

FINAL DRAFT

**Avian Conservation Implementation Plan
Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site**

**National Park Service
Southeast Region**



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In cooperation with

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And Bird Conservation Partners
April 2004

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Introduction

This Avian Conservation Implementation Plan (ACIP) is provided to the staff at Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site (MALU) to serve as guidance to identify, document, and undertake bird conservation activities in the park and with neighboring communities, organizations, and adjacent landowners. Because MALU has no landscape to manage and conserve birds, implementation of North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) goals for the landscape do not apply. However, because MALU can effectively reach out to visitors and conduct actions that will benefit birds, several recommendations will be made that will contribute to bird conservation.

Information and data presented in the ACIP have been obtained from interviews with MALU staff. This plan has been reviewed and approved by MALU management. Optimally, this plan will be incorporated into the park's management documents. **MALU is not obligated to undertake any of the proposed actions in this plan.** Although MALU does not have significant landscape contributions to make toward implementation of NABCI, background information will still be provided.

Background

During the past thirty years, monitoring programs across North America have documented declines of certain bird species populations and their habitats, often severe (Sauer et al. 2000). The decline has caused great concern among scientists, biologists, biodiversity proponents, ecologists, land managers, etc., and the bird conservation community in general. Birds are recognized as critical components of local and global genetic, species, and population diversity, providing important and often critical ecological, social, economic, and cultural values. Their overall decline has stimulated a worldwide focus on conservation efforts, and North American interest in bird conservation is rapidly becoming a focus of government, non-government, industry, and private interests and expenditures.

Many state, federal, and non-governmental wildlife agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) have recognized this alarming bird decline trend and have joined forces in several extensive partnerships to address the conservation needs of various bird groups and their habitats. The primary initiatives are:

- North American Waterfowl Management Plan
- Partners in Flight
- U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan
- Waterbird Conservation for the Americas

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative: While efforts associated with these plans have generated some successes, it has been increasingly recognized that the overlapping conservation interests of these initiatives can be better served through more integrated planning and delivery of bird conservation. The *North American Bird*

Conservation Initiative (NABCI; <http://www.nabci-us.org/main2.html>) arose out of this realization. The vision of NABCI is simply to see **“populations and habitats of North America’s birds protected, restored and enhanced through coordinated efforts at international, national, regional, state and local levels, guided by sound science and effective management.”** NABCI seeks to accomplish this vision through (1) broadening bird conservation partnerships, (2) working to increase the financial resources available for bird conservation in the U.S., and (3) enhancing the effectiveness of those resources and partnerships by facilitating integrated bird conservation (U.S. NABCI Committee 2000). The four bird conservation initiatives mentioned above, as well as several other local and regional partnerships, work collectively to pursue this vision.

NABCI is guided by a set of principles that establish an operational framework within which the Initiative and its partners may conduct integrated bird conservation in the U.S. These will articulate a common understanding of the relationship among NABCI, the individual bird conservation initiatives, and all partner entities to ensure recognition of existing federal legislative and international treaty obligations, state authorities, and respect for the identity and autonomy of each initiative. The fundamental components of the conservation approach to be used by NABCI are expressed within its goal:

To deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation through regionally-based, biologically-driven, landscape-oriented partnerships.

The Southeastern Bird Conservation Initiative: National Park Service: In 1999, the Southeast Region of the National Park Service (NPS) recognized the importance of coordinating existing bird conservation goals into planning and operations of national park units in the southeast, that is, integration of NABCI. In support of this recognition, the Southeast Regional Office NPS approved and allocated eighty-eight thousand dollars, cost sharing 1:1 with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Region 4 (Southeast) to hire a biologist to conduct this two-year project (Interagency Agreement FS028 01 0368). This project is unique in the NPS, and perhaps the nation, and represents a potential model for better coordinating regional bird conservation programs and activities within and outside the NPS. It further represents a progressive action toward institutionalizing bird conservation as a programmatic priority in the Southeast Region of NPS and potentially the nation.

