

Bird Calls

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Andean Condor by
Eric Isselee, Shutterstock

Land Purchase in Ecuador Protects Half of Ecuador's Andean Condors

Andean Condors—soaring birds with wingspans of more than 10 feet—are among the biggest beneficiaries of a 7,000-acre land purchase in the Andes mountains of Ecuador. The acquisition of Hacienda Antisanilla, which protects half of the condors found in the country, was engineered by Fundación Jocotoco in close coordination with the Ecuadorian government and with critical support from a broad alliance of partners, including more than 10 groups within Ecuador and international partners such as ABC, Paul G. Allen Foundation, blue moon fund, Centro de Rescate Iltio, March Foundation, Peregrine Fund, Rainforest Trust, Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, and World Land Trust.

“Antisanilla is a crucial piece of the region’s conservation mosaic,” said George Fenwick, President of ABC. “The land purchase safeguards one of Ecuador’s most important condor populations and bolsters efforts to create a self-sustaining ecotourism program in the region.”

The Andean Condor is the national bird of Ecuador and is featured on the nation’s coat of arms. “This bird is a symbol of our country in the same way the Bald Eagle is a symbol of the United States,” said Rocio Merino, Executive Director of Fundación Jocotoco. “Without question, the need to protect Andean Condors is one of

the main reasons we were able to complete this land purchase. Condors capture the imagination of Ecuadorians like no other bird.”

The acquisition followed the successful reintroduction of a rehabilitated Andean Condor that collapsed on a local farm after ingesting lead fragments. The condor, called “Felipe” after the man who found it, has been fitted with a satellite transmitter that allows biologists from Jocotoco and the Peregrine Fund to track its movements. In the first week after its release, Felipe soared over three volcanos in three different provinces.

Hacienda Antisanilla lies on the western slopes of the Antisana Volcano in central Ecuador. Roughly 30 miles southeast of the capital city of Quito, the area is one of the largest and most celebrated wilderness regions in the country. The purchased lands will be added to 350,000 acres of high-altitude forests and grasslands already included in the Antisana Ecological Reserve.

“This integrated conservation area incorporates one of the largest elevation gradients in the world, stretching from 3,900 to 18,875 feet above sea level. This range of elevations within protected areas is critically important in a time of climate change,” said Fenwick.

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Part of the Hacienda Antisanilla before the beginning of restoration work. Photo by Enrique Ortiz

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ABC Expands Golden-winged Warbler Conservation Efforts

Andean Condor by Murray Cooper



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Rocio Merino, Executive Director,
Fundación Jocotoco

ECUADOR LAND PURCHASE, *continued from cover*

Interest in the acquisition rose all over Ecuador when researchers concluded that as many as 40 condors roosted and nested on cliffs in Antisanilla, formerly a private cattle ranch that offered no special protection to condors. Fewer than 80 condors are found in the entire country.

In addition, the land purchase is expected to protect supplies of drinking water consumed in Quito. Further improving the prospects for biodiversity in the protected area, cattle grazing practices will be revised and restricted, and anti-poaching laws will be more strictly enforced.

“This new property will buffer the existing Antisana reserve,” said Benjamin Skolnik, Conservation Projects Specialist at ABC. “Lands degraded by excessive cattle grazing could start recovering soon. Animals long targeted by hunters who ignore the nation’s laws will receive increased protection.”

Skolnik said the greater Antisana region protects important populations of Silvery Grebe and Andean Ibis, now considered a separate species from the more-common Black-faced Ibis and of greater conservation concern. Lakes, marshes, and bogs in the protected area support a wide range of migratory and resident shorebirds and waterfowl.

The Antisana reserve bridges two of the nation’s largest protected areas: Cayambe Coca National Park (to the north) and Sumaco National Park (to the east.) Altogether, these protected areas now cover 1.8 million acres of critically important Andean and Amazonian ecosystems.



Learn more: Visit ABCBirds.org and search “Andean Condor.”

Note to White House: Now's the Time to Save the Greater Sage-Grouse

The Greater Sage-Grouse, a popular game bird that once numbered in the millions, is in serious trouble. In the mostly public western habitats required by these birds, population estimates have been plummeting for decades. Adding Greater Sage-Grouse to the list of species protected by the Endangered Species Act is “warranted,” according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. But a final decision will not come until 2015.

To its credit, the Obama administration is not waiting. Instead, federal agencies have launched a remarkably ambitious land conservation initiative in the 11 western states where the grouse is found. This initiative is designed to make it easier to save grouse habitats that are increasingly coveted by the oil, gas, geothermal, coal, solar, and wind industries. Many of these landscapes have already been degraded by sprawling energy facilities and by the roads and power lines that come with them. Others have been mined, overgrazed, fenced off, damaged by off-road vehicles, or planted with communications towers.

Research commissioned by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has established that the Greater Sage-Grouse needs wide open spaces to survive and that precious little of its former range remains intact. These are lands that helped define the character of the United States. If they are protected, the environmental legacy of the Obama administration will become much brighter.

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For that reason—and because the Greater Sage-Grouse badly needs to be protected—we applaud the BLM and the USDA Forest Service for agreeing to update the management plans used to regulate development of most of the lands used by the grouse. Scientists associated with a national technical team created by BLM have concluded that these birds will be more likely to avoid extinction and begin recovering if less than three percent of its key habitats are disturbed. Progress toward that goal could help avoid an Endangered Species Act listing, which could trigger political turmoil and legal battles.

