AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY

The Newsletter of American Bird Conservancy

Bird Calls

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Lulu's Tody-Flycatcher by Dušan M. Brinkhuizen

Peru's Abra Patricia Reserve Expanded, Home to More Than 300 Bird Species

In Peru, a world-renowned bird reserve is now much bigger, thanks to conservation groups including American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and Peruvian partner Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos (ECOAN). These groups worked together to acquire two key properties adjacent to the Abra Patricia Reserve in northern Peru, increasing the size of the reserve to more than 25,000 acres.

Abra Patricia, adjacent to the Alto Mayo Protection Forest, forms a protected area that is home to more than 300 bird species, including rare and threatened birds such as the Long-whiskered Owlet, Ochre-fronted Antpitta, Royal Sunangel, Lulu's Tody-Flycatcher, and Pale-billed Antpitta. Several songbirds that breed in North America, such as the Swainson's Thrush, Blackburnian Warbler, and Cerulean Warbler, winter in the forests of Abra Patricia. The reserve is also home to the critically endangered yellow-tailed woolly monkey and a diversity of rare orchids and other wildlife.

These acquisitions continue a string of successes ECOAN and ABC have celebrated in northern Peru. A recent reforestation campaign resulted in completion of a new tree nursery at La Unión, just north of Abra Patricia, and the planting of nearly 75,000 native trees and 25,000 coffee bushes in a variety of mixed forest, shade agriculture, silvipasture, and living fence systems on private lands near the Abra Patricia and Huembo reserves.

"With these strategic land acquisitions, we can now better secure the important headwaters of the Alto Mayo, protecting this important resource for our reserve, neighboring communities, and people far downstream," said Constantino Aucca, President of ECOAN.

These conservation efforts were supported by the IUCN NL/Small Grants for the Purchase of Nature sponsored by the Netherlands Postcode Lottery, along with many other generous donors.

Abra Patricia is one of the premier birding destinations in Peru, itself one of the best countries for birding in the world. The Owlet Lodge at Abra Patricia often serves as a base for birding tourists who typically spend several days at regional birding spots such as Waqanki, Huembo, and Gotas de Agua. The spectacular Marvelous Spatuletail hummingbird can be seen just an hour's drive away at the Huembo Reserve.

Visit **conservationbirding.org** for more information about visiting Abra Patricia and other ABC-supported reserves.

Ochre-fronted Antpitta by Roger Ahlman

Toxoplasmosis: Studies Show Growing Public and Wildlife Health Threat

A pair of new peer-reviewed studies have added to the growing body of evidence that suggests toxoplasmosis is a serious and widespread health threat. A disease caused by the parasitic protozoan *Toxoplasma gondii*, toxoplasmosis depends on cats to complete its life cycle. Up to 74 percent of all domestic cats will be infected with toxoplasmosis during their lifetime, and each cat may shed hundreds of millions of infectious oocysts into the environment through its feces. Although cats are the parasite's definitive host and the only animals in which the parasite can sexually reproduce, other species—including humans—may be infected.

New science suggests that toxoplasmosis poses a threat to people with healthy immune systems. Infections are now linked to conditions as wide-ranging as Alzheimer's and brain cancer.

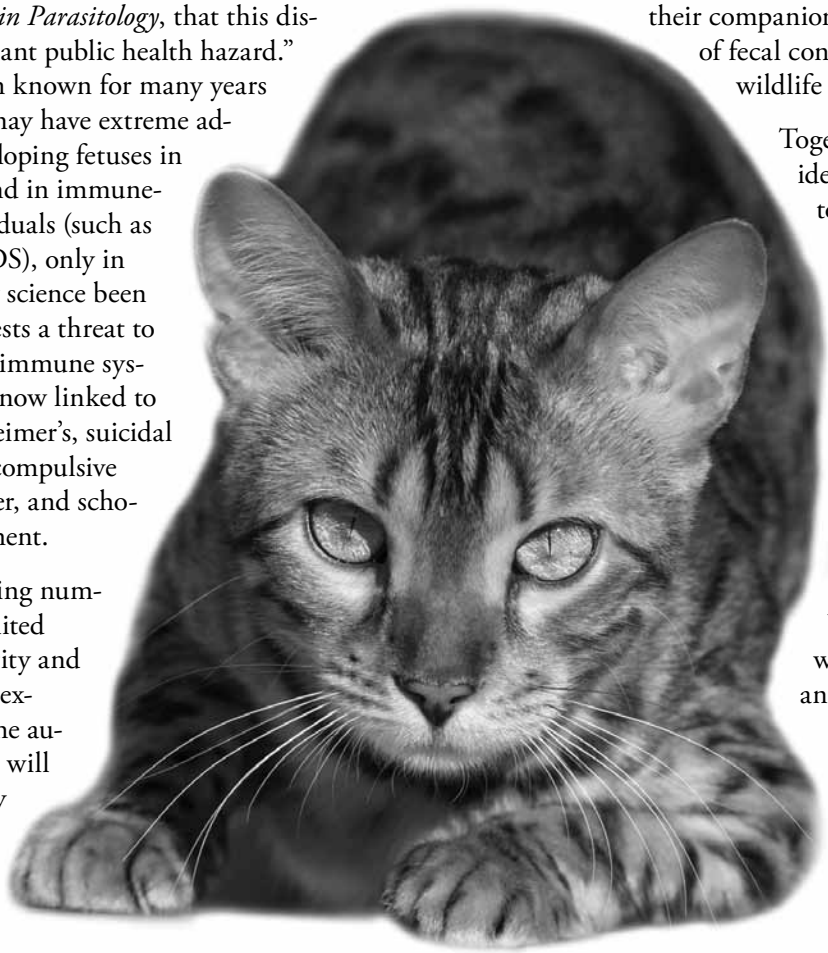
Scientists from the Stanley Medical Research Institute and Johns Hopkins University reviewed the published literature on toxoplasmosis and concluded in their study, published in *Trends in Parasitology*, that this disease poses "a significant public health hazard." Although it has been known for many years that toxoplasmosis may have extreme adverse effects on developing fetuses in pregnant mothers and in immune-compromised individuals (such as those with HIV/AIDS), only in recent years has new science been published that suggests a threat to people with healthy immune systems. Infections are now linked to schizophrenia, Alzheimer's, suicidal behavior, obsessive-compulsive disorder, brain cancer, and scholastic underachievement.

Because of the growing number of cats in the United States and the quantity and longevity of oocysts excreted in cat feces, the authors believe that "it will become progressively more difficult to avoid exposure."

In fact, they suggested that "it should be assumed that the play areas of children, especially sandboxes…[and] gardens to which cats have access are infectious."

Humans are not the only species at risk. Researchers in Wales at the University of Cardiff, Singleton Hospital, and Swansea University assessed the prevalence of toxoplasmosis in Eurasian otters in England and Wales in a study published in *Parasites and Vectors*; the assessment suggested large-scale fecal contamination of freshwater ecosystems. Evidence of a toxoplasmosis infection was identified in 40 percent of otters. Infection in an aquatic mammal like the otter, which primarily feeds on prey that do not carry toxoplasmosis, suggests environmental contamination of freshwater systems with oocysts. The data also suggest that "as populations of humans and their companion animals grow, the impacts of fecal contamination on public and wildlife health are likely to increase."

Together, these new studies identify a substantial risk from toxoplasmosis infection to humans and wildlife and demand greater efforts to combat this disease. Restricting cats from roaming outdoors, where they are more likely to acquire and transmit *Toxoplasma gondii*, is imperative. Not only will this action reduce the spread of disease, it will protect the billions of birds and other wildlife that are killed by cats annually.



Up to 74 percent of all domestic cats will be infected with toxoplasmosis during their lifetime, with each cat spreading the disease through its feces. Photo by stock.xchng

Keep Conservation in the Farm Bill—for the Birds

*By George Fenwick, President, American Bird Conservancy**

The U.S. Farm Bill is a big player when it comes to bird conservation. The story of the Henslow's Sparrow shows how. This species was once relatively common in tallgrass prairie and abandoned pastures, where it sometimes sang all through the night. Now it is rarely heard, due to land use changes that eliminated many of the grasslands the species requires.

