



## ***Inside Bird Conservation – June 2016***

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### **2016 State of the Birds Reports Conservation Works, but More Work Needed**

The [2016 State of the Birds](#) report shows that more than one third of all North American bird species need urgent conservation action, and calls for a renewed, continent-wide commitment to saving our shared birds and their habitats. Healthy environments for birds also benefit other wildlife and people, providing clean air and water, flood and erosion control, and coastal resilience. When bird populations struggle, it's a sign that our natural resources are stressed.

As the report documents, birds in ocean and tropical forest habitats are in crisis. More than half of the bird species in these ecosystems are on the [Watch List](#), which designates species that are most at risk of extinction without significant action. Small and declining populations, limited ranges, and damage to the environment threaten species in these two habitats; for example, ocean pollution and invasive species on islands are problematic for [ocean birds](#), while deforestation is a major challenge for tropical forest birds.

Steep population declines also threaten birds in coastal, arid land, and grassland habitats. In particular, long-distance migratory shorebirds and species that migrate from the Great Plains of Canada and the U.S. to [Mexico's Chihuahua grasslands](#) have lost, on average, almost 70 percent of their continental populations since 1970. Information about the report's methodology, the complete assessment database, animated maps, and other resources are available at <http://www.stateofthebirds.org>.

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### **Bird Conservation Session at the North American Ornithological Conference – August 16, Washington, D.C.**

August 16-20, 2016, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center is hosting the [North American Ornithological Conference \(NAOC\)](#). This year's theme is "Bringing Science and Conservation Together." In conjunction with this conference, there will be a Bird Conservation Alliance meeting August 16 from 1-5 p.m. highlighting connections between science and bird conservation policy. To attend, you must be registered for NAOC. (One-day registrations are available and will allow you to attend pre-conference morning workshops and training sessions as well as the opening reception in the evening. [Click here to register.](#))

Please note: When you register for NAOC, you will need to sign up for the Bird Conservation Alliance (BCA) meeting, which is listed under “Workshops and Training Sessions.” Look for “Bird Conservation Alliance – How to Effectively Engage in Conservation.” For the full meeting agenda, please see <https://abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/BCA-Meeting-Invite.pdf>.

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## **Endangered Hawaiian Geese at Risk from Disease Spread by Feral Cats**

A new study published in the *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* has documented evidence of “widespread contamination of habitat” in Hawai‘i caused by feral cats. This latest research has alarming implications for the endangered Hawaiian Goose (Nēnē) and other animals found throughout the Hawaiian Islands.

The peer-reviewed [study](#), conducted by scientists from the United States Geological Survey, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the University of Tennessee, and the state’s Division of Forestry and Wildlife, evaluated the prevalence of infection with *Toxoplasma gondii* among Nēnē, Hawai‘i’s state bird. *T. gondii* is a protozoan parasite that causes toxoplasmosis in humans and wildlife and is the “most-commonly encountered infectious disease” in Nēnē, the study reports. *T. gondii* relies on cats to complete its life cycle and is excreted into the environment through cat feces. A single cat may excrete hundreds of millions of infectious eggs (called “oocysts”) in its feces.

The study found between 21 and 48 percent of Nēnē tested positive for past infection, depending on the island. The island of Moloka‘i had the highest infection rate (48 percent), followed by 23 percent on Maui and 21 percent on Kaua‘i. According to the authors, the higher rate on Moloka‘i may have been due to “a conspicuously consistent presence of feral cats.”

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## **BLM Plan Threatens Marbled Murrelet, Spotted Owl, and Northwest Forest Plan**

*Marbled Murrelet’s protected zone reduced by 98 percent, carbon sequestration cut by 38 percent*

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing a final forest plan for the forests it manages in Oregon that weakens existing protections for the threatened [Marbled Murrelet and Northern Spotted Owl](#). These protections were put in place in 1995 as part of President Clinton’s Northwest Forest Plan.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) has submitted a [letter](#) to BLM, and is urging Obama administration officials to shelve the proposed plan and to keep the Northwest Forest Plan in effect until it can be updated next year in conjunction with the Forest Service.

“The Marbled Murrelet is an endangered species being placed at great risk by the BLM’s plan to increase logging in mature forests,” said Steve Holmer, ABC’s Senior Policy Advisor. “The Northwest Forest Plan provided for half-mile buffers needed to mitigate for the heavily fragmented landscape. This common-sense safeguard must be retained.”

Please take action today and send letters to the administration and Congress in support of a strong Northwest Forest Plan:

<https://secure2.convio.net/abcb/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=197>

## Conservation Groups Ask Interior Department to Reconsider BLM Forest Plan

Conservation groups are objecting to the Bureau of Land Management's Final Environmental Impact Statement and Resource Management Plans for Western Oregon (FEIS) because the plan appears to violate national environmental laws and departs from the Northwest Forest Plan. [Groups are recommending](#) that the Obama administration not finalize the plan and instead ask BLM to work with the Forest Service to develop a regional EIS that retains and builds upon the fundamental principles of the Northwest Forest Plan.

