

# Integrated Bird Conservation along the Pacific Coast of North America: An Action Agenda<sup>1</sup>

Gregg Elliott<sup>2</sup>, Bob Altman<sup>3</sup>, Wendy Easton<sup>4</sup>, Ricardo Estrella<sup>5</sup>, Geoffrey Geupel<sup>6</sup>, Mary Chase<sup>6</sup>, Ellie Cohen<sup>6</sup>, and Ann Chrisney<sup>6</sup>

---

## Abstract

Scientists and managers representing the continental bird conservation plans explored the status of conservation planning and implementation for birds along the Pacific coast of North America. The theme of the session, “using common currencies to advance bird conservation,” emphasized the components of bird conservation shared among the major initiatives, such as Bird Conservation Region coordinators, species, habitats, partnerships, funding opportunities, and Adaptive Conservation Planning. A primary goal of the session was to develop a conservation action agenda, agreed to by all participants. Types of action items identified include developing new modes of outreach to non-traditional partners, prioritizing funding needs, identifying new sources of funding, and integrating planning and partnerships among the four continental bird conservation plans.

*Key words:* all-bird, common currencies, conservation planning, integrated bird conservation.

## Priorities for Bird Conservation: The Plans

On 21 March 2002, 18 presenters from six states and provinces of Mexico, the United States, and Canada (see *Appendix 1*) participated in a daylong series of presentations and discussions concerning the current status of continental conservation planning and implementation for birds along the Pacific coast of North America. A central focus of the discussions was integration of these efforts among bird conservation plans and

regions. Participating scientists and managers represented all four of the continental bird conservation plans: the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), Partners in Flight (PIF), the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP), and the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (NAWCP), also known as “Waterbird Conservation for the Americas.” These programs have joined forces under the umbrella of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) to support “all-bird” conservation. NABCI’s mission is to facilitate the conservation of native North American birds by increasing the effectiveness of existing and new initiatives, enhancing coordination, and fostering greater cooperation among the nations and peoples of the continent (Pashley et al. 2000).

The theme of this session, “using common currencies to advance bird conservation,” emphasized the components of bird conservation shared among the major initiatives, such as Bird Conservation Region (BCR) coordinators, species, habitats, partnerships, funding opportunities, management techniques, and Adaptive Conservation Planning (ACP). A primary goal of NABCI is to deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation through regionally based, biologically driven, landscape-oriented partnerships. In many cases, these partnerships take the form of NAWMP Joint Ventures (U.S. NABCI Committee 2000). Indeed, in late 2002 the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) issued Order No. 146 to “ensure. . . development and support of Joint Ventures that are regionally based, biologically driven, landscape-oriented partnerships delivering the *full spectrum of bird conservation*,” (emphasis added). The order goes on to state that “Joint Ventures should strive to develop the capacity to become the delivery agents for all migratory bird habitat conservation priorities in their geographic areas” (U.S. Department of Interior 2002).

One goal of this session was to develop an action agenda—a list of specific tasks agreed to by participants—to further the integration and achievement of bird conservation objectives as described in the regional bird conservation plans and other appropriate plans and strategies (for example those of the USFWS, The Nature Conservancy, and state agencies).

In providing summaries of their regional bird conservation plans, and thinking about common currencies,

---

<sup>1</sup>A version of this paper was presented at the **Third International Partners in Flight Conference, March 20-24, 2002, Asilomar Conference Grounds, California.**

<sup>2</sup>PRBO Conservation Science, 2217 Amar Court, Davis, CA 95616. E-mail: gelliott@prbo.org.

<sup>3</sup>American Bird Conservancy, 311 NE Mistletoe Circle, Corvallis, OR 97330.

<sup>4</sup>Canadian Wildlife Service, Pacific and Yukon Region, RR#1, 5421 Robertson Road, Delta, BC V4K 3N2.

<sup>5</sup>Centro de Investigaciones Biológicas del Noroeste, Mar Bermejo # 195, Col. Playa Palo Santa Rita, La Paz, Baja California Sur, 23090, MEXICO.

<sup>6</sup>PRBO Conservation Science, 4990 Shoreline Hwy, Stinson Beach, CA 94970.

presenters were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. What do you see as the best tools or mechanisms for implementing your conservation priorities?
2. What do you see as the best tools or mechanisms for measuring the success of your conservation actions?
3. If reasonably unlimited resources were available for conservation, what would you suggest as the most important one or two conservation activities that should be initiated now?

