

THE 2005 ANNUAL REPORT OF *BOREAL PARTNERS IN FLIGHT*

August 28, 2006



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INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present this summary of activities undertaken by Boreal Partners in Flight (BPIF) and our partners in 2005. During our 14th year, we continued to make good progress toward meeting BPIF's original objectives, which are:

- establish statewide bird inventory and monitoring programs
- conduct research on factors affecting the status of northern populations
- provide information about birds to land managers in Alaska
- educate the public about the conservation of birds and their habitats
- share information about our birds with people who live where our birds migrate and winter

Progress was also made toward several of the goals outlined in BPIF's *Landbird Conservation Plan for Alaska Biogeographic Regions Version 1*; however, it is clear from the reports from our Bird Conservation Regions that much work remains. In particular, climate change, resource and infrastructure development, timber harvest, exotic/invasive species, and lack of information continue to pose challenges for northern bird populations and the managers tasked with their conservation.

One notable achievement in 2005 was our focused effort on Rusty Blackbirds, one of BPIF's top five "Species at Risk." Steve Matsuoka of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Migratory Bird Management, Anchorage) represented BPIF on the International Rusty Blackbird Technical Working Group. A regional task force also met to identify needs and information gaps. Several projects were implemented to broaden our understanding of Rusty Blackbirds, including ones by the Canadian Wildlife Service, Alaska Bird Observatory, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Alaska Natural Heritage Program.

Additional accomplishments in 2005 by BPIF and our members include:

- We produced our first "Annual Summary of Landbird Projects," which is posted on the BPIF website. Please review this for a synopsis of many accomplishments by BPIF members not included in this report.
- Breeding Bird Surveys were conducted on 68 routes in Alaska. Trends in abundance in Alaska are now available for 106 species on the BBS website.
- Participants in the Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey (ALMS) surveyed 13 blocks in Alaska. An additional 19 off-road surveys were completed.
- Six migration stations were operated in Alaska and the Yukon.
- At least 26 raptor surveys and several raptor-monitoring projects were conducted in Alaska.
- The Alaska Department of Fish & Game completed their Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, a huge effort involving input from a broad range of participants. ADF&G continued to fund several landbird research and conservation projects through their Partner Program (State Wildlife Grants).
- The Canadian Wildlife Service began updating their National Boreal Bird Monitoring Strategy.
- Development of Alaska and the Yukon's first All-Bird Conservation Plan was initiated for Bird Conservation Region 4, the Northwestern Interior Forest of North America.
- The annual Department of Defense-Partners in Flight annual representatives planning meeting took place in Fairbanks in early June.
- Audubon Alaska updated the *Alaska WatchList*.
- Members continued to offer a broad array of education and outreach programs. An updated summary of current projects and educational materials is now posted on the BPIF website.

As always, thank you to everyone who contributed to this report. At the close of the 2005 annual meeting, we happily handed over BPIF leadership duties to Paul Meyers (USDA Forest Service) and

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David Tessler (Alaska Department of Fish & Game). We wish them all the best in leading this fine coalition!

Nancy DeWitt and Chris Harwood, Co-Chairs

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Please cite this document as: BOREAL PARTNERS IN FLIGHT. 2006. The 2005 Annual Report of *Boreal Partners in Flight*. Unpublished report, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Migratory Bird Management (Landbird Coordinator), 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503.

2005 LEADERSHIP FOR *BOREAL PARTNERS IN FLIGHT*

PROGRAM CO-CHAIRS

Nancy DeWitt
Christopher Harwood

STEERING COMMITTEE

Melissa Cady
Ellen Campbell
Nancy DeWitt
Chris Harwood
Steve Matsuoka
Paul Meyers
Wendy Nixon
Susan Savage

BIRD CONSERVATION REGION COORDINATORS

Heather Renner, *Aleutian/Bering Sea Islands* (BCR 1)
Rob McDonald and Brian McCaffery, *Western Alaska* (BCR 2)
Debbie Nigro and Steve Kendall, *Arctic Plain and Mountains* (BCR 3)
Melanie Cook and Carol McIntyre, *Northwestern Interior Forests* (BCR 4)
Michelle Kissling, *Northwest Pacific Rainforest* (BCR 5)

