



*Bringing back the birds*

*Inside Bird Conservation – May 2017*

## **Migratory Birds – Legislative Briefing and Reception May 9**

Please join us in Washington, D.C. on May 9, from 2 to 7 pm, for [a legislative briefing](#) in cooperation with the Honorable Senators Sheldon Whitehouse and Ben Cardin on migratory bird conservation programs. The briefing will be followed by a reception to celebrate the remarkable annual migration of billions of birds. These back-to-back events, sponsored by American Bird Conservancy, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ducks Unlimited, and the American Birding Association, highlight bird conservation successes and how popular and important birds are to the American people and the economy. [Please RSVP here](#) by May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **Report Finds Booming Outdoor Recreation Economy**

The Outdoor Industry Association has released an [Outdoor Recreation Economy Report](#) finding that the outdoor recreation economy produces \$887 billion in consumer spending annually, sustains 7.6 million jobs, and generates \$65.3 billion in federal and \$59.2 billion in state and local tax revenue each year. The report also shows that one form of outdoor recreation, wildlife watching, generates \$30.2 billion annually in retail spending and sustains 235,825 jobs.

## **Economic Impact of a Vagrant Bird to be Assessed**

Last month, the Birding Community E-bulletin wrote about a feeder-visiting Black-backed Oriole at Sinking Springs, Pennsylvania (<http://tinyurl.com/SSpringsOriole>). Curiously, that oriole has been there since its apparent late-January arrival. By the end of last month, over 1,600 people had come to see this bird. Now researchers at the Centre for Ecosystem Science, School of Biological, Earth, and Environmental Sciences, UNSW, Sydney, Australia, are attempting to measure the impact of this and other vagrant rarities on the economy. They're collecting data on such issues as travel time, money spent, lists kept, and experiences had at the site.

---

## **Budget Cuts and Riders Threaten Bird Conservation and Public Lands**

President Trump's proposed 2018 budget would gut major programs and protections for birds and for America's public lands, and put decades of conservation work at risk. A large coalition of conservation groups [have weighed in against the cuts](#) and [against anti-environmental riders](#).

This collective effort has had a major impact on the FY 2017 spending bill agreed to this week which does not include any significant cuts to bird conservation programs, and only a one percent cut to

EPA's budget instead of the 31 percent cut sought by the administration. One harmful rider was accepted that prevents ESA protection for the Greater Sage-Grouse for one year but another threatening the Lesser Prairie Chicken was kept out.

Thanks to all who contacted your Senators and Representative. American Bird Conservancy urges all Americans to tell Congress that cuts to bird conservation programs will not fly. **Please speak out and contact Congress by [clicking here](#).**

## **[Review of National Monuments a Step Backward for Endangered Birds](#)**

President Trump signed an Executive Order today calling for the Interior Department to review National Monument designations exceeding 100,000 acres since 1996, with an eye toward reducing or eliminating areas that were protected for their historic, cultural, and environmental importance. Across the United States, National Monuments make a crucial difference for wildlife. For instance, the [Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument](#), the only monument created specifically to conserve biodiversity, provides habitat for the threatened [Northern Spotted Owl](#). The monument also creates an important habitat linkage for the species by protecting a ridge that connects the Coast Range with the Cascade Range.

## **Order Calls for More Offshore Drilling and Review of Marine Monuments and Protected Areas**

President Trump signed an Executive Order directing the U.S. Department of the Interior to expand oil and gas development leasing to new areas along the Atlantic and Arctic coasts and review National Marine Sanctuaries and Marine National Monuments designated during the past 10 years. Numerous environmental groups, including American Bird Conservancy, are condemning the measure, saying it's likely to harm wildlife as well as tourism and fisheries, and several state governors as well as 27 U.S. Senators have expressed their opposition to offshore drilling.

"Offshore drilling and resulting oil spills and pollution would threaten numerous shorebirds along both coasts as well as in the Arctic," said Steve Holmer, Vice President of Policy for American Bird Conservancy. "Endangered species and other wildlife are being put at needless risk by this backward-looking energy policy."

Oil and other petrochemicals are toxic to birds, and because oil floats on the surface of water, seabirds are particularly vulnerable to this form of pollution. Birds with severely oiled plumage lose their ability to keep warm, often dying of hypothermia before they are fatally poisoned. Species at risk along the Atlantic Coast include Brown Pelican, the imperiled Red-throated Loon, Roseate Tern, and the Black-capped Petrel, which is now under consideration for Endangered Species Act protection. The Order also calls for reconsideration of the Well Control Rule put in place after the Deepwater Horizon disaster to reduce the risk of oils spills.

## **Presidential Mitigation Memo Repealed**

President Trump has signed an [Executive Order regarding energy independence](#) that rescinds [President Barack Obama's Mitigation Memo](#) that called for all development impacts to be avoided or minimized, and that remaining impacts be compensated for. The memo called on federal agencies to

ensure that all development of public lands would be guided by landscape-level planning, apply best management practices, and provide for a net environmental benefit.

