

an ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

AMERICAN BIRDS

SUCCESS STORY







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— An Endangered Species Act Success Story —

Summary

This report, produced by American Bird Conservancy (ABC), outlines the current status and population trends of birds listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and provides individual accounts documenting the current status of each listed species, subspecies, or population segment. Analysis of this data shows that significantly more birds listed under the ESA are increasing than are decreasing.

This report is intended to assist policymakers, the conservation community, and the general public in determining how the Act is performing in its goal of preventing extinction and restoring endangered birds.

There is broad consensus in the conservation community that the ESA can be strengthened—for example, through increased funding, creating a more streamlined process by which species can be listed and de-listed, and reinforcing the consultation process between federal agencies concerning actions that may affect endangered species. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the many strengths of the current legislation, and we seek to highlight those, and how they have benefited birds.

This report focuses primarily on those

birds that breed in the continental United States. Hawaiian birds, many of which disappeared or were at the brink of extinction long before the ESA was enacted, are treated in a separate section. Foreign-listed species and those that occur in U.S. dependent territories are excluded, as are birds that likely became extinct before or around the time the ESA was enacted. How Birds Benefit from ESA Listing

Species that are considered to be in danger of extinction, or that may become so, can be considered for listing under the ESA. Several excellent resources that provide more information on the listing process—and the ESA regulatory process as a whole—are available elsewhere. The full text of the Act can be found at www.fws.gov/endangered/esa. html, and a useful summary article can be found at www. environmentaldefense.org.

The ESA is perhaps the most important piece of environmental legislation ever passed in the United States.



Once a species is listed, it receives certain mandatory protections to aid its recovery. Such protections include prohibitions on taking, trading, or harming a species, its nest, or its eggs. Exceptions to prosecution under the Act may be made to prevent financial hardship to individuals, and to allow subsistence activities by certain native Alaskans. Penalties under the Act can include fines and imprisonment in serious cases.

Aleutian Canada Geese/LISEWS

Critical Habitat designations further protect endangered birds by safeguarding areas deemed essential for a species' survival and recovery. To achieve recovery, areas must sometimes be designated as Critical Habitat even though they are not currently occupied by the species, allowing for future population

increases and range expansion. Without this, some species may be restricted to tiny populations and destined to remain on the endangered species list forever. The Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce are provided with latitude to prevent the designation of Critical Habitat from interfering unduly with economic development or national security.

Photo credits previous page: U.S. Capitol/Morguefile.com, Brown Pelicans/USFWS, Golden-cheeked Warbler/USFWS, Whooping and Sandhill Cranes/USFWS, Bald Eagle/Matthew MacManes.

In certain cases, landowners are permitted to create Habitat Conservation Plans (see page 5) that allow for habitat modifications while continuing protection for the affected species. To date, 430 such plans have been approved for all endangered species, and several of the areas covered exceed one million acres in extent.

Federal Protection

Any federal agency that believes an action they plan to authorize, fund, or carry out, could affect an endangered species must consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), or with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), to determine whether the action will jeopardize the species concerned. The requirement for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to initiate consultations as part of their pesticide registration process was recently changed amid much controversy. The EPA now has sole discretion over whether to initiate a consultation, rather than being bound to do so by the Act. While the government maintains that this helps to streamline and improve the process, conservation groups are in unanimous agreement that the Act was weakened by the change.

If a federal action has the potential to jeopardize a species, a series of consultations (both informal and formal) and biological assessments are required. These can result in the prevention of the proposed action, cause amendments to proposed actions, or result in mitigation measures to counterbalance detrimental outcomes. The informal consultation process frequently results in modifications to agency actions that reduce harm to endangered species or provide conservation benefits.

Of the more than 18,000 formal inter-agency consultations that took place between 1996 and 2004, less than four percent resulted in the conclusion that the proposed agency action would likely place a species in jeopardy. This does not diminish the importance of these consultations however. Although few federal actions require modification, the consequence to individual endangered species of eliminating the consultation process could be disastrous.

Recovery Plans

A Recovery Plan must be produced for each listed species. These plans summarize the species' status and threats, set recovery goals and criteria, and estimate costs for recovery actions. The budgeting process involves a number of factors, including the cost of answering petitions and law suits. A species prioritization process grades how taxonomically unique each listed species is and how likely it is that conservation efforts will succeed. This helps further determine the amount of funding a species can receive. Funds cover activities such as habitat management and land purchase.

Public Involvement

A range of other benefits accrue to listed species, including public awareness, which can lead to greater public involvement in voluntary management programs such as Safe Harbor Agreements. Several National Wildlife Refuges have also been established specifically to protect ESA-listed species. Additionally, cooperative agreements with states provide funding for endangered species recovery efforts, and in the case of species that are considered "Candidates" for protection under the Act, conservation agreements and landowner incentives can help to increase species populations, while preventing the need for additional regulation. See page 5 for more information on the ESA and landowners.