As envisioned, the integration of NABCI into the Southeastern NPS involves:

- 1) Development and delivery of Avian Conservation Implementation Plans,
- 2) Coordination with NPS Inventory and Monitoring Program,
- 3) Development of a web-based project site,
- 4) Establishment or enhancement of bird conservation partnerships,
- 5) Identification and exploration of potential funding opportunities, and
- 6) Technical guidance and assistance as needed or requested.

This ACIP fulfills one aspect of the plan outlined above and serves as a basis for future bird conservation actions in MALU and with adjacent partners or landowners. Concurrently, the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the FWS and the NPS (Appendix A) to implement Presidential Executive Order (EO) 13186, Responsibilities of Federal Agencies To Protect Migratory Birds (US Government 2000), calls for integration of programs and recommendations of existing bird conservation efforts into park planning and operations. Complementing each other, the MOU and the Southeastern Bird Conservation Initiative will advance bird conservation in the Southeast Region of the NPS beyond current regional NPS efforts.

Role of NPS in Avian Conservation

The interagency agreement that facilitates this partnership supports both FWS and NPS management policies. Specifically for the NPS, the agreement supports and advances the Strategy for Collaboration, a visionary document developed and signed by the Southeast Natural Resource Leaders Advisory Group (SENRLAG 2000), a consortium of 13 land and resource management agencies in the Southeastern United States whose vision is to encourage and support cooperation in planning and managing the region's natural resources. Furthermore, the agreement is aligned with and implements a variety of NPS Management Policies (2001) including, but not limited to, External Threats and Opportunities, Environmental Leadership, Cooperative Planning, Land Protection, and especially Natural Resource Management that details policy and management guidelines which apply to bird conservation. Important policies in the Natural Resource Management chapter include:

- Planning for Natural Resource Management
- Partnerships
- Restoration of Natural Systems
- Studies and Collection
- General Principles for Managing Biological Resources
- Plant and Animal Population Management Principles
- Management of Native Plants and Animals
- Management of Endangered Plants and Animals
- Management of Natural Landscapes
- Management of Exotic Species
- Pest Management
- Fire Management and
- Water Resource Management

The NPS is the fourth largest landowner in the United States, consisting of over 380 national park units covering 83 million acres of land and water with associated biotic resources (www.nps.gov). The 64 units in the Southeast Region of the NPS represent 16% of the total number of park units in the national park system and cover approximately 5% of the total land base in the entire system. Park units in the Southeast Region include national seashores (Canaveral National Seashore, Cape

Hatteras National Seashore), national parks (Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Everglades National Park), national recreation areas (Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area), national preserves (Big Cypress National Preserve), national battlefields (Cowpens National Battlefield, Fort Donelson National Battlefield), national monuments (Fort Matanzas National Monument, Ocmulgee National Monument), and others such as the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, Obed Wild and Scenic River, and Timicuan Ecological and Historic Preserve.

Southeast NPS units provide habitat for over 400 species of migrating, breeding, and wintering birds and include a wide range of Federal and State listed threatened and endangered species. Likewise, these units also provide nest, migration, and winter habitat for most of the eastern species identified in the national bird conservation plans in need of conservation attention.

Additionally, the NPS attracts over 280 million visitors to the parks each year, 120 million of these in the Southeast Region, affording excellent recreational bird watching and opportunities to strengthen bird conservation interpretation, outreach, and education programs. These opportunities, the NPS mission, policies, and organization all lead to the conclusion that the NPS is an extremely valuable partner and contributor to bird conservation in the region.

Nationally, the status of birds in national parks is largely unknown, although many parks have adequate knowledge regarding bird occurrence in the parks (<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/othrdata/chekbird/chekbird.htm>). Parks often play a role in ongoing regional bird conservation efforts. Indeed many of these parks are often important to regional, national, or international bird conservation, and many have been designated as Important Bird Areas (IBA's) by the National Audubon Society. To date, there are approximately 64 NPS units that are designated IBA's, 35 of which are considered of global importance (<http://abcbirds.org/iba/aboutiba.htm>). In the Southeast Region, the NPS has 13 IBA's.

