

Migratory Bird Treaty Centennial 1916-2016

A Strategic Framework and Plan for Celebrating 100 Years of Bird Conservation Conserving Today's Birds for Tomorrow

Migratory birds are a common thread that connect the United States, Canada, and many other countries. The United States is proud of the successful conservation of its wild birds, especially through the four migratory bird treaties (or conventions) we hold with Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Russia that protect populations of shared bird species. There is perhaps no better example of international collaboration than our efforts to support healthy and sustainable migratory bird populations beyond our borders.

In 1916, the world was in the midst of World War I. Conflict between nations was the headline of the day. Overuse of natural resources was the norm, whether it was unsustainable hunting, habitat destruction, or feathers for millinery trade. On May 25, 1900, U.S. President William McKinley signed the Lacey Act into law. Among other things, this made it a federal crime to poach game in one state with the purpose of selling it in another or to transport illegally captured animals across state lines. On March 14, 1903, U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt signed an executive order establishing Pelican Island in Florida as the first federal bird reservation. In 1911, Roosevelt established a network of 55 bird reservations and national game preserves for wildlife, the forerunner to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The 1913 passage of the Weeks-McLean Act established federal regulation of migratory bird hunting and prohibited importation of wild bird feathers for women's fashion. This was first U.S. law ever passed to regulate the shooting of migratory birds--a tremendous milestone.

Then, on September 1, 1914, the last known Passenger Pigeon, Martha, died in the Cincinnati Zoo. This is a bird that was once the most abundant landbird in North America, with an estimated 3-5 billion individuals (that means that at one time approximately one out of every four birds in the United States and Canada was a Passenger Pigeon). But habitat loss and human disturbance of virtually every nesting colony drove it to extinction in about 30 years.

Amidst this conflict and extinction, partners in both countries saw the overwhelming need and created an international agreement to cooperatively manage and protect birds that migrate internationally. It started in 1916, when the U.S. and Great Britain (on behalf of Canada) entered into the Migratory Bird Treaty - known in Canada as a Convention - to protect our shared resources. The Treaty for the Protection of Migratory Birds was signed in Washington, D.C. on August 16, 1916.

The Treaty unites the efforts in the United States and Canada to protect birds that cross our international boundaries. It connects our two countries with Federal, State, private, non-government, tribal, and international partners, who share our long, successful history of

conserving, protecting, and managing migratory bird populations and habitats. And importantly, the treaty was the foundation for significant achievements in bird conservation since then. In 1917, Canadian Parliament passed the Migratory Bird Convention Act. In 1918 the U.S. Congress followed suit, passing the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

In subsequent years, the United States signed similar treaties with Mexico (1936), Japan (1972), and Russia (1976). Celebrating the Centennial of the first treaty allows us to bring together those who have contributed to the subsequent success of these treaties. It also allows us to reflect on the outstanding work that has been done and to set the stage for what comes next in bird conservation.

We are a culture that celebrates milestones. Throughout 2016, we will celebrate the Centennial of the Treaty between the United States and Canada to protect our shared birds. But we want to do more than just celebrate. We will launch the next century of migratory bird conservation, using the Centennial as an opportunity engage current and potential partners, Congress, Parliament, and the American and Canadian public in increasing support for bird conservation across our nations and beyond our borders. In the United States, efforts will be led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; in Canada, Environment Canada will take the lead. Our many partners will be vital parts of this celebration, and we look forward to working together to honor our collective achievements.

We need everyone's input, ideas, and commitment. How have the migratory bird treaties impacted your organization or agency? How should we celebrate? What messages should we share? What events should we plan? Where can we collaborate? Who else should be involved? This document lays a foundation for how we will celebrate the Centennial, an important milestone in North American bird conservation.

About the Strategic Framework

The Strategic Framework provides a structure for the Service, Environment Canada, and our partners to work together to reach our goals and objectives for the Migratory Bird Treaty Centennial. It is a living document and will be amended and updated as new partners join in the effort.

This strategy is guided by an overall vision and goals centered around four overarching themes: awareness, action, increased support, and engagement. Each goal has target audiences, followed by audience-specific objectives and broad key messages. We anticipate every organization and agency involved in the Centennial celebration will consider their own objectives and decide what activities best help meet their mission and goals. Some objectives and activities will be the same across agencies/organizations and we will work together to achieve them. Others may be similar, but adapted or modified. Still others will be agency/organization-specific, designed to support individual goals relating to bird conservation.

Although there will be many new activities, we encourage everyone involved in the Centennial to first consider what you are already doing. Then think about how you can

leverage the Migratory Bird Treaty Centennial to increase the impact of your event or activity. Wherever possible we hope to avoid the reinvention of the wheel. Rather, we want to promote and highlight existing efforts and use them to celebrate this important milestone.

While the information included in this document is Service-centric, our hope is that partners will use it to develop their own ideas, find their role, and identify opportunities to engage in the Centennial celebration. We also hope partners will join the conversation and help the Service improve our own efforts. As stated earlier, this is a living document. We want to develop and implement this as a collective bird conservation community. The Centennial celebration is a large one, and we welcome and celebrate diversity, both in terms of who is involved and how we celebrate.

Our Vision

A world where birds and people thrive.

Our Goal

Create awareness, promote key actions, increase support, and expand opportunities for engagement in the conservation of migratory birds.