Although federal agencies and states are responsible for much of the ESA's success, major credit must also be given to the many private individuals and conservation organizations that have made critical contributions to the prevention of extinctions, and to species recovery. For more information on some of these efforts see: www. abcbirds.org/esa.

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History and Impact of the ESA

y the early 1900s America had witnessed the disappearance of several spectacular bird species, including the Great Auk, Passenger Pigeon, Carolina Parakeet, and Labrador Duck–lost mostly to excessive, unregulated hunting.

Since its passage, the Act has undergone significant amendments on three occasions, once under President Carter, and twice under President Reagan. Among the amendments made under Carter were Critical Habitat provisions, to be drawn up concurrently with species

In 1918, as bird declines continued, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was enacted to regulate "take" (including hunting and 'live' collection for the bird and egg trade). While the MBTA provided invaluable protection to birds, it only regulated hunting and capture; and did little to help species that were affected by human-induced threats such as habitat loss, introduced predators, and environmental toxins. Thus, even with the MBTA in force, birds such as the Whooping Crane and Aleutian Canada Goose continued to decline.

Bird Declines

In the 1950s and 60s, there was a population crash in some very visible bird species, namely the Bald Eagle,

Peregrine Falcon, and Brown Pelican. Research showed that the culprits were organochlorine pesticides such as DDT, which caused eggshell thinning and dramatically reduced breeding success. As the Bald Eagle tumbled towards extinction in the lower 48 states, the impetus for greater legal protection for the country's most imperiled wildlife mounted. In 1966 the Endangered Species Preservation Act was passed. This was strengthened in 1969, and in 1973 finally became the ESA.

The scope of the ESA legislation was broad, and included a process for identifying species that qualified for listing, habitat protection measures, and a mechanism to ensure that the federal government itself did not contribute to endangered species declines. It also mandated cooperation with states, international cooperation, and trade and take restrictions.

Although the Endangered Species Act protects all endangered animals and plants, birds have played a special role in its history and impact.



listings wherever possible; and the creation of a cabinet-level committee with the power to exempt certain federal projects from compliance with the Act (though few such exemptions have been granted). Amendments made during the Reagan presidency included: the introduction of Habitat Conservation Plans, which permitted landowners to alter habitat if they also implemented mitigation measures; a prohibition on considering the economic implications of listing a species; a requirement that "candidate" and de-listed species be monitored; a framework to improve the implementation of Recovery Plans, and the establishment of a "Cooperative **Endangered Species Conservation** Fund".

ESA Under Attack

In 1992, authorization of the ESA expired. The prohibitions and requirements of the Act still remained in force, but appropriations had to be sought yearly. Ever since, the Act has been the focus of attacks from interest groups bent on relaxing species protections to allow increased development.

As this report illustrates, the Act continues to help endangered birds recover, and there are more than two and one-half times as many listed bird species that are increasing or stable than are decreasing. Species that are increasing have also been protected under the ESA an average of ten years longer than those that are decreasing, indicating that the longer conservation efforts continue, the better the results.



The ESA and Landowners

any landowners are proud to play host to America's endangered species. They

work cooperatively with state and federal biologists to maintain healthy populations, at the same time preserving the natural beauty of their surroundings and the economic productivity of their property.

Landowners who wish to develop lands that harbor endangered species can apply for permits to do so. Agency permission for these developments is contingent upon the approval of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) that ensures habitat alterations do not pose a risk to the survival and recovery of the species in question. To date, more than 380 such plans have been implemented for the birds covered by this report alone. Unfortunately, not all HCPs are effective though, and many need additional funding. Landowners are typically exempted from providing these funds under a "No Surprises" policy implicit in the HCP agreement.

Many landowners are proud to play host to America's endangered species.



easement on several hundred acres of a 3,000-acre ranch to protect Golden-cheeked Warblers, in exchange for which they received USFWS credits that can be sold to mitigate impacts to warbler habitat elsewhere. However, it is important that such easements include restoration, and that this program does not result in a net loss of habitat for the species in question.

Ranch Conservation Bank in Texas placed a conservation

In some cases, the boundaries of Critical Habitat may be designated so as to alleviate potential economic impacts. The Act also contains provisions to prevent hardship to individuals, to facilitate disaster relief efforts, and to ensure that actions deemed necessary to national security are not impeded.

Landowner Assurances

Two programs, "Safe Harbor" and "Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances" allow landowners to gain assurance that their voluntary actions to improve habitat or increase species numbers will not

Federal Support

The Department of the Interior provides support to help conserve endangered species through two major grant programs that will provide more than \$75 million to support a range of activities undertaken by states and private landowners in the current budget year. The Forest Service and many states also offer financial assistance to landowners, through the federally funded Landowner Incentives Program for example, to help manage endangered species on their lands.

A new "Conservation Banking" program also allows landowners to protect habitat for endangered species, and then sell conservation credits to developers to mitigate habitat alteration. For example, the Hickory Pass result in additional regulation. The Safe Harbor program has been particularly successful in restoring Red-cockaded Woodpecker populations in the Southeast.

