



Bird Conservation Funding Priorities in the 115th Congress



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Bird watching and waterfowl hunting are a popular pastimes that generate billions of dollars each for the U.S. economy¹, and birds play a critically important role controlling insects and maintaining healthy ecosystems as well as helping us to identify new environmental hazards.

As the 115th Congress is considering funding levels, American Bird Conservancy respectfully requests the Senator's/Representative's support for the following opportunities to advance bird conservation:

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) supports partnership programs to conserve migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Projects include habitat restoration, research and monitoring, law enforcement, and outreach and education with approximately three million acres of bird habitat improved.

Since 2002, the NMBCA has functioned as a matching grant program to fund projects that conserve the over 386 neotropical migratory birds--those that breed in or migrate through the United States and Canada and spend the non-breeding season in Latin America and the Caribbean.

ABC and partners have used funding from NMBCA and matching funds to reforest critical wintering habitat for Cerulean Warblers -- one of the most threatened neotropical migrant populations. Habitat destruction along with fragmentation

due to resource extraction in their wintering grounds has been one of the biggest threats to their survival.



The Baltimore Oriole. Photo by Greg Lavaty

NMBCA has a proven track record of success, the program has received more than \$53.9 million in grant funding to positively affect 3.7 million acres and leveraged more than \$205.3 million in non-federal contributions – a more than four-to-one match ratio. The program received \$3.9 million in the last budget.

[ABC urges reauthorization and funding in FY 2017 & FY2018 at \\$4.1 million.](#)

Migratory Bird Joint Ventures

The Joint Ventures for Migratory Bird Conservation are regional partnerships managed by Fish and Wildlife Service that identify conservation priorities and carry out projects to reverse population declines of at-risk bird species. The Joint Ventures (JVs) are essential to address the conservation needs of migratory birds, and they leverage significant matching contributions from partner organizations and foundations. By applying science and bringing diverse constituents together, JVs across the U.S. have created a model for solving wildlife management problems and restoring habitats critical to conserving declining species.

Nationally, JVs have protected, restored, or enhanced more than 22 million acres of important habitat for migratory bird species. There are currently 21 JVs in the United States that provide coordination for conservation planning and implementation of projects that benefit all migratory bird populations and other species. Since the program's inception in 1986, Joint Ventures have conserved over 22 million acres of critical habitat for wildlife and people and leveraged 34 dollars of support for every federal dollar spent.



Golden-winged Warbler. Photo by Greg Lavaty.

ABC plays an integral role in Migratory Bird Joint Ventures from sitting on many of the JV Management Boards to housing JV Coordinators and other staff members. ABC had led efforts by the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture and the Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture to protect important breeding habitat for the Cerulean Warbler that has declined by about 70 percent in the past 40 years, making it one of North America's most threatened migratory songbirds. ABC has been working with the JVs to improve forest health and restore and expand the types of habitats preferred by this species through forest management techniques based on sounds science.

[We urge that the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures be fully funded at \\$15 million.](#)

State and Tribal Wildlife Grants and NAWCA

State and Tribal Wildlife Grants and North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grants are essential programs benefitting bird and wildlife habitat conservation. NAWCA works to protect and restore quality wetland and associated upland habitat in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. Federal and non-federal funding through NAWCA has resulted in the conservation of more than 27.5 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands across North America. These projects promote long-term protection of acquired habitats and, due to the highly competitive grant process, each federal dollar is matched by at least \$2 on average.

State and Tribal Wildlife Grants provide funds for multi-partner projects that help state agencies and tribes develop and implement their State Wildlife Action Plans. These plans outline the steps needed to conserve wildlife and habitat before they become too rare or costly to restore.

[ABC urges funding these programs at \\$70 million for State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, and \\$34.145 million for NAWCA.](#)

Farm Bill Programs Advancing Bird Conservation

The Farm Bill contains an array of programs benefiting bird conservation such as the Conservation Reserve Program, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and EQIP to provide resources and incentives for landowners to engage in wildlife habitat conservation and forest restoration. Particularly important is U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service and its Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) which helps improve working forests and grasslands to benefit wildlife.

