight the EPA's decision. Specifically, the company continued to sell d-CON poisons as loose pellets and pastes, and it kept supplying its most toxic poisons to the public.

In 2011, EPA issued what is known as a draft cancellation notice for the "noncompliant" products being made by Reckitt Benckiser and the two other companies that refused to remove their products from the market. In 2013, the EPA issued an official cancellation order, but the company still refused to comply. Instead it

requested a hearing before an EPA Environmental Law Judge. Shortly after that, the public interest law firm Earthjustice filed a motion to intervene on behalf of ABC, Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, and Defenders of Wildlife.

Cynthia Palmer, ABC's Pesticides Program Manager, said Reckitt Benckiser's continuing defiance of the EPA was "unparalleled in recent history" and accused the company of putting "corporate profits ahead of children's health and animal welfare."

"It is time for the makers of d-CON to get in line with every other responsible rat-poison manufacturer," said Palmer. "They need to do as their slogan says: 'Get out.'"

FOCUS ON PESTICIDES

ABC Calls for Suspension of Popular Insecticides

The world's most widely used pesticides are lethal to birds and to the aquatic invertebrates that help anchor food webs, according to an extensive review of the threats posed by a group of agricultural chemicals known as neonicotinoids, or "neonics."

The review, commissioned and co-written by ABC, was followed by a call for a permanent ban on the use of neonics as seed treatments, a temporary suspension of all other uses of these chemicals, and an independent study of the damage neonics do to birds and other organisms.

"These chemicals can harm entire food webs," said Cynthia Palmer, co-author of the report and ABC's Pesticides Program Manager. "They break down very slowly; they contaminate groundwater; and tiny doses can be lethal."

"For example, a single seed that has been treated with a neonic is all it takes to kill a songbird," Palmer added. "If that bird is breeding, daily consumption of one-tenth of a treated seed can harm the reproductive process."

Toxicologist Pierre Mineau led the research team that reviewed 200 studies of products



containing neonicotinoids, including several studies conducted by pesticide manufacturers that had not released their findings to the public. ABC obtained these studies through the U.S. Freedom of Information Act.

In addition to the damage being done to birds, the study found evidence of neonic contamination in surface- and groundwater systems around the world. In many cases, the contamination levels were high enough to kill aquatic invertebrates. In North America, water data gathered in California and the Canadian prairies showed some of the highest contamination levels.

Pesticides containing neonicotinoids were introduced in the 1990s, in response to widespread pest resistance and health concerns linked to older pesticides such as organophosphates. Long promoted as both safe and effective, they are now the most-used class of pesticides on earth.

According to the study, the threats posed by neonics went unnoticed for years in part because many of these chemicals were never properly tested. The authors charge that ineffective EPA risk assessment protocols are the source of this problem. "EPA risk assessments have greatly underestimated the risk, [by] using scientifically unsound, outdated methodology that has more to do with a game of chance than with a rigorous scientific process," states the report. (See Opinion p. 3.)

Other research has already shown that neonics are lethal to honeybees and other insects. What the ABC assessment makes clear is that the damage being done by neonics involves much more than bees.

To view a copy of the report, visit: www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/toxins/Neonic_FINAL.pdf

Neonics Commonly Used in the United States

If you're concerned about neonics, please check the labels of the products you use. Many people are surprised to find that these toxic substances are in many commonly used pest control products. Below are just a few examples of products containing neonics that gardeners should avoid:

Imidacloprid - Ortho MAX Tree & Shrub Insect Control

Clothianidin - Green Light Grub Control with Arena

Thiamethoxam - Maxide Dual Action Insect Killer

Acetamiprid - Ortho Rose and Flower Insect Killer

Dinotefuran - Zylam 20SG Systemic Turf Insecticide

Honeybee by Wikimedia Commons



Wind Power Project Threatens Whooping Cranes

A developer with plans to build a 100-turbine wind power project in a key migratory path for endangered Whooping Cranes may be issued a permit that would prevent prosecution if its turbines kill the protected cranes. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has confirmed that it is now considering a plan to issue such a permit, even though there are fewer than 400 Whooping Cranes in the wild. Threatened Piping Plovers and other migratory birds could also be at risk.

The Merricourt Wind Project would be built in the Prairie Pothole region of North Dakota, an area referred to

as “North America’s duck factory.” Most of the nation’s Whooping Cranes fly through the region in the spring and fall.

The wind farm would consist of about 100 turbines connected by approximately 33 miles of access roads. Wetlands potentially used by Whooping Cranes are located throughout the project site, and designated critical habitat for Piping Plovers is about two miles away.

Earlier this year, the controversial wind project suffered a major setback when a judge allowed a utility company to

cancel its contract to buy electricity from the project. That could make it harder for the owners of the project to obtain construction funding.

We expect debates like these to grow more common in the years ahead, thanks in part to President Obama’s new climate plan, which doubles the previous goal of generating 10 gigawatts of renewable energy from public lands by 2020. Since 2009, the Department of Interior has approved 25 utility-scale solar facilities, nine wind farms, and 11 geothermal plants.