Except in Illinois. There, spring counts of Henslow's Sparrow are more than 25 times higher than they were in 1985, thanks to a key portion of the Farm Bill: the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The CRP pays landowners an annual per-acre fee to allow parts of their croplands to lie fallow or to plant vegetative cover such as native bunchgrasses. These plantings provide food and shelter for birds and other wildlife, plus reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and reduce flood damage.

It is not a coincidence that Henslow's Sparrow counts are highest in the Illinois counties with the largest CRP reserve areas. Nor is it an accident that in the Prairie Pothole region of the Upper Midwest, extensive use of this same program has produced a 30 percent increase in waterfowl breeding in the past two decades. In the American West, a Farm Bill program called the Sage-Grouse Initiative has helped more than 700 ranchers improve bird habitat on more than two million acres in 11 states, while also improving the quality of grasses found in pastures grazed by cattle.

These exemplify just a few of the many conservation programs found in the U.S. Farm Bill, which is aimed primarily at private landowners. These programs benefit the broader environment as well as the birds. Many help absorb the costs involved in switching from destructive forms of agriculture to more sustainable ones, such as establishing grassland buffer zones alongside streams and rivers to improve water quality. Such changes have kept 124 million pounds of phosphorous and 623 million pounds of nitrogen out of the nation's waterways.

It's worth noting that demand for many of these programs among landowners often far outstrips supply and available federal funding. Acreage caps for programs are often exhausted within days and sometimes hours; sometimes a third or more of eligible applications go unfunded.

One might think a set of conservation programs that is both wildly popular and successful with private landowners would get lots of support from the U.S. Congress, but no. Last year, spending on Farm Bill conservation programs came to roughly $5 billion. This year, both the House and Senate have substantially reduced the incentives for conservation on our nation's farmlands. Sequestration could make things much worse by reducing Farm Bill conservation programs by $2 billion over the next 10 years, on top of the $3 billion in conservation funding reductions made in the last five years. Finally, it's possible that the House and Senate might not be able to reconcile their divergent versions of the 2013 Farm Bill, which would mean no funding for these programs at all.

Please call your elected officials in the U.S. Congress to keep the conservation programs in the Farm Bill funded. Help Henslow's Sparrows keep singing!

**This piece is derived from an editorial written by George Fenwick and John W. Fitzpatrick of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for the* Washington Post *in August 2013.*

Henslow's Sparrow by Bill Hubick

BRINGING BACK THE BIRDS

Kentucky Warbler by Greg Lavaty

Partners in Flight Meeting Lays Groundwork for the Future of Migratory Bird Conservation

Kentucky Warblers live in multiple worlds: the southeastern United States, where they breed; Central America, where they overwinter; and stopover sites in-between. The species is also, like so many migratory birds, declining in population. Kentucky Warblers have lost about one percent of their population each year since 1980.

Reversing that decline—for this species and dozens of others—was the driving force behind the recent Partners in Flight meeting in Snowbird, Utah. This 5th International Conference and Conservation Workshop (PIF V), held August 25-28, brought together more than 240 conservation professionals representing 120 agencies and organizations, all of which have a role to play in bringing back the birds. Forty-five of the participants, or nearly 20 percent, came from 14 Latin American and Caribbean countries, reflecting the importance of implementing conservation efforts across the species' full life-cycle.

PIF, formed in 1990 in response to growing concern about declines in the populations of many landbird species, is a partnership of federal and state agencies, academic institutions, and private bird conservation organizations across the Americas. PIF's goal: to work together to reverse declines among at-risk bird species and keep common birds common.

In his opening plenary address, PIF National Coordinator Terry Rich of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recapped the history of PIF. He discussed previous efforts to improve the science behind our understanding of the declines of migratory birds and factors limiting their populations. Noting especially the publication by PIF of the *North American Landbird Conservation Plan* (in 2004) and *Saving Our Shared Birds* (in 2010), Rich observed that PIF has been on the right track for a long time. However, many of our migratory birds continue to decline, and we still lack comprehensive strategies for their conservation. We must move to the stage of implementing on-the-ground conservation action before it's too late.

Business Plans for the Birds

PIF V was designed to bring experts together to develop conservation business plans for migratory birds breeding in North America and wintering in the Neotropics. Over three days, breakout groups met to develop these business plans, designing portfolios of conservation projects to overcome the leading threats to priority migratory bird species in eight geographic regions that link wintering and breeding grounds. Importantly, these plans identify not only necessary actions, but also the funding needed to begin the projects.

Special sessions were held to address themes more universal in scope and geography; for example, a discussion on anthropogenic causes of bird mortality looked at threats such as collisions with buildings and predation by cats. Other

topics covered at these sessions—ranging from population modeling and social challenges to international agreements and climate change—provided a chance for attendees to learn from experts and incorporate new thinking into their business plans for each geographic region.

Several other plenary speakers inspired and enlightened conference attendees. Peter Marra of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute emphasized the importance of understanding population status, connectivity, limiting factors throughout the annual cycle, and technological developments that are advancing the science behind migratory bird conservation. Álvaro Umaña, former Minister of the Environment for Costa Rica, demonstrated how his country's aggressive conservation efforts have turned one of the most deforested Latin American nations into one with extensive forests, a model national park system, and a vibrant private conservation movement. Gary Machlis, Science Advisor to the Director of the U.S. National Park Service, discussed the importance and necessity of incorporating the human dimension into conservation efforts.

Bruce Beehler, Director of Bird Conservation at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, charted the foundation's history of support for bird conservation and emphasized the need to tie investments in conservation to measureable results. Finally, George Fenwick, President of ABC, reflected on the characteristics of successful major initiatives and challenged Partners in Flight to be ambitious and aggressive in its work to "bring back the birds."

To inspire and challenge the group, Fenwick pledged $50 million over 10 years from ABC to kick off a major effort to fund the next generation of migratory bird conservation.

What's Next?

PIF V was an important first step in a longer process. The conservation business plans generated at the meeting will need additional work over the coming months to make them ready for implementation. The large number of projects that emerge will need to be fleshed out and funded, and this work will require dedication from all of the partners. Participation in these plans will also need to include the many individuals who were unable to attend PIF V.

ABC was proud to have hosted the conference, but the success of the event was due to the hard work, energy, and careful planning of the Partners in Flight leadership teams in Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Central America. The meeting would not have been possible without the support of the following sponsors: Platinum Level – American Bird Conservancy, Environment Canada, USDA Forest Service International Programs, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Gold Level – Bureau of Land Management and Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Silver Level – National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Sustainable Forestry Initiative; and Bronze Level – Association of Field Ornithologists and Plum Creek.

See **pifv.org** for more information on the program and partners.

Make Bird Conservation Your Legacy

"When we started to discuss estate planning, we realized there would be no more fitting legacy than helping to protect the wonderful diversity of bird life that has given us so much pleasure.

"Every year ABC accomplishes an amazing amount, from purchasing the last remaining habitat for some of the rarest birds to advancing legislation to address widespread threats to our common, everyday birds. We know that money given to ABC will be used effectively and ensure that future generations will also be able to experience the joy of seeing beautiful birds in the wild."

— David Harrison, Legacy Circle Member

David Harrison and Joyce Millen wanted to create a legacy of bird conservation, so they included ABC in their estate plans. You can create your own legacy by naming ABC as a beneficiary of your will, retirement plan, trust, or life insurance policy. It is a simple way to ensure that ABC will remain a champion for native birds and their habitats for generations to come.

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

CDC Study Highlights Growing Role of Cats in Rabies Transmission

Scientists from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and United States Department of Agriculture, along with ABC President George Fenwick, have published a peer-reviewed study about the ongoing threat of rabies posed by feral cats.

The study, published in *Zoonoses and Public Health*, found that cats are consistently the number-one carrier of rabies among domestic animals and, as compared to wildlife, represent a disproportionate risk to people because of their close affiliation with humans. This association has led to a number of mass rabies exposures and accounted for a "substantial proportion" of all post-exposure prophylactic (PEP) rabies vaccine administration to people. One exposure event in New Hampshire in 1994 required 665 people to receive the PEP vaccine and cost over $1 million. While large exposure events are uncommon, small-scale exposures to rabies carried by cats occur frequently. Each year in the United States, more than 25,000 cats are submitted for rabies diagnosis as a result of potential human exposure.

