

flylines

WINGS ACROSS THE AMERICAS OF THE US FOREST SERVICE

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

July 2012

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For more information on the Wings Across the Americas, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/global/wings> or contact the Program Coordinator, Greg Butcher, at 202-273-4725.



Photos courtesy of Bat Conservation International, US Forest Service, and Carlos Soberanes-Gonzalez.

Wings Across the Americas is a program that engages the entire US Forest Service and its partners to conserve birds, bats, butterflies and dragonflies across landscapes and boundaries.

A Letter of Introduction

Hello, my name is Greg Butcher. I am the new coordinator of Wings Across the Americas for the US Forest Service International Programs. Although I am new to the Forest Service, I have built a career in the migratory species (mostly bird) world.

Looking Back: Developing My Passion for Nature

I first began watching birds when I was inspired by my grandfather's interest and a trip to Point Lobos State Reserve in California. When I returned home to Connecticut, I joined my local bird club, and I have been bird-watching ever since. Like most birders, I am especially inspired by springtime, when the migratory birds return from their wintering grounds. When I learned how fragile the bonds are that keep migratory birds flying, I knew I had to contribute to conservation, not just enjoy the migration.

I received a Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of Washington in Seattle, where I studied the coloration and

behavior of Bullock's Orioles. While I was a graduate student, I met Dr. Dennis Paulson. We spent most of our time together birdwatching, but I also had the opportunity to take his mini-course on dragonflies, which would prove useful many years later as I began to participate in the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership (see article on page 6).



(Photo by David Ringer)

With a background in migratory species conservation, Greg Butcher recently joined the US Forest Service International Programs as the Wings Across the Americas program coordinator.

After Seattle, I accepted a job as Director of Bird Population Studies at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It was there that I began my study of winter bird populations based on the Christmas Bird Count, the longest running citizen science project in the world. I was also the Executive Director of the American Birding Association, Editor of Birder's World magazine (now called Birdwatching), and Midwest Regional

Coordinator for Partners in Flight, the international landbird conservation program. Before I accepted my current position, I served as the Director of Bird Conservation for the National Audubon Society (where I got to continue my work with the Christmas Bird Count data) for nine years.

GOALS OF WINGS ACROSS THE AMERICAS:

- Conserve migratory species that breed in North America throughout their range and throughout the year
- Increase our knowledge of migratory species and the threats to their populations throughout their range and throughout the year
- Help recover endangered species and prevent other species from becoming listed
- Promote international conservation initiatives so that conservation efforts in the United States are not undermined by conservation problems in other countries
- Build partnerships with like-minded individuals and organizations to promote conservation of migratory species both inside the United States and internationally
- Build upon the love that people already have for migratory species and give people tools to contribute to their conservation
- Encourage employees throughout the Forest Service (and their partners) to contribute to the conservation of migratory species throughout their range and throughout the year
- Train conservation professionals and volunteers so that they may better contribute to migratory species conservation
- Promote migratory species as indicators of the health of the wider environment for people and other species of wildlife

My international work also began in graduate school, when I took the eight-week-long Tropical Ecology course offered by the Organization for Tropical Studies in Costa Rica. I have been back to Costa Rica several times since, once to co-teach a bird monitoring workshop in conjunction with the International Wildlife Management Congress and another time to lead a US/Costa Rica joint meeting that attracted 400 birdwatchers and ornithologists.

While working for Audubon, I was deeply involved in BirdLife International, especially BirdLife Americas, where we focused on the conservation of Important Bird Areas and globally threatened species. BirdLife, a global coalition of more than 100 independent national conservation nongovernmental organizations, helps each of its member organizations to build their capacities for bird and site conservation and for improving national and international conservation policy. Working with BirdLife showed me the tremendous passion that people around the world bring to conservation and imbued within me the desire to support that passion in any way I could.

Looking Forward: The Future of Conservation of Migratory Species

Now, I am happy to be a part of the US Forest Service family as coordinator of the Wings Across the Americas Program. In that role, I help harness the wide variety of skills of the Forest Service's employees in conservation and habitat management. I have long been aware of the Forest Service's contributions to conservation because it was the Agency that led the launch of Partners in Flight (PIF) more than 20 years ago. In the intervening years, the partnership has produced bird conservation plans for most bird conservation regions and many (especially western) states (see article on page 7). Both the Forest Service and I continue to be involved in Partners in Flight, and its principles underlie much of what we do for migratory species at Wings Across the Americas.