Unfortunately, the 15 draft land management proposals issued by the BLM, as they stand, will not save the landscapes needed by the birds. Public comments could help change those drafts plans, however.

ABC and other groups, including Defenders of Wildlife and the Sierra Club, are recommending that public

comments call on federal agencies to designate protected reserves for Greater Sage-Grouse populations and sharply limit or ban oil and gas leases in key habitats. Livestock grazing should be managed to leave adequate ground cover in grouse nesting areas and to protect springs and other riparian habitats where these birds raise their young.

On private lands used by the grouse, the federal government needs to keep encouraging ranchers and farmers to voluntarily protect important areas. A Sage-Grouse Initiative led by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service has already provided nearly \$250 million to landowners who improve grazing practices or establish conservation easements. Funding for these programs needs to be maintained by Congress.

Some Congressional leaders recognize the need to start doing more to save important sage-grouse habitat. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has released draft legislation that would save these lands in the state of Nevada as “Wilderness Areas.” It's our hope that the Obama administration will help do the same for Greater Sage-Grouse habitats found in the 10 other western states where grouse are found. Future generations—and the Greater Sage-Grouse—will be better off.



Help the Greater Sage-Grouse:
ABCBirds.org/action/

Habitat Protected for Blue-throated Macaw in Bolivia's Barba Azul Reserve

Bolivia's Barba Azul Nature Reserve, the world's only protected area for the Blue-throated Macaw and a global stronghold for the critically endangered species, has been doubled in size—thanks to a land purchase that expanded the private reserve to more than 27,000 acres. The reserve has hosted the largest known concentration of these birds, with close to 100 recorded at times.

The negotiations that produced the land deal were led by Asociación Armonía, ABC's Bolivian partner. "When this reserve was first established, much of the protected land had been badly damaged by overgrazing, uncontrolled hunting, and poor land use practices," said Bennett Hennessey, Executive Director of Asociación Armonía. "Afterwards, these habitats rebounded quickly, as if recovering from a drought. By expanding the reserve, we have enhanced that process and improved the outlook for the Blue-throated Macaw."

Hennessey said the new land acquisition protects tall grass prairielands dotted with small forest areas. These wooded areas are used by foraging, roosting, and—potentially—by nesting Blue-throated Macaws. Barba Azul, which means "blue beard," is the local name for the Blue-throated Macaw, found only in Bolivia.

Hennessey says these birds were driven to the brink of extinction by habitat loss and the illegal bird trade, adding that in some local communities, feathers plucked from the

carcasses of Blue-throated Macaws were once used to make traditional headdresses. Asociación Armonía has been trying to protect the remaining macaw population by providing high-quality synthetic substitutes for the headdresses, encouraging local farmers and ranchers to protect key habitats, and launching programs that promote the Blue-throated Macaw as an endangered local treasure.

About 250 species of birds are found within the boundaries of this reserve, including Cock-tailed Tyrant, Black-masked Finch, and Greater Rhea. Migratory birds including Bobolink and Buff-breasted Sandpiper winter here. Mammals also abound, including maned wolf, giant anteater, and pampas cat.

Several organizations and individuals teamed up to achieve this historic conservation result, including ABC, Patricia and David Davidson, International Conservation Fund of Canada, IUCN NL/SPN (sponsored by the Netherlands Postcode Lottery), Loro Parque Fundación, Rainforest Trust, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grants Program, Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, and World Land Trust.



Learn more: Visit ABCBirds.org and search "Blue-throated Macaw."



Want to go? See: ConservationBirding.org/AboutBarbaAzul.html

Blue-throated Macaws by Paul B. Jones



ABC Joins Birding's "Biggest Week"

ABC is partnering with Black Swamp Bird Observatory (BSBO) to sponsor the "Biggest Week" birding festival in northwest Ohio this May. Funds raised at the festival this year will benefit ABC's "Save the Golden-Wing" project, which will help advance habitat preservation, restoration, and education in Nicaragua, part of the wintering range of the rapidly declining Golden-winged Warbler.

Now in its sixth year, the "Biggest Week" has become one of the nation's largest birding festivals, attracting up to 75,000 people from different countries to northwest Ohio each year. The festival is based out of Maumee Bay State Park, close to excellent birding



BiggestWeekInAmericanbirding.com

sites such as Magee Marsh Wildlife Area, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, and Oak Openings Preserve Metropark.

Songbirds (including the federally listed Kirtland's Warbler), shorebirds, water birds, and Bald Eagles all move through this area during their spring and fall migrations. Magee Marsh, also known to birders as Crane Creek, is a major stopover point for migrants from the tropics and is informally known as the "Warbler Capital of the World."



Visit Black Swamp Bird Observatory: bsbobird.org

Golden-winged Warbler
by Laura Erickson



Make Bird Conservation Your Legacy

- Doubling the size of the Barba Azul Reserve in Bolivia to protect the Blue-throated Macaw.
- Expanding our habitat creation and restoration efforts for the Golden-winged Warbler to Minnesota and Wisconsin.
- Challenging poorly sited wind farms at Camp Perry in Ohio and Chokecherry in Wyoming, which could be disastrous for migratory birds, eagles, and other raptors.