The Act does place reasonable restrictions on projects that could result in the decimation of habitat for endangered species. The Act's system of checks and balances has stood America and its endangered species in good stead for more than 30 years. With the growth of birdwatching and wildlife tourism, the ESA is helping to build the foundation for future economic prosperity, and is preserving a precious resource that has enormous educational and scientific value.

Photo/Mike Par



Species Accounts

Species have been categorized according to their population trend since the time they were listed under the ESA. They appear in standard taxonomic order within each category. The date of listing appears after each bird's scientific name. Scientific names follow those used by USFWS. The Mexican Duck is omitted as it is no longer considered a valid taxon. Conservation measures undertaken for each species are indicated by symbols (see below) that follow the listing date. All species listed under predecessor Acts at the time the current ESA was signed into law are considered here to have been listed since 1973. Population figures refer to the estimated total number of breeding adults, except where noted. Some population trend categorizations differ from USFWS reports to Congress based on recent field reports from biologists.

Species were allocated to categories as follows:

Increase - Population has increased since listing.

Stable - Current population is similar to that at the time of listing, or population has stabilized since listing.

Decrease – Population has decreased since listing.

NOTE: An increasing population does not necessarily indicate that conservation measures have fully succeeded. Many species in this category require ongoing conservation attention. Conversely, a decreasing trend does not necessarily show that conservation measures have failed. Even if large amounts of a species' habitat are effectively protected, the overall population will still decrease if habitat loss continues, or if key management issues are not addressed. Also, for species with extremely limited habitat, stabilizing populations at current levels may be the only realistic recovery goal.

СН	Critical Habitat designated	NWR: X	Occurs on National Wildlife Refuges X=number of Refuges
SSRP	(includes species with multiple regional plans)	SH	Benefits from Safe Harbor Agreements
MSRP HCP: X	Included in a Multi-Species Recovery Plan Benefits from Habitat Conservation Plans X=number of Plans	*	Species that have been removed from the ESA, or have had a significant portion of their population delisted, due to recovery

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INCREASE



Canada Goose, "Aleutian" subspecies (Branta canadensis leucopareia) 1973 +

By the mid-1970s, this subspecies had been reduced to approximately 800 individuals, having been extirpated from most of its breeding islands by introduced foxes. Following large scale efforts to remove these foxes, and hunting restrictions, the population has soared to more than 60,000 birds. It was removed from the endangered list in 2001. Subsequent taxonomic reclassification of the Canada Goose has resulted in this being considered a subspecies of the Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*). This subspecies migrates south to Pacific coast states after nesting.



Brown Pelican (Pelecanus occidentalis) $1973 \pm$

The Brown Pelican has rebounded dramatically from 1970s lows thanks to the ban on DDT, reintroductions, and the establishment of several key National Wildlife Refuges. The Atlantic Coast, Alabama, and Florida populations now number more than 100,000 birds, and pelicans in these areas were delisted in 1985. Despite the fact that several populations are still listed, the species as a whole is widely considered to have recovered.



Wood Stork (Mycteria americana) 1984 SSRP NWR: 50

This species formerly ranged across most of the southeastern United States and Texas, but breeding is currently limited to Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Its nesting population declined from an estimated 40,000 birds in the 1930s to a low of 5,000 in 1978 due to habitat loss and water level changes, particularly in southern Florida. The stork has since rebounded following a northerly range extension, adaptation to managed wetlands, and the provision of nesting platforms. It now has an apparently stable base population of approximately 11,000 adults. The species also occurs widely in the Neotropics.



California Condor (Gymnogyps californianus) 1973 CH SSRP HCP: 3

The California Condor declined due to persecution, poisoning (consuming lead fragments from carcasses left behind by hunters, and by consuming poisoned animals), and collisions with power lines. In 1987, with just 22 left, the last remaining wild birds were taken into captivity. After five years of intensive captive-breeding, reintroductions began at sites in Arizona and California, and by December 2005, the total wild condor population stood at 127 birds, with a further 146 individuals in captivity. Released birds are now nesting in the wild and one pair has successfully fledged a chick.



Snail Kite, "Everglades" subspecies

(Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus) 1973 CH MSRP NWR: 3

In the U.S., Snail Kites are only found in Florida. Reduced to just 65 birds in 1975, the kite recovered to a reported 3,577 birds by 1999 due to management, and favorable water levels that created ideal nesting and foraging conditions. The species is especially vulnerable to drought which depletes its primary food source, the apple snail, and allows predators access to nests which are built over water. A recent apparent 50% decline can be attributed to water level management problems in the Everglades hydro-system. The species also occurs widely throughout the Neotropics.



Bald Eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus) 1973 CH SSRP HCP: 122 NWR: 374

The Bald Eagle has been proposed for delisting in the lower 48 states where it has recovered dramatically following the cancellation of the pesticides DDT and dieldrin, and through a program of reintroduction and nest site protection. In the 1950s and '60s, eagle numbers plummeted because of widespread breeding failure due to DDT-caused eggshell thinning. The Alaskan population largely escaped this threat and was never listed. In the lower 48 states the eagle has recovered from a low of just over 800 breeding birds to some 16,000 today.