Third-Party Studies Urged for Wind Proposal in Gulf of Maine

A proposal to build wind turbines in the Gulf of Maine—an area used by large numbers of migrating birds—is now on the table. In a pair of letters, ABC has urged the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) not to approve the proposal until additional third-party studies of potential threats to birds can be completed. The letters also asked BOEM to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of the proposed project, indicating that the EIS should not be limited to radar studies, which can be unreliable; instead, the studies should be based at least in part on data gathered during multi-year surveys.

More than 300 bird species are found in the Gulf of Maine. Bald Eagles migrate and forage in the gulf and nest on islands in the gulf and on the coast of Maine. Roseate Terns and Piping Plovers, which are both federally listed endangered species, are found in the

area. Many neotropical migrants, including Bicknell’s Thrush—a candidate for endangered species listing—migrate through the gulf, as well as raptors such as Peregrine Falcons. Nesting seabirds, such as Razorbills and Atlantic Puffins, and wintering birds, such as petrels, fulmars, and shearwaters, fly in the gulf. The Gulf of Maine also hosts numerous waterfowl, including Common Eider, Harlequin Duck, and Barrow’s Goldeneye.

Wind power experts at ABC and other groups say all of these species are potentially threatened by the Hywind Project proposed by Statoil North America. The pilot phase of the project would involve the construction of four wind turbines, but the long-term goal is a full-scale, deep-water floating wind turbine facility, to be built in an as-yet undetermined part of the Gulf of Maine.



Harlequin Ducks by Alan Wilson

“Even the pilot project can be expected to kill birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act,” said Kelly Fuller, ABC’s Wind Campaign Coordinator. “Deaths of birds protected by the Endangered Species Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act are also possible.”

Fuller said there are no complete and up-to-date studies on the numbers and species of birds found in the Gulf of Maine. Until thorough avian studies are completed, she said, it will be impossible to evaluate the threats posed by the proposed wind project.

World-Renowned Wintering Site for Shorebirds Re-Protected

Panama Bay has long been known as one of the most important wintering and stopover sites for migratory shorebirds in the Americas. Every year, the bay attracts more than a million shorebirds, including 30 percent of the world's Western Sandpipers and large numbers of Semipalmated Plovers, Black-bellied Plovers, Willets, Whimbrels, and Short-billed Dowitchers.

Located just to the east of Panama City—Panama's capital—the bay is a rich mosaic of open waterways and intertidal mudflats, surrounded by wetlands, mangroves, and swamp forests. This rich mix of ecosystems is now a protected nature reserve. Whether those protections will remain in place is an open question, though, due to a long-running fight involving conservation groups, developers with plans to build resorts and homes in the area, and Panama's unpredictable Supreme Court.

The push to save the bay and its surrounding wetlands drew international attention in 2009, when the entire area was declared a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention, an international body that identifies and tries to conserve important wetlands. The Ramsar declaration had no power on its own, but in 2009, the government of Panama included nearly all of the bay in a protected area totaling more than

200,000 acres. That decision all but banned development of the bay and its environs, angering the business people who wanted to build homes, roads, resorts, and more.

The business interests won a victory in 2012, when the Supreme Court of Panama suspended the restrictions on developments in or near the bay. Developers hailed the ruling and revived their building plans. Conservation groups from both north and south were surprised and disappointed. Led by the Panama Audubon Society, these groups urged the Supreme Court to reconsider its decision, arguing in part that the mix of wetlands surrounding the bay, including mangroves, acted as nurseries for profitable fisheries, and in part that these same wetlands kept the bay clean by filtering pollutants out of the runoff from farms and urban centers.

Ironically, just after the Supreme Court ruling, storms triggered massive floods in Panama City. Conservation groups repeated warnings that these kinds of floods would become much more common if the wetlands near the bay were developed. Some of the country's business people joined with the conservation groups to warn that future flooding could do major economic damage to the country by submerging the runways at Panama's international airport.



Willet by Larry Thompson



Western Sandpiper flock by Stuart MacKay

Foreign conservation groups helped draw international attention to the fight over the future of Panama Bay. Then, last spring, the struggle took another unexpected turn, when the Supreme Court of Panama decided to reverse its decision to allow development near the bay.

Since that time, the ban on new developments has held. But people on both sides of the debate have made it clear that they do not think it is over. "The fight to protect the bay will go on," said Panama Audubon. "Meanwhile, it is heartening to know the bay will host more than a million shorebirds once again this fall."

Panama Bay by CAVU



ABC and Partners Oppose Plan to Allow “Take” of California Condors

For the first time, a wind farm may be granted permission to kill endangered California Condors without facing prosecution. According to a Record of Decision published by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and a Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), turbines operated by the Alta East Wind Project in California may be allowed to “take” a limited number of condors over the lifetime of the project. Fewer than 250 California Condors remain in the wild.