These are just a few recent examples of how American Bird Conservancy is taking the lead to protect birds across the Americas. You can help us continue to do so for years to come by including ABC in your estate plans. Your estate gift made through your will, retirement plan, trust, or life insurance policy will create a legacy of bird conservation, and is a very special way to ensure our children and grandchildren will be able to see many of these remarkable species and their habitats.

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

Feds to Issue 30-Year Eagle Kill Permits

Over the objections of environmental groups, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has changed the way it implements a key part of the 2009 Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, one of the nation's most important bird protection laws. The revision, announced in December 2013, makes it possible for wind power facilities that accidentally kill (or "take") eagles to continue doing so under permits issued by FWS for as many as 30 years. The old eagle take rule set that limit at five years.

"It's an understatement to describe this rule as 'industry friendly,'" said ABC Vice President Mike Parr. "Eagles are the losers here; the biggest winners are the owners of badly sited, badly operated wind power facilities."

Audubon President and CEO David Yarnold had this to say: "Instead of balancing the need for conservation and renewable energy, Interior wrote the wind industry a blank check. It's outrageous that the government is sanctioning the killing of America's symbol, the Bald Eagle."

"ABC has always been a strong supporter of responsible wind power development," added Michael Hutchins, Coordinator of ABC's Bird-Smart Wind Energy Program. "Unfortunately, this new eagle take rule will not move us toward that goal. What it does instead is tilt the playing field toward energy companies that don't want to deal with eagle kill problems. Those are the companies most likely to take full advantage of a six-fold extension of the take rule."

The 25-year extension of the five-year eagle take rule was first proposed in April 2012. After conservation groups including ABC voiced loud objections,

FWS added language requiring that all of the extended take permits be reviewed every five years. The final version of the new take rule calls for increased federal monitoring of eagle kills at energy facilities. Companies receiving the new permits must also

...existing studies make it clear that improperly sited wind power facilities pose a major threat to important eagle populations.

agree to use "adaptive management practices" to keep eagle kills to a minimum.

However, those adaptive management practices have not been fully defined, and critics of the final rule called those adjustments "window dressing." Hutchins said the new rule weakens eagle protection guidelines that were already ineffective. Like the old rule, the new one relies on self-reporting of eagle kills by wind power facilities. "We already know that voluntary eagle rules don't work," said Hutchins. "That's the part of the old rule that should have been changed."

The new rule could compound existing problems faced by researchers attempting to develop precise estimates of the number of Bald and Golden eagles killed each year by wind turbines. Some eagle experts say these birds are especially vulnerable because they hunt while soaring, locking their eyes onto ground-based prey. That could make it harder for eagles to see oncoming turbine blades, which can move in excess of 150 miles per hour and be 200 feet long.

Hutchins says existing studies make it clear that improperly sited wind power facilities pose a major threat to important eagle populations.

One such study, from 2004, concluded that about 100 eagles were being killed every year at the notorious Altamont wind power facility in northern California. Hutchins says that study suggests that 3,000 eagles have been killed at this facility alone in the 30 years that it has been operational.



Bald Eagle by Sergey Uryadnikov, Shutterstock

Company Tied to Eagle Deaths Agrees to Million-Dollar Fine: First Prosecution of Its Kind

The owner of a pair of eagle-killing wind facilities in Wyoming has agreed to pay a million-dollar fine and launch new bird-protection programs after pleading guilty to numerous violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The agreement, announced by the U.S. Department of Justice, marks the first federal prosecution of a wind energy company accused of killing birds.

Duke Energy Renewables was charged with multiple felonies in connection with the deaths of 14 Golden Eagles and 149 other protected birds, including hawks, blackbirds, larks, wrens, and sparrows, at the “Campbell Hill” and “Top of the World” wind projects in Converse County, Wyo., between 2009 and 2013. The two projects, both on agricultural lands, are powered by a total of 176 large wind turbines. ABC has called repeatedly for federal investigations of wind power facilities built in migratory pathways or near birds protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Several such investigations are now underway, but so far only one—the Duke Energy probe—has led to federal charges.

“We welcome this settlement. It’s about time,” said Michael Hutchins, Coordinator of ABC’s National Bird-Smart Wind Energy Program. “All wind projects kill some birds—that’s unavoidable—but it’s long been clear that some facilities are much worse than the others.”

“Wind energy cannot be considered ‘green’ if projects like this one are killing so many birds,” said George Fenwick, President of ABC. “I’m afraid the flagrant violations of the law seen in this case are widespread.”

ABC and other groups have long complained about the voluntary nature of federal bird collision regulations, arguing that these rules have allowed wind power companies to build in sensitive habitats and hide bird kill problems from the government and the public.

“The bird kills that led to the million-dollar fine were self-reported by Duke Energy Renewables,” said ABC’s Hutchins. “Unhappily, that could make wind power companies even less inclined to voluntarily report bird kills that they already are. It could also tempt these companies to ‘dig more holes in the back forty,’ in an active effort to hide the carcasses of birds killed by their turbines.”