The **NPS Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Program** has been developed to provide management driven scientific information to national park managers so that resources can be adequately protected within national parks. One of the first phases of this program is to inventory vertebrates, including birds, within the 260 national park units in the program. Once completed, data from the inventories will provide an account of the occurrence and abundance of birds in all the national parks in the program. These records will be stored in the NPS I&M NPSpecies database (<http://www.nature.nps.gov/im/apps/npspp/>). Coordination with I&M network staff is important to developing long-term bird monitoring programs that fulfill both park and NABCI objectives.

Park Flight is a NPS international partnership initiative that directs funding toward a variety of NPS programs that involve conservation of neotropical migratory birds whose life history range covers a US national park and a Latin American protected area. A relatively new program, Park Flight offers parks the opportunity to partner with a Latin

American national park or protected area to cooperate on developing bird conservation and education projects (USDI NPS 2002).

Recent increases in NPS base funded programs such as inventory and monitoring, exotic species management, habitat restoration, and fire management all indicate that national park managers recognize that park lands are increasingly subject to a variety of threats and conditions that must be improved to provide the quality of national park experience articulated in the NPS Organic Act (1916). Programmatic funding in these areas will increase the ability of national parks to provide quality habitat and conditions for increased wildlife conservation, including birds. Furthermore, private interests and non-profit conservation organizations have initiated programs, including grant programs, to provide much needed funding to national parks to meet backlogs of identified yet unfunded needs.

Park Description

Just past noon on January 15, 1929, a son was born to the Reverend and Mrs. Martin Luther King in an upstairs bedroom of 501 Auburn Avenue, in Atlanta, Georgia. The couple named their first son after Rev. King, but he was simply called "M.L." by the family. During the next 12 years, this fine two story Victorian home is where "M.L." would live with his parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and their boarders. The home is located in the residential section of "Sweet Auburn", the center of black Atlanta. Two blocks west of the home is Ebenezer Baptist Church, the pastorate of Martin's grandfather and father. It was in these surroundings of home, church and neighborhood that "M.L." experienced his childhood. Here, "M.L." learned about family and Christian love, segregation in the days of "Jim Crow" laws, diligence and tolerance. It was to Ebenezer Baptist Church that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would return in 1960. As co-pastor with his father, "Daddy King", Dr. King, Jr. would preach about love, equality, and non-violence (USDI NPS 2000).

Avian Resources of the Southern Piedmont

The management plan for the Southern Piedmont will focus on a relative few priority species of birds, which will be used as "umbrella" species for the other birds. It is a major assumption of this plan that by providing adequate habitat for maintaining viable populations of these umbrella species, adequate habitat will be provided for all other birds as well. Each of the species below, with the possible exception of the Swainson's Warbler, fits this description.

Forest interior species (Upland deciduous/ mixed). The Piedmont forest birds chosen to serve as umbrella are the Wood Thrush and Summer Tanager. These species were chosen because they are believed to be area sensitive and because they have been sufficiently well studied to provide the knowledge base needed to make informed management decisions. Many intensive demographic studies have been conducted in the eastern U.S. on the Wood Thrush. While there have been fewer studies on the Summer Tanager, Project Tanager has provided data on area sensitivity.

Early successional species. In farmland or grassland dominated habitats, the Northern Bobwhite is a species of both high regional importance and conservation concern. This was chosen as an umbrella species because: (1) it is a declining species believed to be representative of an early successional habitat species suite associated with agricultural landscapes; (2) it is economically important as a game species, and hunters and private land owners are important stakeholder groups in this process; (3) there are already serious management efforts to increase habitat for this species (e.g., many Farm Bill efforts); and (4) the habitat requirements for this species are well-studied and specific recommendations can be made without further study. The Prairie Warbler was chosen as a second umbrella species because, while it occupies a variety of early successional habitats such as abandoned fields and woodland margins, it is associated more with forested landscapes with large openings such as those provided by regeneration cuts than with agricultural areas.

Riparian species. The Swainson's Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush and Acadian Flycatcher are considered both the most sensitive and representative species in this habitat type. Of the three, Swainson's Warbler is probably the most area sensitive, Louisiana Waterthrush is the most closely tied to riparian areas, especially streams, and the Acadian Flycatcher has been the subject of the most studies.

Avian Conservation in MALU

Avian Biodiversity: MALU does not have an avian inventory and a checklist of birds that is available for the public.

