



ASSOCIATION of  
FISH & WILDLIFE  
AGENCIES

---

**BIRD CONSERVATION COMMITTEE PART I**  
**28 March 2018**  
**North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference**  
**Norfolk, VA**

**Bird Conservation Committee leadership as of 16 May 2018**

**Chair: Gordon Myers, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission**

**Vice-Chair: Tony Wilkinson, NY State Department of Environmental Conservation**

**Waterfowl Working Group**

Chair: Vacant (Diane Eggeman retired)

Vice-Chair: Craig LeSchack, Ducks Unlimited

**Partners in Flight/Shorebird/Waterbird Working Group**

Chair: Sara Schweitzer, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Vice-Chair: Eric Gardner, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

**Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Group**

Chair: Alicia Hardin, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Vice-Chair: Dave Morrison, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

**Resident Game Bird Working Group**

Chair: Karen Waldrop, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife

Vice-Chair: Todd Bishop, Iowa Department of Natural Resources

**Grassland Working Group**

Chair: Bill White, Missouri Department of Conservation

Vice-Chair: Greg Link, North Dakota Game and Fish Department

**Feral and Free-Ranging Cat Working Group**

Chair: Sara Schweitzer, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

Vice-Chair: Colin Gillin, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

**Harvest Information Program**

Chair: Ross Melinchuk, National Wild Turkey Federation

Vice-Chair: Karen Waldrop, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife

**US Fish & Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Program Updates**

*Ken Richkus, Acting Division Chief, Division of Migratory Bird Management*

*Sarah Mott, Division Chief, Division of Bird Habitat Conservation*

[See presentation for full summary.](#)

**Priorities:** USFWS is focused on meeting the priorities of the Administration and the Department of the Interior: Access on public lands, regulatory reform, and state and tribal relationships. Additional focus on two secretarial orders: streamlining/modernizing the NEPA process, and hunting and fishing activities on Department of the Interior lands. In addition, the Migratory Bird Program has been working on a [strategic plan](#) for ~1.5 years; the focus of this plan includes providing leadership in migratory bird conservation, conserving and managing sustainable populations of birds and their habitat, and managing bird data and information.

**Budget, Grants, and Agreements:** 2018 budget for migratory birds mostly flat, although saw increase for NAWCA. President's Budget for 2019 is ~\$10m lower than 2018 enacted budget. Note that all cooperative agreements and grants are being reviewed within USFWS, regardless of amount. Level of review determined by 1) amount involved and 2) recipient. NAWCA has been waived from this review, but NMBCA and JVs have not.

**Duck Stamp:** 2018 Theme is "Celebrating our Waterfowl Hunting Heritage." No drop in sales can be attributed to price increase.

**Personnel and Organization:** Brad Bortner retired in December 2017. Ken Richkus was Brad's deputy for 2.5 years and is now acting in Brad's former role. DOI still under DC and Denver hiring freeze, but USFWS has applied for waiver to get Brad's position filled. Note realignment of branches into Monitoring and Data Management, and Assessment and Decision Support.

**Eagle Falconry:** Flyway Council chairs asked to develop an allocation process now that USFWS has determined that removal of 6 Golden Eagles from the wild is compatible with eagle preservation.

NOTE: ~60 master falconers nationwide are qualified to fly an eagle.

**Double-Crested Cormorants:** 2 years ago, USFWS lost a lawsuit and lost both depredation orders they had in place for cormorants: 1) protection for free swimming fish; 2) protection for aquaculture. Right now within Environmental Assessment, cap of ~50k that can be taken per Flyway. EA still does not address free-swimming fish issue. USFWS will hold regional meetings in summer 2018 to address specific information needs.

### **Migratory Bird Treaty Act Solicitor's Opinion- Information and AFWA Response**

*Ken Richkus, Acting Division Chief, Division of Migratory Bird Management*

*Gordon Myers, Executive Director, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission*

On December 22, 2017, DOI released an M opinion about interpretation of MBTA that indicates that incidental take of migratory birds (i.e. unintentional take as a result of an activity but not the purpose of the activity) is not enforceable under the MBTA. The ESA, Eagle Acts, and NEPA still apply to certain species. The Executive Order 13186 and associated MOUs are also still in plan, and the MOUs are under review to ensure they are consistent with new opinion. USFWS can still work with partners voluntarily to reduce impacts to migratory birds.

