

Migratory Bird Program

FY2022 Accomplishments

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Program works with partners to protect, restore and conserve bird populations and their habitats for the benefit of future generations by ensuring long-term ecological sustainability of all migratory bird populations, increasing socioeconomic benefits derived from birds, improving hunting, bird watching, and other outdoor bird-related experiences, and increasing awareness of the value of migratory birds and their habitats.

Guided by our [Strategic Plan](#), every year we work with hundreds of conservation partners to conserve over one thousand different species ensuring these natural treasures will be around for future generations to admire and enjoy.

Celebrating Our National Successes in FY 2022

Our multi-million dollar grant programs reached new milestones as part of our collective efforts to conserve crucial bird habitat. The [North American Wetlands Conservation Act](#) funded 98 grants in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, totaling \$112.4 million in grant funds and \$190.9 million in match. And eight of these recipients

were first-time grantees! [The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act](#) funded 28 projects in 18 countries, totaling \$4.8 million in grants and \$16.8 million in match, helping to protect bird habitat throughout the western hemisphere.

We worked with our partners to develop and implement best practices for conserving birds with a variety of stakeholders, industries and others, and developed draft regulations governing the incidental take of migratory birds. We developed and have started to implement our long-term vision to create more effective regulations, including a proposed rule to improve the [incidental take of bald and golden eagles](#).

And in one of the most important touchpoints we have with the American public, we continued to improve our interactions via the [ePermits](#) system, with a focus on using permits as a conservation tool.

Bring Birds Back: The Service's Response to the Loss of 3 Billion Birds

The publication of the [Decline of North American Avifauna](#) estimated that North America has lost nearly 3 billion breeding birds since 1970, roughly equivalent to losing one in four adult birds in 50 years. In response to this report, we identified five groups of birds and one major threat (referred to as the 5 & 1 priority groups) where we can amplify ongoing actions to have an immediate impact. Working with partners, we aim to support and implement high-impact, common-sense [conservation actions for birds now and into the future](#).

The Service is focusing on the following 5 & 1 priority groups:

- Shorebirds
- Aerial Insectivores
- Seabirds
- Grassland birds
- Forest birds
- Collisions

During FY 2022, we joined the international campaign to "[Dim the Lights for Birds at Night](#)" as part of



World Migratory Bird Day. This effort to eliminate or reduce unnecessary lighting to reduce bird collisions during peak bird migration was an opportunity to reach many audiences, including our own Service employees across the country to do their part at their own offices. Our Urban Birdy Treaty Program, and all the Pacific, Midwest, Mountain-Prairie and Northeast Regions worked diligently to identify offices that have problematic bird collisions and then retrofit the problematic glass at those offices. Our staff also worked with conservation organizations, federal and state agencies, local businesses, and the public to increase awareness about the issue of bird collisions and identify opportunities for improvement.

To address the decline of grassland birds, the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture in our Mountain-Prairie Region worked with five Natural Resource Districts to acquire \$2.1 million to manage fire practices on 20,000 acres, and enhance habitat on 90,000 grassland acres, guided by our grassland bird conservation design tools.

Our staff in Alaska improved their population estimation of spectacled eiders, a seabird that is also listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. With the shrinking of winter sea ice off the coast of Alaska, threatened Spectacled eiders are more spread out than they have been in the past, making it hard for the Service to count them. By applying conventional distance sampling methods to recent aerial survey counts, we identified an estimated additional 123,000 more spectacled eiders in winter survey areas, vastly improving the accuracy of our estimates that are used to inform our conservation actions.



Monitoring Bird Populations

Specifically for waterfowl, our agency has been conducting surveys and monitoring waterfowl populations for close to 70 years. One of the most well-known surveys we conduct is the [Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey](#), conducted by airplane, helicopter, and ground crews over a 2 million square mile area that covers the principal waterfowl breeding areas in North America, including parts of Alaska, Canada, and the northcentral and northeast U.S. The data collected each year during the survey are reported in the annual [Waterfowl Population Status Report](#), which wildlife managers use to develop annual harvest regulations to ensure that waterfowl continue to thrive.

We also implemented the new online [Migratory Bird Harvest Survey](#), inviting 400,000 hunters each year to report their harvest of ducks, geese, sea ducks, brant, mourning and white-winged doves, band-tailed pigeons, American woodcock, sandhill cranes, Wilson's snipe, American coot, rails, and gallinules across the United States.

Across the country our staff are implementing critically important surveys to determine the status of imperiled bird species. For example, in the Mountain-Prairie Region, our staff supported the Intermountain West Shorebird Survey, a massive effort to re-survey western wetlands to estimate shorebird use, population declines, and habitat loss.

In addition, our Alaska staff conducted systematic transect-based photographic surveys of staging black brant in 2017-2019 and used the resulting photos to develop a machine learning process to reduce manual photo counting by 90%. The resulting photographic survey protocol reduces bias, minimizes disturbance to flocks, and improves safety for our pilots.



The Importance of Partnerships

We work with hundreds of diverse partners to support critically important bird management plans, treaties, [migratory bird joint ventures](#), and initiatives including [Partners in Flight](#), the [U.S. Shorebird Plan](#), the [North American Waterbird Plan](#) and the [North American Waterfowl Management Plan](#).

This year our migratory joint ventures continued to strategically tackle priority habitat needs of declining birds and address broader landscape resource concerns. For example, the Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Joint Venture in the Midwest Region facilitated the development of four new Conservation Delivery Networks in the region and supported nearly 40,000 acres of habitat conservation projects with their partners.

And a new and creative collaboration by the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture partners in the West Gulf Coastal Plain of Arkansas and Louisiana leveraged the power of Natural Resource Conservation Service's Regional Conservation Partnership Program to restore and manage over 30,000 acres of high priority open pine and grassland habitats essential for sustainable populations of declining songbirds, pollinators, and game birds.

In the Pacific Southwest Region, the Central Valley Joint Venture partnership published a short [documentary](#) that beautifully illustrates their collaborative approach to ensuring resilient bird populations in the Central Valley and the whole Pacific Flyway for future generations.

In a purposeful effort to reinforce our commitment to our Tribal relationships and our respect for Tribal sovereignty, our staff in the Southwest Region worked with the Comanche Nation government to place the Tribal Eagle Aviary permit under the Tribal Entity: Sia Ethno-Ornithological Initiative. This resolution will allow the aviary to remain as a valuable resource to the Comanche Nation.

Our Southeast Region worked to institutionalize the Service's Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Initiative across all their programs. In an innovative approach to reach new partners, they developed and conducted a Historically Marginalized Landowner Workshop in Mississippi that informed minority landowners of free or low-cost opportunities for conservation land improvements with potential increased income benefits.

Into FY 2023

As we enter a new fiscal year, we will continue to work with our partners to provide leadership in bird conservation across the country and deliver first-class customer service to the American public.

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