---

## **Offshore Wind Development Threatens Endangered Roseate Tern**

Anticipating increased mortality to the Endangered Roseate Tern from planned offshore wind development on the Atlantic coast, conservation groups are asking federal agencies to take steps to protect the remaining population of these already threatened birds. American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and several other national and regional conservation organizations have submitted a [letter](#) to federal authorities expressing their concerns.

## **Commentary: Wind turbines around the Great Lakes? A terrible idea for birds, bats**

The rush is on to build scores of large, commercial wind energy facilities in and around the Great Lakes, in Canada and the United States. From the proposed Galloo Island and Lighthouse projects in New York to Camp Perry and Icebreaker in Ohio and Amherst Island and White Pines in Ontario, developers are looking to flood the region with renewable energy. But at what cost? Commentary by ABC's Michael Hutchins published in *The Chicago Tribune*.

## **Wind Energy and Birds FAQ — Part 1: Understanding the Threats**

How does wind energy threaten birds? What birds are most threatened by wind energy development? Explore these questions and more with ABC's Michael Hutchins.... [Read more >>](#)

---

## **ABC PERSPECTIVES AND FIELD REPORTS**

### **Stopover Habitats and What Birds Need on Migration**

Billions of birds migrate vast distances every spring and fall. Along the way, they rely on healthy stopover habitats to provide food and shelter.... [Read more >>](#)

### **In Search of American Woodcock**

Join an American Woodcock research team as they venture into the field this spring to look for these unusual and elusive birds of the field and forest.... [Read more >>](#)

### **Passing Through: Migratory Connectivity and the Gulf of Mexico**

New technology and boots-on-the-ground research help biologists better understand bird migration patterns around the Gulf of Mexico.... [Read more >>](#)

# Neonicotinoid Pesticides

The problems extend well beyond bees...

## The Environment at Risk

Neonicotinoid (neonic) pesticides were developed in the 1950s and have since become the most used insecticides in the world. Their impacts on bees have been widely reported, but there's much more to know.

Neonics are similar in chemical structure to nicotine and are neuro-toxic to insects, earthworms, birds, and other wildlife. They are persistent in the environment, and recent studies suggest adverse human health impacts. A single treated seed can kill a songbird, and even tiny quantities can impact bird reproduction.



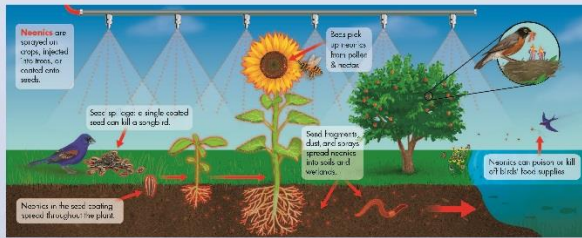
Neonics are used as a preemptive strike, killing both pests and beneficial insects. Today, they are applied to more than 100 million acres in the U.S. each year, and for some crops, farmers now have little choice but to buy neonic-coated seeds.

EPA has already acknowledged uncertainties regarding the environmental effects of neonics, but has yet to conduct a full risk evaluation for birds or endangered

species. Some states, cities, and retailers have already placed restrictions on neonics due to environmental concerns, as have some European countries.

American Bird Conservancy is calling for a ban on neonic-coated seeds, and for a moratorium on other uses while data is gathered to determine the full impacts. Join us in asking the EPA to open the public comment periods on their recent neonic risk assessments.

To learn more, visit [abcbirds.org](http://abcbirds.org).



## Neonics in Your Lunch Today?

Unlike many conventional pesticides, you cannot wash neonics off—they are integrated into the plant itself. We tested a range of fruits and vegetables purchased in congressional cafeterias and found neonics in more than 90% of the samples.



American Bird Conservancy (ABC), an organization dedicated to conserve and their habitats throughout the Air Pesticides and Birds Campaign has been birds from pesticide poisoning since 1980. ABC's work to protect birds from pesticide threats. Donate at: [www.abc.org](http://www.abc.org)

## Are Neonics Effective?

Many studies have found that neonics did not increase agricultural yields. Their use on crops can be likened to feeding healthy people antibiotics as a preventive measure. Not surprisingly, some pests are already starting to develop resistance.

In the meantime, by harming pollinators like bees, and natural pest predators such as birds and beneficial insects, neonics are sabotaging the very organisms on which farmers depend.



## Ad Highlights Risks to Birds from Neonicotinoid Pesticides

ABC has produced an ad campaign to raise the profile of the neonic and bird issue in the lead up to introduction of pollinator protection legislation in the House and Senate, and to encourage EPA to open comment periods on several neonics harmful to birds and bees that are currently under review.

## Boost to Wetland, Waterfowl Conservation, Through Conservation Grants, Federal Duck Stamp Funds

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, chaired by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, has recently approved \$17.8 million in grants for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners to conserve or restore more than 108,000 acres of wetland and associated upland habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds and other birds in 14 states throughout the United States. The grants, made through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), will be matched by nearly \$40 million in partner funds. NAWCA grants ensure waterfowl and other birds are protected throughout their lifecycles.

## Former USFWS Directors Urge Congress to Reauthorize NAWCA

(Birding Wire) On Mar. 30, six former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service directors sent a joint letter to leaders of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and the House Committee on Natural Resources urging for the reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA).

