

2012  
CONSERVATION  
AWARDS

wings across the americas



a us forest service program  
to conserve birds, bats,  
butterflies and dragonflies

un programa para  
conservar aves, murciélagos,  
mariposas y libélulas

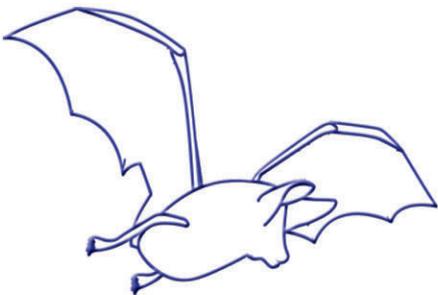
un programme pour  
la conservation des  
oiseaux, des chauves-souris,  
des papillons et des libellule







**WINGS ACROSS THE AMERICAS**  
2012 Conservation Awards



# INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH & PARTNERSHIP AWARD

## HABITAT REQUIREMENTS AND CONSERVATION NEEDS OF AT-RISK NEOTROPICAL MIGRANT BIRDS ON THEIR WINTERING GROUNDS



Effective conservation of Neotropical migrants requires the development and application of robust tools to assess status, distribution and habitat needs. Over the past ten years, David King has played a major role in research and conservation efforts directed towards two at-risk Neotropical migrant species 1) the Golden-cheeked Warbler, which is currently listed under the US Endangered Species Act and 2) the Golden-winged Warbler, which is considered by many the most threatened North American landbird not currently protected by the US Endangered Species Act.

His work has contributed critical knowledge on the winter distribution and ecology of these and other migrants through the development and application of standardized survey methods to estimate habit-

specific abundance and survival. These methods are combined with remote sensing to identify wintering habitat availability and population carrying capacity at the local, landscape and regional scale. Perhaps most important, the project successfully linked bird conservation to the broader issue of at-risk Neotropical habitats such as Latin American pine-oak forests which are critical habitats for Golden-cheeked Warblers. These efforts demonstrate that

both Golden-cheeked and Golden-winged warbler research and conservation efforts can have broader impacts on Neotropical habitats and ecosystems.

Management on the ground has likewise benefitted from the project. Research results have been used to identify sustainable agroforestry management plans and practices as well as providing tools for managers and conservationists to identify and conserve critical wintering habitat. Partnerships have contributed greatly to the success of the work including those with the US Fish and Wildlife Service; the US Geological Survey-Biological Resources Division and universities in Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua; and non-governmental organizations including The Nature Conservancy and





the Mesoamerican Development Institute. The award recognizes the important role that David King has played in advancing our understanding of the conservation needs of Neotropical migrant birds on their wintering grounds.

#### **Award Winners**

- David I. King,  
Northern Research Station,  
US Forest Service
- Richard Chandler,  
USGS Patuxent Wildlife  
Research Center
- Victor Arce,  
Montes de Oro Coffee  
Cooperative

#### **Certificate Recipients**

- Edgar Herrera,  
The Nature Conservancy,  
Nicaragua Field Office
- David Mehlman,  
The Nature Conservancy  
Latin America Program
- Honduras Mesoamerican  
Development Institute
- John Rappole,  
Smithsonian Institution (Emeritus)
- Dana Roth,  
US Fish and Wildlife Service



# RESEARCH & PARTNERSHIP AWARD

## BIRD RESPONSES TO INVASIVE SPECIES, FIRE AND FUEL REMOVAL IN VULNERABLE SOUTHWESTERN ECOSYSTEMS



This award recognizes a 10-year collaborative partnership that coalesced around Neotropical migratory birds, their habitats, increasing fires, and the spread of exotic woody species in riparian ecosystems of the southwestern U.S. Partners set out to evaluate how control of invasive species, fuel removal, and other restoration actions could contribute toward bird and habitat conservation.