Presentations progressed geographically from south to north, beginning with Baja California and progressing through California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and concluding with Alaska. Details of plans presented may be found at <http://www.partnersinflight.org/>. Other sources include [http://www.nawmp.ca/eng/index\\_e.html](http://www.nawmp.ca/eng/index_e.html) and <http://www.manomet.org/USSCP/>. See also <http://www.nacwcp.org/>, or <http://www.nabci.org/cec/>.

### **Looking for Common Currencies: Panel Discussion**

A panel of the presenters entertained questions from the audience. Discussion focused on how to bring the three newer conservation initiatives (PIF, USSCP, NAWCP) squarely into the realm of “implementation” with as much success as NAWMP. NAWMP Joint Venture representatives emphasized the need for measurable conservation targets (numbers of birds, hectares of habitat) from each of the non-waterfowl conservation initiatives. Many participants agreed that a current lack of funding for bird conservation in upland habitats is a significant roadblock to implementing conservation on a meaningful scale.

### **Using Common Currencies to Advance Bird Conservation**

Practitioners presented a series of talks highlighting mechanisms for integration and achievement of bird conservation objectives (some of the papers from these talks are included in this volume). They focused on case studies of actual conservation projects.

What follows here is additional information on common currencies for bird conservation: a discussion of the role of BCRs, Adaptive Conservation Planning, and an action agenda for conservation integration. Policy developments at the national level and successful conservation partnerships at the international level point to future opportunities in the Pacific coast region.

### **The Role of Bird Conservation Region Coordinators**

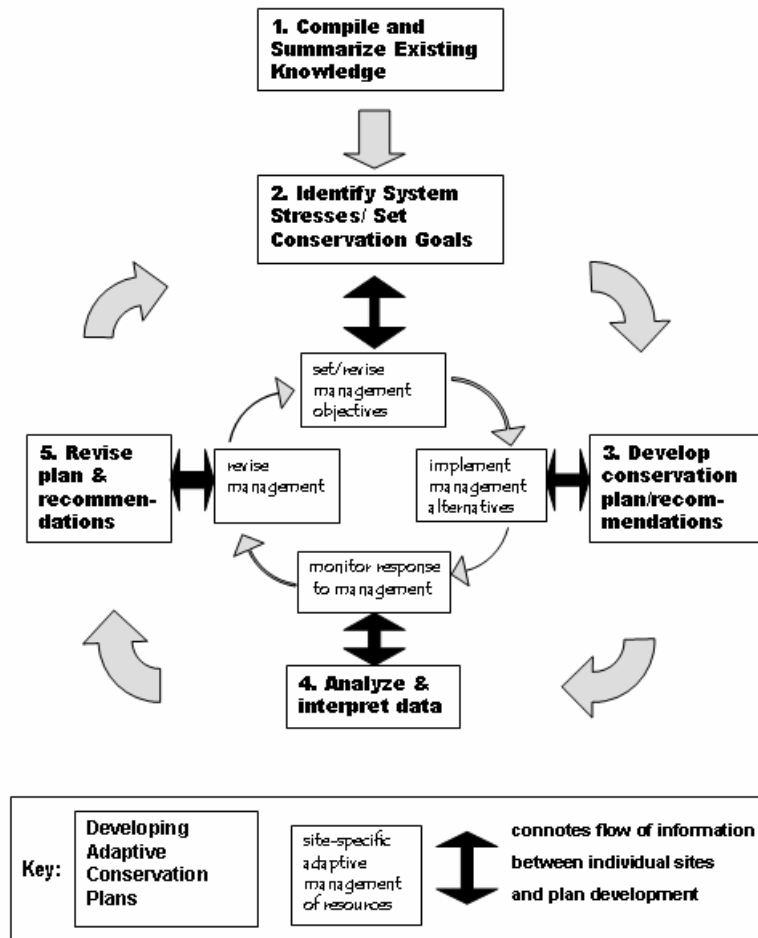
The first meeting of BCR coordinators held 14-16 August 2002 in Hood River, Oregon resulted in the following consensus concerning a BCR coordinator’s job: it is as variable as the circumstances under which the coordinator operates.

Some BCR coordinators have dual roles as Joint Venture coordinators. Some have responsibility for a geographic area that spans several states, and some BCRs are encompassed entirely within one state. Thus, a BCR coordinator’s job is to do whatever it takes to ensure that the trajectory of bird conservation emphasizes coordination among initiatives. Joint Ventures and other bird conservation groups are being encouraged to play an increasing role in the delivery of all-bird conservation. If a Joint Venture is already successfully delivering all-bird conservation (as, for example, in the Mississippi Valley), there may not be a need for a BCR coordinator. A substantive consensus emerging in the Pacific Region was that a significant role of BCR coordinators should be to track, maintain, and facilitate the use of information concerning new and existing sources of funding for all-bird conservation projects of all types (i.e. upland and wetland habitat protection, restoration, enhancement, monitoring, and research).