Aplomado Falcon, "Northern" subspecies (Falco femoralis septentrionalis) 1986 SSRP NWR: 3 SH

This species was extirpated from the U.S. by the 1950s, likely as a result of habitat conversion and pesticide use. A reintroduction program involving the release of more than 1,000 birds has recently been launched in south Texas. To date, this has resulted in the formation of 44 pairs, and the production of more than 170 young. The birds are found on public and private lands in the vicinity of Laguna Atascosa, Matagorda Island, and Aransas National Wildlife Refuges. Small numbers also appear to be invading southern New Mexico naturally from the south, where the species ranges from Mexico to South America.

Peregrine Falcon, "American" subspecies (Falco peregrinus anatum) 1973 ★



Peregrine Falcon, "Arctic" subspecies (Falco peregrinus tundrius) 1973 ★

By 1975, the American Peregrine Falcon had been reduced to just 650 breeding birds in the lower 48 states, and virtually eliminated from the East and Midwest. By 1999 however, following a ban on DDT, and a major effort to reintroduce captive-raised birds, the breeding population had recovered to at least 3,350 individuals. The American Peregrine Falcon was removed from the list of endangered species in 1999. Numbers continue to increase.

Arctic Peregrine Falcons may have declined by as much as 80 percent during the 1950s and 60s due to DDT use, but enough survived to make the release of captive-bred birds unnecessary. Arctic Peregrine numbers increased after the cancellation of DDT, and the subspecies was eventually delisted in 1994. The population of Arctic Peregrines in North America now numbers in the thousands and continues to increase.

oya/The Peregrine Fund





This subspecies ranges from the San Diego Bay region of California into northern Mexico, and, although there are no range-wide population estimates prior to 1980, significant habitat alteration within its limited range likely had a major negative impact. Annual surveys began in 1980 when 406 breeding birds were located. The population climbed to more than 600 by the mid-1990s, and the 2004 count located 700 breeding individuals. Management activities include habitat restoration, predator control, and the provision of artificial nesting rafts.

Sandhill Crane, "Mississippi" subspecies (Grus canadensis pulla) 1973 CH SSRP NWR: 1

The original range of this subspecies was thought to extend east along the Gulf Coastal Plain from southern Louisiana, into Mississippi, Alabama, and the western Florida panhandle. By the 1970s, however, as a result of habitat loss and hunting, fewer than 40 birds were left. With the establishment of the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, and the reintroduction of captive-raised birds, the wild population has now grown to more than 130 birds, 60 of which are breeding.

Whooping Crane (Grus americana) 1973 CH SSRP NWR: 49

Though it once ranged throughout the Great Plains and Gulf Coast regions, the Whooping Crane population was decimated by hunting and habitat loss, and reduced to just 16 birds by 1941. A major captive-breeding effort was subsequently mounted to rescue the species. Today, the main wild population, which migrates between Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada and Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, numbers approximately 215 individuals. There are a further 80 reintroduced non-migratory birds in Florida, and 130 in captivity. Recently, an experimental population, now numbering some 50 birds, has been taught to migrate from Wisconsin to Florida using ultralight aircraft as guides.



Piping Plover (Charadrius melodus) 1985 CH SSRP HCP: 2 NWR: 90

Overall, the US population increased by 27 percent between 1991 and 2001 to an estimated 4,482 birds. During that period the Atlantic Coast population increased 66 percent thanks to intensive management efforts that included restrictions on beach access during sensitive nesting periods, and predator control. The Great Lakes population increased 80%, and the large Great Plains population decreased by 2.5%. Preliminary 2005 estimates again show increasing counts in Atlantic Coast and Great Lakes populations. This species also breeds in Canada.



Least Tern, "California" subspecies (Sterna antillarum browni) 1973 SSRP HCP: 7

Habitat loss caused the population of the California Least Tern to plummet to an estimated low of 1,164 breeding birds in 1974. Since then, recovery efforts, including predator control programs, have led to dramatic increases, with the population assessed at approximately 13,000 nesting birds in 2004. Significant concentrations of these birds benefit from management on Department of Defense lands.



Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Picoides borealis)

1973 SSRP HCP: 14 NWR: 15 SH

This species declined precipitously from historic levels to approximately 10,000 birds at the time of listing. Thanks to intensive management, the population has now increased to some 20,000. Although larger core populations continue to increase, many smaller outlying colonies are still in decline. Several recent hurricanes have destroyed nesting trees, but artificial nest cavities and the translocation of birds has helped to offset their effect on the population as a whole.

Loggerhead Shrike, "San Clemente" subspecies (Lanius Iudovicianus mearsni) 1977 MSRP

After teetering on the brink of extinction for decades, this subspecies' fate has been dramatically reversed thanks to cooperative captive-breeding, predator control, and habitat management efforts that have increased the population ten-fold in just four years. Restrictions on Naval training exercises that included live bombing of the shrike's territory have also contributed to its recovery. By the end of 2004, there were 169 birds on San Clemente Island with a further 60 in captivity, up from just 16 four years earlier.