With 60 to 100 million feral cats roaming across the United States, one management tool that has been touted by feral cat advocates is "Trap, Neuter, Release" (TNR). The study found that TNR, even when accompanied by rabies vaccinations, is not an effective method for reducing public health concerns or for controlling feral cat populations. Feral cat trapping rates are insufficient to vaccinate entire colonies of cats, and necessary rabies boosters to maintain immunity are not administered. Group feeding within TNR colonies also increases the likelihood of rabies transmission among cats and between cats and wildlife, which are attracted by easy food and may act as rabies reservoirs.

Each year in the United States, more than 25,000 cats are submitted for rabies diagnosis as a result of potential human exposure.

The study's authors concluded that steps can be taken to reduce the threat of rabies while simultaneously protecting wildlife from predation; reducing the threat of diseases to cats, wildlife, and people; and enhancing overall animal welfare. These recommendations include educating the public about responsible pet ownership (such as the need for vaccinations and to spay or neuter) and restricting cats from roaming freely.

Feral cat colonies are increasing across the country. To manage the growing number of feral cats, the authors stated that TNR "should not be endorsed as an effective approach by itself or as a method for mitigating health concerns related to feral cat colonies." Clearly, science-based management strategies are critical to control feral cat populations and reduce the continuing threat of rabies.

Science Trumps Sentiment in Florida's Pompano Beach

ABC recently sent a report to Pompano Beach, Fla., city commissioners titled "The Science of Feral Cats." This document was intended to educate commissioners as they grappled with a decision on how to appropriately address the city's feral cat population. Spurred on by a national feral cat advocacy group, feral cat caretakers in Pompano Beach called on the city to change its ordinances by adopting a Trap, Neuter, Release-only policy at a July 9 commission meeting.

ABC's document, along with testimony from the city's animal control officers, influenced the commissioners' decision to reject the new ordinance and instead use scientific fact as the basis for effectively managing the city's feral cats.

Access the report online at **http://bit.ly/194gXjB**.

Group feeding within TNR colonies increases the likelihood of rabies transmission among cats and between cats and wildlife, which are attracted by easy food and may act as rabies reservoirs. Photo by stock.xchng

Desert Grassland Revival in Mexico: Brighter Future for Resident and Migrant Birds

This year, for the first time, Worthen's Sparrows—a species found only in the grasslands of northern Mexico—were observed nesting on the Los Gorriones Reserve, established in 2007 by ABC and Mexican conservation organization Pronatura Noreste. Other nests of this species were found nearby.

These observations of Worthen's Sparrow during the breeding season are a good indicator of the success of the habitat restoration work taking place within the El Tokio Grassland Priority Conservation Areas, as identified by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation of North America. The reserve is part of the larger Chihuahuan Desert grassland ecosystem that covers much of northern Mexico.

The reserve—made up of lands purchased by ABC and Pronatura Noreste—was created in part because many birds here are threatened by drought, poor water and livestock management, and ever-expanding agriculture. These threats reduce the amount and quality of habitat available to over-wintering migratory birds such as the Long-billed Curlew, Baird's Sparrow, and Sprague's Pipit, along with residents such as Worthen's Sparrow.

Worthen's Sparrow by Antonio Hidalgo

With support from ABC, the Southern Wings Program of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), and local Mexican investors, Pronatura Noreste is taking an aggressive approach to restoring habitat on the purchased land. Pronatura has developed a working relationship with the neighboring *ejido* (area of communally owned land), El Cercado. Members of the ejido are directly involved with restoration activities at Los Gorriones Reserve, and over 50 people have been employed in the restoration efforts, which include construction of erosion control structures, filling of deep crevices created by years of erosion, and reforestation with native trees such as junipers and pines.

"The results of the restoration activities have been immediate and extremely positive," said Andrew Rothman, Director of ABC's Migratory Bird Program. "The erosion control structures have captured soil and seed that would have previously washed away, and with this year's good rains, we are seeing native vegetation sprouting up. That's good for preventing future erosion and providing important food and cover for bird species."

Pronatura has also provided technical expertise and management recommendations to the community through workshops, leading to improved management of grassland areas on the properties. Pronatura is partnering with Antonio Narro University, the Mexican Bird Museum, Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon, and other groups to conduct biodiversity inventories and monitor success of restoration activities. Transects are now established to monitor migratory birds and their response to the volume of soil conserved, increases in the structure and abundance of vegetation, and maintenance of wetland areas. The biodiversity and vegetation inventories have led to the discovery of a species of cactus that may be new to science.

In addition to this positive news for Worthen's Sparrow, Golden Eagles are being seen more frequently—another good indicator of successful conservation in these desert grasslands.

Los Gorriones Reserve by David Wiedenfeld, ABC

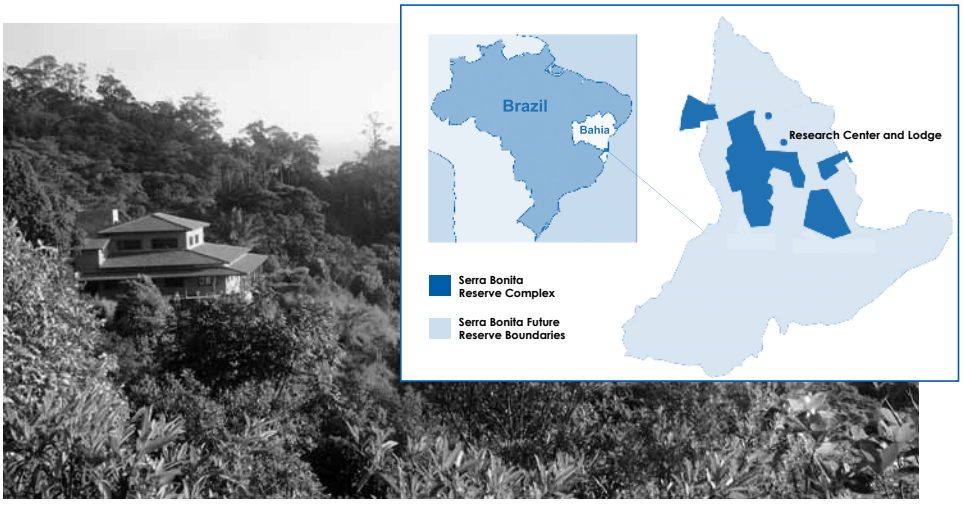
Properties Added to Brazil's Serra Bonita Reserve

ABC, the Rainforest Trust, and Instituto Uiraçu have collaborated to add two new properties to Brazil's Serra Bonita Reserve, expanding protection for six rare birds, the critically endangered yellow-breasted capuchin monkey, and a wide diversity of flora and other fauna. More than 330 bird species are found in the reserve, including birds of conservation concern: the Bahia Tyrannulet, Pink-legged Graveteiro, Plumbeous Antvireo, Salvadori's Antwren, and Buffy-fronted and Temminck's seedeaters.

The reserve is located in the Serra Bonita Mountain Range, one of the last remnants of moist submontane Atlantic rainforest left in southern Bahia state. It protects an important fragment of the historically vast Atlantic Forest, which contains some of the highest levels of biological diversity and endemism in the Western Hemisphere. Unfortunately, the Atlantic Forest has lost more than 93 percent of its original cover—most of that in the last 50 years—and the devastation continues at an alarming rate.

The new properties, totaling about 250 acres, are part of the larger Serra Bonita Reserve (SBR) Complex, a conservation initiative that comprises privately owned properties totaling about 4,446 acres. In 2004, 2,964 acres of the area were converted into four private natural heritage reserves (see map). The SBR is the second-largest area of private reserves in the Atlantic Forest Biodiversity Corridor and is seen as a pioneering initiative in the protection of the region's submontane forest.

"This project adds irreplaceable acreage to a high-priority conservation area," said David Younkman, Vice President for Conservation at ABC. "With less than 10 percent of the Atlantic Forest remaining, we cannot afford to lose any more of this land and its precious diversity of life. The collaboration among ABC, the Rainforest Trust, and Instituto Uiraçu shows how, by working together, groups can make a lasting difference in the race to save rare habitats."