### **Discussion**

-In North Carolina, Regulatory Reform Act indicates that if a federal entity has concurrent jurisdiction for the state, NC cannot be more restrictive than federal laws.

-AFWA's legal council suggests that M-opinion is solidly written and AFWA has not identified an opportunity to take a counter position

-One need is to examine state laws and regulations across the US to evaluate what types of protections are currently afforded in the absence of MBTA protections

-PIF/SB/WB Working Group is concerned, especially regarding wind energy growth; this seems to reduce the ability to advise siting of alternative energy

-Every past administration has interpreted MBTA differently

-This is a challenging opinion for Canada, since there is a link to Canada's convention, and Canada considers incidental take included under the MBTA.

### **Canadian Wildlife Service Update**

*Silke Neve, Director, Assessment and Recovery Planning Division*

[See presentation for full summary.](#)

**Budget:** Canadian government announced \$1.3 billion for conservation over 5 years. Some funding for Species at Risk Act was ending, so Cabinet granted renewed/increased funding. Also, CA has committed to targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity, including conservation of 17% of

terrestrial and 10% of marine landscape in Canada- this served as a platform to request additional resources for Canada. (See slides for more funding details.)

**State of Canada's Birds:** Website summarizing conservation status and population trends of Canada's birds updated every 2-4 years; State of Canada's Birds update planned for spring 2019.

**North American Vision for Hemispheric Bird Conservation:** US, Mexico, and Canada developing short- and medium-term action plans for how to implement this Vision, which was endorsed by NABCIs in early 2017.

**NABCI Canada:** NABCI Canada is re-forming and has identified four main roles (Coordinate, Communicate, Track Bird Conservation, Influence Policy) and priorities within each of these roles (see slides).

**Hunting and Harvest Modernization:** CWS undertaking modernization effort to support more effective hunting regime and examine language re: indigenous harvest; expect "modernized" regulations to be in place in 2019.

**Migratory Bird Permits:** Increase in sales of ePermits, despite technical challenges in 2017. Note proposal to increase service fees for Conservation stamp and Migratory Game Bird Hunting permit.

**Hunting Regulations:** Canada amends hunting regulations every two years- next hunting regulations will take effect in summer 2018.

See slides for information about Species at Risk, including new species added to Canada's list.

## North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) Updates

*Judith Scarl, Bird Conservation Program Manager, AFWA/NABCI Coordinator*

[See presentation for full summary.](#)

US NABCI is working towards all partners providing financial contributions to the partnership. Currently, 4 federal agencies, all 4 Flyways, and 8 NGOs contribute or have committed to contributing financially to NABCI.

**State of the Birds:** NABCI aims to link future SOTB reports with specific policies and initiatives that benefit bird conservation- in summer 2017 NABCI released 2017 State of the Birds Farm Bill Special Report, which was used for Capitol Hill briefing, Joint Venture fly-in, and additional JV outreach to Congresspeople. In 2018, NABCI will produce SOTB report focused on the critical role that state agencies play in bird conservation- this is meant as a communication tool in support of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.

**Demonstrating Bird Conservation Relevance:** To help partners initiate connections outside of the bird conservation community, NABCI is creating a toolkit with sourced examples of ways that bird conservation actions/outcomes align with positive economic or human health outcomes. Anticipated completion: fall 2018.

**National Bird Conservation Priorities:** NABCI helps the bird community speak with a unified voice about broadly supported priorities. With so many priorities across the bird conservation network, NABCI is working to identify a short list of top priorities that NABCI should support, promote, and communicate to leadership and potential partners over the next 3-5 years, to advance NABCI's vision. Priorities will represent actions that *most urgently need to happen* AND for which *it will be possible to make progress* over this timeframe. Priorities are organized into themes, strategies, and actions and will focus on consensus on priority actions. Anticipated completion: fall 2018.

**Private Lands Staff Forum:** NABCI proposing a forum for private lands staff to come together, exchange ideas, identify needs, and develop a community of practice. Looking for input on [a series of questions](#)- please provide feedback to [Todd Fearer](#) if your organization hosts private lands biologists.