Park Priorities: Park staff and consultants have not identified any particular species that is a park management concern or high priority for conservation

Park Identified Needs for Avian Conservation

MALU has not identified any projects that would increase the avian knowledge of the park.

Coordination with Regional Conservation Initiatives

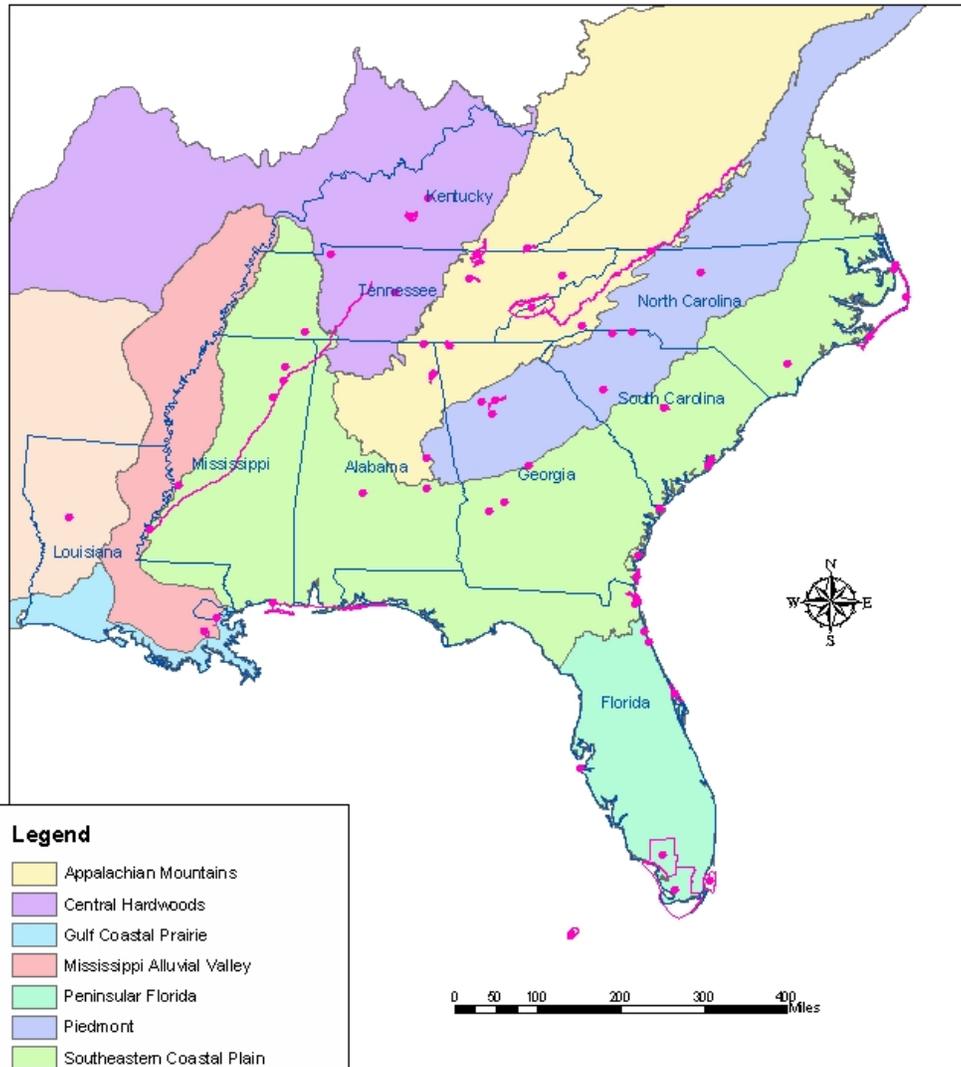
The North American Bird Conservation Initiative: NABCI bird conservation planning units, referred to as Bird Conservation Regions (BCR), are often larger than other planning units associated with other plans, such as Partners In Flight. For example, MALU is within the NABCI Piedmont BCR that extends from New Jersey to east-central Alabama and lies between the Appalachian Mountains and Southeastern Coastal Plain BCR's (see BCR map below) and encompasses several PIF physiographic areas.

