U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Migratory Bird Program

Focal Species Strategy

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service initiated a Focal Species strategy for migratory birds to better measure its success in achieving its bird conservation priorities and mandates. The Focal Species strategy involves campaigns for selected species to provide explicit, strategic, and adaptive sets of conservation actions required to return the species to healthy and sustainable levels.

The Service remains committed to landscape-scale, integrated bird conservation for the full array of species of management concern. The Focal Species approach is just one component of the Migratory Bird Program and complements other work on migratory birds and their habitats.

The goal of the Focal Species strategy is to measure the success in achieving bird conservation and to increase accountability.

Red Knot
Photo Credit: Greg Breese USFWS

Selection of Focal Species

The list of Birds of Management Concern (BMC) is a subset of the species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that pose special management challenges due to a variety of factors. The BMC list consists of species, subspecies, or populations of the over 1000 bird species found in North America.

The BMC list reflects the results of extensive consultations with partners and processes and criteria established over many years. This list is dynamic and is revised as new information concerning species status becomes available. To select Focal Species, the Migratory Bird Program identifies species from the BMC list that need investment because they: 1) have high conservation need, 2) are representative of a broader group of species sharing the same or similar conservation needs, 3) act as a potential unifier for partnerships, and/or 4) have a high likelihood that factors affecting status can be realistically addressed.

Considering a combination of characteristics possessed by the species, status of management planning, and expert opinion, and with due consideration to external factors that might affect, either positively or negatively, the Service's ability to enhance migratory bird populations, Focal Species are identified over the short term to receive specific attention. These species/populations are not the only ones that meet the criteria, but are species the Migratory Bird Program will focus conservation efforts over the next five years.

Focal Species Campaigns

Focal Species campaigns entail compilation or identification of comprehensive management/conservation strategies into an action plan (a species-specific mix of monitoring, research, assessment, habitat and population management, and outreach) necessary to improve the conservation status; a clear statement of the responsibilities for actions within and outside the Program; a focus of Service resources on implementing those actions; and communications to solicit support and cooperation from partners inside and outside the Service.

Lesser Scaup
Photo Credit: Dave Menke USFWS

Partner Support

The engagement of partners and stakeholders is essential for creation and implementation of action plans and for existing work in support of maintaining or increasing the number of species of migratory birds at healthy and sustainable levels. Contact the Regional Migratory Bird Offices, the Division of Migratory Bird Management, or the website http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/CurrentBirdIssues/Management/FocalSpecies.html for more information on the Focal Species strategy and the Focal Species campaigns now underway.

The King Rail (Rallus elegans) has been identified as a focal species due to severe population declines in the northern, central, and eastern parts of its range in North America.
Photo Credit: USFWS

FY2012 – FY2016 Focal Species

Emperor Goose

Brant (Pacific Black)

Canada Goose (Dusky)

Trumpeter Swan (Rocky Mountain population)

American Black Duck

Mottled Duck

Northern Pintail

Greater Scaup

Lesser Scaup

Common Eider (American and Pacific)

White-winged Scoter

Yellow-billed Loon

Laysan Albatross

Black-footed Albatross

Black-capped Petrel

Great Shearwater

Audubon's Shearwater

Reddish Egret

Golden Eagle

Bald Eagle

Yellow Rail

Black Rail

King Rail

Snowy Plover (Interior U.S. and Gulf Coast populations)

Wilson's Plover

Mountain Plover

American Oystercatcher

Black Oystercatcher

Upland Sandpiper

Long-billed Curlew

Hudsonian Godwit

Marbled Godwit

Red Knot (C.c. rufa and C. c. roselaari)

Semipalmated Sandpiper (Eastern population)

Dunlin (C. a. arcticola)

Buff-breasted Sandpiper

American Woodcock (Eastern and Central management unit)

Black Tern

Gull-billed Tern

Common Tern (Great Lakes population)

Kittlitz's Murrelet

Burrowing Owl

Bicknell's Thrush

Wood Thrush

Bendire's Thrasher

Sprague's Pipit

Golden-winged Warbler

Cerulean Warbler

Grasshopper Sparrow

Henslow's Sparrow

Painted Bunting

Bobolink

Tricolored Blackbird

Rusty Blackbird

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Golden Eagle
Photo Credit: Dave Menke USFWS

Wood Thrush
Photo Credit: Steve Maslowski USFWS

Laysan Albatross chick
Photo Credit: Brad Bortner USFWS

Tricolored Blackbird
Photo Credit: Dave Menke USFWS

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www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/dmbmdbhc.html

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