Since 1967, California Condors have been on the list of plants and animals whose habitats are protected by the federal Endangered Species Act. In the 1980s, these giant birds almost

went extinct. The species was saved by a last-ditch decision to capture all of the 22 remaining wild condors, place them in captive breeding programs, and release their offspring in the wild. The condor population has recovered slowly since that time, to the point where there are now approximately 250 of these birds in the wild and about 190 in captivity.

“This massive recovery effort has cost millions of dollars and been the life’s work of many talented people,” said Kelly Fuller, ABC’s Wind Campaign Coordinator. “We don’t think the government should be considering a plan to make it legal to kill even one of these amazing birds.”

If a take permit is issued, the Alta East Wind Project will be required



California Condor by Susan Haig

to install turbines capable of slowing down drastically when condors are detected in the area. Fuller said she hopes the new technologies that would control these turbines prove to be effective. But Fuller said that has not been proven yet, adding that FWS should not have made the decision to consider issuing a take permit before finding out whether the technology will work.

Arizona Water Pumping Decision Threatens Millions of Birds

ABC has called on Arizona Governor Janice Brewer to overturn a decision by the Arizona Department of Water Resources to approve a groundwater pumping plan that could drain the San Pedro River, which was declared a Globally Important Bird Area in 1995. ABC has reviewed the plan and concluded that the project could affect the critical habitat of the southwestern Willow Flycatcher, which is protected by the Endangered Species Act. Other species thought to be potentially at risk include Wilson’s and Yellow Warblers; an important breeding population of the western race of Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Gray Hawk; and Green Kingfisher.

In a recent letter, ABC’s Vice President for Conservation Advocacy Darin Schroeder asked Gov. Brewer to “reverse this ill-considered approval by your administration’s Department of Water Resources to effectively drain the San Pedro River in order to support the unsustainable growth of Sierra Vista.” Schroeder wrote that the pumping plan posed “a serious risk” to millions of migratory birds, many of which are protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

ABC President George Fenwick urged the state to act before the pumping could begin. “Birds won’t get this memo,” said Fenwick. “Their migration paths won’t change in the months and years ahead. As a result, instead



Gray Hawk by Greg Homel, Natural Elements Productions

of finding water, shelter, and nourishment in the San Pedro, the birds will find that their breeding habitat is shrinking. Many may perish.”

California Plan to Ban Hunting with Lead Ammunition Makes Progress

One of Many Ways to Help Save California Condors

A proposal to require all hunters in California to start using non-lead ammunition has moved closer to reality. With strong support from several environmental groups—including California Audubon, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Humane Society of the United States—proposed legislation that would do just that was approved in May by the California State Assembly. The bill still needs to be endorsed by the California Senate Appropriations Committee, and then by the full state Senate, before it would be sent to the desk of California Governor Jerry Brown.

If all of those things happen and the governor signs the bill, California would become the first state to impose a total ban on hunting with lead-based ammunition. The bill would do this by expanding an existing ban on hunting with lead ammunition in southern California, where fragments of lead ammunition plucked from carcasses and swallowed have killed many California Condors.

The California Condor is a critically endangered scavenging bird with a leathery red head, a razor-sharp beak, and a wingspan of nine and one-half

feet. After rising on warm thermal winds, it can glide for miles without flapping once and cover more than 150 miles in a day. Once, these giant birds fed on the carcasses of mastodons and other creatures of the Pleistocene. Now, they often settle for the gutpiles of deer and elk shot by hunters who fail to carry out the remains. Studies have established that the lead bits in these gutpiles are a leading threat to the existence of the giant, soaring birds.

“The condor faces a very real threat of extinction, and California’s movement toward a legislative approach on the lead issue is understandable,” said John Schulz, ABC’s Non-lead Campaign Manager. “Given the dire situation of this species, we believe all reasonable actions should be taken to protect it.”

Schultz said he’s a strong supporter of the California bill. He is also an advocate of voluntary non-lead hunting programs in Arizona and Utah. Unfortunately, in spite of attempts to make the things that condors eat lead-free, eight of the gigantic birds have died since December. Condor experts have confirmed that at least three of the deaths were caused by the ingestion of lead fragments found inside the remains of animals shot by hunters.

Shultz said he is trying to help state and federal agencies develop voluntary non-lead programs “on a meaningful scale, with sufficient financial resources.” He said it is important to remember that lead poisoning threatens not only condors, but also eagles, loons, swans, doves, and songbirds. “It can also hurt people who eat ground game meat killed with lead ammunition,” Shultz said. “At ABC, we’re trying to protect these birds by developing solutions that will be endorsed by all concerned parties.”



California Condor by FWS

White House Asked to Develop Stronger Marbled Murrelet Protections

Conservation groups and scientific societies want the Obama administration to do more to protect the Marbled Murrelet, a threatened bird that nests in mature and old-growth forests near the coasts of northern California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and British Columbia.

A recent study by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and USDA Forest Service found that the Marbled Murrelet has declined by 29 percent over the last decade. Researchers have argued that existing conservation efforts are not enough to reverse this trend. In a letter to President Obama, the activists and scientists say there is an urgent need to save more murrelet habitat.