ABC has developed a wind power risk assessment map that makes it easier for regulators, private citizens, and wind power developers to gauge the threat that individual wind power facilities pose to migratory and endangered birds. The map is not intended to take the place of site-specific risks assessment processes, but it does suggest that both of the Wyoming plants were poorly sited.

ABC’s Bird-Smart Wind Energy Program is generously supported by the Leon Levy Foundation.



See the Wind Development Bird Risk Map: ABCBirds.org/extra/windmap.html

Collisions with Glass: An Avoidable Problem

Collisions with glass and buildings kill up to one billion birds annually.

Virtually every home in the United States kills several birds a year, adding up to a colossal loss of life. The good news is that there is a simple, inexpensive, and long-lasting solution for window exteriors: ABC BirdTape. The product has received rave reviews from those who have tried it.

“When an overwintering Hermit Thrush was killed after colliding with the glass of my back door last year, I knew it was time to act,” said ABC’s Clare Nielsen. “ABC BirdTape was easy to apply, and I’m pleased to report that I have had no bird strikes since.”

Christine Sheppard, ABC’s Bird Collisions Campaign Manager, points out:

“In a series of independent tests, ¾-inch BirdTape installed in a pattern of vertical lines spaced four inches apart was found to deter most bird collisions.”



Purchase ABC BirdTape:
ABCBirdTape.org

“Biggest Eagle Killer”: Wind Power Opposed in Wyoming

Conservation groups including ABC continue to oppose a plan to build as many as 1,000 wind turbines on a mix of public and private lands in Carbon County, Wyo., arguing that the two-part power project would become the biggest eagle killer of its kind.

The company that owns the proposed Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project—Power Company of Wyoming—has applied for a federal “take” permit that could allow it to kill eagles accidentally for as many as 30 years without facing prosecution for harming the protected birds.

“This is a very badly sited wind power facility,” said Michael Hutchins, Coordinator of ABC’s National Bird-Smart Energy Program. “Golden Eagles in particular will never know what hit them.”

Hutchins said it has long been known that large numbers of Golden Eagles migrate through the 220,000-acre project area. The proposed turbines also pose a threat to other raptors in the area and to important populations of Greater Sage-Grouse, a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

In a recent letter sent to the federal Bureau of Land Management, ABC and other members of the Bird Conservation Alliance noted that 181 raptor nests—23 of them active—had been found in the project area. The Bureau of Land Management has estimated that the turbines would kill as many as 200 raptors each year, including as many as 64 Golden Eagles. “We are concerned that the project area could turn into a population sink,” the letter said, “killing more eagles than the area is able to replace.”

The \$4 to 6 billion wind power facility would double the number of wind turbines in Wyoming.

New Turbines Still a Major Threat to Birds

Wind power facilities equipped with modern “monopole” turbines kill as many as 328,000 birds each year in the U.S., according to a peer-reviewed study in the latest issue of *Biological Conservation*, a scientific journal. The study, which excludes bird kills attributed to old-fashioned “lattice” turbines, undercuts industry claims that the new turbines are “bird friendly.”

The study said the number of birds killed at these modern facilities could rise to more than 1.4 million per year by 2030, spurred by targets set by the U.S. Department of Energy that call for a 12-fold increase in U.S. wind energy in the next 16 years.

The study, which combines data from existing national studies with scaled-up local estimates, was authored by Scott Loss of Oklahoma State University, Tom Will of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Peter

Marra of the Smithsonian Institution’s Migratory Bird Center.

“This work proves the need to stop allowing the owners of for-profit wind power companies to regulate themselves when bird conservation is involved,” said ABC President George Fenwick. “Clearly it is time to junk the voluntary rules that were

supposed to limit bird kills at these power plants. Bird protection should be mandatory. End of story.”

ABC is one of more than 60 conservation groups now calling for mandatory bird protection standards and for new Bird-Smart restrictions on the siting of wind power plants across the nation.



Lake Erie Wind Project Cancelled in Major Bird Migration Corridor

A controversial plan to build a wind power facility in the middle of a migratory pathway on the shores of Lake Erie has been abandoned—at least temporarily—by the Air National Guard.

ABC and Black Swamp Bird Observatory (BSBO) had objected to the project, which would have been placed in the middle of a migratory route used by millions of birds, including the endangered Kirtland's Warbler. The proposed project area, at the Camp Perry, Ohio, National Guard facility, is adjacent to a national wildlife refuge. Wildlife professionals with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources had expressed concerns about the plan to build it.

“This is a big victory for the vast numbers of birds that migrate through the Camp Perry area,” said Kenn Kaufman, an internationally celebrated author of bird field guides and a local resident. “It’s also a win for the local economy and businesses that rely on the tourism dollars spent here every year by tens of thousands of birders.”



A wind power facility proposed in the middle of a major bird migratory pathway would impact millions of birds, including the endangered Kirtland's Warbler. (See circled area on map.)


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*Kenn Kaufman,
Bird guide and author*

The decision to abandon the wind power facility was announced after BSBO and ABC notified the Ohio National Guard of their intention to challenge the project in court, charging that it violated federal laws including the Endangered Species Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. More than 5,000 citizens also spoke up in opposition to the project, signing a petition by the two groups.

“Clearly, the combination of the threat to sue and the remarkable local opposition prompted Camp Perry to take another look at this,” said ABC Vice President Mike Parr.