Here at US Forest Service International Programs, I have outlined my priorities for this first year:

- 1) Increase participation of USFS field personnel in the conservation of migratory species and in programs such as Partners in Flight, Waterbirds for the Americas Regional Habitat Joint Ventures and International Migratory Bird Day (see article on page 5).
- 2) Encourage participation from grassroots groups like Audubon chapters, bird clubs, nature centers, and local land trusts in partnerships of US Forest Service International Programs, such as:
 - a. Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative (CRIMBI; see article on page 4)
 - b. Western Hummingbird Partnership
 - c. Migratory Dragonfly Partnership (see article on page 6)
 - d. Monarch Joint Venture

Through this quarterly newsletter, I hope to share with you the successes and challenges of our endeavors and the important partnerships and efforts, in which we are engaged.

US FOREST SERVICE HONORS OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN BIRD, BAT AND BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

Associate Chief of the US Forest Service, Mary Wagner, presided over the 2012 Wings Across the Americas Conservation Awards ceremony. The event was held in Atlanta, GA, as part of the 77th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. US Forest Service employees and their partners are celebrated at this annual awards ceremony for their outstanding work in the conservation of birds, bats, butterflies and dragonflies.

The US Forest Service, other federal agencies, state governments and non-governmental organizations invest heavily in protecting habitat for declining populations of migratory birds, many of which spend the winter in Latin America and the Caribbean. If habitats in these areas are not protected, the tremendous US domestic investment in conservation is wasted. The work is critical because migratory species play unique ecological roles and are intrinsically beautiful. Sadly, many birds, bats, butterflies and dragonflies continue to face a multitude of threats.

Successful conservation work typically happens through partnerships—and these award winning projects were no exception. All of the US Forest Service employees who received awards shared the stage with partners from a myriad of organizations. They included universities, volunteers, foundations, conservation organizations or private firms.

The evening's Master of Ceremonies, Dr. Gregory Butcher, the Wings Across the Americas Program Coordinator, announced the winners for each of the following categories:

- The award for the **International Research and Partnership** category went to the US Forest Service Northern Research station's project **Habitat Requirements and Conservation Needs of At-Risk Neotropical Migrant Birds on their Wintering Grounds**. Partners in this work include US Geological Survey Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Montes de Oro Coffee Cooperative, The Nature Conservancy (Nicaragua Field Office and the Latin America Program), Honduras Mesoamerican Development Institute, the Smithsonian Institution, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

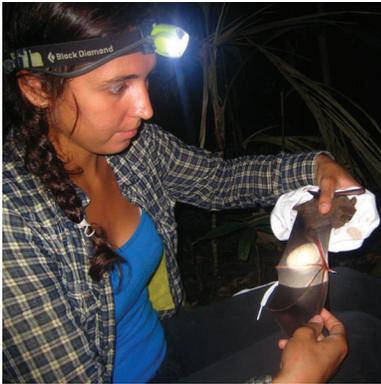


US Forest Service's Associate Chief, Mary Wagner, honored the El Valor's Children & Youth Services and El Valor's Adult Service Program, the Chicago Academy of Sciences and Its Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum--one of seven groups recognized--at the annual Wings Across the Americas Conservation Awards ceremony.

- In the **Research and Partnership Award** category, the award went to **Bird Responses to Invasive Species, Fire and Fuel Removal in Vulnerable Southwestern Ecosystems**. US Forest Service Award recipients came from the Rocky Mountain Research Station and Region 3, State and Private Forestry. Partners included the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the City of Albuquerque Open Space, the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and the Joint Fire Science Program.