Concern for the Marbled Murrelet and its old-growth habitat rose in 2012, when the Obama administration issued a final version of a critical habitat rule for the endangered Northern Spotted Owl. The rule allows logging in parts of that habitat, which overlaps with part of the critical habitat of the murrelet. Analysts with the FWS have stated that this logging could create more problems for the murrelet by creating openings for nest predators such as crows, ravens, and jays.

In a letter to the president, activists and scientists pushed for new restrictions on logging in the private, state, and federal forests covered by agreements to protect the Marbled Murrelet. According to a recent study, nearly one-third of the non-federal forests used by nesting murrelets was lost between 1996 and 2006. Logging operations were identified as the main source of these losses.

Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet habitat such as this coastal Oregon forest needs stronger protection from logging. Photo by David Patte, FWS

Ruling Helps Set Standards for Bird-Friendly Buildings in Canada

The language of a ruling on a bird collision lawsuit filed in Toronto, Canada, could make it much easier for courts to decide when a building owner can be held accountable for bird deaths linked to collisions with glass windows. The ruling was issued in response to a bird-collision lawsuit brought against Cadillac Fairview, one of Canada's largest commercial property owners and managers. In the lawsuit, conservation groups accused the company of violating two of Canada's most powerful environmental laws by failing to prevent hundreds of fatal bird

collisions with the reflective windows in three Toronto office buildings.

In the ruling, Judge Melvin Green of the Ontario Court of Justice wrote that lawsuits over bird collisions could be filed in connection with the Environmental Protection Act of Canada and in connection with the Canadian Species at Risk Act.

The lawyers and activists behind the lawsuit called this portion of the ruling an important victory, noting that it was the first court ruling to acknowledge that these kinds of lawsuits could be filed.

"The law is now clear that owners and managers of buildings with reflective windows that kill or injure birds must take action," said Ecojustice lawyer Albert Koehl. "The judge's ruling also means that the Ontario Ministry of the Environment will now be obliged to regulate buildings whose reflective windows are killing birds."

The ruling also found that the owners of the three Toronto buildings were not liable for the bird deaths, primarily because they had attempted to find ways to keep collisions with the windows to a minimum. For example, the owners said they had spent \$100,000 installing window coverings.

First Global Review of Bycatch from Gillnet Fishing: Seabird Deaths in Hundreds of Thousands

At least 400,000 seabirds of 81 different species are killed accidentally in gillnets each year, according to a study in the journal *Biological Conservation*. The study provides the first global review of seabird mortality associated with the gillnet industry.

In addition to the 81 bird species confirmed to have been killed by gillnets, another 67 species were identified as potential victims. The list of susceptible species includes five critically endangered, 14 endangered, 29 vulnerable, and 15 near threatened bird species, as classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The highest number of bird kills attributed to gillnets—roughly 194,000—was reported in waters of the northwestern Pacific Ocean. Gillnet kills in the waters near Iceland reportedly stood at roughly 100,000, while approximately 76,000 birds were killed by gillnets in the Baltic Sea. The authors of the report said numerous data gaps made it highly probable that the actual avian death toll is much higher than the estimates.

Auks—diving seabirds found in the Northern Hemisphere—have been identified as the group of birds most frequently caught by gillnets, especially near oceanic colonies off the Atlantic Coast of the Iberian Peninsula and near certain islands in the northwestern Pacific. Other highly vulnerable groups of birds include sea ducks in the Baltics; loons, cormorants, and gannets in the northwest Atlantic; and penguins in the waters of the southeastern Pacific, the southwestern Atlantic, and off New Zealand.

“Gillnets have been the cause of some of the highest recorded mortalities of seabirds worldwide,” wrote authors Ramūnas Žydelis, Cleo Small, and Gemma French. “The status of seabird populations is deteriorating faster compared to other bird groups, and bycatch in fisheries is identified as one of the principle causes of declines.”

Gillnet fishing boats use mesh nets that are sometimes anchored to the sea floor, and sometimes set to hang down from the surface of the water. The size of the catch depends on the size of the openings in the mesh, but in all other ways gillnets are indiscriminate.

All of the marine life that cannot pass through the mesh stays in the net. Diving seabirds often drown when they become entangled.

“Gillnets are among the greatest challenges faced by entities attempting to reduce seabird mortality in fisheries,” said Holly Freifeld, Seabird Program Director at ABC. “But we are convinced that it’s a problem with solutions.” For example, Freifeld said that ABC is now working with ProDelphinus, a Peruvian nonprofit conservation group, to develop gillnets that are less risky to seabirds such as the Waved Albatross, a critically endangered species that breeds only on the Galapagos Islands.

Industrial-scale fishing with drift nets longer than 1.5 miles has been banned on the high seas since 1991, partly due to public outrage triggered by reports that the long nets were catching and killing large numbers of marine mammals, seabirds, sea turtles, and nontarget fish species. Gillnets that are fewer than 1.5 miles long are still widely used in international waters and in fisheries found within the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones claimed by many countries.