Bell's Vireo, "Least" subspecies (Vireo bellii pusillus) 1986 CH SSRP HCP: 15

This Californian subspecies was reduced to approximately 600 breeding birds by 1986, but has since rebounded thanks to management efforts. There has been up to a ten-fold increase in some populations over the past two decades, mostly due to the control of Brown-headed Cowbirds that parasitize vireo nests. The vireo also recently appeared in the Central Valley of California for the first time in 60 years. It migrates south to Mexico outside the breeding season.



Kirtland's Warbler (Dendroica kirtlandii) 1973 SSRP NWR: 2

This rarest member of the wood warbler family breeds primarily in Michigan, with a few birds also nesting in Wisconsin and Ontario, Canada. The species declined due to fire suppression programs that altered habitat, and as a result of nest parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds. Thanks to intensive management, the number of singing males counted during the breeding season rose from 167 in 1974 (and 1987) to 1,400 in 2005. The species spends the non-breeding season in the islands of the Bahamas.



California Towhee, "Inyo" subspecies (Pipilo crissalis eremophilus) 1987 CH SSRP

This once widespread subspecies declined to approximately 100 individuals by the late 1970s due to a dramatic reduction of its riparian forest habitat. Following a period of stabilization, recent increases have potentially exceeded recovery goals, although the status on Department of Defense lands need to be confirmed through additional surveys.



STABLE



Spectacled Eider (Somateria fischeri) 1993 CH SSRP NWR: 4

Surveys indicated a drastic decline from close to 95,000 birds in the 1970s, to 3,400 in 1992 at key breeding grounds in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. This has since been linked in part to the ingestion of spent lead shot by the birds. Pesticide residues have also been found in eggs of this species. The use of lead shot was phased out in the Delta by 1998, and subsistence hunting has also since been closed. The total U.S. population (including North Slope birds) appears to have stabilized at approximately 14,000 breeding individuals since listing.



Northern Bobwhite, "Masked" subspecies (Colinus virginianus ridgwayi) 1973 SSRP NWR: 1

This subspecies was extirpated from its restricted U.S. range in Arizona in the late 1800s and early 1900s, due to habitat alteration caused by cattle grazing and drought. Despite the purchase of the Buenos Aires Ranch as a National Wildlife Refuge, and the sustained release of captive-raised birds, the wild breeding population has remained stable at between 300 and 500 birds. There are close to 1,000 birds in captivity, and a small population also occurs in Mexico.





Crested Caracara, "Audubon's" subspecies (Polyborus plancus audubonii) **1987**

In the U.S., this species occurs in Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, and Florida, but only the Florida population is listed under the ESA. Numbers appear to have stabilized prior to listing at 400-500 birds, having reached a low of possibly fewer than 100 birds in the mid-70s. Reserve purchases and easements provide a measure of habitat protection.

Clapper Rail, "California" subspecies (Rallus longirostris obsoletus) 1973 MSRP NWR: 1

Between the late 1800s and the late 1900s, the San Francisco Bay area lost approximately 85 percent of its tidal marsh to agriculture, development, and salt pond creation, resulting in a catastrophic population decline in this subspecies of the Clapper Rail. Pollution and predation by foxes and free-roaming cats have likely exacerbated the threat. However, a predator management program at the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge has proven effective. The species expanded its range into Suisun Marsh after 1978 due to salinity changes there. The overall population now appears stable at 1,200-1,500 birds.

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Clapper Rail, "Yuma" subspecies (Rallus longirostris yumanensis) 1973 SSRP HCP: 4 NWR: 4

This rare subspecies is confined to marshes along the Colorado River and around the Salton Sea. There is also a population in northern Mexico. It is the only race of Clapper Rail found in freshwater marshes. Estimates suggest that the U.S. breeding population in the early 1970s was between 700 and 800 birds. This increased to more than 1,000 in the early 1990s, and declined slightly to 809 birds in 2003. Dam construction and dredge spoil dumping have created additional habitat for this species.



Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii dougallii) 1987 SSRP NWR: 13

This migratory species is widespread around the globe, but relatively rare in the U.S. Here it occurs in two distinct populations, one nesting in the Northeast, and another in Florida (now much reduced). After excessive market hunting was curtailed by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, tern populations recovered. However, this species began to decline again in the 1950s, reaching a low of around 5,600 total U.S. breeding birds in 1977. The population peaked at approximately 10,000 birds in 2000, thanks to management efforts such as the provision of artificial nesting sites. The loss of natural nesting sites, human disturbance, predation, and competition remain threats, and the population again shows a recent trend back towards late 1980s numbers.

Sage Sparrow, "San Clemente" subspecies (Amphispiza belli clementeae) 1977 SSRP

Since sagebrush on San Clemente Island has been less affected by habitat alteration caused by introduced goats than have grassland areas, this subspecies has remained largely stable despite its small population of just a few hundred birds.