EDUCATION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Tricia Blake, Chair

INVENTORY AND MONITORING COORDINATORS

Steve Matsuoka, *North American Breeding Bird Survey, Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship*
Colleen Handel and Melissa Cady, *Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey, Alaska Off-road Breeding Bird Survey*
Buddy Johnson, *Migration Monitoring*
Carol McIntyre, *Diurnal Raptors*
Jack Whitman, *Owl Monitoring Working Group*

THE 2005 ANNUAL MEETING OF *BOREAL PARTNERS IN FLIGHT*

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Gordon Watson Conference Room, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska

Introduction

On December 7 & 8, 2005, the members of Boreal Partners in Flight (BPIF) met to discuss the conservation of landbirds, including gamebirds and raptors, in Alaska. Several presentations given at the meeting are represented in the *2005 Annual Summary of Landbird Projects for Boreal Partners in Flight* at <http://www.absc.usgs.gov/research/bpif/bpif.html>.

Some of the highlights from the meeting include:

- David Tessler (AK Department of Fish & Game) and Paul Meyers (USDA Forest Service) agreed to take over as co-chairs for 2006-2007.
- Steve Matsuoka and Michelle Kissling (USFWS) led a discussion on the Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey program and the on-going challenges of access and cost. Colleen Handel has developed new plot quotas based on access to lessen these challenges. A strategic planning team was formed to raise awareness of ALMS among decision-makers and to investigate other sources of funding for the surveys.
- Carol McIntyre (National Park Service) led a discussion on how to integrate raptors and upland gamebirds into Boreal Partners in Flight. Carol and Phil Schempf (USFWS) will now lead a raptor working group and/or organize meetings prior to the BPIF annual meeting. Dale Rabe (ADFG) will look into forming a gamebird working group.
- Groups representing the five Alaska Bird Conservation Regions held break-out sessions to review progress made toward addressing the needs outlined in the 1999 BPIF Landbird Conservation Plan. There was unanimous agreement that the Plan needs to be revised to reflect contemporary conservation issues. Although Steve Matsuoka agreed to take the lead on updating the Plan, it will require the efforts of many people.
- Dirk Derksen with USGS gave a presentation on the current status of H5N1 avian influenza and the funding proposed for targeted surveillance in Alaska.
- Carol McIntyre led a discussion on the need for a standardized training program for distance estimation. A committee was formed to work on standardizing distance estimation training.
- The meeting culminated with a lively discussion on how to increase participation in BPIF and its committees. The consensus was to do more promote how successful BPIF has been, highlighting the progress we have achieved since we started. We need to not just ask, but *inspire* people to get involved.

Approximately 50 people attended the meeting, including:

ABR, Inc. Environmental Research & Services: Jennifer Boisvert, Terry Schick

Alaska Bird Observatory: Anna-Marie Benson, Nancy DeWitt, Susan Sharbaugh, Tim Walker

Alaska Department of Fish and Game: Steve Lewis, Dale Rabe, Mary Rabe, Dave Tessler, Jack Whitman

Alaska Natural Heritage Program: Tracey Gotthardt, Jodi McClory

Audubon Alaska: Iain Stenhouse

Bureau of Land Management: Ruth Gronquist, Debbie Nigro, Bruce Seppi

National Park Service: Carol McIntyre, Judy Putera, Bill Thompson

University of Alaska-Fairbanks: Travis Booms

U.S. Air Force: Gene Augustine, Herman Griese

U.S. Army Alaska: Amal Ajmi

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Joe Conner, Robin Corcoran, Maureen deZeeuw, Chris Harwood, Danielle Jerry, Jim Johnson, Liz Jozwiak, Steve Kendall, Michelle Kissling, Bob Leedy, Steve Matsuoka, Brian McCaffery, Greg Risdahl, Susan Savage, Phil Schempf, Page Spencer, Hank Timm, Kent Wohl