### **Adaptive Conservation Planning**

One common currency widely recognized by conservationists is adaptive resource management, a process that emphasizes interaction between resource managers and scientists. Adaptive management involves treating management as a continual experiment in which the results of previous actions are monitored and used to modify future management (Holling 1978, Ringold et al. 1996).

Adaptive Conservation Planning (ACP) (*Fig. 1*) focuses on closing the scientific feedback loop, a critical but neglected component of adaptive management. ACP is a process designed to pool the results of many adaptively managed projects by collecting data on focal species, then developing an adaptive conservation plan (often called a bird conservation plan), which contains science-based conservation, management, monitoring and research recommendations for specific habitat types or ecoregions (Chase and Geupel this volume). The ACP process involves five steps: 1) compile and summarize existing knowledge, incorporating expert opinion, 2) identify system stressors and set conservation goals (this step entails substantial participation by land/ocean managers), 3) develop an adaptive conservation plan to achieve those conservation goals (this step focuses on data synthesis to generate management and research recommendations), 4) continue



**Figure 1**— Flow of Adaptive Conservation Planning, showing development of adaptive conservation plans and linkages to site-specific adaptive management of resources.

to collect relevant data, and 5) revise the adaptive conservation plan on a regular basis.

**Action Agenda for Conservation Integration**

This session closed with a discussion to develop an action agenda for future collaboration. Participants identified the following as important objectives to be achieved over the next several years.

1. Increase collaboration between Mexico, the U.S., and Canada through development of joint proposals and projects that cross borders. Projects should address the needs of migrant species irrespective of political borders.
2. Integrate, through joint planning exercises, the geographic and habitat conservation priorities of all four continental bird conservation programs.
3. Identify Pacific coast all-bird projects/focus areas for the Trinational NABCI Committee to support as demonstration trinational conservation projects.

4. Work with the NABCI U.S. Committee to augment support and funding for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA), viewed as the upland equivalent of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which provides funding for waterfowl and wetland conservation.

(Note: Results from the first round of NMBCA grants in 2002 resulted in the funding of 32 proposals, at a mean match-to-grant ratio of 4.7 to 1. Many high quality projects went unfunded, and this overwhelming response to the first grant round showed an enormous demand for upland projects in the United States and Latin America.)

5. Increase financial support for people traveling internationally, particularly biologists and agency representatives from Latin American countries who may have limited sources of support for international travel. Increase financial support for much-needed equipment and facilities for biologists, particularly those in Latin American countries seeking to build a more robust bird monitoring infrastructure. For example, this could be accomplished if key sources

- of federal or private funding allowed a greater percentage of project funds to cover the cost of new equipment (such as mist nets, computers, wet labs).
6. When working internationally, realize that the interests and priorities of research institutions can differ substantially from those of government agencies.
  7. Identify and increase use of non-wetland/non-game conservation funding (in addition to NMBCA funding), for example, state wildlife grants (federal wildlife conservation funds available to state fish and wildlife agencies) or other state programs that target habitats or regions rather than wildlife directly (such as programs for coastal conservation).
  8. Help to establish state matching programs for federal dollars.
  9. Develop a list of top priority projects for all birds, with associated price tags, to demonstrate need and help with fundraising.
  10. Recruit and/or identify non-game agency personnel and non-governmental organization representatives to participate in existing Joint Ventures (boards and technical committees).
  11. Build partnerships with private landowners and seek the support of new funding sources in 2002 Farm Bill conservation programs. For example, there will be \$50 million in new grassland conservation programs and a 15 percent earmark of Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program funds for species at risk.
  12. Work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to partner with and help train new employees who will be hired to conduct technical assistance (120 new employees in 2002 in California alone).
  13. Conduct outreach to private landowners to facilitate realistic wildlife-friendly stewardship.
  14. Ensure that bird conservation initiatives work together to develop incentives for landowners to improve stewardship for birds and other wildlife.
  15. Work with the hunting community to further enhance traditionally managed habitats for all birds.
  16. Use resources of the Land Trust Alliance and similar organizations, which provide business support and other resources and can assist in identifying local land trust partners.
  17. Work with private forests and other industries as partners to identify economically viable wildlife conservation practices and projects.
  18. Help other regions and Joint Ventures learn from successful programs, such as the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture's relationship with agriculturalists (i.e., their partnership with the California Rice Growers).
  19. Increase the staff available to all-bird conservation programs within the Pacific states and provinces of North America to achieve stepped-down conservation goals of PIF, USSCP, and NAWCP. Increases could take the form of dedicated state or federal agency staff time, the hiring of new BCR coordinators, or project-level staff based at private organizations.

