

Part 6: Shorebird Plan Implementation

Proposed Implementation Model

Implementation of the U.S. Shorebird Plan will require an active, committed, and diverse partnership of organizations both in the U.S. and in the other countries where shorebirds occur. Implementation at various scales will be accomplished through the following partnerships:

The U.S. Shorebird Plan Council

Implementation of the U.S. Shorebird Plan will be coordinated by the U.S. Shorebird Plan Council. The Plan Council is an advisory and steering committee for the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and is open to all of the partner organizations involved in development and implementation of the Plan. The Council supervised the development of the Plan, particularly with respect to integration with other migratory bird conservation initiatives, and continues to engage in strategic planning toward implementation of the regional, national, and international goals of the Plan.

The Council is open to participation by any organization committed to conservation of shorebirds, and depends on the involvement of interested organizations to guide implementation efforts under the Plan. The Council is currently chaired by Jon Andrew, Chief, Migratory Bird Management Office, USFWS, and the Vice-Chair is Bob Gill, USGS Alaska Biological Science Center. New participants are approved by the standing Council, which currently includes representatives of the following organizations and geographic areas:

National Shorebird Plan Technical Working Group Chairs:

Research and Monitoring
Education and Outreach

Shorebird Planning Regions:

Northern Atlantic
Southeastern Coastal Plains-Caribbean
Upper Mississippi Valley/Great Lakes
Lower Mississippi/Western Gulf Coast
Northern Plains/Prairie Potholes
Central Plains/Playa Lakes
Intermountain West
Northern Pacific
Southern Pacific
Alaska
Hawaii and the Pacific Islands

Current Partner Organizations:

American Bird Conservancy
Bureau of Land Management
Canadian Shorebird Conservation Plan
Canadian Wildlife Service
Department of Defense Partners In Flight
Ducks Unlimited
International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
IAFWA Migratory Shore and Upland Gamebird Subcommittee
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences



Shorebirds need to both rest and feed. In marine habitats, feeding is done during lower tides, while resting is at higher tides. During migration and winter, shorebirds and people alike are often squeezed on to smaller beaches as tide levels rise. Photo by David Twitchell.

National Audubon Society
 National Park Service
 NAWMP Joint Venture Coordinators
 North American Waterbird Conservation Plan
 Partners in Flight
 Point Reyes Bird Observatory
 The Nature Conservancy
 US Department of Defense Partners in Flight
 US Bureau of Land Management
 USFWS Division of Bird Habitat Conservation
 USFWS Division of Migratory Bird Management
 USFWS Non-Game Coordinators
 USFWS Refuges
 USDA Forest Service – Taking Wing Program
 USGS Patuxent National Wildlife Research Center
 USGS Alaska Science Center
 USGS Midcontinent Ecological Science Center
 USGS Forest and Rangeland Ecological Science Center
 Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network

Regional Shorebird Partnerships

During the development of the Plan, active regional groups formed in most Shorebird Planning Regions, and include a wide diversity of state, federal, and non-governmental organizations that were willing to participate in drafting the Plan. These groups are an important nucleus of ongoing regional shorebird conservation efforts focused on implementation of regional objectives. The needs of shorebirds in each region are best understood by organizations working in that region. The groups should endeavor to implement aspects of the Plan consistent with their regional goals and objectives. The functions of each group will vary widely among regions depending on the needs and interests of the active organizations. Most of the regional partnerships have formed active relationships with Joint Ventures organized under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and will participate as appropriate with Joint Ventures to implement habitat-related aspects of the regional shorebird plans. Additional aspects of the regional plans, including monitoring, research, and education and outreach, will be addressed as appropriate through Joint Ventures or other partnerships with organizations equipped to meet each role. It is important to note that any agency or landowner is encouraged to take the initiative to begin implementation of any regional goal. Ideally, their efforts would be communicated to the broader group of planning participants so that achievements and advancement of goals can be tracked.

