

Integrated Bird Conservation Web Site in the United States¹

Roxanne Bogart,² Chris Eberly,³ and Elizabeth Martin⁴

Abstract

In working towards a vision of integrated bird conservation, scientists, conservationists, land managers, and administrators are faced with a variety of scientific, managerial, administrative, and logistical challenges and complexities. The broad scope of integrated bird conservation requires organizations to work together to conserve birds across taxonomic groups, across landscapes, across geopolitical boundaries, and across social, economic, and political groups. This is no small task. While the benefits of achieving such an integrated approach are numerous and far-reaching, the effort requires considerable coordination and communication among numerous individuals at all levels of organizational structure. Communications tools, such as the internet, are key to enhancing the ability of people to coordinate and exchange information and ideas. A partnership of organizations involved in the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) developed an integrated bird conservation web site in the United States that is helping to facilitate coordination and collaboration among users. The site contains linkages to all the major bird conservation planning initiatives, and provides information on progress being made in the field towards integrated bird conservation, information on NABCI as a forum for integrated bird conservation, and a variety of state-of-the-art tools and resources. The web address is <http://www.nabci-us.org>.

Key words: bird conservation, NABCI, North American Bird Conservation Initiative, web site.

Introduction

In working towards a vision of integrated bird conservation, scientists, conservationists, land managers, and

administrators are faced with a variety of complex scientific, managerial, political, administrative, and logistical challenges. The broad scope of integrated bird conservation requires that organizations and individuals work together across taxonomic groups, across landscapes, across geopolitical boundaries, and across social, political, and cultural groups. This is no small nor simple task. While the benefits of achieving such an integrated approach are numerous and far-reaching, the effort requires considerable coordination and collaboration among individuals working at the local, state, regional, national, and international levels. In today's world, the internet is rapidly becoming the principal mechanism for sharing information and providing access to documents, especially in efforts where participants are widely spread geographically, such as the various bird conservation initiatives in North America.

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative

During the last two decades of the 20th century, a surge of interest in conserving birds and their habitats spurred the development of several proactive, partnership-based bird conservation initiatives, including the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners in Flight, the United States Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan. Each of these initiatives has produced landscape-oriented conservation plans for birds that lay out population goals and habitat objectives. By the end of the century, participants of these initiatives realized that the most effective way to carry out these plans would be to work in partnership by bringing together the resources, both human and financial, to protect and restore the habitats and landscapes North America's diversity of birds depend upon for survival. The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) evolved out of this realization of the value of an integrated approach to bird conservation (US NABCI Committee 2000). In this way, NABCI is not a new and separate initiative, but part of the natural evolution of bird conservation in North America.

The vision of NABCI is 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

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

²U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Bird Habitat Conservation, 11 Lincoln St., Essex Junction, VT 05452. E-mail: Roxanne_Bogart@fws.gov

³Department of Defense Partners in Flight Program, P.O. Box 54, The Plains, VA, 20198-0054.

⁴U.S. Geological Survey, 12201 Sunrise Valley Dr., ms-302, Reston, VA 20192.

sound science and effective management. To realize this vision, NABCI participants are working toward the goal of delivering comprehensive bird conservation through a network of regionally based, biologically driven, landscape-oriented partnerships (US NABCI Committee 2000).

The creation of an effective delivery system for integrated bird conservation entails building upon the dynamic partnerships of Joint Ventures and the biological foundation of Bird Conservation Regions (BCR) to avoid redundant partnership structures and separate biological planning processes. The key to realizing such a delivery system lies in assuring that a communications network exists among individuals and organizations working within particular geographic areas at various scales (Ford 2000). The internet provides a means of fostering communications and coordination by enabling web users to share information efficiently and interact with it in novel ways that have no precedents in paper document design (Lynch and Horton 1999).

The United States Integrated Bird Conservation Web Site

A team of organizations participating in NABCI developed a web site in the United States that is facilitating coordination and collaboration among people working towards a vision of integrated bird conservation. Concurrently, an international communications team developed an international site to foster coordination among bird conservationists in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The international NABCI web site (see <http://www.nabci.org>) provides access to information of interest to the three countries and functions as a portal to each of the national sites, including the United States integrated bird conservation web site that is the topic of this paper. The short-term objectives of the United States web site (<http://www.nabci-us.org>) are to 1) provide basic information on integrated bird conservation and NABCI's role as a forum for integrated bird conservation, 2) enable users to link up to individual bird conservation initiative web sites which contain bird conservation plans and species assessment work, and 3) make available a variety of tools and resources that help foster an integrated approach.

The site is divided into four main sections that function as navigational aids: Vision, Partnerships and Plans, Tools and Resources, and News and Events. Under Vision, one section provides information on NABCI, including the United States NABCI Action Plan, access to outreach and other documents, and lists of Committee and Working Group members and meeting minutes. Vision also includes a "Stories from the Field" section

which presents information about progress being made by partners in each BCR toward coordinating and integrating conservation activities. The pathways to integrated bird conservation are diverse and unique to the ecological, geopolitical, and cultural settings within each BCR. However, by sharing stories and information, partners can help one another face hurdles that may seem insurmountable and gain a greater sense of possibility.

The Partnerships and Plans section provides links to the major bird conservation initiatives and their plans, to Joint Venture and BCR staff contact information, and to a host of conservation organizations in the United States. The Tools and Resources section provides state-of-the-art web-based information, including an easy-to-browse Bird Conservation Regions map hyper-linked to descriptions of habitats and species of interest in each BCR. It also includes a link to the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) Bird Conservation Node, sponsored by the U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. NBII is an electronic information network that provides access to biological data and information on our nation's plants, animals, ecosystems, and conservation resources. In the future, this section will link to a directory of funding sources for bird conservation work.

The News and Events section contains information on upcoming conferences, workshops, meetings, and other events, as well as news briefs about noteworthy developments in integrated bird conservation.

The long-term objective of the site is to allow users to stay up-to-date on progress being made in the field of integrated bird conservation by expanding ecoregional information provided on the hyper-linked BCR map to include a host of species, management, policy, and contact information that will help users to define their role in conserving birds on landscapes within their region. Toward this end, if desired by users, the site may also incorporate advanced interactive discussion boards and chat rooms to facilitate communications among users on specific topics. Discussion boards could help users find information or share experiences that might help others facing similar challenges.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks goes to the US Geological Survey and the National Biological Information Infrastructure for hosting the web site and providing funds for initial web site development, to S. Chambers of AtomicWeb, Inc., for creating the site's splash page and navigation structure based on the authors' guidance, to M. Zavori for technical assistance, to B. Battle graphics assistance,

and to D. J. Case and W. S. Schwenk for insightful recommendations on the site's content and structure. Thanks to many partners for offering helpful edits and suggestions for developing the site.

Literature Cited

Ford, R. P. 2000. **Joint Ventures and Bird Conservation Regions: Evolving roles for bird conservation delivery.** Unpublished draft supplied by author.

Lynch, P. L. and S. Horton. 1999. **Interface Design.** In: Web style guide: basic design principles for creating web sites. Princeton, NJ: Yale University Press; 11.

U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) Committee. 2000. **The North American Bird Conservation Initiative in the United States: A vision of American bird conservation.** Arlington, VA: Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.