The work is important because over the last century riparian communities along the Middle Rio Grande in New Mexico have become increasingly stressed due to fires, exotic plants, increased fuel biomass, long-term drought conditions, and water shortages. Saltcedar and Rus-

sian olive, highly invasive exotic plant species, not only make up a large percentage of the fuel biomass but also appear to crowd out native species such as Rio Grande cottonwood by rapidly replacing them after wildfire events. Invasions by woody plants can alter native ecosystems by increasing fuel loads and fire frequency. Rapid growth of

invasive species after wildfires may create an invasive plant-fire cycle which, in turn, may make reestablishment of native plant communities extremely difficult. The group quantified the immediate and long-term responses of birds and their habitats to wildfire to aid in developing environmentally sound policies to manage ecosystems exposed to fire. The increased danger of wildfires in the riparian forest, known in New Mexico as “the bosque” has resulted in numerous fuel reduction restoration projects. Little was known about how fire itself or habitat alterations from fuel removal might affect local bird populations. The USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) and their partners examined how birds

responded to fire, exotic plants, fuel reduction treatments, and exotic plant removal. Their research questions addressed goals identified by river managers: 1) preserve cottonwoods and other native trees and shrubs, and 2) reduce catastrophic fire risk via control of exotic plants and fuels. Among the bird species that benefited from fire is the Black-chinned Hummingbird. Those that benefited in the short term by invasive species removal and fuel removal include Ash-throated Flycatchers. Birds projected to benefit in the long-term by invasive species removal and fuel removal are canopy nesters such as Summer Tanager and Western Wood-Pewee. The partnership’s principal investigator, Deborah Finch of the RMRS, convened teams involving research joint ventures with multiple universities and RMRS staff to conduct the research. The award recognizes the valuable information this partnership has provided on fuel reduction methods that reduce fire danger while conserving bird populations.





### **Award Winners**

- Deborah M. Finch, Rocky Mountain Research Station, US Forest Service
- David Hawksworth, Rocky Mountain Research Station, US Forest Service
- June Galloway, formerly Rocky Mountain Research Station, US Forest Service
- Walter Dunn, Region 3, State and Private Forestry, US Forest Service

- D. Max Smith, Rocky Mountain Research Station, US Forest Service
- Yasmeen Najmi, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- City of Albuquerque Open Space
- Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge
- Joint Fire Science Program

### **Certificate Recipients**

- Jean-Luc Cartron, Drylands Institute and University of New Mexico
- Jeff Kelly, University of Oklahoma
- Justin Fitch, New Mexico State University
- Cyndie Abeyta, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- New Mexico State Forestry





## HABITAT MANAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIP AWARD (1)

### CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN

The Lesser prairie-chicken, a beautiful brown and tan speckled bird with orange air sacs and a yellow crown, occurs only in the Southern Short-Grass eco-region including the Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands in southeastern Colorado and southwestern Kansas. These picturesque landscapes are key strongholds for the species in those two states. Sadly, contemporary Lesser prairie-chicken habitat and populations have declined significantly since the 1800s. The species is a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act, with a listing decision imminent. A strong partnership between the two national grasslands and partners has developed and evolved

over time to reflect the primary goals of learning more about populations and habitat needs locally and applying that knowledge to targeted habitat conservation and restoration projects. The focus of activities has been threefold: inventory and monitor habitat and populations; maintain and improve crucial habitat on the northern end of the range of the species; and research movement patterns associated with different habitat types. The variety of partners cultivated or encouraged by the Grassland personnel in this vital conservation effort is broad and notable, including USDA San Dimas Technology & Development Center and Natural Resources Conservation Service,

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado Natural Areas Program, Craighead Berlingia South, The Audubon Society, Chaparral Energy, private landowners and grazing permittees, and many volunteers from the local community and academic institutions.

Management and conservation of the Lesser prairie chicken has been ongoing. A few of the impressive on-the-ground accomplishments in just the past three years on the National Grasslands reflect the complexity of management for this precarious species: breeding ground surveys on 120,000 acres





over 100 historic lek sites, cooperative field surveys and evaluations of population abundance in historic vs. current habitat conditions, prescribed burning to improve nesting habitat, fence enclosures around active leks to protect and improve associated nesting habitat, shelter and winter habitat plantings, fence marking to reduce collision-related mortalities, and seeding burned areas with native grasses to accelerate restoration of high quality habitat.

Research outputs are also significant, including a study in conjunction with San Dimas and state agencies that examines the habitat use of the Lesser prairie-chicken by fitting birds with a device that is part GPS receiver and part satellite transmitter. The data captured—some 2,500 observations to date—are a rich source of information on

the movements and habitat use of birds in the region. This work has also attracted partners and stimulated collaborative efforts to expand the reach of the investigations beyond these two national grasslands.