Common Murres killed in a gillnet by Brandon Cole

Court Backs Protective Measures for Rare Hawaiian Bird

Thanks to a ruling by the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawai'i, efforts to protect the last remaining habitat of the critically endangered Palila are once again moving forward.

The ruling allows the state to resume aerial hunting of non-native feral sheep, mouflon-hybrid sheep, and goats in the subalpine habitat on the island of Hawai'i's Mauna Kea volcano. These grazing animals destroy and degrade the māmane-naio forest required by the Palila for successful breeding.

Earthjustice—representing the Hawai'i Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Hawai'i Audubon Society, and the National Audubon Society—has led the court battle on the issue since 1978. In a series of orders beginning in 1979, the court found that, to prevent the bird's extinction, the state must permanently remove the mammals from the Palila's designated critical habitat through all necessary means, including aerial hunts. The

State of Hawai'i suspended the hunts in 2012, after Hawai'i County voted to prohibit them. But the court held that, under the U.S. Constitution, the federal Endangered Species Act and a federal court order trump the county law. The Hawai'i Department of Lands and Natural Resources resumed these hunts at the end of April.

The population of the Palila, a Hawaiian honeycreeper, has declined 66 percent in the past decade, to fewer than 2,200 individuals. Due mainly to habitat destruction, its range has contracted to only about five percent of its historical size.

In the past, removal efforts were hampered because there was no way to keep the remaining sheep and goats from migrating back into the Palila's critical habitat once the aerial hunting ceased. However, the state has recently built 25 miles of fence, bringing the total length of ungulate-proof fencing in place to nearly 36 miles. This fence protects the Palila's critical habitat, especially the



Critically endangered Palila by Daniel J. Lebbin, ABC

core breeding area on the southwest slope—one of the main areas of sheep and goat traffic. Once completed, the fence will stretch over 51 miles and enclose 91 percent of designated critical habitat for the Palila.

The goal is to remove all non-native goats and sheep from the enclosure. While the fence is under construction, ABC is working with the state's Mauna Kea Forest Restoration Project and the Division of Forestry and Wildlife to control feral cats and mongooses, which are known Palila nest predators, as well as to control invasive plants and to restore native plant communities.

Millerbird Population on Laysan Hits 100

In the Hawaiian Island chain, a high-stakes effort to protect endangered Millerbirds has passed another milestone. In September 2011, when all of the world's Millerbirds were living on the Hawaiian island of Nihoa, a team of biologists from ABC, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and other organizations caught 24 of the imperiled birds and moved them to the island of Laysan, 650 miles away. Twenty-six more Millerbirds were captured on Nihoa and released on Laysan in August 2012.

The effort to create a second Millerbird population was designed

to decrease the chances of extinction, which could easily occur if an already-vulnerable population was hit by a catastrophic weather event or compromised by the introduction of invasive species or disease. But for that plan to work, the “founder birds” released on Laysan needed to survive, then thrive.

Which is precisely what they've done. Researchers on Laysan say the translocated Millerbirds have had no trouble finding food or reproducing. As a result, more than 100 Millerbirds are now living on this island, which they share with the endangered Laysan

Finch, the endangered Laysan Duck, and millions of nesting seabirds.

Millerbirds are small brown songbirds that eat insects found in low shrubs and bunch-grasses. The Millerbirds on Laysan all wear colored leg bands that allow biologists to identify them in the field.

Laysan Island is part of the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge located in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

Read more on ABC's blog: www.abcbirds.wordpress.com.

Birds on California Island Rebound after Rats Eradicated

A decade after tens of thousands of invasive rats were removed from Anacapa Island—an ecologically significant island off the coast of southern California—populations of rare seabirds are rebounding. There has been a four-fold increase in the number of Scripps's Murrelet nests, and two species never before known to nest on the island, the Cassin's Auklet and Ashy Storm-Petrel, are now nesting.

Anacapa is part of Channel Islands National Park, which comprises five of the eight Channel Islands found off the California coast. West Anacapa has long been the home of the world's largest breeding colony of California Brown Pelicans.

The non-native rats that threatened all of these bird species were first reported on Anacapa in the early 1900s. Later research found that the rats were eating 70 percent of the eggs of the once-common Scripps's Murrelet, which is now a threatened species in the state of California. The rats also ate native deer mice, reptiles, insects, intertidal invertebrates, and a wide variety of plants.

To restore balance to the island ecosystem, black rats were removed in 2001 and 2002 using an aerial application of rodenticide bait. Some of the world's leading island experts and scientists from the United States, Canada, and New Zealand assisted project partners from Channel Islands National Park, Island Conservation, and the American Trader Trustee Council (composed of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) in the project's rigorous planning process.



Scripps's Murrelets by Peter LaTourrette

“Nowhere are the threats of extinction higher than on islands, and nowhere do we have greater opportunities to save species at risk. This successful project demonstrates the value of this critical conservation tool for other islands around the globe.”