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## New Riders Threaten Greater Sage-Grouse

American Bird Conservancy strongly supports existing regional grouse conservation plans as well as follow-up policies to the administration's planning initiative, including the proposed 10-million-acre mineral withdrawal, prioritized grazing-permit renewal for sagebrush focal areas, public disclosure of soft and hard trigger reviews, and application of a no-net-loss mitigation policy. However, legislative riders threaten to exempt Greater Sage-Grouse from Endangered Species Act protection, or to overturn the federal management plans.

The House has passed a National Defense Authorization Act that would exempt the grouse from ESA for 10 years and overturn the regional conservation plans. The House Interior Committee bill also includes another one-year exemption to ESA listing for the grouse. Adding to our concern is an aggressive litigation campaign by local interests that seeks to do away with the plans. If these lawsuits against the government are successful, the Greater Sage-Grouse would be without any meaningful protection as a result of the moratorium on ESA listing that has been in effect the last two years and that is again being proposed by the House.

**It is essential the ESA be restored for Greater Sage-Grouse to keep the management plans in place, and that individual species not be exempted from the law. ABC is closely monitoring the situation in Congress and will keep you posted on opportunities for your voice to make a difference.**

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## Two Endangered Hawaiian Birds Receive Critical Habitat Protection

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced the [designation of 109,240 acres of critical habitat](#) for the Akohekohe (Crested Honeycreeper) and Kiwikiu (Maui Parrotbill) on the islands of Maui and Molokai. Part of a larger ecosystem designation covering 157,000 acres, the decision is an important step forward that will bolster habitat protection for these two endangered birds and 123 three other listed species.

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## [Share the Beach: Help Coastal Birds This Summer](#)

*Beachgoers Asked to "Fish, Swim, and Play from 50 Yards Away"*

Memorial Day marked the start of summer, when millions of Americans head to beaches to enjoy time in the sun. It's not just people who flock to the shore this time of year. Many birds have already staked out their own space on the beach, choosing nesting sites on the sand and raising their young along the shoreline, in the dunes, and in nearby marshy areas. American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is urging beachgoers to be mindful of breeding birds that share our vacation spots and help coastal birds this summer.

“Many beach-nesting bird species, like [Snowy Plover](#) and [Black Skimmer](#), are declining in population and really need our help,” said Kacy Racy, Gulf Conservation Program Manager Gulf for ABC's Gulf Coastal Program. Eggs and chicks risk being trampled or run over by vehicles, and young birds can be killed by predators when they are flushed from their nests or foraging areas.

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### **[Along Lake Erie, a Passionate Voice to Protect Birds](#)**

Black Swamp Bird Observatory's Kimberly Kaufman talks about migration, bird conservation, and the dangers of wind turbines for migratory birds.

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### **[In Restoring Native Prairies, Landowners Help Birds and Butterflies](#)**

By improving the landscape for grassland birds such as the Northern Bobwhite and Loggerhead Shrike, a new program in Texas and Oklahoma also helps another declining species: the monarch butterfly.... [Read more >>](#)

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### **Check out this Amazing Hummingbird Video**

Fierce, fast and found only in the Americas, hummingbirds are amazing. American Bird Conservancy protects over 200 of these spectacular flying jewels. Take a moment to appreciate these awe-inspiring birds in motion. See <https://youtu.be/qsgyl8betyg>

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### **Texas Eastern Willet Migration**



Jennifer Wilson (Texas Mid-coast NWR biologist) and GCBO biologist Susan Heath made an important recovery last month. In spring 2015, they put 10 small geolocators on breeding eastern Willets at the San Bernard NWR. In late March 2016, several of these birds returned from their unknown wintering grounds and Jennifer and Sue were able to capture one bird and retrieve its geolocator.

The data revealed that the bird, a male, departed Texas on July 10th. It flew across the Gulf of Mexico to the Yucatan Peninsula, spent a day there

(July 12th) and then flew straight to the Bay of San Miguel on the southern coast of Panama arriving on July 14th. It spent the winter there and on March 23 of this year, it began its flight back to Texas. It took a similar route to the one it used in July, returning to the refuge on March 26th. This represents a new wintering location for U.S. breeding eastern Willets, and adds a big piece to the migratory connectivity puzzle for this species! Jennifer and Sue hope to recover more geolocators before the birds depart again in July. *GCBO June E-News*.

## [Endangered Florida Sparrow Chicks Hatch in Captivity](#)

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) is hailing the hatching of the first captive-bred Florida grasshopper sparrow chicks, born at the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation (RSCF) in Loxahatchee, Florida. The species, says the FWS in a release, is one of North America's most endangered birds, with only an estimated 150 left in the wild. *Discovery News*.

## **Have News for *Inside Bird Conservation*?**

If you have a press release, op ed, magazine story etc about bird and habitat conservation, please send to Steve Holmer, [sholmer@abcbirds.org](mailto:sholmer@abcbirds.org).