#### **Award Winners**

- Andy Chappell, Cimarron National Grassland, US Forest Service
- Stephanie Shively, Comanche National Grassland, US Forest Service
- Kraig Schultz, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism
- Jonathan Reitz, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

#### **Certificate Recipients**

- Jeff Stoney, Comanche National Grassland, US Forest Service
- Christina Kemp, Comanche National Grassland, US Forest Service
- Mike Welker, Pike & San Isabel National Forests and Cimarron & Comanche National Grasslands, US Forest Service
- Rey Farve, San Dimas Technology and Development Center
- Brian Bedrosian, Craighead Beringia South
- The Chaparral Energy Company



## HABITAT MANAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIP AWARD (2)

### CHIPPEWA FLOWAGE FOREST CONSERVATION EASEMENT

This award recognizes an innovative partnership among the Forest Legacy Program of the Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry, U.S. Forest Service; the Bureau of Forest Management for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; and the Trust for Public Land, a non-profit. Their collective three-year effort resulted in a Forest Legacy conservation easement in Wisconsin, called the Chippewa Flowage Forest. Consisting of more than 18,000 acres, the easement has forest, wetlands, waterways and exceptional wildlife habitat. The property, located on the southeast edge of the Chippewa Flowage, is nestled between the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest to the northeast and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources land and lands of the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Band to the west.

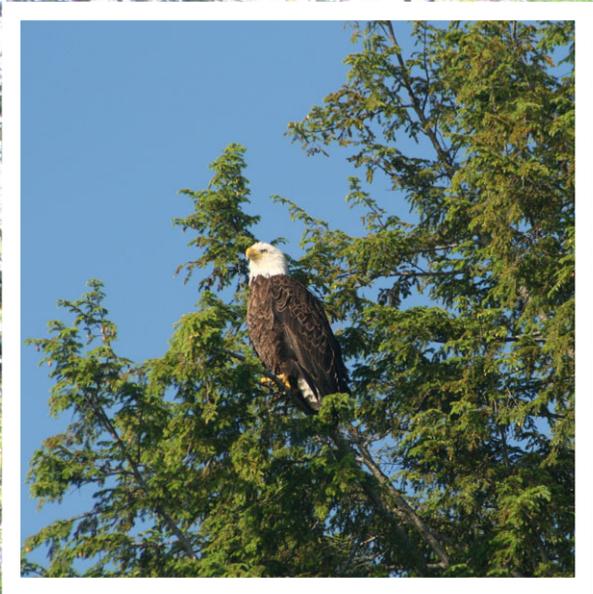
Land on the easement is dominated by an upland northern hardwood forest with maple, red oak, birch, and aspen. In addition, the property boasts red and white pine, spruce, cedar, and hemlock—all of which provides much needed habitat for a wide range of species. The property offers food and shelter for both migrating and nesting birds—and one of the few places for the public to observe an active heron rookery. Many migratory bird species have been observed on the property as it straddles two bird conservation regions. It is especially important for waterbirds like the Bald Eagle (state species of concern), Osprey, and Common Loon and forest birds like the Wood Thrush, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Black-throated Green Warbler.

In addition to its great value for birds, the flowage supports a world-class fishery for muskellunge and walleye. Key mammal populations include radio-collared gray wolves, black bears, American martens, river otters, and Wisconsin's reintroduced elk herd. This award recognizes an outstanding three-year effort to create this important conservation easement so vital to the region's many species.

#### Award Winners

- Deirdre Raimo,  
Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, US Forest Service
- Neal Bungard,  
Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, US Forest Service
- Scott Stewart,  
Washington Office  
State and Private Forestry,  
US Forest Service
- Nicole Potvin,  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Amy Singh,  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Shaun Hamilton,  
Trust for Public Land
- Paul DeLong  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Dick Steffes,  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources





# BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION AWARD

## INTERAGENCY MARDON SKIPPER WORK GROUP



In 2005, a small group of biologists from the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management in Oregon and Washington were concerned enough about the survival of a small brown butterfly, the Mardon skipper, to form an Interagency Work Group. The goal of the work group was to learn about conservation gaps regarding this federal candidate species and to determine what it would take—both in terms of personnel and funding—to address them. The Group has evolved over the years to include representation from many other groups including the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the US

Fish and Wildlife Service, and most recently, National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service from California. The Group now addresses key issues across the entire range of the species.