Gregg Howald, North America Regional Director, Island Conservation

Island Conservation's North America Regional Director Gregg Howald said, “Nowhere are the threats of extinction higher than on islands, and nowhere do we have greater opportunities to save species at risk. This successful project demonstrates the value of this critical conservation tool for other islands around the globe.”

“ABC was among the many environmental groups that endorsed this work,” said George Wallace, ABC's Vice President for Oceans and Islands. “We are glad the environmental community rallied around this project. It is exactly the kind of well-designed, extensively researched, and responsibly implemented conservation program that is needed to protect native birds on islands from the harmful impacts of exotic species.”

Rats have ravaged island ecosystems all over the world and are the single-largest cause of bird extinctions on islands. Researchers have found that they are also responsible for half of the world's reptile extinctions.

Aerial view of Anacapa Island by Wikimedia Commons



Black-backed Woodpeckers May Be Granted “Threatened” Status

Two populations of Black-backed Woodpeckers—one in the Black Hills of South Dakota and the other in the Cascade Range of Oregon and the Sierra Nevada of California—could be granted “threatened” status by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

The Black-backed Woodpecker tends to thrive in “snag forests” made up of dead, standing trees that provide its beetle larvae food. These snag forests are created by fires or mass insect outbreaks.

Conservation groups asked FWS to consider adding the Black-backed Woodpecker to the list of plants and animals protected by the Endangered Species Act. FWS agreed that such a listing may be warranted “due to

small population sizes” and because the forests where these woodpeckers live have been diminished by “salvage logging, tree thinning, and fire suppression activities.”

The listing petition argued that Black-backed Woodpecker populations found in parts of the Black Hills National Forest seem particularly threatened. There, every acre of forested land has been logged at least twice, reducing the size and number of snags. Large-scale insect management projects—two now pending—could eliminate nearly all of the remaining snag forests in the area, petitioners said.

The FWS decision to consider listing the Black-backed Woodpecker could be affected by an ongoing debate over whether the woodpecker populations



Black-backed Woodpecker by Eleanor Briccetti

in question are in fact “distinct” and thus deserving of protection. FWS has “tentatively” concluded that there are three separate populations of Black-backed Woodpeckers.

Guide to Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Issued

A new, nonbinding state and federal guide details what it will take to reverse the decline of Greater Sage-Grouse, a ground-dwelling bird native to the arid sagebrush plains of the American West. The *Conservation Objectives Report* issued by FWS identifies dozens of areas important to the large, dark grouse, which once numbered in the millions. Now, thanks primarily to habitat loss, the population of the Greater Sage-Grouse stands between 250,000 and 500,000.

According to a court agreement, FWS has until 2015 to decide whether to add the Greater Sage-Grouse to the list of plants and animals protected by the federal Endangered Species Act. The

report is intended to help guide a regional effort to conserve those habitats.

“This report provides an important roadmap for land managers, and we urge state and federal agencies to follow it,” said Steve Holmer, ABC’s Senior Policy Advisor. Holmer said the next step in this regional effort will be taken when the seven states with Greater Sage-Grouse habitat complete state-based Environmental Impact Statements. If all goes as planned, the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and FWS will use those impact statements to amend more than 100 management plans spread across 57 million acres of federal land.

But Holmer said it is not clear that these federal agencies will follow the

suggestions in the report. For example, Holmer said, the BLM has just revised a management plan for a part of Wyoming that contains important sage-grouse habitat, and Holmer said the new plan fails to designate any “significant” grassland areas as bird-protection areas.

“It is disappointing to see that, in this case, BLM is not waiting for the states to complete their Environmental Impact Statements,” said Holmer. “The plan BLM has issued appears to fall short of what’s needed to conserve the species.”

Greater Sage-Grouse habitat exists today in eastern Montana, Wyoming, northwestern Colorado, Utah, southern Idaho, Nevada, eastern Oregon, and northeastern California.

Shearwater's Mysterious Migration to be Tracked

This spring, six Pink-footed Shearwaters migrated north from their breeding grounds on Isla Mocha, Chile, with tiny transmitters on their backs. The solar-powered satellite transmitters were attached to the birds during the nesting season on the isolated breeding island.

Valentina Colodro, a scientist and veterinarian with the nonprofit group Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge, worked with park rangers from Chile's Corporación Nacional Forestal (CONAF) to outfit the birds with transmitters.

Pink-footed Shearwaters cross the territorial waters of as many as 13 countries while migrating to and from feeding grounds west of the United States and Canada. "Tracking data gathered by the transmitters will help us find out where they may be threatened by fisheries or other human activities," said Dr. Josh Adams, a biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Western Ecological Research Center in California and a specialist in seabird tracking. "It will help us map the routes the birds take while migrating and pinpoint the places they forage with their chicks after returning to Isla Mocha."

