



ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

BIRD CONSERVATION COMMITTEE PART II
Chair: Gordon Myers, NC Wildlife Resources Commission
Vice-Chair: Ross Melinchuk, TX Parks and Wildlife Department

13 September 2017
8:00-10:00 am

AFWA Annual Meeting
Snowbird, UT

Resident Game Bird (RGB) Working Group Report

Karie Decker, Assistant Wildlife Division Administrator, Nebraska Game and Parks

This WG conducted a feasibility study to evaluate whether data are available to develop a reliable range-wide index on resident game bird hunter populations and harvest. The WG distributed a survey asking about availability of data for harvest, hunter participation, harvest per unit effort, and populations of 19 resident game bird species- all states participated in this survey. The group developed a draft report outlining what types of data states are collecting by species, how frequently they are collecting these data, and information about historic harvest seasons. This report will be available for review by the Bird Conservation Committee later this year.

Partner Updates:

National Wild Turkey Federation: Becky Humphries is now CEO. September 1 marked completion of Year 5 of "Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt," which has exceeded its goals- in the first 5 years, this initiative has conserved or enhanced 2.5 million acres (total goal is 4 million over 10 years).

Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever: Farm Bill is highest priority, and PF/QF hosted August field tours for Congressional staff. PF/QF maintains 145 Farm Bill biologists across the country.

National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan: Management Board approved supporting a second 3-year term for Coordinator. MB is focused on Farm Bill, funding for partnership, project examining the economics of pheasant hunting, and the effects of CRP on hunter numbers and spending.

National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative: Annual [bobwhite almanac report](#) is available, and includes conservation reports from all 25 NBCI states. Features articles on states and their progress. National Bobwhite Technical Committee held its annual meeting jointly with the Quail 8 symposium.

North American Grouse Partnership: Partnership is re-establishing and reformalizing partnership agreements with multiple groups, including Pheasants Forever and National Bobwhite Conservation Initiatives. They are working with Farm Bill partners to provide grouse-specific and native prairie information that can be communicated during the development of the next Farm Bill.

Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative: Focus for the next year on completing the Sagebrush Conservation Strategy. Primary objective is to make sure sage grouse conservation efforts are compatible with other ecosystem uses. Their next RFP will address social science and economics.

Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative: Recently completed aerial surveys; their final report shows 33,000 birds, which is an increase of 34% from last year. Continued upward trend since the 2012 drought. Conservation efforts include 147,000 acres conserved.

Western Quail Working Group: Discussing potential development of a “Status of Western Quail” report (similar to Status of Mule Deer report). Also working to develop translocation guideline for western quail.

Ruffed Grouse Conservation Plan: Brent Rudolph is this group’s new Director of Conservation Policy, and he is building a more aggressive policy program. The Ruffed Grouse Conservation Plan is 10+ years old and mostly used as a communications device- group is open to suggestions about how it can be revised or improved.

Chukar/Hungarian Partridge Plan: Solicited peer review for Chukar/Partridge management guidelines in Spokane in March. Document is now complete and has been approved by the Western Directors.

The **North American Bird Conservation Initiative** released a [State of the Birds 2017 Farm Bill Special Report](#). This is meant to serve as a communication and advocacy tool in support of strong Farm Bill conservation programs. NABCI also publishes a bimonthly blog, the [All-Bird Bulletin](#), and they are looking for a submission from the Resident Game Bird community.

Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Group (MSUGBWG) Report

Dave Morrison, Deputy Director, Wildlife Division, TX Parks and Wildlife Department

Harvest Information Program Working Group was discussed (see BCCI notes for more details). Arizona, Louisiana, and Minnesota may participate in pilot program. The HIP WG is looking for more states to join a pilot study of a national HIP reporting system.

Mourning dove banding project- Inscriptions on bands are being changed, group discussed how this will affect hunters and data collection. Reward banding payments starting in 2018 and new bands will be deployed in 2019.

WG discussed its future and its relevance and committed to reassessing what pressing issues the group will address moving forward. Alicia Hardin, Rich Schulteis, and Dave Morrison will lead the development of a new work plan.

PIF/Shorebird/Waterbird Working Group Report

Sara Schweitzer, Wildlife Diversity Biologist NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Shorebirds: The U.S. Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network has a new Chair, Rob Penner of TNC-Kansas, and three new reserves (one each in Washington, Kansas, and Georgia) may be approved soon.

Conflict Species: Group discussed the development of a framework for management of conflict species such as the Double-crested Cormorant and noted the need for state input as this process proceeds.

Multi-state Projects: Several multi-state projects are underway for landbirds (Desert Thrasher, Short-eared Owl) and shorebirds (predator management; human disturbance).

International Meetings: Two upcoming international meetings will provide input from Latin American partners to conservation plans focusing on full annual cycles of landbirds and shorebirds: PIF VI in Costa Rica (Oct. 30-Nov. 3) and the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group in Peru (Nov. 10-14).

Data Workshops: Work Group proposed workshops for states on data standardization, management, and analysis from multi-state projects (AKN) during Flyway meetings. WG will continue to engage states in the enhancement of the Avian Conservation Assessment Database (ACAD).

Discussion:

Atlantic Coast JV and Atlantic Flyway are working on Black Rails, which do fall within the jurisdiction of the PIF/SB/WB WG. Discussed the importance of coordinating between working groups.

