

Northeast Region Division of Migratory Birds



Working with others to conserve, protect and enhance migratory birds in the Northeast Region and Atlantic Flyway for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Migratory Birds in the Northeast Region leads conservation and management of migratory birds from Virginia to Maine, and with our partners within the flyway, joint ventures, and internationally. We do this working with partners to provide guidance and assistance on migratory bird initiatives; conduct biological planning, project implementation, evaluation for migratory bird management plans; and implement and administer migratory bird permits for a variety of activities, e.g., science, education, damage control, rehabilitation, and Native American religious use of migratory birds. Our vision is a Northeast Region and Atlantic Flyway where native migratory birds and their habitats thrive.

2018 Priorities and Beyond

- **Permits and Regulations:** We will train our staff to efficiently implement our regulatory responsibilities to meet the needs of the public, while also addressing the conservation needs of migratory birds.
- **Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative (AFSI):** We will increase communications, implement conservation actions (e.g., reduce human disturbance and increase predator management work), and work with Caribbean and South American partners to effect conservation for the full annual cycle of shorebird focal species.
- **Coastal Marsh Birds and Habitats:** We will engage partners throughout the Atlantic coast in protecting and restoring coastal marsh habitats, with emphasis on Saltmarsh Sparrow, Black Rail, and American Black Duck.
- **Marine Birds:** We will continue coordination with partners to increase conservation efforts and determine the greatest limiting factors affecting marine bird populations, including colonial nesters. We will support partner efforts to improve science to inform management and policy decisions, including coastal and marine spatial planning and harvest management of sea ducks.

Overview of Work Areas of Emphasis

Permits and Regulations

We will continue streamlining migratory bird and eagle permit processes and documents including National Environmental Policy Act analyses and standard operating procedures, identify and address emerging issues relative to species conservation and authorized take, and maximize our coordination efforts with partners and stakeholders in support of priority species. We will continue to support our permits workforce and will aim to cross train staff to optimize efficiency and promote opportunities for growth. We filled recent vacancies with biologists to enhance biological review of all permits, work with partners on overabundant and conflict species issues related to take, and work with partners to develop management plans for these species.

Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative (AFSI)

AFSI is the first-ever flyway approach to planning for shorebirds; it was developed to coordinate efforts to reverse significant declines in shorebird populations. We are continuing to emphasize implementation of the plan throughout the hemisphere. We will

work through international organizations to garner broad support for AFSI. This contributes to regional priorities including landscape scale conservation, at risk species and coastal resilience. Specific actions include:

- Implement conservation actions to address specific threats (e.g., predation).
- USAID collaboration to implement habitat conservation in the Caribbean and South America.
- Support the AFSI Executive Committee and Working Groups.
- Support development of the America's Flyway Framework through the Convention on Migratory Species.
- Bilateral partnerships with high priority countries in the flyway.

Coastal Marsh Birds and Habitats

The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV) recently adopted coastal marsh habitats and three flagship species – Saltmarsh Sparrow, Black Rail and American Black Duck – as the priorities for the partnership. Our goal is to protect, restore, and enhance habitat for these and other co-occurring species through coordinated habitat delivery efforts across the Atlantic Coast. Migratory Bird Division staff will engage ACJV

partners to develop species-specific population objectives, identify threats, and develop and implement actions to remove or reduce those threats by protecting, restoring and enhancing critical habitats. This contributes to the regional priority to enhance coastal resilience. We aim to accomplish the following:

- Complete the Saltmarsh Conservation Business Plan.
- Disseminate the Black Duck Decision Support Tool.
- Develop population objectives and habitat metrics for all three flagship species.
- Revive the Atlantic Coast Black Rail Sub-Working Group.



Black Rail

- Coordinate partner efforts to develop habitat delivery projects.
- Redesign the ACJV website to better promote actions and the work of the partnership to advance conservation of these species and habitats.