Implementation through Joint Ventures

The Joint Ventures which were formed to implement the North American Waterfowl Management Plan have provided the most effective model for a public/private conservation partnership that exists today. The Joint Ventures have involved state and local governments and a wide range of non-governmental conservation organizations in productive partnerships to deliver conservation on the ground. Many existing Joint Ventures already have taken formal steps to embrace the goal of integrated bird conservation, and these Joint Ventures will represent the first efforts to deliver integrated shorebird conservation. The Regional Shorebird Working Groups have all embraced the concept of working closely with the Joint Ventures in their respective areas as the primary partners in providing integrated delivery of shorebird conservation activities on the ground. In other areas of the country that do not have an existing partnership, additional Joint Ventures will need to be formed and funded. Collectively, these Joint Ventures should deliver integrated habitat conservation on the ground for all birds, including shorebirds.

Linking with other Bird Conservation Initiatives

In the last few years, there has been unprecedented interest in development of conservation plans for birds. Four major initiatives, including the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners In Flight, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the North American Colonial Waterbird Conservation Plan, are now in existence, with others being contemplated. This groundswell of interest and support has created a unique opportunity to advance the conservation of shorebirds as part of a broad increase in support for overall bird conservation. In addition, the development of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, which will coordinate the activities of all these specific initiatives both nationally and internationally, will dramatically raise the visibility of bird conservation. Implementation of the Shorebird Plan will be carried out through integrated activities with each of these other initiatives whenever possible.

The same approach, applied not just to bird conservation needs, but also to those of other interests (i.e. other wildlife species, agriculture, development, etc.) would allow planners to define the nature of landscapes desired for the future. All of society's interests, be it flood control, public health, or bird conservation, must somehow coexist on our landscapes. The ultimate goal is to build the partnerships needed to achieve truly integrated conservation planning, so that we can protect and manage sustainable environments that meet the needs and desires of future generations.

Shorebird Plan Implementation Funding Needs

This section summarizes the highest priority programs needed to ensure that stable and self-sustaining populations of shorebirds are preserved in the United States.

Shorebird and Integrated Waterbird Proposals at the Federal Level

1) National Shorebird Research Program

This program, described in detail above, should be funded at a total of \$3.75 million per year. Research for shorebird conservation is currently funded through a wide variety of small programs, is limited in amount, and lacks overall coordination. Current funding is inadequate to meet high priority topics for shorebird conservation research. High priority research needs include subjects like the effects of human disturbance, effectiveness of current management practices, techniques for effective multiple species management, identification of causes for species declines, etc. This program would result in improved information on high priority shorebird conservation issues, with an emphasis on guidelines and techniques for integrated management of shorebirds and other waterbirds.

2) North American Shorebird Monitoring Program

Basic data on the status and trends of shorebirds is critical to successful management programs, so this program is a very high priority for funding. The Monitoring Program report of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan details the specific protocols that must be implemented to determine the population trends of shorebirds that occur in the U.S. Implementation of these protocols is a major goal of the Plan. The scope, justification, and expected benefits are provided in the report. The total cost of the program is approximately \$1.5 million per year.

3) Integrated Waterbird Management Training

Development of a training program on Integrated Waterbird Ecology and Management for Federal and State Agencies is necessary to ensure that maximum shorebird conservation benefits are achieved from ongoing and future management efforts for wetlands and associated habitats. Current shorebird training programs targeted at USFWS staff have been very effective at increasing awareness, understanding, and application of shorebird management issues among management and regulatory staff. However, other government agency staff, including Forest Service, BLM, National Park Service, and state agency staff have had limited access to appropriate training. In addition, the development of new waterbird initiatives creates the need for integration of management activities for diverse species.

An integrated approach would address multiple taxonomic groups, including shorebirds, marshbirds, colonial waterbirds, and waterfowl. Integrated management is more complex than management for single species or taxonomic groups, and is best addressed as part of a coordinated program. Development of the capacity to conduct integrated training on waterbirds will require substantial material development and technical input. Integrated training for waterbird management would ensure that appropriate state and federal staff have access to the most up-to-date approaches to management of wetland and deepwater habitats for multiple species. The workshops will increase the amount of management activity for waterbirds by increasing awareness and understanding of management opportunities and challenges, and by supporting the use of multiple species management that can benefit many groups of non-game birds. Costs for development of the training program would total \$350,000 with implementation of the program costing approximately \$180,000 per year.