- There were two winners in the **Habitat Management and Partnership** category. The first was **Conservation and Management of the Lesser Prairie-Chicken**. The US Forest Service award winners were from the Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands. Partners included the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

- The second award in the **Habitat Management and Partnership** category went to the US Forest Service's Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry and the Washington Office State and Private Forestry for their work on **Chippewa Flowage Forest Conser-**



The US Forest Service recognized the outstanding work done by the Agency, Bat Conservation International and the Walt Disney Company to conserve bats.

vation Easement. Partners in this effort included the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Trust for Public Land and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

- The **Butterfly Conservation Award** went to **Interagency Mar-don Skipper Work Group.** The US

Forest Service award recipients included the Region 6 Regional Office/Bureau of Land Management's Oregon State Office, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, the Willamette National Forest, the Rogue-River/Siskiyou National Forest, and the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Partners in this effort included the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Xerces Society, the Medford Bureau of Land Management and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

- For the **Urban Communities in Conservation** category, the winner was **Using Cultural Symbols to Introduce Monarch Conservation and Nature-Based Activities in Chicago.** The US Forest Service partnered with El Valor's Children & Youth Services and El Valor's Adult Service Program, and the Chicago Academy of Sciences and Its Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.

- And in the last category of **Bat Conservation**, the winner was **Workshops and Scholarships for Bat Conservation in the Americas.** The US Forest Service partnered with Bat Conservation International and the Walt Disney Company - Corporate Citizenship - Environment & Conservation Team.

For more information, including the names of the individual winners, please visit the US Forest Service website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/global/wings>.

CONSERVING MILLIONS OF SHOREBIRDS

By Rob Butler, a shorebird biologist for Bird Studies Canada, and Jim Chu, migratory bird specialist for US Forest Service International Programs

Each spring, millions of Western Sandpipers depart beaches from as far away as Peru, French Guiana, Mexico, and the Caribbean to migrate to tundra nesting grounds in western Alaska. During their travel north, these Western Sandpipers are joined by hundreds of thousands of Dunlins from the lower 48 states and many other shorebird species, creating one of the world's largest bird migrations.

The Copper River Delta in the Chugach National Forest and the Stikine River Delta in the Tongass National Forest are key refueling stops along this great migratory route. Many millions of birds arrive in May to quickly find the food that will fuel flights north. The sheer number of birds—numbers that are actually declining—that depend on the food and safety provided by these delta mudflats confirms the need for their careful management.

But protecting these birds in Alaska will be futile without similar efforts abroad. Conservation of migratory birds that span many borders depends on international cooperation. Because of that need, Forest Service International Programs and Ducks Unlimited started the Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative (CRIMBI) in 2001. Now, CRIMBI and its partners have designed a 10-year project to combine solid scientific investigation, community engagement, governance development, threat assess-



(Photo by Milo Burcham)

ment, and conservation action. The Pacific Flyway countries of Canada, USA, Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru are already implementing the project.

The project—one of the leading efforts of Wings Across the Americas—will catalyze a survey of the numbers of Western Sandpipers to track range-wide trends and pinpoint causes of change in North, Central, and South America. The project will also engage organizations and individuals to participate following a standard online data protocol and will build a strong voice for international conservation. The results of the project will help to protect and restore important habitat throughout the range of Western Sandpipers to benefit that species and many other shorebirds.

Initial activities of the project are to train observers to census Western Sandpipers and other shorebirds to help determine causes of population declines locally, regionally, and globally and to design interventions to reverse declines and secure stable or increasing populations.

A workshop to promote this initiative was recently held in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, Mexico. Participation in this workshop included 41 individuals from 29 institutions. The result of this workshop was the completion of a monitoring protocol that will be used at 11 important shorebird sites in Northwest Mexico. The protocol was developed by the Grupo de Aves del Noroeste (“GANO”), a collective working group of shorebird biologists in Northwest Mexico.

The range-wide project is led by PRBO Conservation Sciences in California, Bird Studies Canada, Terra Peninsular Mexico, Panama Audubon Society, Asociacion Calidris in Colombia, Aves y Conservacion in Ecuador, and Neotropical Center for Wetlands Training (CNEH in Spanish) in Peru. Funding has been provided by U.S. Forest Service International Programs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mexican National Commission for Natural Protected Areas (CONANP in Spanish), the Packard Foundation, and Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge.



COMMUNITIES IN CONSERVATION: EL VALOR CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) celebrates and highlights one of the most important and spectacular natural events in the Americas—bird migration. Through the Wings Across the Americas program, the US Forest Service works with public and private partners to conserve migratory birds along species’ flyways—from Alaska all the way down to the southern tip of Argentina.