According to the Wind Development Bird Risk Map developed by ABC, the Lake Erie shoreline in Ohio is an especially bad location for wind power development. Plans to develop dozens of additional wind power facilities in surrounding areas could be influenced by the decision to halt this project.

 See the Wind Development Bird Risk Map: ABCBirds.org/extra/windmap.html



Kirtland's Warbler by Ron Austing

Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo Protection Plan Deemed Inadequate

A federal plan to add the western population of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo to the federal Endangered Species list—but not to classify the birds as “endangered”—is too weak to succeed, according to ABC and other conservation groups. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has proposed to classify this cuckoo as “threatened,” which is defined by the Endangered Species Act as “likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future.”

Steve Holmer, Senior Policy Advisor at ABC, said there is an urgent need to strengthen the proposal by re-classifying the rapidly declining birds as endangered. “As it stands, the draft rule does next to nothing to address the leading threats to the existence of the western Yellow-billed Cuckoo,” Holmer said. “If that does not change the last remaining western cuckoo habitats will keep disappearing, and the disastrous decline of western cuckoos will continue unabated.”

The draft rule identifies the main threats to the western cuckoo populations as excessive water use and cattle grazing in riparian areas, overuse of pesticides on farms adjacent to key cuckoo habitats, and collisions with communications towers.

“The federal government knows how to solve these problems,” Holmer said.



“Federal agencies could do much more to restore habitat and halt development practices that have ruined most of the cuckoo’s former habitat.”

Slender, long-tailed, and often found in deciduous woodlands, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo earned the nickname “rainbird” by calling out before big storms. Once the western population of these birds ranged through parts of British Columbia, 14 western states, and parts of Mexico. Now it is no longer seen in Oregon and Washington; Idaho and Utah have fewer than 20 pairs of cuckoos each; and fewer than 10 pairs per state exist in Nevada, Wyoming, Colorado, and Texas. In Arizona, the state with largest U.S. cuckoo population, numbers have declined 70 to 80 percent in the past 30 years.


The western population of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo is declining rapidly, and ABC recommends that it be classified as endangered, which will strengthen protections for the birds. Photo by Owen Deutsch

“Post-Fire” Logging Plans Not Good for Spotted Owl

A coalition of forest and wildlife conservation groups, including ABC and partners Conservation Northwest, Environmental Protection Information Center, and Oregon Wild, are urging the Obama administration to restrict post-fire logging in forests used by the Northern Spotted Owl, which is protected by the Endangered Species Act. Proposals to increase this kind of logging have been passed by the House and proposed in the Senate, even though the latest version of the Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan requires federal land managers “to

concentrate on conserving and restoring” the habitat of this owl.

“Government scientists say the Northern Spotted Owl requires large, dead, standing trees and other post-fire habitats,” said Steve Holmer, Senior Policy Advisor at ABC. “Plans to increase logging in these places threaten the existence of the Northern Spotted Owl and the integrity of the ancient forests that support them.”

 Take action to help protect forest habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl: ABCbirds.org/action



Proposals to increase post-fire logging threaten important habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl. Photo by Chris Warren

Celebrated *rufa* Red Knot Seen in Argentina

The oldest-known member of the *rufa* Red Knot subspecies, known as “B95” or “Moonbird,” has survived another trip from its Arctic breeding grounds to the southern tip of South America. In December, researchers in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, took several pictures of the celebrated bird, which is at least 19 years old.

The average lifespan of a *rufa* Red Knot is about five years. This particular Red Knot is called Moonbird because researchers believe that the distance it has traveled in its lifetime is greater than the distance to the moon.

Patricia M. Gonzales of the Global Flyway Network said she was so excited that her hands started shaking when she saw B95 on a beach in Argentina in December. Stories about the sighting ran in major newspapers in both North and South America.

Moonbird sightings have been used to draw attention to the sharp decline of the *rufa* Red Knot, and to new and ongoing attempts to protect them. One such effort is now being made in the Delaware Bay, where giant flocks of Red Knots converge once a year to eat horseshoe crabs’ eggs.



The *rufa* Red Knot known as “Moonbird” is so famous that it even has a statue in its honor, which can be seen at Mispillion Harbor Reserve in Delaware. Photo by ABC

Overfishing of these crabs is thought to be one of the causes of the Red Knot’s decline. Bans and sharp restrictions on that fishing have been put in place by Delaware and New Jersey. Recently, the FWS proposed to add the *rufa* subspecies of Red Knot to the list of plants and protected by the Endangered Species Act.

B95’s remarkable life is celebrated in the book “Moonbird” by Phillip Hoose. Gonzales said a statue of B95 may soon be built near the Argentina beach on which it was last seen. An existing statue of the bird can be found at the Mispillion Harbor Reserve near the town of Milford, Del.



Read about Moonbird on ABC’s blog. Visit abcbirds.wordpress.com and search on “Moonbird.”

Movie Star Speaks Up for the Palila

Now available on computer screens everywhere: well-known film and TV actor Jason Scott Lee as a rare Hawaiian bird! Lee, raised in Hawai’i, has voiced a video designed to raise awareness of the plight of the Palila, a critically endangered species only found in forests on the flanks of the Mauna Kea volcano on Hawai’i Island.

