



Bringing back the birds

Sage Grouse Conservation Initiative Making Progress but Threats Remain

On the one-year anniversary of new federal Greater Sage-Grouse conservation plans, federal agencies released [a report detailing accomplishments to date](#), and the Sage Grouse Initiative also has summed its contributions in a report, [Tracking Success](#). Another \$360 million has been committed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other agencies toward grouse conservation through 2018, implementing memos have been released, mitigation policies are beginning to be formulated, and the proposed mineral withdrawal Draft EIS is expected out in early 2017.

But members of Congress continue to try to scuttle this entire landmark effort by overturning the federal plans with legislative amendments. It is important to remember that the not-warranted finding for Greater Sage-Grouse was based in part on the required conservation and mitigation measures in the federal management plans. [Please send a letter to your elected officials today!](#)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced that the next status review for the grouse will be in 2020, by which time we should have indications if the plans have proved successful at reducing and mitigating habitat loss. Lek counts are currently up in most states due to good moisture the last two years, but grouse populations are cyclical. Monitoring will need to include the next trough in their cycle to better understand if conservation efforts are stabilizing or recovering the population.

In Washington State, the Columbia Basin population declined 25 percent last year from 1,000 birds to only 750 because of drought and poor habitat conditions exacerbated by extensive fragmentation. This population was stripped of its distinct population segment status in the not-warranted decision for Greater Sage-Grouse. **This is a serious problem that warrants immediate attention. ABC recommends that the Columbia Basin distinct population segment be the focus of added conservation measures and be included on the FWS National Listing Work Plan for a discretionary status review in FY 2017.**

[Hunting and Fishing Groups Support Sage-Grouse Conservation](#)

“The federal plans alone will result in the conservation of 67 million acres of some of the best public fish and wildlife habitat in the West, including upland and riparian habitats. These are the very same lands that support the fish and wildlife species our customers depend on and, as a result, millions of hunters, anglers, and outdoor recreation business owners are directly benefiting from the conservation of sage grouse,” said the groups.

[This Fall, Help Migratory Birds Avoid Window Collisions](#)

Migratory birds are on the move, winging their way from nesting and breeding grounds in North America to winter habitat in Central and South America and the Caribbean. It's a spectacular journey—but it's one that many of them will never finish. Habitat loss, outdoor cats, and pesticides all take their toll, but one of the biggest threats to the birds' safe travels is one they can't see. Hundreds of millions die every year in the U.S. when they collide with glass windows. High-rise offices create an obvious threat, but about half of collisions occur at private homes. Several birds of conservation concern are among the species most vulnerable to window collisions, including Golden-winged and Canada Warblers, Painted Bunting, and Wood Thrush. Help is as close as your local hardware or art-supply store. Window screens, painted designs, and bird tape or decals, properly applied, can all deter birds from flying into glass.

Watch a [new video PSA](#) from ABC that calls attention to bird collisions and showcases creative—and attractive—ways to help

[Experts Call for a National Conservation Network](#)

The group of 14 authors argues in a [paper](#) published in this month's edition of the journal *BioScience* that major challenges such as climate change are imperiling the United States' natural heritage. Absent a "cohesive and strong" plan, they say, we risk our ability to conserve that heritage for the future. The paper is notable, in part, for who the authors are. They include D.A. Boyce, Jr., national wildlife ecologist for the U.S. Forest Service; Raymond M. Sauvajot, associate director for natural resource stewardship and science in the National Park Service; and Kit Muller, coordinator for the National Landscape Initiatives at the Bureau of Land Management.

Global Study Finds Many Key Bird Habitats Remain Unprotected

A new study, [Persistent disparities between recent rates of habitat conversion and protection and implications for future global conservation targets](#), finds that many key habitats important for birds, such as temperate grasslands and tropical and subtropical broadleaf dry forests, remain largely unprotected, and that conversion of mangroves (93.4 percent), broadleaf dry forests (93 percent), tropical and subtropical coniferous forest (83.65 percent) and temperate broadleaf and mixed forests (81.27 percent) has reached crisis proportions. On the positive side, the study finds that habitat loss and the creation of new protected areas are beginning to balance out.

IUCN Calls for Protection of Primary Forests, Including Intact Forest Landscapes

Delegates at the IUCN World Conservation Congress [approved a resolution](#) calling on the world to protect its remaining primary forests and intact forest landscapes. The resolution recognizes the importance of forest protection to mitigate climate change, and to provide clean water, wildlife habitat and other irreplaceable resources. To download a map of the world's remaining intact forest landscapes, please see <http://www.intactforests.org/data.ifl.html>.