The research center and lodge at Serra Bonita has six labs, eight apartments, two collection rooms, a scientific library, and an auditorium with capacity for up to 60 people. Photo by John Tschirky

The reserve protects an important fragment of the historically vast Atlantic Forest, which contains some of the highest levels of biological diversity and endemism in the Western Hemisphere.

Salvadori's Antwren by Ciro Albano, NE Brazil Birding

Pink-legged Graveteiro by Ciro Albano, NE Brazil Birding

The Serra Bonita research station and lodge provides high-quality accommodation to researchers, ecotourists, and birdwatchers. All income generated goes toward maintenance and further conservation at the reserve.

If interested in visiting Serra Bonita, contact Clemira Souza at clemirasouza@gmail.com.

Study of Endangered Hawaiian Petrel Shows Rapid Change in Oceanic Food Web

A dramatic and unprecedented shift in the endangered Hawaiian Petrel's foraging habits is likely linked to industrial-scale fishing in the Pacific Ocean, according to a study by scientists from Michigan State University, the Smithsonian Institution, and eight other organizations.

The Hawaiian Petrel—a crow-sized seabird that ranges widely over the northeastern Pacific Ocean—now numbers only about 15,000 birds distributed in isolated breeding colonies on Kaua'i, Lana'i, Maui, and Hawai'i Island. The birds spend most of their time at sea and return to land only to breed.

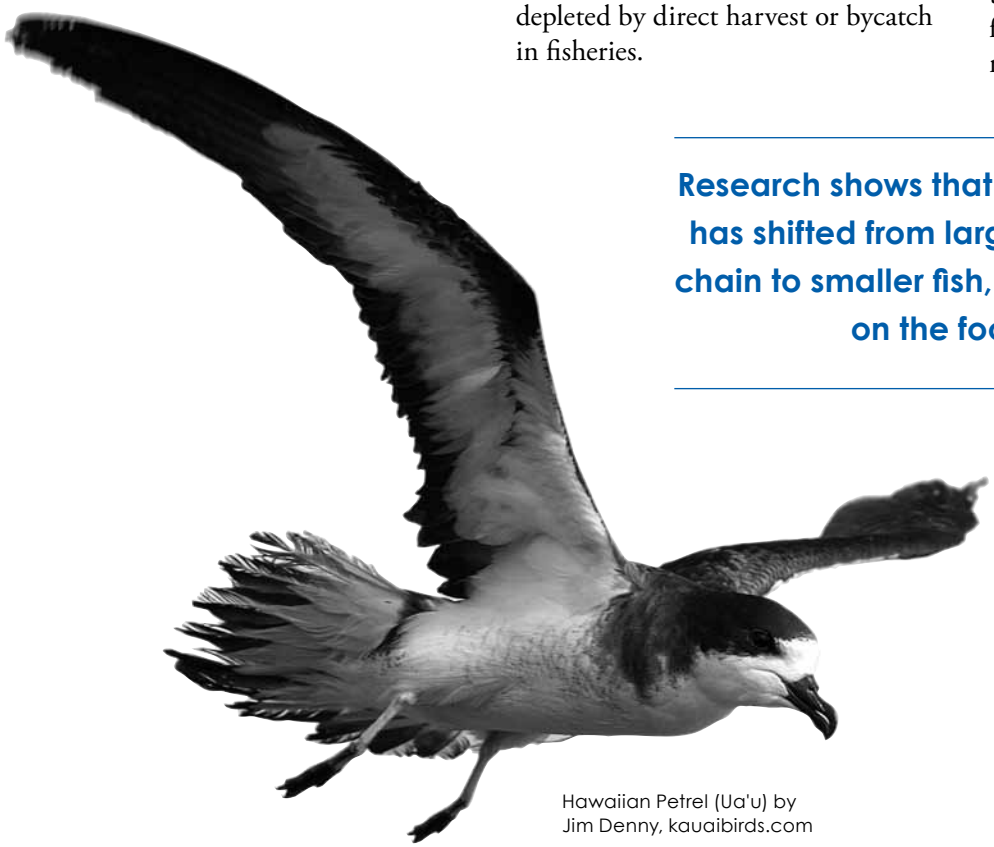
The research, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, examined the chemistry of feathers and bones of modern Hawaiian Petrels and compared them to bones from fossils as old as 4,000 years, seeking to determine where on the food chain and where in the Pacific Ocean the birds had been foraging—and how that may have changed over time. In samples that predated industrial-scale fishing, scientists found higher nitrogen isotope ratios, indicating a diet of relatively large prey high on the food chain. Samples from the era of industrial-scale fishing had lower nitrogen isotope ratios, revealing a dietary shift to smaller fish, squid, and other prey lower on the food chain overall.

What's behind the shift? Many seabirds such as the Hawaiian Petrel forage in association with schools of large predatory fish, such as tuna and billfish, which drive prey to the ocean surface. Depleted numbers of these schools may reduce the availability of prey for the petrel. It is also possible that prey species have been depleted by direct harvest or bycatch in fisheries.

Earlier studies have shown that the combined effects of habitat loss and overharvesting of marine life have caused the regional loss of entire ecosystems. The Hawaiian Petrel and other seabirds at the top of the food chain seem to be reflecting changes happening throughout their oceanic ecosystems.

"This groundbreaking study highlights the need for further research to explore the conservation implications of this shift for the Hawaiian Petrel, other seabirds, and the marine food webs that support them," said George Wallace, Vice President for Oceans and Islands at ABC. "The study not only illustrates how the marine food web has changed over time, indirectly documenting the decline in large predatory fish. It also may suggest—rather encouragingly—that Hawaiian Petrels have been able to adapt to these changing conditions. Dietary flexibility in the petrel could be good news for this threatened species."

Research shows that the diet of Hawaiian Petrels has shifted from larger prey higher on the food chain to smaller fish, squid, and other prey lower on the food chain overall.



Hawaiian Petrel (Ua'u) by Jim Denny, kauaibirds.com

Development Could Drive Unique Thrasher to Extinction on St. Lucia

White-breasted Thrasher
by Mikko Pyhälä

In a story that has been repeated many times throughout the Caribbean, an endangered bird species now faces a grim future due to potential tourism development. The White-breasted Thrasher—a species more closely related to the Gray Catbird than any thrasher—lives only in fragments of dry coastal forest on St. Lucia and Martinique. Its range on St. Lucia is currently restricted to two areas along the eastern coast. Recent estimates put the global population at only around 1,900 birds, and it is classified as endangered by the IUCN.

Research from the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and Tufts University shows that most of the species' population lies within an area where a large tourism development is proposed. The Le Paradis property, owned by the DCG development group, is slated to include condominiums, private residences, a central plaza, and a golf course. Development of this project actually began over four years ago, when large swaths of dry forest were cleared for the proposed golf course over protest from ABC.

However, due to the economic crisis in 2008, the project was halted, leaving half-finished structures on the cleared lands. With the recent turnaround of the global economy, new investors are looking at the property for possible purchase and further development. While DCG had ensured that part of the property would be kept as a reserve and that native plants would be used in landscaping, any new investor may have different ideas. The current remaining forest fragments, which now harbor White-breasted Thrashers, could soon become fairways and housing.

ABC recently supported predator control and nest monitoring efforts that confirmed the existence of more than 150 White-breasted Thrasher nests on and directly around the Le Paradis property. Some nests were as close as 150 feet to one another.

"These birds are surviving in tiny fragments of dry forest," said Katherine (Kate) Freeman of Villanova University, who conducted the survey. "If we lose the remaining habitat on this property, the White-breasted Thrasher population will likely crash." Freeman also found evidence that cats, mongooses, and rats are now on the property in areas that have been disturbed. "We captured and removed one cat, and we saw an immediate increase in thrasher activity," she added.

Between encroaching predators and encroaching investors, the White-breasted Thrasher is feeling the squeeze, and only a concerted effort will prevent its extinction. ABC is now working with Durrell, the St. Lucia Department of Forestry, and other groups to create an emergency conservation action strategy before it is too late for this rare bird.