The Palila, small and striking, is a yellow, gray, and white bird that has been described as an “evolutionary wonder,” in part because it eats the toxic seeds of the māmane tree. In the last 10 years, the number of Palila on Mauna Kea has fallen 66 percent due to habitat destruction caused by sheep

and goats, predation by non-native feral cats and mongooses, and a long-term drought that could be linked to global climate change. Fewer than 2,200 Palila are now thought to be in existence.

Federal court orders dating to 1979 require the state of Hawai’i to remove non-native grazing mammals from lands designated as Palila Critical Habitat under the federal Endangered Species Act. In an effort to help build support for that ongoing effort, Lee lent his voice to the public outreach message developed by the Hawai’i Department of Land and Natural Resource’s Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) and ABC.

Lee voices the thoughts of a Palila as the bird talks about its decline and efforts being made to save it. In one of those efforts, DOFAW, the Mauna Kea Forest Restoration Project, ABC, and hundreds of local volunteers are restoring and replanting māmane forests on Mauna Kea. In another, DOFAW is replacing the fence that encircles over 90 percent of the Palila Critical Habitat and removing non-native grazing animals from the area inside the fence. ABC has been a strong advocate for efforts to fund this work.



View this PSA: youtube.com/user/restoremaunakea

New Studies Show Dramatic Coastal Wetland Losses Linked to Climate Change

Coastal wetlands used by innumerable birds and roughly half of the plants and animals on the federal Endangered Species list are disappearing at an increasingly rapid pace, according to a new report from FWS and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). A related study from Virginia's College of William and Mary supports the idea that global climate changes are partly responsible.

The federal study, which measured the net loss of fresh and saltwater wetlands found on the Pacific, Atlantic, and Gulf coasts and in the Great Lakes area, says these coastal wetlands covered 41 million acres in 2009. That figure includes 34.6 million acres of freshwater wetlands and 6.4 million acres of saltwater wetlands. According to the study, a net loss of 360,729 acres of coastal wetlands took place between 2004 and 2009. Significantly, the rate at which these wetlands have been disappearing rose 25 percent between 2004 and 2009.

Most of the freshwater wetland losses occurred in forested areas along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, from North Carolina to Texas, the study says. Forestry and development practices are among the leading causes.

In contrast, most of the saltwater wetland losses were attributed to severe coastal storms and erosion problems near the Gulf of Mexico. The federal report only makes one reference to the



Laughing Gull
by Greg Lavaty,
texastargetbirds.com

“When you combine this study with the U.S. government report on coastal wetland losses, it becomes more apparent that the impacts of global climate change are real, happening now, and not to be ignored.”


George Wallace
VP for Oceans and Islands, ABC

possible connection between severe weather, sea level rise, and global climate change. But the Virginia study seems to show that this connection is a strong one. The study, from the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary, measured the impact of rising sea levels on nesting Laughing Gulls in the saltwater wetlands of the Delmarva Peninsula. In these wetlands,

high-water tidal events were linked to an 82 percent decline in the number of Laughing Gull breeding pairs over a 10-year period and to the loss of 85 percent of the low marsh habitat used by the breeding gulls.

“When you combine this study with the U.S. government report on coastal wetland losses, it becomes more apparent that the impacts of global climate change are real, happening now, and not to be ignored,” said George Wallace, ABC’s Vice President for Oceans and Islands. “It’s one of the reasons why so many of our coastal wetlands, particularly saltwater wetlands, are now dwindling to the point where they lose their ecological function, or are disappearing altogether.”

Freshwater and saltwater coastal wetlands sustain waterfowl, shorebirds, rails, herons, egrets, and songbirds. The list of coastal wetland birds protected by the Endangered Species Act includes Wood Stork, Whooping Crane, Snail Kite, and Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow. Coastal wetland species on ABC’s WatchList of birds of conservation concern include Reddish Egret, Yellow and Black rails, and Saltmarsh Sparrow.

 See ABC’s WatchList of birds of conservation concern at ABC Birds.org; search on “WatchList.”

ABC Expands Golden-winged Warbler Conservation Efforts

The Golden-winged Warbler is one of the most rapidly declining birds in the Western Hemisphere. One of the main causes is a change in the nature of the forests found in the eastern half of North America.

Once, the canopies of these forests were full of openings created by multiple factors, from small family farms to forest fires left to burn themselves out. Young, or “early successional,” forests grew in these openings—forests used by a wide range of birds including breeding Golden-winged Warblers.

Now, for many reasons, there are far fewer openings and far fewer breeding Golden-winged Warblers. Efforts to bring back the birds by conserving and restoring early successional forest areas have been launched by groups including ABC, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, North Carolina Audubon, and the Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture. ABC and partners are also trying to expand these operations in six states across the Appalachian Mountains and northern Great Lakes region.

In Minnesota, ABC is working with a \$1.18 million grant from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. That grant allowed ABC and The

Conservation Fund to purchase a 480-acre tract of property in the warbler’s breeding range. This property was later passed on to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and then added to Minnesota’s Four Brooks Wildlife Management Area.

This grant also made it possible for ABC to hire a forester, Peter Dieser, who hopes to help the state of Minnesota create more than 1,500 acres of Golden-winged Warbler habitat on public lands in the northern portion of the state. A second forester hired by ABC, Kevin Sheppard, works with private landowners in this area. That work is supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, in cooperation with the USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service and its landowner incentive programs.