U.S. Geological Survey: Colleen Handel, Lisa Pajot, John Tererzi, Lee Tibbitts, Caroline Van Hemert

USDA Forest Service: Mary Ann Benoit, Marty Bray, Melissa Cady, Ellen Campbell, Paul Meyers

Agenda

Wednesday, December 7th

- 8:30 Welcome, introductions, and agenda. Nancy DeWitt, Alaska Bird Observatory and Chris Harwood, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- 8:50 Update on the continental PIF program. Nancy DeWitt
- 9:00 Boreal Songbird Initiative. Jeff Wells, Boreal Songbird Initiative
- 9:30 DoD-PIF update. Gene Augustine, U.S. Air Force
- 9:40 Migration Monitoring Update. Bud Johnson, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- 10:00 Break
- 10:20 BBS Update. Steve Matsuoka, USFWS/Migratory Bird Management
- 10:30 ALMS Update (MOU, Access issues, Analysis). Colleen Handel, U.S. Geological Survey
- 10:55 Status of statewide programs and recommendations for future sampling. Chris Harwood, USFWS
- 11:05 Monitoring Discussion: Where do we go from here? (e.g., can we implement ALMS now? Do we need more migration stations? What about basic inventory needs?? What about rare or low density/clustered spp.? etc.) Moderators: Steve Matsuoka and Michelle Kissling USFWS
- 12:15 Lunch
- 13:30 Loose ends from monitoring discussion. Moderator: Steve Matsuoka, USFWS/MBM
- 13:50 Introduction: Taxa not well integrated into BPIF. Chris Harwood, USFWS
- 13:55 Summary of upland gamebird work. Dale Rabe, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game
- 14:10 Inventory of forest owls: SE Alaska. Michelle Kissling, USFWS and Steve Lewis, ADFG
- 14:25 Monitoring forest owls: interior Alaska. Jack Whitman, ADFG
- 14:40 Life history lessons from molted Gyrfalcon feathers on Yukon Delta NWR. Travis Booms, University of Alaska Fairbanks
- 14:55 Monitoring Bald Eagles. Phil Schempf, USFWS/MBM
- 15:10 Break
- 15:30 Discussion: How to better integrate raptors and gamebirds into BPIF. Moderator: Carol McIntyre, National Park Service
- 16:30 First day's closing business. New chairperson(s), etc.
- 17:00 Adjourn

Thursday, December 8th

- 8:00 Introduction to the day's topics. Chris Harwood, USFWS
- 8:10 Update on State of Alaska's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Mary Rabe, ADFG
- 8:25 Rusty Blackbird Update. Steve Matsuoka, USFWS/MBM
- 8:40 Break out discussions by BCR: Implementing recommendations from the Landbird Conservation Plan and Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Moderators: BCR Coordinators moderators; Susan Savage, USFWS; Carol McIntyre, NPS; Debbie Nigro, BLM; Michelle Kissling, USFWS; Heather Renner, USFWS

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10:00 Break

10:20 Summary of BCR discussions with action items for 2006. BCR Coordinators, 10 minutes each

11:10 Discussion: Revisiting the Landbird Conservation Plan: Part II (e.g., does it need revision based on earlier discussions?). BPIF membership; moderated by Steve Matsuoka, USFWS

11:40 Avian Influenza update and discussion. Dirk Derksen, USGS

12:15 Lunch

13:30 Alaska land-clearing “timing matrix.” Maureen deZeeuw, USFWS

13:45 Discussion: Distance estimation training needs. Carol McIntyre, NPS

14:10 Education and Outreach Efforts. Nancy DeWitt, ABO.