BCC Grassland Work Group Report

Bill White, Private Land Services Division Chief, MO Department of Conservation

At the September 2016 AFWA meeting, the Bird Committee formed a Grassland Work group with four tasks:

- a.) Develop and submit for consideration a resolution outlining the crisis and prioritizing grassland birds conservation by AFWA and participating states for consideration by the AFWA Resolutions Committee,
- b.) Facilitate evaluation of tri-national grassland habitats and bird conservation efforts and develop a report with synopsis of current programs (goals, objectives, funding entities, etc.) and recommendations for collaboratively and collectively addressing declines in the broad suite of grassland birds,
- c.) Begin development, in concert with other appropriate working groups, of an NCN to address grassland bird conservation needs currently identified by conservation partners and to operationally address potential new recommendations from the above evaluation, and
- d.) AFWA avail itself of all possible avenues for encouraging prioritization of grassland birds conservation in budgeting of federal agencies.

Group's initial meeting by phone was December 2016, and WG currently has ~25-30 regular members. Formed four teams to address the four tasks.

Progress:

NCN was submitted in February but not selected; group will re-submit NCN for consideration in March 2018.

Grassland resolution submitted and was approved by AFWA at the 13 September business meeting. (See [page 3 of this document](#) for full text of Grassland Resolution.)

Team to evaluate **funding sources** has been activated, but some of that work will have to wait until results of evaluation are complete.

Evaluation team has developed template/questionnaire to pilot within a Joint Venture or Flyway, but WG asks for clarification on purpose of evaluation task and ways to address this task. Task is very complex and involves programs at different scales, multiple species groups (not just birds)

Discussion:

Since grassland initiatives are about bird habitats, and JVs are delivering habitat conservation, Joint Ventures are potential customers for this evaluation and should be primary group we reach out to for evaluation. However, there may be small projects that JVs are not aware of- does the team stop at JVs or dive further down? It seems that what is needed is a gap analysis; while there are many grassland projects, we don't have a single document that identifies tangible gaps that need to be addressed. The CEC has done a lot of work and pointed out several needs in Mexico, but nothing points out what's currently missing from delivery programs.

Recommendation to tie this evaluation to the Joint Venture framework, which would also get information from Mexico and Canada. Recommendation to move forward by asking the JVs to participate in the evaluation initially, and then going back to the states (through the Flyways) to fill any gaps for projects that are not recognized by any Joint Venture. An evaluation through the Joint Ventures would both serve as a gap analysis and a recognition of what's happening on the ground and bring together these two things.

An additional question is whether the evaluation needs a GIS portion that maps where each initiative is happening, but that would take more capacity. Gordon Myers suggests that this may be a second phase of the project.

Silke Neve offered to help connect this group with Canadian grassland projects.

Brad Bortner mentioned reaching out to TrUST (science team) which may have some capacity for GIS and measuring landscape change.

Gordon mentions following up with a small team to further shape the focus of this group, if needed.

Waterfowl Working Group Report

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

Work Plan: The 2018 Waterfowl Working Group plan maintains the four goals that we have had in the past years:

- NAWMP Implementation
- Wetland Conservation / Protection
- State Contributions to Canada Action Plan Implementation
- Information Sharing

State Contributions to Canada 2016-17 Report: 40 states are contributing to waterfowl breeding ground projects in Canada – a new record — and a few states have now achieved their goal levels and others are working very hard to increase contributions to their goal level. \$3.8 million contributed — also a new record — which is leveraged such that over \$19 million is invested in habitat in Canada.

Nature Conservancy of Canada: At the WG meeting, this group described their biodiversity program in Canada and their focus on the grassland mosaic that encompasses wetlands and uplands important to NAWMP/NAWCA projects in the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture region. They have a new \$750 million campaign with a significant grassland component, which targets securement of high priority areas, working with livestock producers, and working with the agriculture industry.

NAWMP Implementation / Human Dimensions Research / 2018 Update: WG had presentations to provide updates on implementation of the 2012 NAWMP Revision; the timeline and steps being employed to Update NAWMP by September 2018; and a teaser on the results of three (2) major human dimensions research projects – hunters; viewers, and the public. Results of the human dimensions workshop will be presented at the Future of Waterfowl - II Workshop that will be held at NCTC on September 26 and 27th. FOW2 will also provide an opportunity for the 200 invited participants to provide input into the development of the 2018 NAWMP Update.

Nature of Americans: Dave Case provided information on relevancy of conservation and the information will be very helpful as we move forward with the people goal of NAWMP. Conservation and the Outdoors are relevant to the public, both adults and children

Waterfowl Professionals Survey: Dale Humburg provided a summary of the research with the bottom line suggesting that waterfowl management is doing well, but some changes are required.

The WWG will continue to support efforts to ensure appropriate levels of resources are provided and available within the USFWS Migratory Bird Program. They will continue to monitor WOTUS and encourage members to inputs as appropriate during the consultation process. In addition, this WG will continue to work on the issues of wetlands and relevancy for wildlife management/conservation and outdoor recreation of all types. Finally, the WWG will continue to implement the Action Plan for State Contributions to Canada and will fully develop the marketing elements and present them to the Task Force prior to the North American meeting

Future of Waterfowl 2/NAWMP Update

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

The NAWMP update will be completed a year from now. NAWMP has preliminary human dimensions results on their nationwide surveys of hunters, viewers, and the general public, and these results will be presented in more depth at the Future of Waterfowl 2 workshop, which will be held September 26-27 at

the National Conservation Training Center. The workshop's audience will include not just members of the waterfowl conservation community, but also individuals in the birding conservation community whose goals align with waterfowl habitat work.

In preparation for the 2018 update, 3 subgroups will report to the Update Steering Committee: a writing team, a FoW2 Workshop team, and an Institution team. Hunter/Viewer surveys will be available in early October, and Canadian data are expected in 2018.

Additional Items

The [11th Woodcock Symposium](#) will be held October 24-27 2017 in Michigan.

NatureServe is conducting detailed work with grassland classifications that indicate historic distribution of grasslands and current status. They will be holding [webinars](#) to discuss this work.