

News Release

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Oak Habitat in Oregon and Washington to Benefit From Grants for Neotropical Bird Conservation *Partners join in efforts to help migratory birds in Western Hemisphere*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced a grant to the American Bird Conservancy for \$250,000 to help acquire and restore oak habitat in Oregon and Washington. The Conservancy, the Columbia Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy and other partners will add over \$750,000 to help fund the efforts.

The grant is among eight grants totaling \$4.9 million awarded by the Service for 37 projects that support neotropical migratory bird conservation throughout the Western Hemisphere. The grants are funded under the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, which supports public-private partnerships carrying out projects in the United States, Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean that promote the long-term conservation of neotropical migratory birds and their habitats.

“The announcement of this grant is timely as we celebrate the spring return of millions of birds to the Pacific Northwest from their wintering grounds in Latin America,” said Robyn Thorson, Director of the Service’s Pacific Region. “The grant will help conserve songbirds, raptors and other neotropical birds that Oregonians and Washingtonians cherish.”

Oak habitat has declined as much as 90 percent in parts of the Pacific Northwest, creating a pressing need for action, Regional Director Thorson said. “Much of the remaining habitat has been degraded due to fire suppression and invasive species.”

Bob Altman, a Conservancy Project Manager, said the protection and restoration of oak habitat that his group and other partners have done over the last 10 years with help from Service funds has been critical to support several declining and priority bird species.

“This project furthers those habitat conservation efforts and includes significant outreach and education activities and products for private landowners who own the majority of the remaining oak habitat in the Pacific Northwest,” Altman said.

Fifteen priority bird species in Oregon and Washington are highly associated with oak habitat including acorn woodpeckers, western bluebirds, band-tailed pigeons, ash-throated flycatchers and white-breasted nuthatches. Other neotropical migratory bird species moderately associated with oak habitats include American kestrels, house wrens, lazuli buntings, Cassin’s vireos and many more.

The grant and matching funds will allow the following projects to move forward:

- In Klickitat County, Washington, the Columbia Land Trust will acquire an important 320-acre parcel that has the potential to be sold for development and provides a connective corridor to about 2,000 acres already owned by Columbia Land Trust and 14,000 acres of a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Management Area. The property contains high quality oak habitat and supports breeding Lewis's woodpeckers, among the highest priority non-listed birds in North America. This is the third acquisition by the Columbia Land Trust in this area using Conservation Act funds, for a total of over 1,000 acres protected.
- Two habitat restoration projects will allow the Nature Conservancy of Washington to reestablish historic oak habitats on private lands along Swauk Creek in Kittitas County, Washington, and the Lomakatsi Restoration Project to control invasive and competing species in Oregon's Rogue Valley.
- Several bird monitoring and research projects throughout Oregon and Washington oak habitats will be undertaken by Klamath Bird Observatory and American Bird Conservancy to document the effects and contributions of habitat restoration efforts to bird populations and assess progress towards established population objectives.
- Two field demonstration days will be hosted by private landowners participating in the project. These events are effective tools to support habitat conservation because landowners can see management recommendations as achievable goals, and they are provided with extensive information on management techniques and the many programs available to support habitat conservation.
- *A Land Managers Guide to Bird Conservation in Oak Habitats of the Pacific Northwest* will be produced. The *Guide*, targeted to private landowners, will be the culmination of 10 years of bird conservation work in oak habitats by the American Bird Conservancy and many other partners, including the Pacific Coast Joint Venture.

For more information about these projects, contact Bob Altman, American Bird Conservancy, at baltman@abcbirds.org or 541-745-5339.

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 2000 established a matching grants program to fund projects promoting the conservation of neotropical migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Funds may be used to protect, research, monitor and manage bird populations and habitat, as well as to conduct law enforcement and community outreach and education. By law, at least 75 percent of the money goes to projects in Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada, while the remaining 25 percent may go to 5 projects in the United States.

More than 340 species of neotropical migratory birds breed in the United States and Canada and winter in Latin America, including plovers, terns, hawks, cranes and many other birds such as sparrows, warblers and tanagers. The populations of many of these birds are presently in decline, and several species are currently protected as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

More information about all projects awarded grants is on the Web at:

<http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NMBCA/2010.shtm>

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