14:25 Update on 2006 Alaska Bird Conference. Michelle Kissling, USFWS

14:35 Discussion: What can/should BPIF present collectively or individually at the 2006 Wildlife Society meeting (Anchorage)? Moderator: David Tessler, ADFG

15:05 Break

15:20 Discussion: Where are we going with BPIF in the next 5-10 years? How do we get more folks more involved with BPIF (e.g., very few folks sent ideas about what to discuss at meeting)? Chris Harwood, USFWS and new (co)chair(s)

16:20 Closing Business. Chris Harwood, USFWS and Nancy DeWitt, ABO

16:30 Adjourn

PROGRAM & ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

CONTINENTAL PARTNERS IN FLIGHT UPDATE

Compiler: Nancy DeWitt, *Alaska Bird Observatory*

The Partners in Flight Technical Series is now available on the PIF website at <http://www.partnersinflight.org/pubs/>. These include *High Priority Needs for Range-wide Monitoring of North American Landbirds* and *Designing Optimal Landscapes to Meet Bird Conservation Objectives*. The first document is an extension of the work done for the PIF *North American Landbird Conservation Plan* and provides more details on monitoring needs and approaches to improve Population Trend scores. Recommendations for species not adequately monitored include implementing new surveys in boreal and arctic regions, early spring surveys, and species-specific surveys.

PIF has completed the update of its Species Assessment Database (version 2005) and the accompanying PIF Handbook on Species Assessment. Both can be downloaded from Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's website at <http://www.rmbo.org/pif/pifdb.html>. The database contains updated biological assessment scores, which may have affected some Alaska priority species. A half-day training on using the database will be offered at NAOC meeting in Veracruz in October 2006.

A workshop, "Conservation Design: Exploring Methods for Linking Bird Population Goals with Spatially-Explicit Habitat Objectives," in St. Louis, MO on 11-13 April 2006. The goal of the workshop is to help participants better understand spatial models and other approaches that can be used to develop landscape-level habitat models, bird-habitat association models, and predictive models.

Raptor Population Index (RPI) Project: Hawk Migration Association of North America, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association and HawkWatch International have formed a partnership "To ...determine annual population indices and trends of hawks counted during spring and fall migrations at sites throughout the United States, Canada and Central America." The specific objectives of the RPI are to (1) produce scientifically defensible indices of annual abundance and trends for each species of migratory raptor, from as many count sites as possible; and (2) make those results available widely, i.e. to participating count sites, the scientific community, conservation agencies and the public. For more information see <http://hmana.org/rpi/>.

Landbird Migration Monitoring Network of the Americas (LAMMNA): This partnership, led by Klamath Bird Observatory, was formed among migration stations this year "...to collect, archive and make available the results of monitoring efforts from stations across the Americas." More information can be found at <http://www.klamathbird.org/lammna/>.

BOREAL SONGBIRD INITIATIVE

Jeff Wells, Senior Scientist for the Boreal Songbird Initiative narrated a PowerPoint presentation by phone. The Boreal Songbird Initiative (BSI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating Americans about the importance of the Boreal Forest to migratory birds. BSI is part of the Boreal Songbird Network, a coalition of U.S. organizations including the American Bird Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, the National Wildlife Federation, Defenders of Wildlife and the Natural Resources Defense Council, working to raise awareness about the boreal forest and assist efforts in Canada and Alaska to conserve it. Much of the boreal is consumed by the United States in the form of junk mail, catalogs, and advertising inserts. The BSI is therefore working to influence U.S. consumer choices and reduce impacts on Canada's boreal forest. Because the theme for International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) 2006 is "The

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Boreal Forest,” the BSI is very involved in working with agencies in Canada and the U.S. to organize IMBD events. More information about the BSI can be found at <http://www.borealbirds.org/index.html>.

Contact: Jeff Wells; Boreal Songbird Initiative, 1601 2nd Avenue, Suite 615, Seattle, Washington 98101 (206) 956-9040, jeffwells@borealbirds.org

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE–PARTNERS IN FLIGHT UPDATE AND ANNUAL REPRESENTATIVES PLANNING MEETING

Compilers: Gene Augustine, *611 CES/CEVQN Alaskan Remote Air Force Sites*, and Chris Eberly, *DoD Partners in Flight*.