As of this writing, five of the six tagged shearwaters have left Chile and are on their way to North America,

where they will remain at sea until September or October. Three birds are off the west coast of Mexico's Baja Peninsula, one is off the coast of central Peru, and one bird is in the Galápagos Islands. The sixth bird transmitted for just over three weeks following tagging and remained in the vicinity of Isla Mocha. The bird may be dead or its transmitter may have failed. (You can follow the travels of the satellite-tagged shearwaters at www.seaturtle.org/tracking/?project_id=834.)

This satellite tracking project is an international collaboration among Oikonos, Chile's CONAF, Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service, USGS, Hawai'i Pacific University, ABC, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). In partnership with ABC and with support from NFWF, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and others, Oikonos works on multiple fronts for the conservation of the Pink-footed Shearwater, conducting monitoring and other research, habitat restoration, predator control, and education and outreach in Chile.

Oikonos and partners have been studying the migration and at-sea threats of Pink-footed Shearwaters since 2006. See previous results here: www.oikonos.org/projects/fardela_migration.htm.



Pink-footed Shearwater with transmitter by Oikonos

About the Pink-Foots

Pink-footed Shearwaters nest on three Chilean islands: Isla Mocha; and Robinson Crusoe and Santa Clara in the Juan Fernandez Islands. The species' total breeding population is estimated at about 28,000 pairs; more than 60 percent nest on Isla Mocha.

These birds are threatened by predation by non-native mammals, human harvest, and hooking or entanglement in fishing gear. The Pink-footed Shearwater has been designated "vulnerable" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Chile recognizes the species as endangered.

The threats faced by the Pink-footed Shearwater at sea are poorly known, but the tracking work should help with that. "Satellite tracking will do more than shed light on the threats to the seabirds," said Valentina Colodro of Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge. "Yes, it will help us measure the threat posed by the fishing boats that share the shearwater's feeding grounds, but it will also help us show the people who live near the bird's breeding grounds why these amazing migrants are worth saving."

"Satellite tracking...will help us measure the threat posed by the fishing boats that share the shearwater's feeding grounds, but it will also help us show the people who live near the bird's breeding grounds why these amazing migrants are worth saving."

Valentina Colodro, Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge

BIRDS IN BRIEF

Sequestration Cuts Bird Conservation Funds

Last spring, the U.S. Congress voted to continue funding federal programs at sequestration levels for the fiscal year 2013. This will translate into funding cuts of roughly five percent for programs linked to laws such as the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and the Joint Ventures programs led in part by ABC. It also means less federal money will be available to leverage funds provided by private funders. As of now, the only light at the end of this tunnel is contained in the president's budget request for the 2014 fiscal year, which—as written—would push the funding for bird conservation programs past current sequestration levels.

Florida Public Cat Hoarding Legislation Tabled

In Florida, a coalition that includes ABC, veterinarians, wildlife professionals, and private citizens has helped defeat legislation that would have endorsed public hoarding of cats. “Community Cats” bills backed by feral cat activists were considered by Florida's House of Representatives and the state Senate. The bills would have legalized domestic cat abandonment. They also would have



Feral cat colony by Greg Homel

provided immunity to agencies and citizens involved in “Trap-Neuter-Release” (TNR) programs for outdoor cats.

Critics of the bills, including ABC, cited studies linking outdoor cats to the spread of diseases that harm humans, including the toxoplasmosis parasite and rabies. They also cited peer-reviewed research that found that outdoor cats kill at least 2.4 billion birds and 12.3 billion small mammals every year in the contiguous United States. In the end, the bills were tabled, which means they could be revived.



Althea Sherman's tower birdhouse, Oberlin College Archive

Restoring the First Chimney Swift Tower

In eastern Iowa, the first tower built for nesting Chimney Swifts—erected by a local ornithologist in 1915—is being restored.

The ornithologist was Althea R. Sherman (1853-1943), a self-taught scientist made famous by her detailed studies of the nesting birds found near her home. After building the first “Chimney Swift Tower,” Sherman was also the first to study the complete nesting cycle of swifts. The Althea

R. Sherman Project was created to protect both the tower and the legacy of a notable citizen scientist. The restored nesting tower will be located near a museum and interpretive center on the 560-acre Bickett-Rate Farm, which is known for birds including Cerulean Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, and Pileated Woodpeckers. To find out more about the project and how you can help, go the group's website: www.altheasherman.org.

Forest Service May Drop Mandatory Conservation for Mexican Spotted Owls

The USDA Forest Service (USFS) may soon make it harder to conserve the Mexican Spotted Owls found in five of Arizona's national forests. Forest plan revisions proposed by USFS would allow extensive logging in the old-growth forests used by the threatened owls. The proposed revisions would also eliminate current owl conservation standards.

As of now, USFS requires loggers and others to protect the nesting areas of these owls in southwestern national forests. Current regulations also call for regular monitoring of owl populations and for protection of 20 percent of the old-growth forests found in each management area. The proposed revisions would turn all of those requirements into “discretionary guidelines.” Conservation groups, including ABC, have urged USFS to abandon the proposals.