Learn more about the White-breasted Thrasher in an ABC blog post by Kate Freeman: **http://bit.ly/1btOjcs**.

ABC's Andrew Rothman holding a White-breasted Thrasher. Photo by Jennifer Mortensen

Property in Guatemala Added to Migratory Bird Network

With help from ABC, the Guatemalan organization FUNDAECO has purchased a 1,670-acre property to protect migratory birds. The property, now called the Manabique Wildlife Refuge, is located on the Manabique Peninsula, which juts out into the Bay of Honduras in the Caribbean. This area is an important stopover site for migratory birds that follow the coastline of the Yucatán Peninsula to Central America and beyond.

The property contains a wide variety of habitats—mangroves, riparian-mangrove transition forests, and lowland rainforest—and as a result attracts a wide variety of migratory birds. Least and Sandwich terns, Red Knot, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Kentucky and Magnolia warblers, and Baltimore Oriole are just a few of the bird species that can be found here during migration.

The location of the site is a strategic one for conservation. The peninsula, like many locations throughout Latin America, is threatened by habitat loss due to expanding cattle ranching and agriculture.

"We hope this acquisition will lead to securing the entire peninsula from additional development," said Marco Cerezo, Executive Director of FUNDAECO. Andrew Rothman, ABC's Migratory Bird Program Director, adds, "When you have a location where Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Red Knot, Wood Thrush, Prothonotary Warbler, and Summer Tanager are all in the same place, you know it's important for birds—a place that ABC feels is important enough to invest in."

AFWA's Southern Wings Program, which provides state support for migratory bird conservation on wintering grounds, contributed to the acquisition. Deb Hahn of AFWA notes, "U.S. state wildlife agencies know they need to invest in full life-cycle conservation for migratory birds. The refuge helps protect wintering areas for birds that are a conservation priority for many state wildlife agencies."

FUNDAECO is now working toward having the reserve designated as a national protected area. Support for management of the property, including security personnel, equipment, and infrastructure, is still needed.

For more information, contact Andrew Rothman at arothman@abcbirds.org or Karen Aguilar at FUNDAECO, k.aguilar@fundaeco.org.gt.

New Reserve Created in Costa Rica for Yellow-billed Cotinga

ABC and partner group Osa Conservation have secured a 29.1-acre property on Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula that will help protect the endangered Yellow-billed Cotinga. This property, now known as the Yellow-billed Cotinga Sanctuary, is located near the town of Rincón on the eastern side of the peninsula.

While the new sanctuary is fairly small in size, it is big in terms of significance. A study of the Yellow-billed Cotinga by Osa Conservation, conducted in 2011 and 2012 with support from ABC, identified the Rincón area as one of four key areas for the species in the Osa. The study also identified the need for connectivity between mangroves and forests, both used by the cotinga. The location of the new sanctuary will help provide safe passage as Yellow-billed Cotingas move from nesting grounds in the mangroves to feeding grounds in the rainforests.

Yellow-billled Cotinga by Glenn Bartley

The sanctuary is close to a main road, which allows for easy access by birders to one of the best places in the world to see this rare bird. It is also an important wintering location for migratory birds such as the Prothonotary Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, and Yellow-throated Vireo.

A management plan is being drafted for the sanctuary, and reforestation of former cattle pastures is already underway, supported in part by Southern Wings and its contributing partners. This work is part of a larger effort by ABC and Osa Conservation to conserve the Yellow-billed Cotinga throughout the Osa Peninsula.

Minnesota and Oakland Adopt Bird-Friendly Building Requirements

Adoption Follows Trend in San Francisco and Other Locations

The state of Minnesota and the city of Oakland, Calif. are the latest in a series of jurisdictions to institute bird-friendly building design requirements. Oakland has set standards similar to those established in neighboring San Francisco in 2011, while Minnesota followed guidelines set by bird collision experts affiliated with the national Leadership in Engineering and Environmental Design (LEED) program.

Christine Sheppard, Bird Collisions Campaign Manager at ABC, says there is a trend developing here. "There is a growing awareness of and alarm about the very significant bird mortality that is occurring across the United States as a result of bird collisions with buildings," she said. "Studies suggest that as many as one billion birds die from such collisions each year. What we're seeing now is evidence that increasing numbers of governments, architects, and developers are trying to help solve this problem by adding 'bird-friendliness' to the mainstream list of green methods, next to things like energy efficiency and water conservation."

Minnesota has incorporated bird-safe standards into their general building sustainability standards for any state-funded construction—the first U.S. state to do so. These guidelines specifically require collision deterrent facades and incorporating "Lights Out" concepts during migration.

The city of Oakland's Bird Safety Measures have now become part of the building permit process. These measures apply to all construction projects that include glass as part of the building's exterior and where proposed projects meet any one of several criteria, such as proximity to a substantial body of water or inclusion of extensive vegetation, a green roof, or green wall areas.

Oakland's measures require that a plan to reduce potential bird collisions to the maximum feasible extent be developed by each project builder and approved by the city. Plans must include a series of mandatory measures known to help prevent bird strikes, such as avoiding using mirrors in landscape design; placing bird attractants away from glass; and using minimum-intensity white strobe lighting with three-second flash instead of solid red or rotating lights, which attract birds.

Notably, the measures require bird-friendly glazing treatments be applied to no less than 90 percent of all windows and glass between ground level and 60 feet above ground. The measures describe eight different examples of glazing treatments, all of which serve to increase visibility of the glass to birds.

Oakland's Bird Safety Measures also call for a reduction in light pollution that can attract night-flying migrants into the built environment. Lighting reductions during migration seasons, use of automatic light timers, and steps to reduce light emitted from building interiors are just a few examples.

Beyond these important state and local improvements, Illinois Congressman Mike Quigley wants to improve the bird-friendliness of federal government buildings. He has recommended that the General Services Administration require architects to use bird-safe building materials and design features in any future new construction, to the maximum extent possible.

The glass panels comprising the exterior of the Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland, Calif. include patterns made of ceramic dots, or "frit." The patterns contribute to the building's extensive use of natural light in its interior, while also making it safe for birds. Photo by CTG/SF, flickr.com

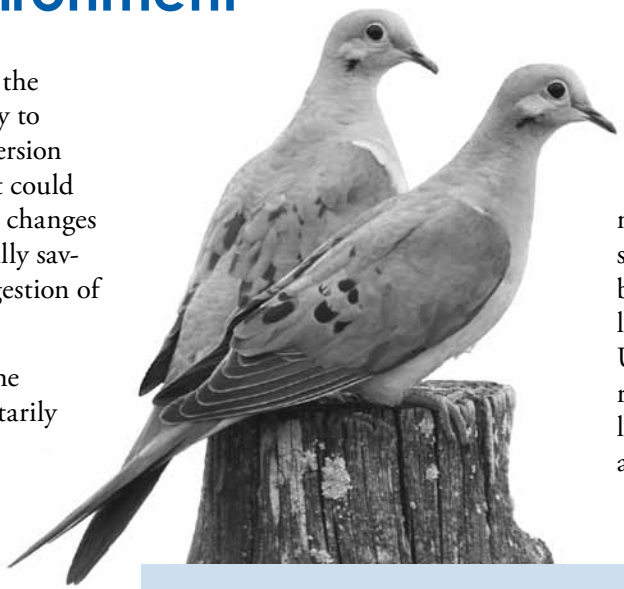
U.S. Military Taking a Shot at Removing Lead from the Environment

The recent decision by the United States military to move to a non-lead version of their 7.62 millimeter bullet could prompt widespread voluntary changes in hunting practices, potentially saving millions of birds from ingestion of spent lead ammunition.

ABC has been encouraging the hunting community to voluntarily switch from traditional lead-based ammunition to non-lead alternatives based on hundreds of peer-reviewed studies showing that millions of birds are poisoned every year following ingestion of either shotgun pellets mistaken for grit or seeds, or lead particles left in gut piles following hunts. Among the birds most impacted are Bald Eagles, hawks, vultures, California Condors, and Mourning Doves.

The military's decision may eventually blunt the most common concern about non-lead ammunition: the relatively higher cost.