[Contact Judith Scarl](#) to sign up for NABCI News list or All-Bird Bulletin Blog, which highlights bird conservation projects and stories from across the country.

## **NABCI State of the Birds 2018: State Agency Contributions to Bird Conservation**

*Tom Moorman, Chief Scientist, Ducks Unlimited*

[See presentation for more details.](#)

2018 State of the Birds report will focus on the critical role of state governments in bird conservation and may emphasize the partnership responsibility between federal and state agencies for this shared resource. This report is meant to serve as a communication tool in support of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, the legislation that stemmed from the Blue Ribbon Panel efforts. Report will have a backdrop of science that documents a net loss of 2.3 billion birds in the US since 1970- this shows that our current conservation activities are not working and highlights the importance of an infusion of money for conservation. Like past reports, SOTB 2018 will focus on relevancy messaging (how bird conservation and other human goals are linked).

## **Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife/Recovering America's Wildlife Act**

*Sean Saville, Blue Ribbon Panel Campaign Manager, AFWA*

Recovering America's Wildlife Act, or HR 4647, was introduced to the House in December by Congresspeople Fortenberry and Dingell. As of 16 May 2018, the bill has 53 co-sponsors. State Directors are encouraged to meet with members of Congress and developing relationships with them. As of March 2018, 26 states had passed resolutions in support of RAWA, as have three regional associations and AFWA, and some other states have written letters of support. The campaign website is [OurNatureUsa.com](http://OurNatureUsa.com). Reach out to [Sean Saville](#) if your state has content or social media needs related to this campaign.

Note [toolkit](#) available for states, NGOs, and other groups wishing to promote this legislation.

Sean's advice on State of the Birds report: Recommends an online version that comes out earlier- perhaps a pre-piece on social media or a "teaser" report? Highlight successes, but also point to urgencies in order to make a case for increased funding.

Messaging to take to state leadership: there is some concern over perceived competition with Land and Water Conservation Fund. LWCF is important to states and AFWA advocates for this. RAWA is a complementary piece that fills a unique niche. Note that Congressman Fortenberry is champion of both RAWA and LWCF.

## **Human Dimensions of Bird Conservation- Resources and Future Directions**

*Ashley Gramza, National Bird Conservation Social Science Coordinator, NABCI/Virginia Tech*

[See presentation for more details.](#)

NABCI's Human Dimensions Subcommittee resources available:

[One page fact sheet](#) that demonstrates how to use Human Dimensions for bird conservation. The most successful bird conservation actions are aligned with people's well-being and values.

Document is meant to encourage leadership to fund HD integration.

[Human Dimensions webinar series](#) (can watch recordings online): 1) Intro to HD; 2) Incorporating HD into conservation planning; 3) Incorporating HD into conservation delivery

Bird Conservation HD Success Stories Map- Examples of how HD had been successfully utilized to address bird conservation issues (planned release: late spring 2018). (See presentation for story map examples.)

HD project partnership between Virginia Tech, Farm Service Agency, Playa Lakes JV, and Bird Conservancy of the Rockies to understand landowner motivations for enrolling in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), examining conservation behavior after CRP contracts end, and understanding what tools landowners need that would help catalyze stewardship behavior after CRP contracts ends.

If you are interested in joining NABCI's [Human Dimensions Subcommittee](#), [contact Ashley](#).

### **Increasing Birding Resources on State Agency Websites**

*EJ Williams, Vice President Migratory Birds and Habitats, American Bird Conservancy*

The most recent National Survey showed that ~45 million people watch birds. Do these people connect to state agencies? Partners in Flight explored state agency websites and searched for different birding language (birds, birding, IMBD, etc). Overall, it was difficult to find information using those terms. If you Google birds or birdwatching in a specific state, you often do not end up at a state agency website. However, if we can get birders to the state's website, we can also introduce them to our relevancy work, State Wildlife Action Plans, etc. Partners in Flight, led by Terry Rich, developed a **proposal** to help state agencies better connect with birders through their websites.

Discussion:

- Ask that individuals take this back to the communications people in their state. Often the "bird people" provide content to the communications people.
- Some states worried about the effort to maintain content, or did not want to duplicate efforts that were already happening within a state- some states have partnership with NGOs for eBird portals.