The Department of Defense (DoD) Partners in Flight Program focuses on the conservation of birds and their habitats on U.S. military lands. In addition to a Program Coordinator and a full-time Program Manager, the program relies on a network of roughly 30 DoD natural resources professionals from around the country to accomplish its goals and priorities. In order to plan conservation strategies and discuss the results of previous actions, this network of representatives meets annually. The location of the meeting moves around the country to introduce its members to different physiographic areas and agency partners. For the first time in 2005, this meeting was held outside the lower 48 (aka, “CONUS” for CONTiguous U.S.). The DoD host was Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks, and the local host was Alaska Bird Observatory. Three days of meetings were held at the Farthest North Girl Scout facility (14-15 June) and on Fort Wainwright (16 June). Local BPIF partners were invited to present an overview of their work. DoD PIF presented an overview of the program and some of our ongoing projects. The first day of each year’s meeting is the Partners Meeting, and is open to all local PIF partners, in this case BPIF. The next two days, conducted as more or less closed-door meetings, are the planning portion of the meeting where the group works through topics that require discussion, debate, and decision making. Another integral part of these meetings is local birdwatching opportunities. Unfortunately for the DoD PIF group, the Fairbanks area provides virtually unending light during June. Some of the group experienced the fatigue that summer in Fairbanks can bring. Birding until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, and getting up again at 7:00 can wear a person out very quickly. The upside of the extended daylight was the record number of life birds recorded by members of the group.

The DoD Partners in Flight program extends a hearty thanks to Gene Augustine, Nancy DeWitt at Alaska Bird Observatory, Steve Reidsma at Fort Wainwright, and everyone else who went above and beyond to make this our most successful meeting to date. Many in the group had never been to Alaska before. For them as well as those of us who live here or have visited before, the red carpet treatment, salmon bake at ABO, and excellent birding did nothing but make us pledge a return trip in the future. Maybe next time we’ll consider the middle of winter to experience the annual BPIF meeting and the Northern Lights!

A more thorough write up of meeting notes is included as Appendix A of this report.

Contact: Gene V. Augustine, U.S. Air Force 611 CES/CEVP, 10471 20th St., Ste 302, Elmendorf AFB, AK 99506-2200, gene.augustine@elmendorf.af.mil

CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE LANDBIRD COMMITTEE NEWS

Compiled by Pam Sinclair, *Canadian Wildlife Service*

Albert Creek Banding Station. CWS (Whitehorse) continues to support the Albert Creek banding station in southeast Yukon, where a total of 4548 birds were banded this year, including 2679 in spring and 1869 in fall. The most common birds were Wilson’s Warbler, White-crowned, American Tree, and Fox sparrows, and Orange-crowned Warbler in spring; and Slate-coloured Junco, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Common Yellowthroat, Myrtle Warbler, and Alder Flycatcher in fall. A second site was also explored this

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year, at Teslin, with 1142 birds banded in spring. The most common birds banded there were American Tree Sparrow, Slate-coloured Junco, Wilson's Warbler, Fox Sparrow, and Swainson's Thrush. (Pam Sinclair).

Three-toed and Black-backed woodpeckers in southwest Yukon April – May 2005. The southwest Yukon is currently experiencing the largest and most intense infestation of spruce bark beetle (*Dendroctonus rufipennis*) ever recorded in Canada. This infestation began in 1994, and warmer and drier summers and warmer winters have played a key role in its magnitude and intensity. The total area now affected by bark beetle is over 400,000 ha. During the initial stage of spruce bark beetle activity in this area, populations of Three-toed and Black-backed woodpeckers were highest in areas with the most severe and/or longest duration of beetle infestation (Pelech 1994). Surveys conducted along portions of two established BBS routes in the Dezadeash Lake area, and a third route in the Kluane area in April and May of 2005 showed high densities of these two species. The densities were similar to the high densities noted in interior Alaska following a fire disturbance. Assuming that drumming resident woodpeckers are detected within a 200 m radius of each survey point, the density of resident Black-backed and Three-toed woodpeckers in the Kluane and Dezadeash areas averaged 0.1 birds/ha (n=38) north of Dezadeash Lake, 0.15 birds/ha (n=35) south of Kluane Lake and 0.2 (n=26) birds/ha south of Dezadeash Lake. (Wendy Nixon).