"The quantities of ammo required by the military will no doubt require that producers acquire the new equipment to not only produce non-lead ammo, but also produce it in large quantities, possibly at lower costs," said George Fenwick, President of ABC. "This is a game-changer because it shows the ammunition manufacturing industry that the non-lead market is increasing."



The switch to non-lead 7.62 millimeter bullets follows another military ammunition switch in 2010, which converted the 5.56 millimeter to a non-lead bullet. The switch to the 5.56 millimeter non-lead bullet eliminated nearly 2,000 tons of lead from the environment per year. Use of the new non-lead round could result in an additional 4,000 tons of lead being eliminated annually from ammunition production.

Lead Makes Dove Hunting Doubly Lethal

September 1 marked the start of fall hunting seasons and the beginning of dove season across much of the United States. In an attempt to reduce the amount of lead poisoning in doves and other ground-feeding songbirds, ABC President George Fenwick has joined many community leaders in asking hunters to consider stocking up on non-lead shot.

Concern about the toxic effects of spent lead shot is greatest for doves because dove hunters deposit enormous quantities of lead shot on relatively small areas. Data from the Missouri Department of Conservation show that on one public hunting area near Kansas City, 1,425 hunters reported firing almost 40,000 rounds of shotgun ammunition on and around 185 acres of managed sunflower and wheat fields, resulting in the deposition of approximately 2,500 pounds of lead on the entire area.

During 2011, dove hunters killed 14.5 million doves nationwide, using approximately five shots per bird on average. Assuming all hunters were using 12-gauge shotguns and one-ounce small game loads with #8 shot, this amounts to almost 30 billion lead pellets, or roughly 4.5 million tons of lead, scattered around managed fields designed to attract feeding birds.

Experimental evidence from captive Mourning Doves showed that virtually all doves that ate lead pellets eventually died due to the direct or indirect effects of lead poisoning. Studies suggest that 8.8 to 15 million Mourning Doves may die from lead poisoning each year—roughly the same number of doves legally harvested.

Mourning Doves by Gary Smyle

Legislation Threatens Habitat for Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet

The expiration of a federal support program for rural counties in Oregon has legislators scrambling to renew the program during a severe budget crunch and to seek more timber extraction to make up for the expected funding shortfall. Conservation groups, however, say the effort could have dangerous consequences for threatened Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet populations that depend on mature and old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest.

The legislative process is already underway and moving quickly. In September, the U.S. House approved H.R. 1526, a bill that mandates a major increase in logging in the national forests to pay for county services. Representative Peter DeFazio of Oregon, who is now ranking minority member on the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, advanced his controversial proposal to divide federal forest lands in Oregon into logging lands and conservation lands by attaching his bill to the proposed legislation, which is opposed by a wide range of conservation groups.

Meanwhile, Oregon Senator Ron Wyden, who chairs the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, is developing legislation that seeks to alter the Northern Spotted Owl's protected reserves, which were created by scientists as part of the Northwest Forest Plan. The redesigned reserves would increase the amount of land available for logging by reducing the amount of land set aside to protect clean water and endangered wildlife.

How You Can Help

- Encourage your U.S. senator to vote against H.R. 1526.
- Tell Senator Wyden you oppose his plan: **wyden.senate.gov/contact**
- Visit ABC's action page: **abcbirds.org/action**

Spotted Owl by Chris Warren

Studies Show Protected Areas Needed to Conserve Greater Sage-Grouse

A new report by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and other peer-reviewed research indicate that conserving the Greater Sage-Grouse will require both protecting large areas of habitat and making significant changes in land management to reverse population declines of this wide-ranging species. Federal agencies are currently engaged in an unprecedented planning process across the American West to conserve and restore this impressive gamebird, the largest grouse in North America.

A study by Copeland et al. (2013) assessing the Wyoming "core area" conservation strategy, which some Bureau of Land Management (BLM) plans have also adopted, predicted that recommended conservation measures will reduce the rate of sage-grouse decline, but will not stabilize grouse numbers or provide for the species' recovery. Another study by Knick et al. (2013) concluded that sage-grouse appear to need greater protection than that provided by the Wyoming core area strategy, the current conservation plan that is being proposed.

ABC and partners have expressed support for a National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy and have offered recommendations to ensure its success in a letter to Secretary Jewell of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

In addition, ABC and partners submitted a conservation alternative in the early stages of planning. ABC remains concerned that BLM has not fully analyzed this alternative.

According to Steve Holmer, Senior Policy Advisor at ABC: "Of all the alternatives considered so far, this conservation alternative represents the best opportunity to conserve sage-grouse. It remains to be seen how federal planners ensure that large expanses of intact sagebrush habitat will be protected to secure and recover sage-grouse populations, as the USGS report advises."

View the letter to U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Jewell at: **http://bit.ly/14KQLHa**.

See the conservation alternative submitted by ABC and partners: **http://bit.ly/KdDwD8**.

Safe Rodent Control Coalition Offers Better Alternatives

Red-tailed Hawk by Greg Homel, Natural Elements Productions

In the wake of last January's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decision to pursue a ban on d-CON rodenticides, ABC and other nonprofits, municipalities, businesses, and scientists have joined together to form the Safe Rodent Control Coalition (saferodentcontrol.org) to promote effective and affordable rodent-control strategies.

The coalition website offers a menu of practical solutions to rodent problems—from sealing cracks and eliminating food sources, to providing owl boxes in support of raptor predation and using snap and zap traps.

The launch of this website coincides with a decision by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation to designate second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides as California-restricted materials. The proposed rules would allow only certified pesticide applicators to use these extraordinarily toxic poisons—a more stringent restriction than that delineated by EPA. To better protect raptors, pets, and children, the coalition is urging California to limit use even further, allowing use of these rodenticides only as a last resort and only in public health emergencies or for limited conservation purposes. With these additional conditions, the California state regulations could become a model for the rest of the world.

Californians are already leading the national effort to get rid of these poisons. Sixteen cities and counties in California have called on local stores to voluntarily remove d-CON from their shelves. The city of San Francisco launched a "Don't Take the Bait" campaign to encourage merchants to voluntarily discontinue selling the most harmful rodent baits.

Second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides interfere with blood clotting, resulting in uncontrollable bleeding that leads to death. Brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difethialone, and difenacoum are persistent and slow acting; when eaten over several days by rats and mice, these poisons accumulate in flesh at many times the lethal dose. Predators and scavengers that feed on the poisoned rodents can also sicken and die.

The coalition promotes safe and effective alternatives to super-toxic rat poisons.

San Joaquin kit fox by FWS

The resulting harm to wildlife is widespread. Researchers at the University of California found second-generation anticoagulants in 70 percent of the mammals and 68 percent of the birds they examined. Wildlife officials have documented poisonings of eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls, in addition to mountain lions, bobcats, and endangered kit foxes. These rat poisons are also responsible for over 10,000 childhood exposures and over 100 deaths of pet dogs and cats each year.

Following years of meticulous evaluation and research, the EPA and the state of California are trying to outlaw these poison pellets to protect children and animals. Every other rat-poison manufacturer has complied, but Reckitt Benckiser, the maker of d-CON rat poison, continues to fight safeguards that would reduce unnecessary poisonings of children, pets, and wildlife. The company has formally appealed the EPA decision that would limit consumer uses of d-CON and require tamper-resistant packaging.

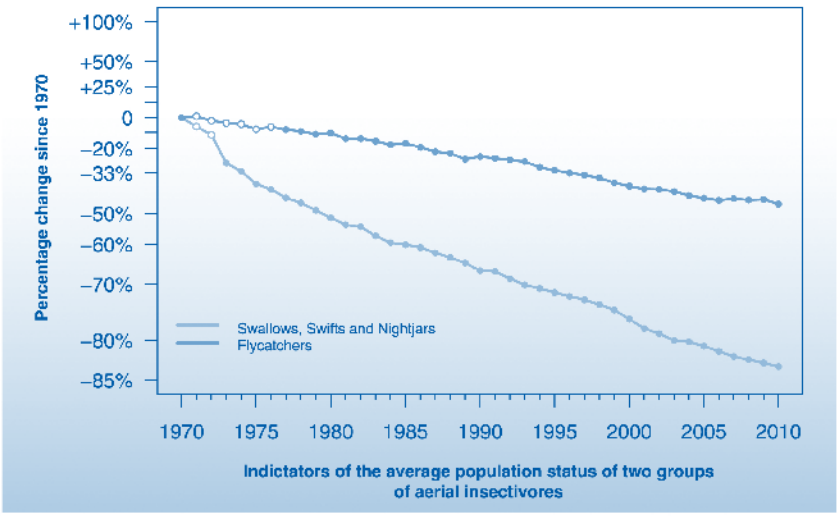
"The d-CON company continues to profit from products that poison our nation's kids, pets, owls, and eagles," said Cynthia Palmer, ABC's Pesticide Program Manager. "d-CON's decision to fight the ban shows us the depths of greed in this $37-billion multinational conglomerate."