[The Ravages of Guns, Nets and Bulldozers](#)

New analysis of IUCN Red List data finds that “by far the biggest drivers of biodiversity decline are overexploitation and agriculture.” Of the species listed as threatened or near-threatened, 72 percent (6,241 of 8,688 species) are being overexploited for commerce, recreation, or subsistence. Unregulated hunting and fishing, live pet trade, unsustainable logging, expansion of agriculture, livestock farming and aquaculture, invasive species, energy production, and anthropogenic climate change (increases in storms, flooding, extreme temperatures, drought, or sea-level rise) are all posing significant threats to threatened species. The analysis also found that 80 percent of these species are affected by more than one major threat.

ABC Wins Award for Putting Sustainable Forestry to Work For Birds

ABC has received the Sustainable Forestry Initiative’s (SFI) President's Award for working with SFI Program Participants like Weyerhaeuser, Hancock Natural Resource Group, Resource Management Service, Enviva and Georgia Pacific to identify priority habitats for bird conservation, develop improved management scenarios, and focus on critical habitats and migration routes. SFI Program Participants in the Southeast provide habitat conditions that support Prairie Warblers, Prothonotary Warblers, Wood Thrushes and [Kentucky Warblers](#).

Annual Forest Disturbance Data from 1986-2010

Annual forest disturbances from fire, insects, and logging (at the 30 m scale) for all of the US from 1986-2010 is available at https://daac.ornl.gov/NACP/guides/NAFD-NEX_Forest_Disturbance.html.

[The Surprising Science of Wildfires and Tree-Killing Beetles](#)

Tom Veblen, a professor of geography at the University of Colorado at Boulder, has been involved in studying the effects of fire and mountain pine beetle outbreaks in the Rocky Mountains for 25 years. He is also the co-author of a [study led by Sarah J. Hart](#), also of U.C.-Boulder, that was published last year in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that looked at the effects of mountain pine beetles across forests in the Western U.S. (excluding Alaska) and found definitively that the area burned has not increased because of beetle-killed trees. This includes whether the trees were in the “red stage,” which means the dead needles are still on the trees, or the “grey stage,” in which the needles have fallen off.

CEQ Guidelines on Considering Climate Change in NEPA Reviews

The [CEQ] recommendations suggest that direct, indirect, and cumulative greenhouse gas emissions from a proposed project should be modeled if the tools and data exist. It also clarifies that agencies should account for greenhouse gas emissions emitted over the short and long term. That could be important for projects where land-use changes may occur and carbon stocks are affected. (Climatewire)

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/08/02/fact-sheet-white-house-council-environmental-quality-releases-final>

Carbon Implications of Current and Future Effects of Drought, Fire, and Management on Pacific Northwest Forests

Recent Pacific Northwest wildfires have added less carbon to the atmosphere than previously thought. This is mostly due to previous overestimates of combustion losses by fire (Campbell et al., 2007), and uncertainty in remotely sensed estimates of burnt areas in different severity classes (Meigs et al., 2009). For Oregon and Northern California, a reduction in the intensity of timber harvest, combined with an increase in the interval between harvests, could almost double carbon stocks from the current level of 3.2–5.9 Pg C, with an increase of 15 percent possible in 50 years (Hudiburg et al., 2009). It would take centuries, however, to make up for carbon that was lost through previous harvests (Schulze et al., 2012; Hudiburg et al., 2011; Harmon and Marks, 2002). There is considerable potential for increasing carbon sequestration in PNW forests by using longer rotations, particularly in those forests dominated by Douglas Fir in climatically buffered areas, because if undisturbed they can continue to accumulate carbon for centuries. If rotations in managed forests were extended to 100+ years, the benefit would be significant in terms of carbon stocks per unit ground area. (Law, B.E., Waring, R.H. 2015. Review and synthesis - Carbon implications of current and future effects of drought, fire and management on Pacific Northwest forests. *Forest Ecology and Management* 355 (2015) 4–14. <http://terraweb.forestry.oregonstate.edu/pubs/law.fmec.2015.pdf>)

Northern Spotted Owl Listed as California Endangered Species

By a unanimous vote, the California Fish and Game Commission listed the Northern Spotted Owl under the California Endangered Species Act. The Commission's decision ended the four-year review process, first initiated by the Environmental Protection Information Center's (EPIC) petition for listing in 2012. Northern Spotted Owls are threatened with extinction by past and ongoing habitat loss, primarily to timber harvest, and competition from the aggressive and invasive Barred Owl. The increasingly rare and old-growth-forest-adapted Northern Spotted Owls are now understood to be at risk from the use of rodenticides and other poisons used in large-scale trespass marijuana operations, and there is increasing concern about what the impacts of climate change will be on the forest ecosystems that the owls call home.