Several NABCI BCR's have coordinators whose primary responsibility is to coordinate all bird conservation planning in the BCR, across all agencies and organizations.

Bird Conservation Regions

Southeast Region (SER)

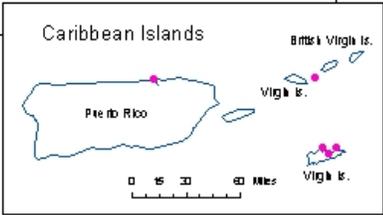
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Legend

- Appalachian Mountains
- Central Hardwoods
- Gulf Coastal Prairie
- Mississippi Alluvial Valley
- Peninsular Florida
- Piedmont
- Southeastern Coastal Plain
- West Gulf Coastal Plain/Ouachitas
- NPS Units

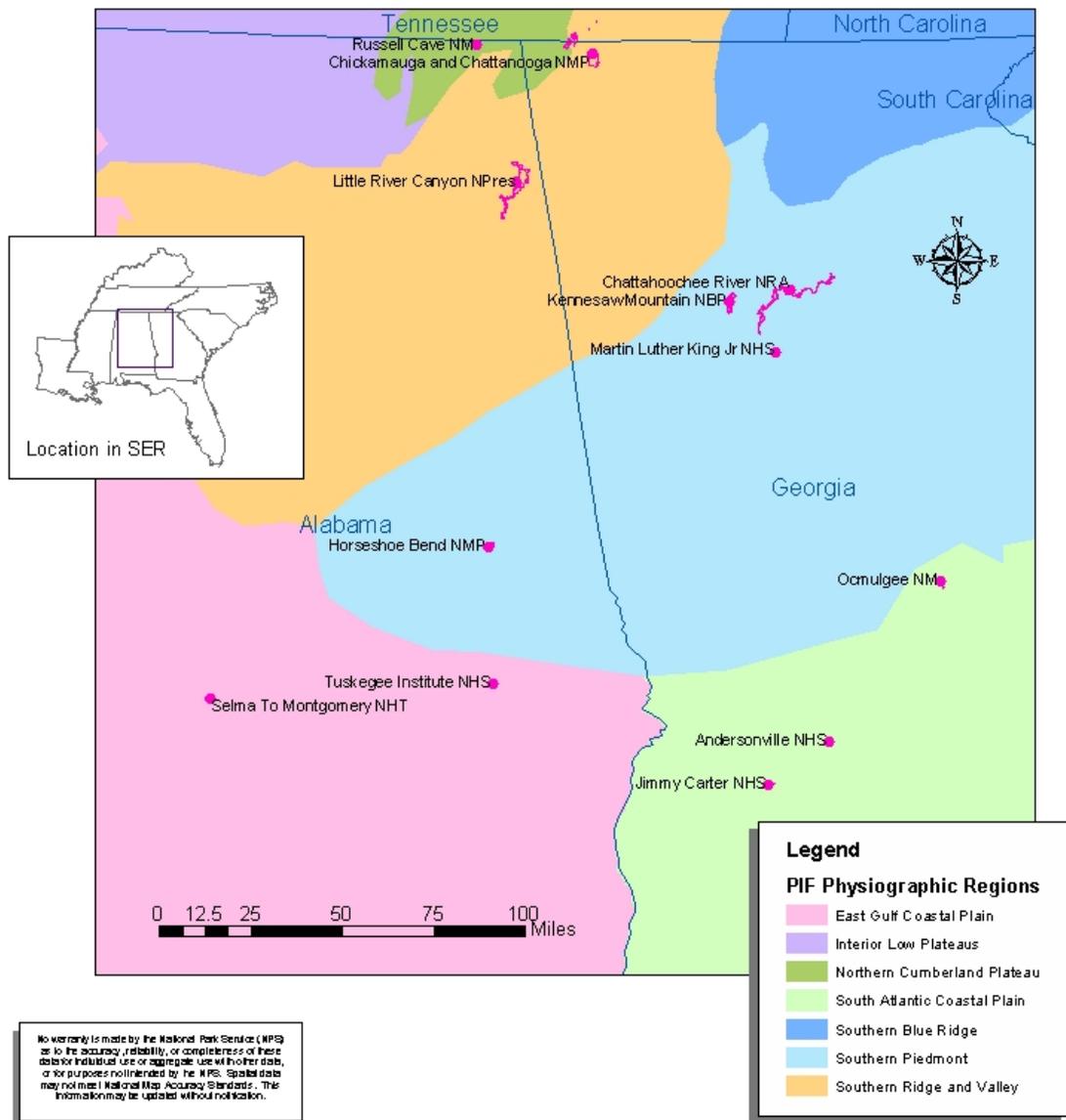
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Partners in Flight (PIF) Regions and NPS Locations