[ABC supports for funding for CRP, EQIP and the new Regional Conservation Partnerships Program at FY 2016 levels.](#)

Sage Grouse Conservation Incentives and Management Plans

Implementing federal grouse conservation plans, and continuing the NRCS's Sage Grouse Initiative to incentivize grouse habitat conservation on private and state lands offer the best hope to reverse the rapid decline of sage grouse populations.

[ABC urges support at the requested \\$78 million level for the BLM's sage grouse conservation plans and continued full funding for the NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative.](#)

Deforestation and Supporting Restoration

One the greatest threats to America's forests is permanent deforestation resulting from urbanization. Incentives, such as the Forest Service's Forest Legacy program, are crucial to enable landowners to keep their forests as forests. The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) is proving successful at advancing science-based projects on the National Forests which benefit bird species of conservation concern. ABC hosted the [Restoring Natural Communities](#) conference in 2014 to highlight successful forest restoration on the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri.

[ABC urges full funding of Forest Legacy and CLFRP.](#)

Endangered Species Recovery

[The Endangered Species Act: A Record of Success](#), an ABC report released in 2016, found that for U.S. mainland birds, 78 percent of those listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA have populations that are now stable, increasing or have recovered enough to be delisted. Forty-one listed U.S. birds are currently increasing in numbers and have the potential for delisting if this trend continues. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is asking for a \$7 million increase in ESA recovery spending which supports the activities that are bring back these endangered birds.

[ABC urges support for the requested \\$7 million increase in ESA recovery spending.](#)



Greater Sage-grouse by Tom Reichner, Shutterstock



Recovery of Threatened and Endangered Birds in Hawaii

Hawaii is the bird extinction capital of the world. Before human settlement Hawaii was home to at least 113 bird species found nowhere else on Earth. Since then, 71 Hawaiian birds have gone extinct. Of the 43 endemic bird species that remain, 33 are listed as Threatened or Endangered under the Endangered Species Act, with several that are on the brink of extinction, including ten species which have not been seen in as long as 40 years.

ABC is working to ensure that future generations of Americans will enjoy the magnificent Hawaiian bird diversity that we treasure today. Bringing back populations of the Palila, one of the first species federally listed as endangered in 1967, is one of ABC's top priorities in Hawaii. ABC is working with partners to increase the Palila population by restoring native forest, maintaining the new fence around most of the federally designated Palila Critical Habitat to keep out sheep and goats, as well as engaging in predator control in the core area where most Palila breed. ABC is also working with the Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife and the US Geological Survey to provide annual population monitoring data on the species.

Preventing further extinctions of Hawaiian birds is going to require significant, coordinated action among all conservationists, increased funding, and perseverance—but it is possible. The *2009 State of the Birds* report made clear that if resources are invested in conservation, we can save endangered wildlife, protect habitat, and solve the multiple threats that form the root of these bird declines. The State of the Birds report has led to an increase in bird conservation funding for Hawaii, but much work remains.

ABC proposes Congress establish a Native Hawaiian Bird Restoration Fund at \$20 million.

Marine Debris Cleanup

NOAA Marine Debris Program is authorized by Congress to work on marine debris through the Marine Debris Act, signed into law in 2006 and amended in 2012. The Act requires the program to “identify, determine sources of, assess, prevent, reduce, and remove marine debris and address the adverse impacts of marine debris on the economy of the United States, marine environment, and navigation safety.” Because this problem continues to grow, additional funding is needed for cleanup which will benefit albatrosses and petrels and other birds dying in large numbers from ingesting the debris.

ABC urges \$5 million in increased funding for the NOAA Marine Debris Program.

Additional Resources

[Saving Migratory Birds for Future Generations: The Success of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act](#)

American Bird Conservancy is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization dedicated to conserving birds and their habitats thru out the Americas. Please see www.abcbirds.org for more information.



Palila, Photo by Alexander Clark

Saving Migratory Birds for Future Generations:

The Success of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act



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