Grasshopper Sparrow, "Florida" subspecies (Ammodramus savannarum floridanus) 1986 MSRP

This non-migratory subspecies occurs at a handful of state Wildlife Management Areas that are managed for it, as well as on Department of Defense lands. It has a stable but small population of between 500 and 700 birds.



DECREASE



Greater Prairie-chicken, "Attwater's" subspecies (Tympanuchus cupido attwateri) 1973 SSRP NWR: 2

This subspecies numbered approximately one million birds and ranged across some six million acres of southern coastal prairie at the turn of the twentieth century. Today, fewer than 60 individuals are restricted to just two protected locations. Captive-breeding is underway, but the subspecies is on the verge of extinction in the wild due to development and the spread of invasive plants.



Snowy Plover, "Western" subspecies (Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus) 1993 CH SSRP HCP: 10 NWR: 2

The bulk of the U.S. population occurs in California where it experienced a 21% decline between the mid-1970s and 1995. Smaller numbers, which have shown recent increases, also occur in Washington and Oregon. The total population currently stands at approximately 2,000 birds, but is still declining according to USFWS. A few local populations have shown increases in response to management actions such as beach closings during nesting, and anti-predator fencing at nest sites.



Marbled Murrelet (Brachyramphus marmoratus marmoratus) 1992 CH SSRP HCP: 11 NWR: 1

This species' ESA listing only covers the populations nesting in Washington, Oregon, and California, where some 25,000 breeding birds occur. Estimates suggest that these populations are declining by four to seven percent annually. Logging of old-growth forest (used for nesting), mortality due to gill nets and oils spills, and over-fishing of the species' food sources are all threats. A lawsuit has recently been filed in an attempt to delist this species.



Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, "Cactus" subspecies

(Glaucidium brasilianum cactorum) 1997 CH SSRP HCP: 2 NWR: 5

This listing relates only to the Arizona population of the subspecies. Habitat for the owl has undergone significant modification in the past as a result of dams, water diversions, and urban expansion. The number of known individuals decreased from 41 in 1999, to 18 in 2002. This most recent drop has been linked to drought conditions. The subspecies also occurs more commonly in Texas and Mexico. The owl has recently been proposed for delisting as a result of a lawsuit that contends this Distinct Population Segment is neither discrete nor significant.



Spotted Owl, "Northern" subspecies (Strix occidentalis caurina) 1990 CH SSRP HCP: 15 NWR: 1 SH

The Northern subspecies of the Spotted Owl requires old-growth forest for nesting, making it vulnerable to habitat loss caused by logging, and it declined at a rate of four percent annually between 1990 and 2003. It is also falling victim to the invasive Barred Owl, which out-competes the Spotted Owl for nesting territories and hybridizes with it. There are currently some 7,500 breeding birds, and an additional 1,000 territorial individuals, with isolation of some population segments due to habitat fragmentation.

Black-capped Vireo (Vireo atricapilla) 1987 SSRP HCP: 6 NWR: 3 SH

This species has an estimated population of 6,000 to 10,000 individuals. It is threatened by habitat loss, fire suppression, and Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism. Despite the overall declining status of the vireo, there have been some significant localized increases. Fort Hood, for example, improved nesting success by 40 percent between 1987 and 1996 through a cowbird control program. Small numbers occur in Mexico, where U.S. nesters also winter.



Florida Scrub-Jay (Aphelocoma coerulescens) 1987 SSRP HCP: 38 NWR: 5

This species' population, now estimated at between 8,000 and 10,000 birds, has seen an approximate 25 percent decline since 1983. Sprawl, fire suppression, cat predation, and other human-induced factors are the main threats. Efforts are underway to buy land, and conduct managed burns that will create early successional scrub-oak habitats for this species.



California Gnatcatcher, "Coastal" subspecies (Polioptila californica californica) 1993 CH HCP: 31

This northern subspecies currently has a population of approximately 5,000 birds in the U.S. Habitat loss and nest parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds are the principal threats. Cowbird trapping and habitat restoration have begun at some sites, and parts of the population have been stabilized. The gnatcatcher also occurs in northern Mexico.



Golden-cheeked Warbler (Dendroica chrysoparia) 1990 SSRP HCP: 76 NWR: 3

This species breeds only in the Edwards Plateau area of central Texas. Population estimates indicate a steady decline linked to loss of mature juniper habitat, and to cowbird parasitism. By 2004, the population had fallen to approximately 21,000 birds. Habitat restoration and cowbird control have increased some populations, particularly at Fort Hood, but habitat is still under threat elsewhere. The species winters in Central America.

SH



Seaside Sparrow, "Cape Sable" subspecies (Ammodramus maritimus mirabilis) 1973 CH MSRP

A dramatic decline in Cape Sable numbers from 6,450 birds in 1992 to 2,800 birds in 1995 was likely due to the effects of water level changes, and to habitat damage caused by Hurricane Andrew. The population has now largely stabilized at between 2,800 and 3,500 birds, but has recently shown an encouraging upward trend. It occurs within Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve.