In the United States, US Forest Service International Programs works with El Valor, an organization that reaches out to underserved audiences in Chicago, to engage communities in conservation. Chicago is a stopover site for the Monarch Butterfly, which travels from Canada and the United States to winter in Mexico. The city also has one of the largest Mexican-American communities in the nation. Since International Programs and El Valor already work with the community on Monarch Butterfly conservation, it was easy to engage local people in looking at migratory birds.

Consequently, the staff of El Valor decided to combine IMBD with its annual Día del Niño celebration. Día del Niño, or Day of the Child, is recognized every April 30th, which falls right in with the arrival of migratory birds in Chicago.

This past spring, the local children were encouraged to study birds and participated in hands-on activities in the schoolyard and at home. Another partner, the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, conducted workshops for

Every Day Is International Migratory Bird Day!

Approximately 20 years ago, the Forest Service started sponsoring International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD). Together with its sister Caribbean festival, Endemic Bird Day, IMBD provides one of the best education and outreach tools for bird conservation in the world. Be sure to plan or contribute to an event this year! Take someone birding! To view outreach products available in English and Spanish, visit the IMBD web site: <http://www.birdday.org>. There you can find out how to get the latest 2012 poster: Connecting People to Bird Conservation by Rafael Lopez.

teachers, children, and their parents. The Environment for the Americas provided guidance, materials, and links to similar events in North and South America. Efforts were made to directly engage the parents and to encourage them to participate in activities with their children in the outdoors. Community-level partnerships such as these generate a lot of energy and foster appreciation for migratory bird conservation.

IMBD was celebrated with parades through various neighborhoods of Chicago so that the children could showcase what they had learned and to build conservation awareness. More than 1,500 people participated in the parades. Parents remarked that in preparation for the event, they were noticing that their children increasingly were observing nature on their walks to and from school. Many even began to notice several of the migratory birds right in their own backyards!

A NEW PARTNERSHIP EXPLORES THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF DRAGONFLIES

When one watches the stained-glass wings of dragonflies as they flit across ponds and alight upon reeds, it's hard to imagine that these seemingly fragile creatures can migrate thousands of miles. Many don't know that, in fact, there may be as many as 16 dragonfly species in North America that migrate at least occasionally, including five that are regular migrants. Large groups of dragonflies have frequently been documented heading south in the fall, some flying over large bodies of water despite their apparent fragility.

The research, however, on the phenomenon of dragonfly migration is still in its infancy. There is so much more to learn. Therefore, a number of individuals and organizations have gotten together to form the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership (MDP), coordinated by The Xerces Society in Portland, Oregon, and sponsored by US Forest Service International Programs. The purpose of the partnership is to develop a network of citizen scientist monitors across Canada, Mexico, and the United States in order to track the spring and fall movement of the best-known migratory dragonflies in North America. The MDP will develop tools and resources to enable participants to monitor the timing, location, duration, and direction of travel of dragonfly flight and to identify the species involved. Regular monitoring and centralized reporting among participants across three nations will help us answer some of the many questions currently surrounding dragonfly migration and provide information needed to create cross-border conservation programs to protect and sustain the phenomenon.

One of the first projects will be Dragonfly Pond Watch, a volunteer-based program to investigate the annual movements of two major migratory dragonfly species in North America: Common Green Darner (*Anax junius*) and Black Saddlebags (*Tamea lacerata*). By visiting the same wetland or pond site on a regular basis, participants will note the arrival of migrant dragonflies moving south in the fall or north in the spring, as well as record when the first resident adults of these species emerge in the spring.



People should care about dragonflies for two reasons: First, they are great indicators of water quality in wetlands. Dragonflies are excellent species for monitoring the current biological condition of wetlands and for predicting future changes in those environments. Also, they are voracious predators on insect pests, including mosquitoes and a variety of biting flies. Dragonflies can't eliminate mosquitoes or other pesky flies, but the number would be much worse without hungry dragonflies eating their fill. Our studies will help us learn more about the life cycles of these critically important species.

For information about the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership, please contact: Scott Hoffman Black, The Xerces Society, 628 NE Broadway, Suite 200, Portland, OR 97232. Tel: (503)232-6639, E-mail: dragonfly@xerces.org.