4) Shorebird Sister Schools Program

Development of a national Shorebird Sister Schools program will ensure that public education includes information on the needs of shorebirds and exposes children to their interesting and unusual biology. The Shorebird Sister Schools program has been an extremely effective model for increasing elementary education opportunities on shorebird ecology, migration, and conservation. The program involves schools from throughout the Hemisphere in tracking the annual migration of shorebirds through their respective regions, and has been most active in the Pacific Flyway. This model should be expanded to cover the remainder of the country. Increasing exposure of children to shorebird ecology and conservation will ensure ongoing interest and support for shorebird conservation programs. The program would cost approximately \$270,000 per year to support one national coordinator and three regional coordinators for the Pacific, Atlantic, and Central/Mississippi flyways.

5) Support for Regional Shorebird Plans and Joint Ventures

The Regional Shorebird Conservation Plans summarized above outline the most critical projects and programs needed in each area of the country to support shorebird conservation. Collectively, these projects will ensure that the United States does its part to guarantee that the shorebirds of the Western Hemisphere are protected, and that stable and self-sustaining populations persist. The details describing projects needed in each region are provided in the detailed regional reports. The Shorebird Plan partnership is committed to raising the funds necessary to support these regional projects. Existing Joint Ventures will in most cases serve as the primary delivery partnerships for the shorebird plan, and securing full and permanent funding for current and planned Joint Ventures is a high priority for Shorebird Plan implementation.



*During winter, Black Turnstones, which breed only in Alaska, are specialists of rocky, intertidal habitats along the Pacific coast of the United States and Mexico.
Photo by Mike Patterson.*

NABCI Recommendations for National Programs that Benefit Shorebirds

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative is proposing several important national programs that will benefit bird conservation broadly. Several of these programs are of particular importance for shorebirds, and these are listed below. The Shorebird Plan partnership fully supports all the goals of NABCI, but will play a particularly significant role in supporting the development of the following programs:

1) Increase funding support for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA).

NAWCA has been a major catalyst for migratory bird habitat conservation since 1989. It has been a major conservation success, contributing significantly to the effectiveness and maturation of Joint Venture partnerships developed through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. However, many worthy projects involving millions of dollars of non-federal funding commitments go uncompleted each year due to insufficient NAWCA funding. NAWCA has never been appropriated at more than half of its authorized funding. One of the most immediate steps to more comprehensively address bird conservation needs should be to maintain full fund for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

2) Pass an analog act to NAWCA to support conservation of upland bird habitats.

NAWCA has been a successful model for addressing the needs of wetland habitats for bird conservation. Building upon that model, analogous federal legislation should be passed to address critical upland habitat needs in the U.S. and other countries sharing populations of birds. To facilitate efficiency and integrated bird conservation delivery, the existing mechanism of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council should be used as the foundation for this broadened, more inclusive, integrated conservation approach. This program would provide support for conservation of grassland nesting shorebird habitat.

3) Increase funding, federal and non-federal, for other partner-based habitat conservation programs.

Increased support is needed for programs in several federal agencies, e.g., USFWS's Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, USFWS's Coastal program, and USDA Forest Service's Taking Wing program. Increased funding is essential at the state level where much of the nation's habitat conservation is focused. The challenge cost share programs of several federal agencies also serve as effective catalysts for bird conservation delivery. These programs should be expanded to adequately take advantage of the public and private non-federal partners willing and desiring to help fund bird habitat conservation.

4) Contribute to improved habitat conservation in Western Hemisphere nations sharing U.S. bird populations.

Just as bird conservation needs vary across regions of the U.S., needs and successful approaches differ across international borders. However, the U.S. shares many bird populations with other nations, and should partner with them to comprehensively address the full range of habitat and management needs of those shared populations. Funding for federal programs supporting habitat conservation outside the U.S., e.g., North American Wetlands Conservation Act international projects, the Borderlands Program, and USFWS's International Affairs Small Grants Program, should be increased to more adequate levels, with appropriate levels of matching non-federal funds, and funding for the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network should be increased to support the inclusion of critical sites in other countries.

5) Develop and implement comprehensive monitoring and assessment capabilities to fully address bird conservation needs.

Effective management decisions must be based on sound understanding of the status and trends of bird populations and their relationships to habitats throughout their annual life cycles. Existing monitoring and assessment programs for migratory bird populations should be enhanced, and similar programs for birds for which little or no reliable data are available should be developed.