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UNDETERMINED

Due to a paucity of data, birds in this category are those that cannot definitively be allocated to another category at this time.

Steller's Eider (Polysticta stelleri) 1997 CH SSRP NWR: 9

Estimates of the Alaskan breeding population made from 1989 to 2000 ranged between 350 and 5,000 birds. Numbers may have since declined, but breeding areas are remote and difficult to survey. High concentrations of lead have been found in dead birds. The species also breeds in Russia, and mixed flocks of Russian and American birds winter along the Alaskan Peninsula.

Least Tern (Sterna antillarum) 1985 SSRP HCP: 1 NWR: 38

Nesting on sandbars in the Mississippi, Missouri, Arkansas, Red, Platte and other major rivers, the "Interior" Least Tern (those nesting more than 50 miles inland from the coast) is threatened by the alteration of natural river dynamics caused by dams, channelization projects, and water level manipulation for barge traffic. While FWS indicated an estimated population of 5,000 terns in 1990, it was not until 2005 that the first ever range-wide survey was completed, yielding an observed population of 17,871 birds.

Spotted Owl, "Mexican" subspecies (Strix occidentalis lucida) 1993 CH SSRP HCP: 1

This subspecies of the Spotted Owl is significantly more tolerant of logging and degraded habitats than its "Northern" counterpart, often nesting in rocky canyons as opposed to oldgrowth forest. It has an estimated population of between 777 and 1,554 birds in Utah. Arizona, and Texas. It also occurs in northern Mexico.



Ivory-billed Woodpecker (Campephilus principalis) 1973 NWR: 2

The exciting 2004 record of a single lvory-bill in the "Big Woods" area of Arkansas was the first evidence of this species' continued existence in 60 years. A small population may have persisted in this area, but due to lack of data, no trend can currently be inferred.







Willow Flycatcher, "Southwestern" subspecies (Empidonax traillii extimus) 1995 CH SSRP HCP: 19 NWR: 8 SH

This subspecies declined as a result of large-scale destruction of riparian forest caused by cattle grazing and water extraction. Surveys conducted in 1995 detected 700 breeding birds, although the estimated population has since grown to approximately 2,000. Much of this apparent growth can be attributed to increased survey efforts, but biologists also report recent increases at key sites such as the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, Arizona, in response to habitat restoration. Proposed Critical Habitat was reduced by 68% following a public comment period and USFWS support for the development of a two million acre Habitat Conservation Plan. The flycatcher migrates south to Mexico outside the breeding season.

EXTINCT

Seaside Sparrow, "Dusky" subspecies (Ammodramus maritimus nigrescens)

A denizen of the saltwater marshes of Brevard County, Florida, this once common subspecies became extinct as a result of mosquito control efforts that included the flooding of Merritt Island, the draining of marshes along the St. John's River, and the application of pesticides. The only remaining birds (all males) were brought into captivity in 1979. The last bird died at Disney World in 1987.





HAWAIIAN SPECIES

Hawaiian species face a more severe barrage of threats than most mainland species, and many either became extinct, or were on the verge of extinction when the ESA became law. Nevertheless, nearly three times as many listed species are increasing or stable than are decreasing.

Increase

Small Kauai Thrush (Myadestes palmeri) Hawaiian Goose (Branta sandvicensis) Laysan Duck (Anas laysanensis) Hawaiian Duck (Anas wyvilliana) Common Moorhen, "Hawaiian" subspecies (Gallinula chloropus sandvicensis) American Coot, "Hawaiian" subspecies (Fulica americana alai) Black-necked Stilt, "Hawaiian" subspecies (Himantopus mexicanus knudseni)

Stable

Hawaiian Hawk (Buteo solitarius) Akepa (Loxops coccineus coccineus) Hawaii Creeper (Oreomystis mana) Crested Honeycreeper (Palmeria dolei) Palila (Loxioides bailleui) Laysan Finch (Telespyza cantans) Maui Parrotbill (Pseudonestor xanthophrys)

Decrease

Hawaiian Dark-rumped Petrel (Pterodroma phaeopygia sandwichensis) Townsend's Shearwater, "Newell's" subspecies (Puffinus auricularis newelli) Hawaiian Crow (Corvus hawaiiensis) Now only in captivity, though captive population is stable Elepaio, "Oahu" subspecies (Chasiempis sandwichensis ibidis) Akiapola'au (Hemignathus munroi)

Undetermined

Nihoa Millerbird (Acrocephalus familiaris kingi) Nihoa Finch (Telespyza ultima)

Likely Extinct

Maui Akepa (Loxops coccineus ochraceus) Oahu Creeper (Paroreomyza maculata) Nukupu'u (Hemignathus lucidus) Kauai 'O'o (Moho braccatus) 'O'u (Psittirostra psittacea) Po'ouli (Melamprosops phaeosoma) Large Kauai Thrush (Myadestes myadestinus) Molokai Thrush (Myadestes lanaiensis rutha)

Hawaiian Goose



aiian Dark rumped Petrel



Po'ouli



THE ESA ACTS AS AN EMERGENCY ROOM FOR OUR RAREST SPECIES but what should we be doing to treat the less severe cases before they need intensive care?

hough vital for bird conservation, the ESA is a last resort to prevent species extinctions. By the time a species is listed under the ESA it may be extremely difficult to recover, and recovery may be slow. With few exceptions, non-listed declining bird species do not receive nearly the level of funding they require—and typically orders of magnitude less than listed species—in many cases forcing them toward endangerment. Not only is this a colossal risk, it is also a false economy. The cure comes at a much higher cost than would prevention.