Southeast Region (SER)

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Produced by Southeast Regional Office GIS, Atlanta, GA

February 2004

Currently, the Southern Piedmont does have a designated coordinator.

North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP): The NAWMP (<http://northamerican.fws.gov/NAWMP/nawmphp.htm>) is completed and has been revised several times, incorporating updated goals and strategies based on new information. This plan is one of the most successful bird conservation delivery programs in the United States, being monetarily supported by the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA).

Partners In Flight: Goals and strategies for the MAV can be found in the draft bird conservation plan, previously submitted to the park. The current plan identifies priority bird and habitat conservation goals for landbirds that must be implemented in the MAV to achieve bird conservation success in this region.

Similar to NABCI BCR's, PIF physiographic areas often do not have designated coordinators. However, state level non-game agencies with investment in PIF will establish key personnel to develop partnerships among cooperators in the physiographic area. The State of Louisiana does have a PIF coordinator and can be instrumental in assisting MALU to implement recommendations identified in this ACIP and projects important to bird conservation relative to Louisiana's role in implementation of the MAV PIF plan.

United States Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP): The USSCP has been completed and is available on the World Wide Web (<http://shorebirdplan.fws.gov/>). A regional step down plan is in preparation by FWS personnel and should be available in 2004. Since MALU has little habitat of regional importance to shorebird conservation, recommendations for shorebird conservation are not presented.

Waterbird Conservation for the Americas (WCA) The WCA plan has been completed and is available on the World Wide Web or can be ordered from the US Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center (<http://www.waterbirdconservation.org/>). Substantial waterbird conservation priorities exist on the MAV and MALU will have an important role to conduct with regional waterbird conservation. This national plan has been stepped down to the regional level and is available for MALU. Waterbird conservation priorities for the MAV in the Southeast Region are presented in Appendixes C-D.

Integration of NABCI Goals and Objectives into Park Planning and Operations

NABCI Implementation Recommendations

To successfully achieve park-established goals and actively participate in NABCI, the park could implement a variety of projects in different NPS programs. Most of these projects would require some level of participation by many existing park programs and

could either be achieved through NPS funding, or more likely, through establishing or improving partnerships with agencies and organizations that already have the necessary expertise to provide guidance, funding, and execution of these programs. Programmatic areas where bird conservation actions are likely to be focused are:

- Outreach

To the extent appropriate, each of these program areas will be discussed separately and within each, specific opportunities identified that, when implemented, will enable the park to meet its mandates (current and expected) as well as integrate NABCI into its planning and operations. With emphasis added, the park is not expected to implement any of these recommendations or be obligated to pursue any opportunity other than those the park is required to do by law or NPS program or policy. In other words, participation in this effort is currently voluntary. However, implementation of EO 13186, Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds (US Government 2000), will require NPS to incorporate a wide range of bird conservation programs into planning and operations. The development of the MOU between the FWS and the NPS will establish a formal agreement to promote bird conservation within the agency by incorporating goals and strategies of existing bird conservation initiatives, plans, and goals into park planning and operations.

Outreach

- **support bird conservation by serving shade-grown coffees at meetings, events, and the office buildings in the park (<http://www.americanbirding.org/programs/consbcof3.htm>)***
- **offer the Common Birds of Atlanta Area field guide at the visitor center**
- **make available at the visitors center a brochure on North American bird conservation**
- **partner with Atlanta Audubon Society to assist with any bird projects in the park (<http://www.atlantaudubon.org/>)**

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