In Wisconsin, the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is helping to lead an effort to restore Golden-winged Warbler habitats. In north-central Wisconsin, restoration work on 5,000 acres of potential warbler habitat has begun. ABC also worked with Amber Roth of Michigan Tech University and the state of Wisconsin to develop a warbler-friendly salvage plan for 13,000 acres of forests

damaged in a major wind storm in 2011.

The projects in Wisconsin and Minnesota complement existing programs in Pennsylvania. There, with help from ABC, Jeff Larkin of Indiana University’s Research Institute is overseeing extensive forest restoration work on both private and public lands. ABC is also involved in Golden-winged Warbler conservation projects in Maryland, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

Conservation goals developed by the Golden-winged Warbler Working Group call for a 50 percent increase in populations. Andrew Rothman, Director of ABC’s Migratory Bird Program, said meeting those goals means expanding the scale of early-successional forest restoration work now underway in this bird’s breeding range. That, in turn, requires more assistance from private landowners, timber interests, and government agencies.

“I’m optimistic,” Rothman noted. “One thing I would like to stress is that the complex forest ecosystems used by Golden-winged Warblers are used by many other birds, including American Woodcock, Ruffed Grouse, Eastern Whip-poor-will, and mammals such as black bear and moose.”



Golden-winged Warbler by Dennis Maleug

ABC forester Peter Dieser hopes to help the state of Minnesota create more than 1,500 acres of Golden-winged Warbler habitat on public lands in the northern portion of the state.

BIRDS IN BRIEF

Congress Passes Farm Bill: Mixed Bag for Birds

A new Farm Bill was recently passed into law after an unusually long debate over the terms of the trillion-dollar legislation. The result is a bipartisan agreement that includes a provision that would require many farmers and ranchers to protect wetlands and erodible lands that are important to birds in return for crop insurance. Conservationists wanted this provision to apply to farmers all over the United States, but it was eventually limited to farmers who own croplands in Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The nation's prairie pothole region—also called the “duck factory”—supports more than 200 different species of birds, including Franklin's Gull, Yellow Rail, and Piping Plover.



Northern Shoveler by Owen Deutsch

Conservation groups including ABC praised a provision in the new Farm Bill that would discourage farmers from tilling native grasslands by limiting subsidies for newly tilled lands used by a wide range of birds. But some of these same groups said they were disappointed by provisions that would consolidate the 23 conservation programs found in the previous Farm Bill, folding smaller programs into larger ones and cutting \$6 billion from conservation programs over the next decade.

Still from new PSAs, ABC



New Public Service Announcements Carry “Cats Indoors” Message

Keeping cats indoors is better for cats, better for birds, and better for people: that is the message reinforced by four new video public service announcements (PSAs) released in December by ABC. The PSAs are intended to expand the reach of ABC's *Cats Indoors* campaign. Produced in partnership with the Hillsborough Animal Health Foundation, they have been distributed to television networks across the country and posted on ABC's YouTube Channel and *Cats Indoors* web page.



Cats Indoors on ABC's website: ABCBirds.org/cats



ABC's YouTube channel: youtube.com/user/abcbirds

Bald Eagle Die-off in Utah Due to West Nile Virus

In December 2013, Bald Eagles wintering around Utah's Great Salt Lake began to die mysteriously. Now laboratory tests by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) have implicated West Nile Virus in the deaths.



Bald Eagle by ClipArt.com

More than 40 eagles have died in Utah since this outbreak began, and others are still being treated at local rehabilitation centers.

The DWR has confirmed that the eagles contracted West Nile after preying on infected Eared Grebes that had already succumbed to the virus. This marks the first time that Eared Grebes have been known to contract the virus.

About 750 to 1,200 Bald Eagles winter in Utah each year, remaining until March. The spread of the infection appears to be slowing, so wildlife officials hope that the number of eagle deaths should start to decrease.

Portland Adopts Bird-friendly Building Guidelines

The Portland, Ore. City Council has added bird-friendliness to the list of green building guidelines used by land-use planners and architects. The change, designed in part to raise public awareness of bird kill problems linked to collisions with windows, will apply bird-friendly guidelines to new city buildings. It will be applied to existing buildings “when feasible.”

More than 200 bird species can be found in Portland. Many of these birds migrate through the city in the spring and fall. Building collisions are a leading source of bird mortality, especially in cities found in migratory pathways.

As this issue went to press, another jurisdiction—Sunnydale, Calif.—had just announced its City Council's decision to adopt bird-friendly building guidelines, with ABC's manual on *Bird-Friendly Building Design* cited as an influence.



Find ABC's manual on *Bird-Friendly Building Design* at ABCBirds.org; search on “bird-friendly buildings.”



Collisions solution for homeowners: ABCBirdTape.org.

Snowy Owl by Tom Middleton



Snowy Owls Stage Major Irruption into Lower 48

Snowy Owls that typically stay north of the Canadian border are staging what ornithologists refer to as a “major irruption” in the lower 48 states. Sightings of the large, white owls have been recorded as far south as Florida, and one of the birds was seen in Bermuda. To the delight of ABC staff, a Snowy Owl took up residence in Washington, D.C., in January.