Human Activity Can Trigger Nest Abandonment, Study Finds

Birds considered tolerant of human activity may actually be quite sensitive to human disturbances, according to a study undertaken by scientists at Boise State University and published in the British Ecological Society's *Journal of Applied Ecology* (May 10, 2013). The

American Kestrel pair by Tom Grey



study found that American Kestrels nesting near developed areas showed elevated levels of stress hormones and a ten-fold increase in the rate of nest abandonment.

The study showed that female kestrels nesting near noisy areas, including roadways, had higher levels of the hormones linked to stress, while the hormone levels in male kestrels did not change. The authors said this might be so because the females spent more time in the nests near the disturbances, while the males spent more time flying off to hunt in quieter locations.

Michigan Graduate Raising Funds for Hawaiian Bird Extinction Crisis

Biologist David Pavlik is raising money for bird conservation by taking a picture of every bird species he sees in the year 2013. Pavlik, 25, is asking sponsors to donate between \$0.05 and \$5 for each species he photographs

during his “Big Year.” He says all of those donations will be given to ABC for use in Hawaiian bird conservation programs. So far, he has raised about \$3,000 from 25 individuals.

Pavlik says he chose Hawai’i after learning of the very serious bird conservation crisis in that state—one that has given Hawai’i the regrettable distinction of being the “bird extinction capital of the world.” Since the arrival of Europeans to the Hawaiian Islands, 71 endemic bird species have become extinct out of a total of 113 that existed just prior to human colonization. Thirty-two of the remaining 42 are federally listed, and ten of those have not even been seen for up to 40 years.

Pavlik is currently a graduate student in the Conservation Biology program at the University of Minnesota and is accepting temporary/seasonal positions with bird research groups and institutions. He graduated from Northern Michigan University in 2010. So far, Pavlik has taken pictures of nearly 500 bird species. He hopes to reach 550 by the end of 2013.

To follow David’s progress, see www.birdingforconservation.blogspot.com.

2013 *State of the Birds* Report Released

The 2013 *State of the Birds* report, a collaborative effort involving federal and state wildlife agencies and scientific and conservation organizations, shows how private land conservation incentives positively impact bird habitat.

Individuals, families, organizations, and corporations, including two million ranchers and farmers and about 10 million woodland owners, own and manage 1.43 billion acres—roughly 60 percent of the land area of the United States. Private lands are used by all bird species found in the country, 251 of which are federally threatened, endangered, or of conservation concern. Many privately owned working lands

that produce food, timber, and other resources for society also provide valuable habitat for birds.



According to ABC’s George Wallace, who wrote the report’s chapter on islands, “To reach our ambitious bird conservation goals, we will need all possible partners, and that means private land owners have to be in the mix. In Hawai’i, approximately half of the land area is in private ownership, including important tracts of high elevation forest and nearly half of the state’s wetlands. The future of many of the United States’ most imperiled species depends on the efforts of private land owners.”

To view the report, see www.stateofthebirds.org.

About *Bird Calls*

If you have questions or want more information on 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.**

Editors: George Fenwick, Steve Holmer, Bob Johns, Jack Morrison, Merrie Morrison, Clare Nielsen, John Nielsen, Mike Parr, Gemma Radko, George Wallace

AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY
1731 Connecticut Ave, NW, 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20009
202-234-7181/fax 202-234-7182
www.abcbirds.org


Bird Conservation Alliance
www.birdconservationalliance.org



David Pavlik and friend



Breaking News: You can help save birds, bees, and aquatic life from lethal pesticides. Participate in our action alert on the *Save America's Pollinators Act of 2013*. Act now: www.abcbirds.org/action

Printed at a carbon-neutral facility.
Printed on recycled paper. 



Help Migratory Birds Across Their Full Life-Cycle

Habitat loss and degradation, poor land management, man-made threats that kill billions of birds every year—is it any wonder that 40 percent of neotropical migrants are declining in population?

ABC's Migratory Bird Program protects birds across the entirety of their annual cycle—on their wintering, stopover, and breeding grounds. You can help protect a host of migratory species with your extra gift today.

Your donation will help ABC's work with partners to protect:

- **The Golden-winged Warbler** by creating and restoring early successional breeding habitat in the Appalachian and Great Lakes regions, as well as supporting shade coffee farms and reforestation projects in Nicaragua to protect its wintering grounds;

- **The Long-billed Curlew** as we restore and develop better management for its grassland breeding grounds in the northern Great Plains, and in the desert grasslands at El Tokio in northern Mexico where this iconic species winters; and
- **The Bicknell's Thrush** by working to increase the amount of wintering forest habitat protected from illegal logging on Hispaniola, and to identify more of its breeding habitat in Canada and work there with local landowners on better management practices.

You can help ABC's Migratory Bird Program meet the full life-cycle conservation needs of these and other threatened migratory birds. Together, we can protect them across the hemisphere.

Please donate today using the enclosed envelope, or online at www.abcbirds.org. Thank you for your support!