Detailed Goals and Tactics

1. Create **awareness** about the importance of migratory bird conservation.
 - a. Encourage news media stories about treaty-related achievements, migratory birds, and habitat conservation
 - b. Connect people to migratory bird conservation via social media and other means
 - c. Celebrate the importance of the migratory bird treaties and migratory birds
2. Promote key **actions** to help birds.
 - a. Increase participation in citizen science programs by developing and distributing information about opportunities
 - b. Expand property/homeowner use of best practices (lights out, reduce collisions, wildlife-friendly gardens) through outreach to refuges, partners, governments and other audiences
3. Increase **support** for funding initiatives and maintain funding for migratory bird conservation.
 - a. Strengthen international partnerships for migratory bird conservation outside of the United States through outreach tools and materials to audiences such as the Organization of American States
 - b. Increase knowledge and understanding of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and other key legislation
4. Expand opportunities for **engagement** in birdwatching, hunting, and conservation.
 - a. Support bird-focused programs and festivals in Urban Bird Treaty Cities and Urban Refuge Partnerships
 - b. Increase sales of Duck Stamps and Jr. Duck Stamps and participation in the Junior Duck Stamp Program

- c. Promote youth birding and hunting opportunities on national wildlife refuges and other locations

Topline Key Messages and related goals (see below)

- Migratory birds connect people to nature and provide multiple benefits – ecological, economic, aesthetic and recreational – to humans, communities and the natural environment. This year, we celebrate the centennial of the signing of the most important document to aid in their protection. (Goals 1, 3 and 4)
- The Service aims to coordinate and galvanize efforts to protect migratory birds for the generations to come. (Goals 1, 2, 3, 4)
- National and international cooperation and action are essential in conserving and protecting the world's migratory birds. Flying over long distances involves the crossing many international borders and entering different political areas with their own environmental politics, legislation and conservation measures. International cooperation between governments, NGOs and other stakeholders is required along the entire flyway of a species to share knowledge and to coordinate conservation efforts. (Goals 2 and 4)
- Conservation works; where we have invested in healthy habitats, birds are doing well. Healthy birds mean healthy forests, wetlands, grasslands, shorelines and oceans, even healthy cities! By conserving birds we conserve our American landscapes and the economies and ways of life that depend on them. From farmers and ranchers to outdoor recreationists to children, we all benefit when birds thrive. There is still much work to be done as indicators show that some bird species are declining rapidly. (Goals 2 and 4)
- Migratory birds are good indicators of environmental health because they are visible and relatively easy to study. Habitats that birds need are also valuable to people. Healthy habitats for birds improve water quality, contribute to flood control, buffer coastal erosion, recharge ground water and help buffer the impacts of global climate change. (Goals 1 and 2)

Supporting Messages

- On Aug. 16, 1916, the United States and Great Britain (on behalf of Canada) adopted a uniform system of protection for certain species of birds that migrate between the United States and Canada. This landmark treaty provides the foundation for domestic implementation of migratory bird conservation and management programs.
- Many bird species migrate as part of their lifecycles. Migration is a perilous journey and involves a wide range of threats, many of which are caused by humans.

- Habitat loss due to urban development, agriculture and other human activities are the main threats to migrating birds, which are dependent on suitable breeding and wintering grounds as well as stopover sites along their flyways where they can rest and feed. The loss of any of these sites used by the birds during their annual cycle could have a dramatic impact on the birds' chances of survival.
- Birdwatchers have a significant economic impact through purchasing bird food and equipment, hotel accommodation, travel and tour tickets, and birding festivals, creating thousands of jobs and generating millions of dollars in tax revenues in association with those recreation opportunities. According to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation:
 - 46.7 million Americans enjoy watching and feeding birds
 - \$107 billion is spent on birdwatching equipment and travel in the U.S.
 - 666,000 jobs are created due to birdwatching
 - \$13 billion in local, state, and federal tax revenue results from birdwatching
 - 17.8 million Americans travel to see birds, putting millions into local economies
 - Birds also can make a difference to local economies. A 2011 study by Texas A&M University concluded that nature tourism -- dominated by bird watching -- brings in over \$300 million a year to the Rio Grande Valley economy. This direct economic contribution led to a total county-level economic output of \$344.4 million and 4,407 full and part-time jobs annually.
- Through their purchases of Federal Duck Stamps, waterfowl hunters and others who buy the stamps have contributed more than \$850 million to the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, which has been used to acquire and protect more than 6.5 million acres of habitat for birds and other wildlife. Moreover, through excise taxes on equipment and gear, and their expenditures on travel, accommodations and meals, waterfowl hunters contribute tens of millions of dollars annually to conservation and local economies.
- Migratory birds contribute important environmental benefits, including pollination, insect and rodent control, carrion disposal and seed dispersal. Bird conservation benefits society and specific economic sectors. Birds have been estimated to consume 98 percent of certain insect pests such as codling moths, enhancing agricultural production and reducing the need for toxic pesticides. Birds pollinate many plant species, particularly flowers.

Objectives

We have created broad objectives for each of the four overarching Centennial goals. This is a living document and the details will change and grow as we collectively brainstorm and assume responsibilities and tasks.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be a challenging but critical piece of our efforts. Once we have decided on

activities, we will develop metrics to track whether our efforts are working. We will enter measures of these metrics in a shared database as activities occur, allowing us to make adjustments where necessary. Metrics will include things like number of programs offered, number of participants, website visits/downloads, articles published, etc.