You can also visit <http://migratorydragonflypartnership.org> and <http://www.xerces.org/dragonfly-migration/projects>.

PARTNERS INFLIGHT ANNOUNCES NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Partners in Flight (PIF) celebrated its 20th anniversary in bird conservation in 2010. To prepare for the next 20 years, the PIF Steering Committee held strategic planning session 11-12 September 2011, near Omaha, Nebraska. Participants reaffirmed the value and centrality of PIF's mission and goals:

Partners In Flight Mission

- Help species at risk
- Keep common birds common
- Promote voluntary partnerships for birds, habitats and people

Partners In Flight Goals

- Ensure active science-based conservation design to identify and develop solutions to threats and risks to landbird populations.
- Create a coordinated network of conservation partners implementing the objectives of landbird conservation plans at multiple scales.
- Secure sufficient commitment and resources to support vigorous implementation of landbird conservation objectives



Goal 1 – Increase our capacity to support full life cycle conservation

Partners in Flight is committed to identifying and addressing threats and limiting factors across species full annual life cycles in order to focus conservation actions where they will have the greatest benefit.

Goal 2 – Integrate the Partners in Flight approach, priorities, and objectives into public agency, Joint Venture, Landscape Conservation Cooperative and private lands natural resource planning and action.

Partners in Flight has developed a science-based method for bird conservation that uses a multi-species approach for assessing landbird vulnerabilities and needs, setting measurable conservation targets, designing management to meet these targets, and measuring the effectiveness of conservation actions.

Goal 3 – Engage Partners in Flight's constituencies, audiences, and partners in priority conservation actions through more effective education, outreach and communications.

Effective communication, education, and outreach are all essential to bridge the implementation gap in engaging appropriate audiences in achieving PIF's conservation priorities.

Goal 4 – Expand membership, increase financial resources and sustain a highly effective network.

An increased commitment of people, time and funding will be necessary to keep pace with the growing bird conservation needs across the Western Hemisphere.

PIF Resources

In the United States, PIF is divided into four regions:



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WINGS ACROSS THE AMERICAS OF THE US FOREST SERVICE

ABOUT THE US FOREST SERVICE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

The US Forest Service International Programs advances sustainable natural resources management and biodiversity conservation in approximately 90 countries worldwide. By linking the skills of the staff of the US Forest Service with partners domestically and overseas, the Agency can address the most critical natural resource issues and concerns.

The United States benefits from working with partners overseas. Innovative technologies are brought back to the country, natural resource problems that traverse boundaries and ownerships are addressed and opportunities to hone US Forest Service skills are increased. In addition, strengthened international ties lead to mutual aid and cooperation in facing challenges that threaten natural resources.

With over 37,000 employees in the Agency, International Programs taps into a large wealth of expertise, including:

1. Migratory species
2. Illegal logging
3. Conservation Education
4. Protected area management
5. Habitat management
5. Wildlife management
6. Watershed management
7. Ecotourism
8. Fire management
9. Fisheries
10. Climate change
11. Recreation
12. Rangeland management
13. Forest economics
14. Forest products and wood technology
15. Forest health and invasive species
16. Integrated forest monitoring
17. Sustainable natural resource management
18. Disaster response and mitigation
19. Policy analysis
20. Urban forestry

Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, and West, and PIF has written conservation plans for most Bird Conservation Regions and many (especially western) states. PIF is also active in Canada and Mesoamerica, and has multiple links to partners in South America. Information about the conservation plans, regional activities, and much more is available at www.partnersinflight.org and www.savingourshared-birds.org. You may also email the PIF coordinator Terry_Rich@fws.gov at any time.

Save the Date: “Partners in Flight – Hot Topics in the Tropics (and other cool places)” – Meetings, reception, and symposium

AUGUST 13-15, 2012 at the North American Ornithological Conference, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC

For more information: <http://www.naoc-v2012.com/>

Save the Date: “Bridging the Implementation Gap” Bird Conservation Conference in the Northeast and International Rusty Blackbird Workshop

OCTOBER 16-19, 2012 at the Radisson Hotel, Plymouth, Massachusetts

For more information: <http://www.birdconservationconference.org>

Watch for: The 5th International Partners in Flight Conference.

AUGUST 2013, somewhere in the Front Range of Colorado