### **Migratory Bird Joint Ventures Updates**

*Todd Fearer, Coordinator, Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture*

[See presentation.](#)

In the US, there are 18 Habitat Joint Ventures and 3 Species Joint Ventures. At their December meeting, the Joint Ventures developed an internal communications strategy to develop and execute consistent and effective communications by Joint Venture staff, Management Board members, and partners in a way that all Joint Ventures can speak with a unified voice to federal leadership. The Association of Joint Venture Management Boards has representation from the JV Management Boards and partners and helps to advocate for and promote JV program to federal leadership. An *ad hoc* subcommittee of Board Members and JV staff was formed at the February meeting of the Association to improve the Association's structure and function and facilitate stronger management board engagement in the Association.

Some highlights from the JV Partnership:

Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture (LMVJV) has developed conservation delivery networks to coordinate within different subregions within the JV. In Northeast TX, their habitat incentive program works with private landowners- this cost-share program provides funding to landowners for habitat work.

Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV)-working to integrate bird monitoring with on-the-ground conservation work. In partnership with Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, developed a state-of-the-art monitoring framework that addresses conservation/management needs of state agencies and other partners.

Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture (AMJV)- Focal Landscape Initiative (similar to conservation delivery network) identifies subgeographies that are important ecologically and in which JV partners can have high degree of success.

For more details on Joint Venture work, [see this overview](#).

### **2012 NAWMP Revision and 2018 Update Process**

*Diane Eggeman, Director, Hunting and Game Management Division, FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*

*Dean Smith, NAWMP Director, AFWA*

[See presentation](#) for desired outcomes (Slide 2), key elements (Slide 3), Outline of update (Slide 4), More detailed outline (Slides 5-9), Achievements since 2012 (Slides 10-14), Challenges/Opportunities/Direction (slides 15 on).

NAWMP scheduled for ~5 year updates and a draft update was out for review at the time of this meeting. NAWMP objectives will remain unchanged with this update, but they will clarify what they mean by integration- considering the impact of specific management decisions on all objectives. They will emphasize achievements since 2012 to inspire users and provide examples that social and ecological goals are achieved through partnerships.

### **Harvest Information Program Review Task Group Updates**

*Ross Melinchuk, Director of Conservation, National Wild Turkey Federation*

Where we are: Presented a report suggesting solutions to national problem of HIP data. Biggest obstacle right now is funding, without putting pressure on state agencies to fund this. NCN submitted through Tech and Data Committee in February, and we will hear results this week. Several states reaffirmed state interest in pilot: Five states are definitely in, across all four flyways. Looking for a few more. Ross thanks Data and Technology Committee for submitting NCN. Committee formed a small WG to flesh out what proposal might work with- will get together in next few weeks and then will have full HIP WG meeting first week in June. Also appointed Vice Chair- Karen Waldrop, Deputy Director in KY. Tony- what can we do to help, from the states? Ross- Continue to encourage state involvement. Want some larger states (large mig bird hunters) and small ones. Looking for some diversity re: state participation. Five States: LA, AZ, NC, MN, CO. Timeframe: Early 2019 for pilot. Ken R- USFWS is very supportive of this effort. Josh- Subgroup spoke briefly, plans to develop survey for pilot states, and would like to expand that. That may be request that comes through Committee- may need Ross's authority to do this, or come through Bird Committee.

### **4:25 Southern Wings Progress Updates**

*Deb Hahn, International Relations Director, AFWA*

Southern Wings is a partnership of state fish and wildlife agencies created in 2009 to help facilitate participation on international conservation of shared species. Southern Wings focuses on biological links between state SGCN species and where they winter. With increasing information about where specific populations of birds winter, states can make stronger connections to where their birds go. 30 states participate in Southern Wings, contributing \$2.7 mill+ to conservation since the program began.

Southern Wings is:

- working with some of Flyways and JVs to figure out how to use this program to support full life cycle conservation through these partnerships.

- exploring the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative and Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy to evaluate how states fit in.
- Looking to support increased grassland coordination in North America

Discussion:

What is the process for developing projects? Some states already have relationships with partners in Central and South America. For other states, Southern Wings can advise on where money should go. Southern Wings can't always create a project but can look for good partners in key areas. Projects can be focused either on delivering habitat restoration or could be science based, depending on what state is looking for.