Species that should be considered for significant, urgent conservation help (some of which are already considered ESA "Candidate Species") include the Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Lesser and Greater Prairie-Chickens, Long-billed Curlew, Mountain Plover, Xantus's and Kittlitz's Murrelets, and the Akikiki.

Many more species have seriously declining populations, tiny ranges, major threats, or all three, and should also be considered for additional conservation attention. Examples include the Blackfooted Albatross, Sprague's Pipit, Cerulean Warbler, and Henslow's Sparrow.

Additionally, several subspecies and socalled "Distinct Population Segments" have been overlooked and allowed to slip towards extinction. These include the Appalachian subspecies of the Bewick's Wren, and the northeastern U.S. population of the Loggerhead Shrike, both of which are now likely extirpated. A full inventory of declining subspecies is needed so that conservation action for the rarest birds can be implemented.









Alternative conservation strategies that deploy significant resources to halt species declines, or prevent the threats that could lead to ESA listing need to be implemented. Numerous conservation agencies and organizations are addressing these and the broader array of threats to wild birds. This work needs to be given the full support of federal and state governments.

Many more bird species outside the U.S. also face imminent extinction, yet we still lack a systematic approach to halting the global extinction crisis and averting the loss of Earth's biodiversity.

For more information on some current conservation initiatives, see Alliance for Zero Extinction at www.zeroextinction.org, North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) at www.nabci-us.org, and Partners in Flight at www.partnersinflight.org.

Top to bottom: Red-legged Kittiwake/USFWS, Mountain Plover/Dick Cannings/ NatureServe, Emperor Goose/USFWS, Henslow's Sparrow/ Laura Erickson, Binoculars.com

ABC'S POSITION STATEMENT



The Endangered Species Act (ESA)

is perhaps the most important piece of environmental legislation ever passed in the United States. The Act sets a high standard for the protection of threatened species that can be emulated around the world, and it can be credited with numerous success stories over its 30-plus year history. The recovery of the Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon, and growing or stable populations of many other listed species, such as the Whooping Crane, are living examples of the Act's success.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) believes the ESA is fundamentally sound. We also know that the Act can be improved to offer better protection for birds, plants, and other wildlife, and more incentives for landowners to provide some of that protection. ABC believes a strong and effective ESA should, as a minimum, contain the following provisions:

- All practical means must be made available to prevent the extinction of any species, even those with perilously small populations, as evidence shows that even these can recover.
- Decisions about the listing of species, their recovery goals, and their habitat and management requirements should be made by professional biologists and based on the best available science. Criteria for these decisions should be further clarified to help streamline the process and increase transparency.
- Take of listed species must be prohibited. Enforcement of this most basic of ESA provisions has given rise to collaborative habitat conservation planning across the country to the benefit of numerous species.
- Recovery Plans should be updated and better standardized; expenditures and progress to recovery goals must be more easily trackable.
- Protected habitat must allow for the inclusion of areas that are not currently occupied by a species, but can be restored so that habitat becomes suitable. Without this, many species with small populations will need

to remain on the endangered list forever. Designation and conservation of such habitat should be made in conjunction with landowner incentive packages aimed at encouraging active engagement from stakeholders.

- Through consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, all federal actions—including pesticide registrations that are currently exempted—must be held to a recovery standard that prohibits activities that would hamper recovery, or would significantly delay or increase the cost of the recovery of a listed species.
- If a species' recovery is being impeded by a failed Habitat Conservation Plan, the Act should require that the Secretary of the Interior retain full authority to intervene, while not imposing additional costs on participating landowners.
- The Act should provide economic incentives, such as priority treatment for federal grant programs and tax credits to landowners who voluntarily conserve habitat, particularly those who own land that currently harbors threatened and endangered species.
- Endangered species conservation efforts must be adequately funded. To accuse the Act of failing to save species when recovery efforts remain under-funded is equivalent to withholding medications, then blaming doctors for their patients' failure to recover.

ABC believes that a systematic effort to address the conservation needs of declining species before they reach the point where they need to be listed as threatened or endangered is also essential.

Additionally, concerted action in cooperation with our trading partners in other countries is needed to conserve endangered species and avert a global extinction crisis.

With the basic foundations listed above, we believe that the Act will retain its position as one of the cornerstones of environmental law in the United States.



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American Bird Conservancy, 2006

Piping Plover © Garth McElroy/VIREO