The Interagency work group has been productive. Extensive surveys undertaken by the group have

discovered significant numbers of new Mardon skipper populations. Further, site management plans have been developed for most southern Oregon sites, and extensive restoration actions are being implemented. Efforts also included production of a range-wide conservation assessment that not only has research but also management implications. A major result has been the lowering of the US Fish and Wildlife Service listing priority for this species from a 3 to an 8. In addition to creating strong interagency cohesion aimed at species conservation, the work group has used

the expertise of many partners including the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. The award recognizes the accomplishments of the Interagency Work Group in the conservation of this rare species.

### AWARD WINNERS

- Kelli Van Norman, Region 6 Regional Office/BLM Oregon State Office, US Forest Service
- Rob Huff, Region 6 Regional Office/BLM Oregon State Office, US Forest Service
- Mitch Wainwright, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, US Forest Service
- Carol Chandler, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, US Forest Service
- Ruby Seitz, Willamette National Forest, US Forest Service
- Holly Witt, Rogue-River/Siskiyou National Forest, US Forest Service





- Carole Jorgensen  
US Forest Service
  - Joan St. Hilare,  
Okanogan-Wenatchee  
National Forest,  
US Forest Service
  - Ann Potter,  
Washington Department of  
Fish and Wildlife
  - Scott Hoffman Black,  
The Xerces Society
  - Tony Kerwin,  
Medford Bureau of Land  
Management
  - Steve Godwin,  
Medford Bureau of Land  
Management
  - Vince Harke,  
US Fish and Wildlife  
Service
  - Ted Thomas,  
US Fish and Wildlife  
Service
- CERTIFICATE RECIPIENTS**
- Tom Kogut, retired,  
Gifford Pinchot National  
Forest, US Forest Service
  - Norm Barrett, retired,  
Rogue-River/Siskiyou  
National Forest, US Forest  
Service
  - Dr. Cheryl Schultz,  
Washington State  
University
  - Loni Beyer,  
Washington State  
University



# URBAN COMMUNITIES IN CONSERVATION AWARD

## USING CULTURAL SYMBOLS TO INTRODUCE MONARCH CONSERVATION AND NATURE-BASED ACTIVITIES IN CHICAGO



The US Forest Service has partnered with El Valor, a community center that conducts outreach to underserved audiences in Chicago, and the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum with the goal of introducing urban monarch conservation to diverse audiences in urban areas of the city. Chicago, directly located on the monarch's migratory flyway, is ideal due to a large number of immigrants from Mexico—many from Michoacan. For them, the monarch is an easily recognizable symbol, facilitating the acceptance of these outreach programs. The immigrant families strongly identify with the themes, recognizing that people, like wildlife, migrate back and forth.

Likewise, the partners are well suited for the work. El Valor is a non-profit organization offering services to families throughout Chicago, serving as a bridge to often hard-to-reach audiences in immigrant communities including the provision of services to Latino children and adults with different abilities. Another partner, the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum provides expertise in both environmental

education and conservation activities. The Nature Museum furnishes environmental educators, conducts training for teachers, and provides scientific expertise for this project. Their staff is quick to design conservation projects geared for participants of all levels. One educational project focuses on early childhood programs, with activities not only designed for the classroom and the schoolyard, but also to promote parent-child interactions with nature in the home. To integrate monarch conservation projects into the classroom, teacher training focused on: engaging children at an early age in the sciences while tapping their enthusiasm for touching, exploring,

and investigating. El Valor's staff skillfully integrates this content into its 'birth through five' programs, targeting teachers and parents. The theme of migratory monarchs and birds also appears in the afterschool reading and math programs for middle school students, including real world conservation challenges. Other program content is geared towards some of the city's most underserved—children and adults with special needs. The monarch is used as a focal point for horticultural and sensory therapy, and conservation activities replicated physical therapy in the development and fine-tuning of motor skills. Habitat for monarchs and birds is planted, and monarchs are raised and tagged in all of El Valor Centers.

Since 2009, more than 4,500 children of the early childhood education program, approximately 75 adults with disabilities, 25 children with disabilities, and 300 middle school students have participated in these outreach programs. As a result of these activities, parents remarked that their children were starting to notice birds, insects, and urban wildlife on their treks to and from school, a sure indicator of the program's success. This award recognizes the creativity and innovation these partners have shown in engaging underserved and immigrant audiences in conservation.