Earthjustice will represent ABC, Defenders of Wildlife, Center for Biological Diversity, and Sierra Club as intervenor on behalf of the EPA in proceedings before the EPA Administrative Law Judge. These organizations are seeking to get these poisons off the market as quickly as possible.

No More Nighthawks? Aerial Insectivores Showing Steep Declines

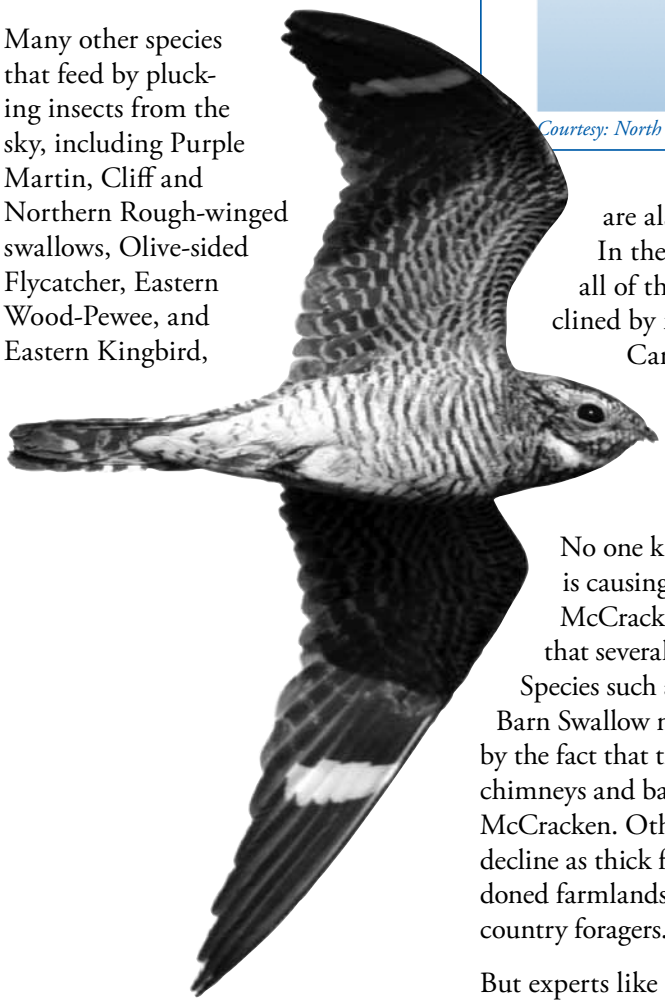
Aerial insectivores—birds that feed on flying insects—are showing steep declines in the United States and Canada, according to data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey and other population estimates. Experts say the sharpest downturns have been taking place in northeastern North America, where population estimates of Barn Swallow, Bank Swallow, Chimney Swift, and Common Nighthawk are down by more than 70 percent since the mid-1970s.

Population Trends of Aerial Insectivores in NE North America



Courtesy: North American Bird Conservation Initiative Canada

Many other species that feed by plucking insects from the sky, including Purple Martin, Cliff and Northern Rough-winged swallows, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and Eastern Kingbird, are also declining sharply. In the last two decades, all of these birds have declined by more than half in Canada, according to Jon McCracken, Director of National Programs at Bird Studies Canada.



No one knows exactly what is causing these declines, but McCracken says it is probable that several changes are involved. Species such as Chimney Swift and Barn Swallow may have been affected by the fact that there are fewer open chimneys and barns to nest in, notes McCracken. Other species may also decline as thick forests fill the abandoned farmlands often used by open-country foragers.

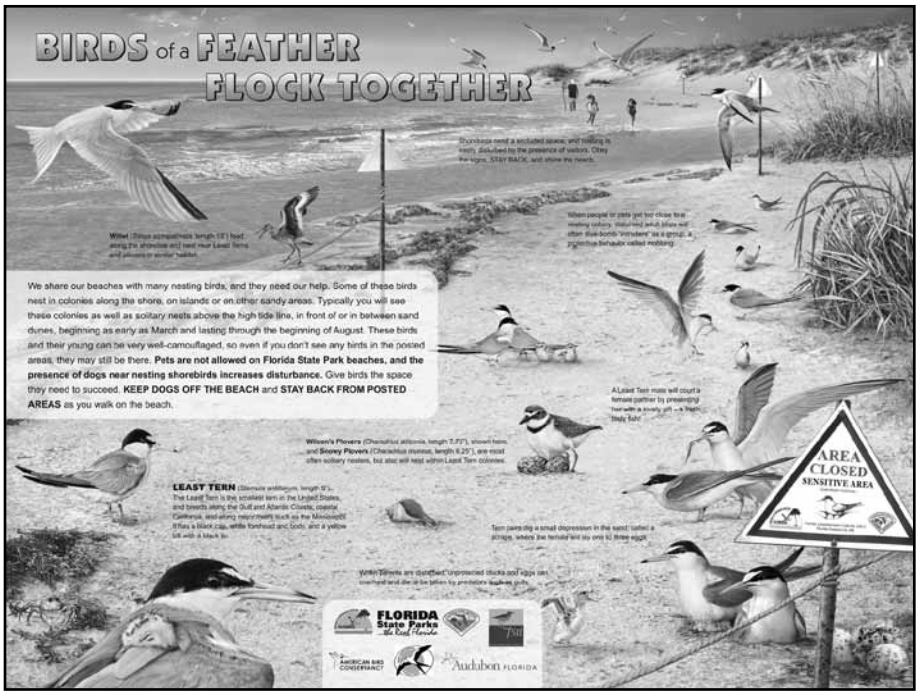
But experts like McCracken say it is likely that the leading cause of these declines will be found up in the sky, which he calls an "ecosphere of what is essentially 'aerial plankton'... flying in the airspace above us." Scientists do not know much about the status of flying insects found over North America, but it has long been known that bird populations respond when the status of this "plankton" changes.

"It's not unreasonable to suspect that aerial insectivores are declining, at least in part, as a result of a change in the abundance of their food supply," wrote McCracken in Connecticut Audubon's *State of the Birds 2013*. If this is what is happening—and that has not been proven—McCracken and many of his colleagues say the next step will be finding out why. Climate change could be affecting both the emergence of insects that some aerial insectivores rely on, as well as the timing of these emergences. The widespread use of pesticides on farms could be doing damage as well.

Population estimates of Common Nighthawks are down by more than 70 percent since the mid-1970s. Photo by Greg Lavaty, texastargetbirds.com

Beach-Nesting Birds Benefiting from Gulf Partnership

2013 was the second year of ABC's Beach-nesting Bird Conservation Program in the Gulf of Mexico. ABC worked with more than 20 partners at 35 locations in three states—Florida, Louisiana, and Texas—to protect beach-nesting sites for solitary and colonially nesting birds such as the Wilson's Plover and Least Tern. The long-term conservation goal is to maintain or increase the nesting success of these imperiled birds.



Signs such as this one at Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park in Florida help alert visitors to the presence of beach-nesting birds.

Coastal-nesting birds are facing both regional and range-wide population declines as a result of degraded and dwindling habitat lost to development and human disturbance. This disturbance comes in many forms: unaware (or uncaring) beachgoers, boaters, and recreationists who wander into nesting areas; unleashed pets, especially dogs, which can destroy nests and kill young birds within minutes; and off-road vehicles that run over young birds, which sometimes congregate in tire tracks.