Rusty Blackbirds are now being recorded on the annual Yukon Spring Roadside Waterfowl Survey, conducted by CWS (Whitehorse) in partnership with the Yukon Department of Environment and Yukon College since 1991. These surveys cover about 280 wetlands in southern Yukon, each surveyed weekly for 5 weeks, from early May to mid June. Based on data from 2004, when Rusty Blackbirds were first recorded on these surveys, this species is recorded on about 30% of the wetlands surveyed. Waterfowl surveyors were confident in their ability to detect and identify Rusty Blackbirds; southern Yukon is beyond the range of similar species such as Brewer's Blackbird and Common Grackle (Pam Sinclair).

Rusty Blackbird. The International Rusty Blackbird working Group chaired by Russ Greenberg of the Smithsonian Institute was formed to address the catastrophic decline of this species in North America over the last 30 years. Hobson is the lead on using stable isotopes to link breeding and wintering populations. In addition to modern specimens obtained from birds captured on breeding, wintering, and stopover sites, we are examining feathers of museum specimens to better link demographic changes with specific regions of the continent. Other researchers are looking at wintering habitat requirements, diet, and contaminants. (Keith Hobson).

Rusty Blackbird breeding/wintering population connectivity. Feathers were collected from 105 Rusty Blackbirds in southern Yukon in 2005, including 56 in spring and 49 in fall. Stable isotope analysis will be performed on the feathers, which are grown on the breeding grounds in late summer. Birds were trapped using baited traps and mist nets at three sites, and were colour banded. A good site was found for banding fall staging birds, which provides an opportunity for further work here (Pam Sinclair).

CAFN Strategic Forest Management Plan. A consultant was contracted by CWS (Whitehorse) to model Northern Goshawk habitat suitability in the Champagne Aishihik First Nation (CAFN) Traditional Territory in southwest Yukon, as part of the CWS contribution to the CAFN Strategic Forest Management Plan. The habitat model was based on Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) methodology (US Fish and Wildlife Service 1981). The model was developed based on habitat characteristics for 15 nest areas in the Kluane study area, the expert opinion of the authors (Todd Mahon and Frank Doyle), and relevant literature. The intended use of the habitat model is to quantify the relative suitability and distribution of goshawk habitat across the area. Habitat ratings resulting from the model represent relative values suitable for comparisons across the area and for comparing habitat supply under different forest management scenarios. (Wendy Nixon).

Yukon Wetlands for Wildlife Calendar. CWS (Whitehorse) has partnered with Government of Yukon Department of Environment Wildlife Viewing Program, Ducks Unlimited and others to produce a

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“Yukon Wetlands for Wildlife” calendar for 2006. The calendar is comprised of original art work from school students, and Yukon wetland species trivia and photographs (Wendy Nixon).

National Boreal Bird Monitoring Strategy Update. In 2005 we undertook three field-based research projects to help with technical issues. First we did a series of trials to determine the effective detection distance of the CZM microphones that Hobson helped refine. We tape-measured distances to a couple hundred birds that were at the detection limit of the machinery. Second, we completed almost 500 hours of daily recordings from several habitats during the breeding season. These recordings will be used to quantify diurnal and seasonal decay in singing frequencies of birds to allow adjustments to detection probabilities. Third, we completed point counts at 9 locations north of Yellowknife using the sampling protocol of the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Program (9 points per location, 20km between locations). We'll use those data for a power analysis to determine what sampling intensity might be appropriate for the taiga landscape (or if we need to do more sampling to answer that question). It also allowed us to accurately cost out sampling in a remote area (helicopter based) and work through some basic logistical issues that are certain to recur. (Craig Machtans and Mike Norton).

BPIF CHAIRPERSON(S) FOR 2006-2007

David Tessler (Alaska Department of Fish & Game) and Paul Meyers (USDA Forest Service) agreed to take over as co-chairs for the next two years.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Committee members include Melissa Cady, Ellen Campbell, Paul Meyers (Forest Service); Nancy DeWitt (Alaska Bird Observatory); Chris Harwood, Steve Matsuoka, Susan Savage (USFWS); Wendy Nixon (Canadian Wildlife Service); David Tessler (ADF&G).