### Award Winners

- Guadalupe A. Reyes,  
Children & Family Center,  
El Valor Children &  
Youth Services
- Rey B. Gonzalez,  
Children & Family Center,  
El Valor Children &  
Youth Services
- Carlos H. Cantú,  
Children & Family Center,  
El Valor Children &  
Youth Services
- El Valor Adult Services Program
- Chicago Academy of Sciences  
and Its Peggy Notebaert Nature  
Museum

### Certificate Recipients

- Chicago Academy of Sciences  
and Its Peggy Notebaert Nature  
Museum
  1. Rafael Rosa
  2. Doug Taron
  3. Carina Ruiz
  4. Glenda Gonzalez
  5. Amaris Alanis-Ribeiro
  6. Education Department Staff
- North Park Village Nature Cen-  
ter, Chicago Park District
  1. Julie Sacco
  2. Sean Shaffer
  3. Liza Fischel
  4. Robert Porter
- Center for Independence  
through Conductive Education
- Monarchs in the Classroom,  
University of Minnesota

- US Forest Service
  1. Midewin National Tallgrass  
Prairie
  2. Janine CatchpoleJennifer  
Durkin,
  3. Midewin National Tallgrass  
Prairie
  4. Delane Strohmeyer
  5. Raquel Garcia
  6. Wendy Tresouthick
- Environment for the Americas –  
International Migratory Bird Day
  1. Sue Bonfield
  2. Natasha Kerr
  3. Courtney Carlson
- Sagawau Environmental Learn-  
ing Center, Forest Preserve  
District of Cook County
- City of Chicago Family & Sup-  
port Services
- Openlands





## BAT CONSERVATION AWARD

### WORKSHOPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR BAT CONSERVATION IN THE AMERICAS

More than 1,230 species of bats worldwide account for about 20 percent of all mammal species. Bats are essential in maintaining healthy ecosystems and human economies. Bats eat huge amounts of night-flying insects, pollinate countless valuable plants, and disperse seeds that help restore cleared rainforests. An innovative partnership between the US Forest Service (USFS) International Programs and Bat Conservation International protects these valuable mammals by fostering research and capacity building opportunities for numerous part-

ners throughout the Americas. The work also raises the profile of bats and the importance of conserving their habitats.

One very successful component of the capacity building efforts is a series of workshops that were held in Nicaragua, Paraguay and Colombia. The workshops had been in peril because of insufficient funding until Bat Conservation International's Amy Price leveraged USFS International Program seed money to raise additional funds from new sources. In addition to working with in-country partners

to create grant applications, she secured interest and investment from the Disney Corporate Citizenship division—leading to a \$100,000 award from Disney Friends For Change for “Wings Across The Americas: Bats.” The money ensured that the workshops would continue, and more importantly that they could include participants from other countries. The diversity among the workshop participants ensured rich and lively discussions and debate. The Disney grant is also being used to develop a website showcasing migratory bat work in Latin America. The





site will feature bat conservation scientists and their work in the field, the importance of bat conservation, and the urgency of more young people embarking on careers in field biology and conservation. Funds will also be used to enhance migratory bat work involving research, monitoring, outreach and partnership building.

Robert Locke is the key person behind another essential part of our program, the Bat Conservation International Student Research Scholarships. Each year, USFS International Programs provides funds for 10 scholarships to support bat-related research in developing countries. Bob sifts through applica-

tions to find the best prospective researchers and follows up to ensure that the funding adds conservation value. Applications are judged by a panel of bat scientists from outside BCI. USFS International Programs funding has supported 62 student-research projects in 24 countries through this academic year. A gifted communicator, Bob is also Director of Publications for Bat Conservation International. He has helped to highlight the role of the US Forest Service in joint activities.

This award honors the efforts of these two dedicated staff members of Bat Conservation.

### **Award Winners**

- Amy Price, Bat Conservation International
- Bob Locke, Bat Conservation International

### **Certificate Recipients**

- The Walt Disney Company - Corporate Citizenship - Environment & Conservation Team









*Wings Across the Americas* is a partnership across:

National Forest System  
State and Private Forestry  
Research and Development  
International Programs

[www.fs.fed.us/global/wings](http://www.fs.fed.us/global/wings)