[Keep Oregon's Elliott State Forest Public](#)

Nearly 3.5 million acres in Oregon, from the forests of the Coast Range to the high desert, were once state-owned public lands. But Oregon sold off almost all of the state's public land heritage. The 91,000 acre Elliott State Forest, located in the Coast Range near Coos Bay, is one of the largest remaining areas of state public land. Unfortunately, Governor Kate Brown and the State Land Board are weighing a proposal to sell off the Elliott. Privatizing the Elliott could lead to the clearcutting of the surviving old-growth forest and the loss of habitat for the threatened Marbled Murrelet. **[Take a few moments to send a message to Kate Brown and the Stand Land Board.](#)** Please tell Gov. Brown the Elliott State Forest belongs to the public and you want to keep it that way.

[Protecting Hawaiian Birds a Priority at World Conservation Congress](#)

The International Union for Conservation of Nature concluded its World Conservation Congress in Honolulu having set policy goals for global sustainability in the face of climate change and increasing populations. It also created a number of small-scale resolutions, including one aimed specifically at [protecting Hawaii's bird species](#).

One of the IUCN's recommendations, formally recognizing Hawaiian birds as part of the U.S. avifauna, is under consideration by the [American Birding Association](#). Including Hawai'i in the ABA area would increase the conservation profile for the numerous globally endangered species found across the islands.

[Building a New Colony for Threatened Seabirds on Kaua'i](#)

A project years in the making took place on Kaua'i's north shore where eight threatened Newell's Shearwater ('A'o) chicks were flown by helicopter from their montane nesting areas to a new colony protected by a predator-proof fence at Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge. There they will be raised to fledging from the same site where 10 Hawaiian Petrels were [successfully translocated](#) last year in the hopes of starting new colonies of both species.

Another Hawaiian Bird, the 'I'iwi , Proposed for listing as a Threatened Species

"Over two-thirds of Hawai'i's native birds are extinct, and the USFWS' proposed listing of the 'I'iwi under the Endangered Species Act is an important step to prevent us from losing another species," said Chris Farmer, American Bird Conservancy's Hawai'i Program Director. "The increased exposure of 'I'iwi to non-native avian malaria because of climate change, along with the new threat from rapid 'ohi'a death in the bird's primary habitat on the Big Island, justify the proposed listing. As ABC's recent report <https://abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ESA-Report-2016-FINAL.pdf> showed, ESA listing combined with the necessary conservation resources leads to recovery. We can save the 'I'iwi."

Field Notes from the [Bird Calls Blog](#)

[Margaret Atwood's New Graphic Novel Stresses Dangers of Letting Cats Roam Outdoors](#)

Science and conservation play a role in the Canadian author's new graphic novel, "Angel Catbird," which features a character who is part owl, cat, and human.... [Read more >>](#)

[Texas' Fort Hood Is an Unlikely Haven for Golden-cheeked Warbler, Other Songbirds](#)

The wispy songs of two federally endangered birds sweeten the springtime air of Fort Hood, where scientists and military officials are teaming up to conduct important conservation research.... [Read more >>](#)

[On a Mission to Save the Tricolored Blackbird](#)

A bird that once was one of the most abundant birds in all of California is now declining so rapidly that it could meet the same fate as the Passenger Pigeon. ABC and others are working hard to put the Tricolored Blackbird on the path to recovery.... [Read more >>](#)

[In Latin America, It Takes a Village to Save Rare Hummingbirds](#)

A culture of conservation is taking root in several South American communities as residents find creative ways to help rare hummingbirds survive.... [Read more >>](#)

[Meet the Streamertail, the 'Most Beautiful Bird in Jamaica'](#)

Work is under way to enhance conservation opportunities to benefit Jamaica's national bird in one of the country's most remarkable protected areas: the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park. ... [Read more >>](#)