"When nesting birds are disturbed by humans, they will typically flush off their nests, leaving eggs and young vulnerable to the hot sun and predators such as gulls, cats, or coyotes," said Kacy Ray, ABC's Beach-nesting Bird Conservation Officer. "Minimizing human disturbance at important nesting sites is a critical component of our program and increases the chances of successful breeding for beach- and island-nesting birds."


Snowy Plover on nest by Kacy Ray, ABC

ABC and its partners' "Fish, Swim, and Play from 50 Yards Away" public service announcements aim to reduce disturbance at nesting areas. ABC interns and volunteers also conduct in-person public outreach at marinas, boat ramps, parks, and beaches in both Louisiana and Texas. Signs and fencing that alert visitors to the presence of birds and monitoring of breeding success are among other ongoing efforts to bring back the populations of imperiled beach-nesting birds.

"At the core of our program are protection, monitoring, and outreach projects run by interns and coastal bird technicians under the direction of ABC and local partners," added Ray. In 2014, interns and technicians worked in dozens of locations, from Ft. DeSoto Park in Florida to Bolivar Flats in Texas, to conserve Black Skimmers, Least Terns, Wilson's and Snowy plovers, American Oystercatchers, and other species.

BIRDS IN BRIEF

Migrating Red Knots Receive Additional Protection

The government of France has made it easier for Red Knots to migrate over the French West Indies (Guadeloupe and Martinique) without being shot by hunters. Anthony Levesque, a wildlife consultant for the Guadeloupe National Hunting and Wildlife Agency, reports that the French Ministry of Environment has signed a "Décret Ministériel" specifying that if a hunter kills a Red Knot, he or she faces a maximum penalty of six months in prison, a fine of up to 15,000 euros, and confiscation of his or her gun.

This action follows concerns raised by conservation groups, including the Center for Conservation Biology, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, and ABC, after two migrating Whimbrels that were part of a satellite tracking project were shot in the West Indies in 2011. Migrating shorebirds are often killed by sport hunters at gun clubs on these islands. This latest action by the French government is encouraging evidence that efforts to regulate shorebird hunting in the French West Indies are beginning to take effect.

2014 Appropriations Bill Attempts to Slash Conservation Programs

Before leaving for the August recess, the U.S. House of Representatives attempted to move a bill that would drastically reduce funding for the agencies that have been tasked with protecting our birds and other wildlife, as well as air and water quality and public lands.

The pending bill would cut funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Red Knot by Eleanor Briccetti

(FWS) 27 percent below this year's levels. Several essential bird conservation grant programs would be completely eliminated, including the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) Grants Program, North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

In response, ABC has worked with Congresswoman Betty McCollum's (D-MN) office on an amendment to restore funding for NMBCA to the President's FY 2014 request level. Rep. McCollum also offered amendments to restore funding for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants and the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, while Congressmen Jose Serrano (D-NY) and David Price (D-NC) offered an amendment to restore funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The House recessed before it was able to vote on the bill, and due to its many controversial provisions, it is unlikely to be reconsidered. The Senate bill does not include the drastic cuts seen in the House bill and instead mirrors the President's FY 2014 funding request, which maintains current or close to current funding levels for most programs.

Help Save America's Pollinators: Ask EPA to Say No to Neonics

ABC and a coalition of wildlife organizations, beekeepers, and agricultural practitioners are calling on the public to support H.R. 2692, the Save America's Pollinators Act of 2013. Neonicotinoid insecticides, or neonics, are causing serious harm to birds, bees, and aquatic life.

Passage of the Save America's Pollinators Act, sponsored by Reps. John Conyers Jr. (D-MI) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), would require EPA to suspend the registration of neonicotinoid insecticides pending thorough review and field study of the adverse effects on birds, bats, bees, and other beneficial organisms. The bill would also require EPA to coordinate with the Department of the Interior in monitoring the long-term viability of native bees and other pollinators.

Earlier this year, ABC and partners released a toxicological assessment, *The Impact of the Nation's Most Widely Used Insecticides on Birds*, which concluded that a single neonic-coated seed is enough to kill a songbird. The report called on EPA to remove these insecticides from the market.

While EPA now requires labeling of some products containing neonics, no action to remove the pesticides from the market has yet been taken. EPA plans to make this decision sometime within the next five years; meanwhile, the European Union has issued a two-year ban on neonics that will take effect on December 1, 2013.

Ask Congress to pass the Save America's Pollinators Act. See: **abcbirds.org/action**.

View ABC's report on the impact of neonics at: **http://bit.ly/XnBQMo**.

FWS/Northeast

Climate Change, Deforestation Driving Increased Parasitism of Nestlings

A recent report shows that increases in precipitation and changes in vegetative structure in Argentine forests—factors driven by climate change and deforestation in the region—are leading to increased parasitism of nestlings by botfly larvae.

The report appeared in the online edition of PLOS ONE and was prepared by the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Disease Ecology Laboratory of Instituto de Ciencias Veterinarias del Litoral, Argentina.

Great Kiskadee by Owen Deutsch

In the study, scientists found that slight changes in precipitation and vegetation structure resulted in large increases in the number of parasites per chick and led to higher death rates of these chicks. The highest prevalence of parasitism was observed in the Great Kiskadee, Greater Thornbird, and Lesser Thornbird.

The investigation also showed evidence that fragmentation of forests results in overcrowding of broods. The authors believe that expected increases in precipitation and temperature from climate change, along with continued deforestation, are reasons for further concern.

Study Shows Healthy Environment Key to Economy of Gulf Coast

The coastal environment of the Gulf of Mexico supports a $19 billion annual wildlife tourism industry that is highly dependent on critical investments in coastal environmental restoration, according to a newly released study funded by the Environmental Defense Fund with support from the Walton Family Foundation.

The study notes that this area's ecosystems are in peril due to natural events but also because "…human activities have altered the natural hydrology and halted natural processes, leading to severe land loss and a decrease in the health of the region's estuaries." Estimates show that since 1932, about 1,900 square miles of Gulf Coast land have been lost through a combination of natural and human-caused circumstances. Such losses, combined with a decrease in the region's water quality, threaten wildlife and habitats as well as the tourism activities they make possible.

Substantial funding for habitat and wildlife restoration is now flowing to state agencies and groups working in the region through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), stemming from Deepwater Horizon oil spill reparations along with RESTORE Act and early Natural Resource Damage Funding. Projects supported by NFWF include ABC's

Black Skimmer by Tom Grey

Beach-nesting Bird Conservation Program that works to create safe nesting habitat for birds such as Least Terns and Black Skimmers at key colony sites.

About $6.5 billion is spent in the region in connection with bird and other wildlife watching, and about $5 billion on hunting tourism. The study also found that tourism jobs can account for 20 to 36 percent of all private jobs in coastal counties and parishes that are particularly dependent on wildlife-related activities. All forms of tourism generate 2.6 million jobs in the Gulf states, nearly five times the number of jobs provided by the region's other three largest resource-based industries: commercial fishing, oil and gas, and shipping.

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.**

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Gold-ringed Tanager by Fundación ProAves

Rare Birds Need Your Help!

As you'll discover in this newsletter, ABC and our partners are making exciting gains in expanding the Latin American Bird Reserve Network. But right now we have urgent land protection needs throughout the network, and **we need your help to protect more rare birds.** Your extra gift today will help us with acquisitions for the:

- Critically endangered Stresemann's Bristlefront in the Atlantic Forest of Brazil, where ABC and our partner Biodiversitas are working to acquire additional properties.
- Gold-ringed Tanager in Colombia, where ABC is working with our partner Fundación ProAves to protect vital habitat at the Tanagers Reserve, one of the few strongholds for this rare and striking species.
- Endangered El Oro Parakeet and El Oro Tapaculo at the Buenaventura Reserve in the Andes of southern Ecuador, where ABC is working with Fundación Jocotoco on the addition of 400 acres of pristine tropical rainforest.

Your contribution to ABC will help protect these rare birds and their habitats. **Please, donate today using the enclosed envelope or online at abcbirds.org.** Thank you for your support.

Atlantic Forest by Mike Parr