Marine Birds

Marine birds are among the most imperiled avian taxa in the world, facing threats from climate change, competition for food resources with fisheries, bycatch in fishing gear, displacement and mortality associated with offshore energy development, pollution, and degradation of nesting habitat. There are still huge gaps in understanding of marine bird trends, life history, and ecology, and many management challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that marine birds thrive into the future. We aim to accomplish the following:

- Prioritize and implement northwest Atlantic marine bird management and conservation through the Atlantic Marine Bird Cooperative and associated working groups.
- Coordinate marine bird research and conservation projects across USFWS programs and Federal agencies to meet management needs.
- Manage and serve marine bird survey data through the Northwest Atlantic Seabird Catalog, and work with partners to improve or develop data management for other important marine bird datasets.
- Represent marine bird issues in interagency planning and management efforts.
- Revitalize regional colonial nesting waterbird monitoring and data management efforts, and encourage linkages to at-sea efforts.
- Evaluate sources of unintentional take of marine birds, and implement voluntary conservation actions with partners to reduce take.

Landbirds

We will emphasize applied aspects of landbird conservation, such as helping to guide implementation activities on the ground to create functional forest

landscapes supporting the full suite of landbirds from species associated with early-successional forest to those needing mature forest conditions. These activities will include:

- Connect aerial insectivore work with urban bird treaty cities, seeking to reduce mortality and protect migratory stopover habitat.
- Coordinate with partners to develop best management practices and outreach products for public land managers, forest industry, and the public, focusing on organizations that have the largest impacts on forest management. Evaluate forest management activities through targeted monitoring efforts where best management practices are being applied.
- Continue to participate in working groups for high priority species, including Bicknell's Thrush, Cerulean Warbler, Wood Thrush, Golden-winged Warbler, and American Woodcock, with a focus on implementing high priority activities identified in the conservation action plan for these species. Engage partners and facilitate efforts to understand limiting factors for these species during the entire annual life cycle.
- Facilitate international partnerships to protect and restore winter habitat for migratory forest birds of conservation concern that are threatened by winter habitat loss, in particular, Bicknell's Thrush.

Migratory Game Birds

We will work with partners, including state and provincial agencies, Canadian Wildlife Service, and other FWS regions to support species Joint Venture and Atlantic Flyway efforts. We intend to maintain our focus on:

- Issues effecting migration and wintering habitat for Black Duck and American Woodcock during the non-breeding season.
- Factors affecting breeding success and recruitment of American common eiders.
- Management of resident and migrant Canada goose populations, working with permit staff, and addressing survey and monitoring needs for effective decision-making.

Urban

The Northeast is the most heavily urbanized area in the US which has huge effects on migratory bird habitat and means the general population is more disconnected from natural areas. The Division has focused our efforts

on outreach to the public through opportunities such as Urban Bird Treaty Cities and Urban Refuges. We intend to explore the following opportunities:

- Determine the importance of migratory bird stopover habitat in urban areas.
- Assist Urban Bird Treaty Cities and Urban Refuges, on an as-needed basis.
- Assist with events associated with our partnership with the New York Aquarium, International High School, and a New York Historical Society celebration of MBTA.
- Clearly define success of our outreach and conservation efforts consistent with the national Urban Bird Treaty Program Review.

Human Dimensions

Our success at increasing people's interest, engagement and active support of migratory bird conservation is linked to our understanding of their knowledge, values and behavior regarding migratory birds, and potential barriers to their participation. Nationally, there are approximately 43.7 million hunters and shooting sports participants in the U.S. who actively support jobs and the economy. Since 1937, people who have participated in hunting and shooting sports have generated more than \$10.5 billion that has been used for wildlife conservation and habitat management through an excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition. We intend to look for opportunities to:

- Support the North American Waterfowl Management Plan objective of increasing waterfowl conservation support (hunters, birdwatchers and landowners) to at least the levels experienced during the last two decades.
- Support state agency, flyway, and national recruitment, retention and reactivation strategies through effective migratory game bird management and habitat conservation efforts.

For additional information or questions contact:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Northeast Region
Division of Migratory Birds
300 Westgate Center Drive
Hadley, MA 01035
413/253 8539

January 2018



Jeff Nadler

Bicknell's Thrush