Scientists say the unexpected influx of Snowy Owls is likely a result of a very successful breeding year for the species. That appears to be related to a sharp increase in the number of lemmings, one of the owl’s major prey items. As territorial birds, young Snowy Owls must find their own hunting grounds, which may be in short supply given the large number of adult owls now seeking food.

Birders who have seen a Snowy Owl this year can contribute to ongoing studies of these mysterious birds by reporting their sightings at ebird.org.

Woodpeckers Limit Damage Done by Emerald Ash Borer

Woodpeckers are on to the emerald ash borer, an invasive pest that has killed millions of native ash trees since 2002, according to a study in *Forest Ecology and Management*, a peer-reviewed scientific journal. The study suggests that in some of these forests, booming populations of woodpeckers may be slowing the rate at which ash borers are spreading.

A related study has concluded that in the Great Lakes area and near Detroit, Mich., borer infestations have been followed by sharp increases in populations of Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied woodpeckers and White-breasted Nuthatches—all insect-eating birds that nest in the cavities of trees. That study was undertaken by researchers at Cornell University and the USDA Forest Service.



Downy Woodpecker by Michael Stubblefield

The studies do not suggest that these birds will be able to stop the borers from spreading. In the 22 states where the invasive insects have been found, quarantines have been imposed on infested forests, and limits have been placed on the transport of live ash trees, logs, and firewood.

Court Ruling Saves Panama Bay

The Panama Supreme Court has affirmed the protected status of the bird-rich swamps and mangrove forests found near the Gulf of Panama, one of the most important wetland areas in the Western Hemisphere. Business groups in Panama had petitioned the court to reverse an earlier ruling that protected these wetlands. That petition has now been rejected, which means



Whimbrel by visceralimage, Shutterstock

the protections will remain in place. (*Bird Calls*, Vol. 17, No. 2)

The Bay of Panama is an important stopover and wintering area for migratory shorebirds in the Americas, hosting more than 30 percent of the global population of Western Sandpiper and 22 percent of the world’s Whimbrels. The bay also supports important fisheries, filters out pollutants, and lowers flood risks in Panama City, the nation’s capital.

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

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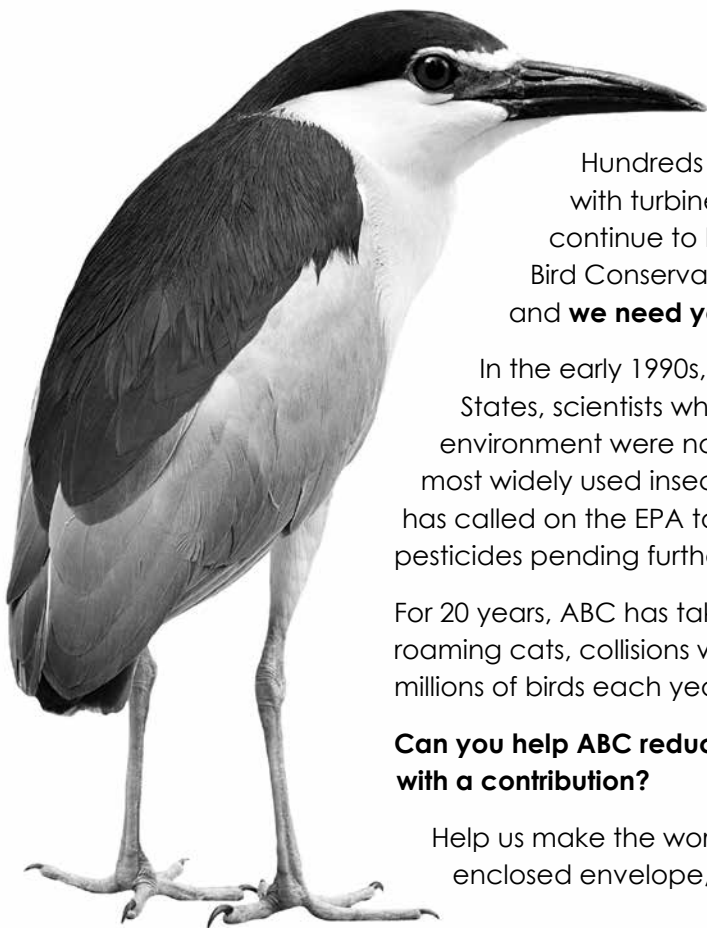
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We Stand Up for Birds. Will You Stand with Us?

Hundreds of thousands of birds die every year when they collide with turbines at the nation's wind power facilities, yet new wind farms continue to be planned in important migratory corridors. American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and its partners are challenging these projects and **we need your help.**

In the early 1990s, when neonicotinoids were registered for use in the United States, scientists who warned of their potentially devastating impacts on the environment were not heeded. Now the evidence is in that "neonics," the most widely used insecticides in the U.S., are highly toxic to birds and bees. ABC has called on the EPA to immediately suspend all applications of these dangerous pesticides pending further review and is working to restrict their use.

For 20 years, ABC has taken on these and other threats to birds, such as free-roaming cats, collisions with glass, and seabird bycatch, that kill hundreds of millions of birds each year.

Can you help ABC reduce these threats and strengthen protection for birds with a contribution?

Help us make the world a safer place for birds by donating today using the enclosed envelope, or online at www.ABCBirds.org.