6) Cooperatively enhance management capabilities for birds at all geographic scales based on sound science, measurable conservation objectives, and an adaptive process of planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Evaluation of relationships among habitats, management actions, and population responses must be an ongoing activity to refine and integrate bird conservation practices. Capabilities of existing migratory bird research programs should be restored and enhanced, and new programs should be developed for bird groups having little or no current scientific support. Adaptive ecological models for important breeding, wintering, and migratory staging areas for major bird groups should be identified and developed, guided cooperatively by groups such as the USFWS/USGS Adaptive Management and Assessment Team.

7) Strengthen cooperation and funding among land management agencies and land-related regulatory agencies that directly and indirectly affect bird conservation.

Actions of federal and state agencies affect bird conservation in important ways. In many cases, however, existing funds for natural resource conservation are not expended as effectively as possible to gain the broadest resource benefits, including birds. Improved coordination within and among many of these agencies could lead to improved bird conservation. A strategic plan for the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior should be developed to enhance funding capabilities and delivery of habitat protection and restoration activities governed by provisions of

the Farm Bill, recognizing statutory modifications as appropriate. Due to their impacts on land management, comprehensive and integrated bird conservation commitments and strategies should also be established, in consultation with the Department of Interior, by the U.S. Departments of Transportation, Defense, Energy, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and Environmental Protection Agency.

8) Fully fund the 10 existing bird conservation Joint Ventures, and support the development of 10-20 new Joint Venture partnerships.

Several North American Waterfowl Management Plan Joint Ventures already have taken steps to be the delivery mechanism for other migratory bird initiatives. To carry out, coordinate, and communicate the regional planning, monitoring, evaluation, and delivery of actions necessary for integrated bird conservation, the 10 existing regional Joint Ventures should be fully funded. Further, to deliver the integrated conservation actions of all bird conservation initiatives in areas not included in existing joint ventures, 10-20 new Joint Venture partnerships should be developed.

9) Conduct cost-effective, integrated delivery of bird conservation on a regional basis.

Comprehensive bird conservation joint ventures, from coast-to-coast, are necessary for cost-effective, integrated conservation of bird populations and habitats. This must be facilitated through a coordinated planning process within each bird initiative to step down identified national needs and priorities to regional action plans, and to identify individual management actions generating the greatest benefits. Although some broadly beneficial programs and management actions can be identified now, regionalization should be accelerated and finalized.

10) Develop an effective outreach and education program that promotes enhanced wild bird-related recreational and educational opportunities for the American people.

The support and participation of the American public as partners in this national and international bird conservation effort is essential. Funding and other resources required to achieve the vision of national bird conservation will not flow without their support. However, rapidly growing participation in bird-related recreational pursuits clearly demonstrates the public's strong collective interest in birds. With the majority of U.S. bird habitats in private ownership, the active, voluntary participation of landowners and the general public in delivering management actions is a cornerstone of successful bird conservation. The support of the American public has been critical to the successes achieved to date, and must be maintained and strengthened through an effective, partner-driven outreach and education program about bird populations, their habitats, and responsible natural resource conservation.



Bar-tailed Godwits are widespread across Northern Europe, but also breed in smaller numbers in Alaska. The Alaskan-breeding birds winter along with the old-world populations in southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. Photo by Tim Bowman.

Part 7: *List of Shorebird Conservation Plan Technical Reports*

Regional Shorebird Conservation Plan Reports

Alaska
Northern Pacific
Southern Pacific
Hawaii/Pacific Islands
Intermountain West
Northern Plains/Prairie Potholes
Central Plains/Playa Lakes
Upper Mississippi Valley/Great Lakes
Lower Mississippi/Western Gulf Coast
Northern Atlantic
Southeastern Coastal Plains-Caribbean

National Shorebird Conservation Plan Technical Reports

A Comprehensive Monitoring Program for North American Shorebirds

National Shorebird Research Needs: A Proposal for a National Research Program and Example High Priority Research Topics

Shorebird Education and Outreach Needs in the United States

National Shorebird Conservation Assessment: Shorebird Conservation Status, Conservation Units, Population Estimates, Population Targets, and Species Prioritization

Estimates of Shorebird Populations in Canada and the Western Hemisphere

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative in the United States: A Vision of American Bird Conservation

All of these technical reports can be downloaded from the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan website, at <http://www.manomet.org/USSCP.htm>