## Future Directions

Participants discussed the concept of developing a regional Pacific All-Bird Conservation Initiative (PABCI) to help achieve the objectives listed above. The mission of PABCI would be to conserve all birds and ecosystems throughout the Pacific Flyway by integrating the interests of the waterfowl, landbird, shorebird, and waterbird efforts locally, regionally and flyway-wide. They agreed to meet again in 2003 or 2004 (as of May 2003, no meeting had yet been scheduled) to further refine these goals, facilitate collaboration, and ensure true integration of bird conservation action.

The primary goal of an inaugural PABCI meeting would be to facilitate new partnerships or expanded roles for Joint Ventures by:

1. Developing one or more pilot all-bird conservation projects, which integrate data and data collection, conservation planning, prioritizing, and fundraising across continental bird conservation programs and across borders.
2. Assessing existing monitoring and research programs to increase cooperation, identify gaps, and develop a set of common priorities across bird conservation programs.
3. Developing strategies to foster real international communication and partnership through seminars, courses, research opportunities, and on-the-ground conservation projects.
4. Identifying agencies or NGOs to lead each of these actions and target potential sources of funding.

## Acknowledgments

The authors wish to acknowledge the Common Currencies panelists listed in *Appendix 1* for their partici-

pation and contributions in developing the action agenda presented here.

**United States.** The Plains, VA: American Bird Conservancy; 92 p.

Ringold, P. L., J. Alegria, R. L. Czaplewski, B. S. Mulder, T. Tolle, and K. Burnett. 1996. **Adaptive monitoring design for ecosystem management.** Ecological Applications 6: 745-747.

### Literature Cited

Chase, M. K. and G. R. Geupel. This volume. **The use of avian focal species for conservation planning in California.**

U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. 2002. **Director's Order No. 146, Subject: Joint Venture Administration.** Washington, DC: Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Holling, C. S., editor. 1978. **Adaptive environmental assessment and management.** Toronto, Canada: John Wiley & Sons.

U.S. NABCI Committee. 2000. **North American bird conservation Initiative, bringing it all together.** Washington, DC: Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Pashley, D. N., C. J. Beardmore, J. A. Fitzgerald, R. P. Ford, W. C. Hunter, M. S. Morrison, K. V. Rosenberg. 2000. **Partners in Flight: Conservation of the land birds of the**

### Appendix 1— Common Currencies panelists.

Province or State	Panelist
<b>Baja, Mexico</b>	Eduardo Palacios, Centro de Investigación Científica y de Educación Superior de Ensenada (CICESE) (Waterbirds) Eric Mellinck, CICESE (Shorebirds) Ricardo Estrella, Centro de Investigaciones Biológicas del Noroeste (CIBNOR) (Landbirds)
<b>California</b>	Mark Pietre and Mike Eicholz, Ducks Unlimited; Bob Schaffer, Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture; and Catharine Hickey, Point Reyes Bird Observatory (Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture) Karl Malamud Roam, San Francisco Bay Joint Venture (SFBJV) Kyra Mills and Gregg Elliott, Point Reyes Bird Observatory; and Maura Naughton, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Waterbirds) Catharine Hickey, Point Reyes Bird Observatory (Shorebirds) Geoffrey Geupel and Sandy Scoggin, Point Reyes Bird Observatory (Landbirds)
<b>Oregon-Washington</b>	Joe La Tourette, Washington Joint Venture Coordinator (Pacific Coast Joint Venture) Joe Buchanan, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Shorebirds) Bob Altman, American Bird Conservancy (Landbirds)
<b>British Columbia</b>	Andre Breault, Canadian Wildlife Service (Waterfowl) Rob Butler, Canadian Wildlife Service (Shorebirds) Wendy Easton, Canadian Wildlife Service (Landbirds)
<b>Alaska</b>	Brad Andres and Heather Johnson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Shorebirds) Steve Matsuoka and Colleen Handel, U.S. Geological Survey, and Brad Andres, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Landbirds)