



A Budget to Bring Back the Birds: Testimony by Steve Holmer, Vice President of Policy, American Bird Conservancy

To help begin to reverse bird declines and the loss of three billion birds since 1970, American Bird Conservancy respectfully requests significant funding increases for bird conservation programs in the FY 2022 Interior Appropriations bill. These include the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA), Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, State of the Birds Activities and mosquito control, and the early detection and control of invasive species.

In addition, funds are urgently needed to research solar energy producing glass products that reduce bird collisions, and to mitigate wildlife impacts from the rapid expansion of renewable energy development. Thank you for considering these requests.

Please Increase the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act to \$6.5 million.

Increase Migratory Bird Joint Ventures to \$25 million.

Increase State of the Birds Activities to \$7 million.

Provide for Controlling Mosquitoes on Hawaii by allocating \$10 million over three years.

Please Increase Funding for DOI Invasive Species Control by \$10 million.

Please Provide \$10 Million to Research and Develop Bird-Safe Solar Collecting Glass.

Provide \$10 Million to Mitigate Wildlife Impacts from Renewable Energy Development.

Migratory Birds: Please increase funding for migratory birds including wintering grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean by providing the authorized level of \$6.5 million for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, and \$25 million to fully develop the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures and provide a down payment on shovel-ready projects.

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. 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. NMBCA has helped conserve 400 species, including some of the most endangered birds in North America, and is a crucial source of funding essential to the conservation capacity of our Latin American and Caribbean partners.

Hawaii and Mosquito Control: We greatly appreciate the funding provided in the FY 2020 spending agreement for State of the Birds Activities dedicated to arresting the bird extinction crisis in Hawaii. For FY 22, please allocate \$7 million for State of the Birds activities, double the current amount, and \$10 million over three years for mosquito control in Hawaii to save endangered forest birds and prevent multiple imminent extinctions.

Invasive Species: Early Detection and Rapid Response (including Eradication) seeks to identify non-native species before the founding population becomes established or spreads so widely that eradication is no longer feasible. Rapid Response is then employed to eradicate the founding population. We recommend increasing funding for Early Detection and Rapid Response by \$10 million.

Reducing Window Collisions: Provide \$10 million in annual funding to research and develop bird-safe glass products, including solar-collecting windows.

Renewable Energy Wildlife Mitigation Fund: Provide \$10 million in annual funding to minimize impacts from wind and other renewable energy development.

Endangered Species Recovery: Increase funding for avian recovery programs, particularly in Hawaii, and for critically endangered birds such as California Condor, Spectacled Eider, and Florida Grasshopper Sparrow, and \$4 million for recovery of condors, eiders, and other critically endangered birds.

Additional Recommendations to Advance Bird Conservation

Migratory Bird Conservation

We urge the Committee to:

1. Express support for restoring protections for birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and establishing an incidental take permitting system for industrial sectors known to cause significant mortality.
2. Recommend FWS issue a Songbird Stamp similar to the Duck Stamp to raise funds for migratory bird programs to engage the growing number of bird watchers.
3. Propose expansion of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act at a higher funding level and with a reduced 1:1 match requirement.

Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation

Please oppose inclusion of the ESA listing exemption in the base bill, and any amendments what would add it back in. We recommend that the Presidential Memorandum, “Mitigating Impacts on Natural Resources from Development and Encouraging Related Private Investment,” be put back into effect by the Biden administration and that the FWS, BLM, and Forest Service complete the mitigation policies called for in the Memo. The Greater Sage-Grouse conservation plans need to be updated based on the best available science, as well as

the Presidential Mitigation Memorandum referenced above. And that other key agency policies and internal memoranda critical to the 2015 conservation strategy, including the proposed mineral withdrawal must be reenacted and completed to retain grouse strongholds.

Renewable Energy Development

To minimize wildlife impacts of renewable energy facility development we recommend that federal agencies avoid ecologically important areas on public lands and develop a compensatory mitigation fund to offset unavoidable impacts. We encourage promotion and subsidies for energy efficiency measures and distributed solar energy development, which have the least impacts to birds compared to other energy options.

Offshore wind energy planning has been underway for years, and is just coming to fruition. Federal and state agencies have done an admirable job of finding appropriate locations for these facilities, but as the first facilities are approved and constructed it becomes imperative to effectively monitor and mitigate impacts to birds.

Facilities should be required to use the best available technology to document bird collisions with wind turbines. This is particularly important for listed species like the Roseate Tern, which are at risk of such collisions. Studies are needed to assess collision risk to the hundreds of millions of songbirds that make nocturnal migratory flights offshore. And work must begin now to develop a compensatory mitigation fund to offset impacts to birds.

Reducing Bird Collisions with Windows on Public Lands

To build on the significant progress underway to retrofit National Park Service structures we recommend \$1 million in funding and the following report language.

All agencies under the jurisdiction of this Act are directed to consider bird-safe building design and materials for the structures they manage, build, or retrofit. In addition, agencies are directed to take low cost or no cost action, such as identifying problem windows and buildings that routinely cause collision, turning off interior lights in those buildings at night, and applying films or other adhesives to glass windows in those buildings to reduce bird collisions.

Public Lands, Reforestation, and Forest Carbon

Please recommend:

1. The protection of existing carbon stores in mature and old growth forests that provide habitat for the Marbled Murrelet and Northern Spotted Owl.
2. Reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act to promote sustainable forestry on federal forests in Oregon, and provide funding for rural counties and forest restoration nationwide.
3. Expansion of easement programs such as Forest Legacy to keep forests as forest, and avoid their conversion to non-habitat.

4. Creation of new landowner payment mechanisms, such as a national carbon credit system, to incentivize good forest management practices, and reforestation.

Oceans and Seabirds

Please recommend: The Senate vote to accede to the Agreement for the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels, and enact the Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act (H.R. 1305 in the 116th Congress) to implement the agreement. Federal agencies support policies to reduce plastic pollution that is filling up the oceans and being ingested by seabirds.

Pesticides

Please recommend: The Environmental Protection Agency ban chlorpyrifos, restrict the pre-emptive use of all currently registered neonicotinoid products, while conducting a scientific review of their impacts to birds, insects, and the overall environment, and for FWS to ban the use of neonicotinoids on National Wildlife Refuges.

Lead Ammunition and Fishing Tackle

As many as 16 million birds die each year from ingesting lead, with significant impacts to Bald and Golden Eagles. Worst of all, recovery of the endangered California Condor is currently being limited by ongoing lead poisonings. To address this threat, we urge the Committee to please recommend that:

1. FWS move to phase out toxic ammunition and fishing tackle within a reasonable time period.
2. FWS provide interim protection from lead for National Wildlife Refuges and important bird areas.
3. FWS provide funds for hunter education, outreach, and acquisition of nontoxic products to facilitate a smooth transition away from lead.

Thank you for considering these requests.

Sincerely,



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