## Relocating Florida Scrub-Jays to Increase Populations

(Birding Wire) The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and Florida Forest Service, is relocating Florida scrub-jays to increase this threatened species' populations on public lands.

### **Renewable Fuel Standard Causing Loss of Grassland Habitat**

[Fueling Destruction](#), a new report by the National Wildlife Federation, details the impact of biofuels on America's grasslands, and the wildlife that depend on them. More than 7.3 million acres of grasslands, wetlands, and forests were converted into cropland between 2008 and 2012 (mostly grasslands). The land conversion largely took place on sensitive land and important wildlife habitat.

"Our analysis shows an undeniable connection between corn ethanol production and habitat destruction," said study co-author Ben Larson, senior manager of forestry and bioenergy for the National Wildlife Federation. "This massive loss of wildlife habitat is happening under the radar of the public and many policy makers—even though the impacts are enormous. These data are a wake-up call that EPA needs to rethink its implementation of the Renewable Fuel Standard while Congress enacts meaningful reform."

### **[A Cup of Joe That Is Good for Birds](#)**

(Smithsonian Insider) Many of us can't begin the day without a cup of coffee. Coffee is a major agricultural crop in many Central and South American countries and a multibillion-dollar industry around the world. Like many other crops, acres of cultivated coffee plants can have a negative effect on surrounding habitat and wildlife. Deforestation to clear land for coffee in the American tropics means fewer trees for non-migratory birds and the migratory birds that fly south for the winter, impacting the survival of both.

### **[People and Shorebirds Flock to Beaches](#)**

Several species of migratory shorebirds depend on beaches for a portion of their annual cycle. For some, beaches along the Atlantic Coast represent terminal refueling sites where shorebirds must forage to build up the energy reserves needed to make their final flight to arctic breeding grounds. Many of these species are sensitive to human disturbance. Human activities may force them from beaches to less profitable foraging areas may alter their foraging behavior or foraging times and ultimately reduce food intake and energy storage. For some species, human and shorebird use of beaches is not compatible. Our love and use of the beach effectively renders extensive swaths of the coastline off limits to some shorebird species. (Center for Conservation Biology)

### **Share the Shore with Beach-Nesting Birds**

Meanwhile in Texas, Kristen Vale and our Houston Audubon technician manned our 'Help Gulf Birds' outreach booth for Galveston Independent School District's STEM Rodeo. The event focused on educating students from 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, and we educated 125 students, parents, and staff about our Gulf program's focal species. Our "Share the Shore with Beach-nesting Birds" story was published in the Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach

Spring Newsletter. You can read it following this link: <http://www.glo.texas.gov/adopt-a-beach/pdf/AAB-Spring-Newsletter-2017.pdf>

## **Kirtland's in Cuba**

Blink and you'll miss it, but Anne Goulden didn't. She spotted and photographed a Kirtland's Warbler on a recent birding trip to Cuba, making this the first "official" sighting of the bird on Cuba. It's not just an interesting discovery, but also an important one, because the Kirtland's Warbler is one of the rarest songbirds in North America. [Read more about it on the blog!](#) (BirdsCaribbean March Newsletter)

## **Habitat loss threatens birds' future in La Plata County**

*(Durango Herald)* More than 1,300 bird species across the globe face extinction, driven by the loss of places to live and breed. Here in La Plata County, three birds [Mexican Spotted Owl, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, and Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo] are in worrying decline, their futures uncertain. For each bird, the impacts of human hands on the landscape have caused the destruction or disappearance of habitat, which has led the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list the animals on its endangered/threatened list.

---

## **Bird Conservation Programs In Review**

Our thanks to Judith Scarl, U.S. Coordinator of the [North American Bird Conservation Initiative](#) (NABCI) and Bird Conservation Program Manager for the [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#) (AFWA), for her work developing materials and messaging for bird conservation including the following overview and links:

Many of the migratory birds we enjoy in our backyards, that control insects in our community or that pollinate our crops, spend much of their lives outside of our country. National and international policies to protect migratory birds, such as the [Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#), help to ensure that our local birds are protected wherever they are in their annual cycle.

Paramount in this endeavor are several key national programs funding bird conservation at multiple scales in the U.S. The [North American Wetlands Conservation Act](#) funds habitat protection and restoration for waterfowl and other waterbirds across the U.S. and Canada. The [Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act](#) helps to support our migratory birds when they are on their wintering grounds south of our border.

The [Farm Bill](#) is a major source of federal funding for private lands conservation and provides numerous opportunities for conservation of birds and other wildlife. [State and Tribal Wildlife Grants](#) funding is provided to each state to proactively conserve Species of Greatest Conservation Need; these grants support multi-partner initiatives that protect species and habitats before they become too imperiled to adequately conserve.

Finally, [Migratory Bird Joint Ventures](#) are cooperative, regional partnerships that help to unify private and public partners engaged in bird habitat conservation and receive base funding through

the [Migratory Bird program](#) budget of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The JVs leverage federal funding with partner matches, allowing them to use a small amount of federal funds extremely efficiently.