INVENTORY & MONITORING

THE BREEDING BIRD SURVEY, ALASKA LANDBIRD MONITORING SURVEY (ALMS), MIGRATION MONITORING, AND RAPTOR INVENTORIES & MONITORING

See the 2005 BPIF Project Summaries at <http://www.absc.usgs.gov/research/bpif/bpif.html> for updates on these programs.

ALMS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Steve Matsuoka gave a brief overview of the MOU for the Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey (ALMS), which can be reviewed at <http://www.absc.usgs.gov/research/bpif/bpif.html>. Nine federal, state, and nongovernmental agencies signed this document. This MOU establishes a framework for collaboration among the Cooperators to implement the Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey, including the use of standardized methodology, the sharing of information obtained through the program, and the periodic assessment of the program's efficacy in meeting its stated goals.

MONITORING DISCUSSION

Moderators: Steve Matsuoka, *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Migratory Bird Management* and Michelle Kissling, *USFWS - Juneau Field Office*

The session started with a discussion about continuing the ALMS program. Some agencies and refuges have put great effort and money into these (or similar) surveys, while others have been unable or unwilling to implement them. The greatest challenges continue to be access and cost. Colleen Handel has derived new plot quotas per land unit, based on accessibility. Instead of the original 200 biennial plots, land units would now have to do 120 plots.

Some agencies don't want to implement ALMS until they see a statewide commitment from land managers to support ALMS over the long term; for others, ALMS does not address the individual priorities set for their land units. Carol McIntyre was able to implement a program similar to ALMS by being creative (dove-tailing it with Denali's long-term monitoring program) and by working intensively with Denali's decision-makers to sell the program. Ellen Campbell added that the Forest Service in Southeast bought into ALMS because it contributes to a statewide effort. Refuges would like to see more of a commitment from Migratory Birds Management (MBM).

What about those species that are not covered by current monitoring methods (raptors, woodpeckers, wetland species, swifts, grouse, swallows, kingfishers, shrikes, etc.)? If they are declining, do we really need to *monitor* them or spend money instead on research or land management to help halt declines? Some species-specific and habitat-driven surveys have been implemented (e.g., wetland surveys in the Yukon, owl surveys in Southeast Alaska) and more are needed. We can never expect to cover all 135 priority species in the Landbird Conservation Plan, so we need to prioritize.

Recommendations for the coming year:

- a) Determine how many plots each land unit could do so that cost estimates per land unit can be calculated.
- b) Work with Danielle Jerry to develop a strategy between refuges and MBM.
- c) Think about "hooks" for attracting money and support for the program, such as global climate change, exotic species, etc.
- d) Form a BPIF strategic planning team to raise awareness of ALMS and investigate other sources of funding for the program. This committee will consist of the representatives from the MOU.
- e) Send the MOU with a cover letter to all the land managers asking for their support.

RAPTORS & UPLAND GAMEBIRDS

INTEGRATING RAPTORS AND UPLAND GAMEBIRDS INTO BOREAL PARTNERS IN FLIGHT

Moderator: Carol McIntyre, *National Park Service*

The first part of the discussion addressed whether raptors should be integrated into BPIF or if they need a separate working group. Some participants noted that, because raptors are addressed by Partners in Flight International, we should not form a splinter group. Raptors (and gamebirds) deserve special efforts that could be addressed by smaller working groups under the auspices of BPIF. Others felt that a stand-alone working group would be more appropriate. Either way, more communication is needed among those studying raptors; perhaps a working group could meet prior to BPIF each year the way the migration-monitoring folks do?

Colleen Handel recommended that a small working group for upland gamebirds be created under BPIF's wing. However, are there enough people working with gamebirds to form a group? Maureen deZeeuw noted that grouse and ptarmigan are not USFWS "trust resources," which limits funding for these taxa.

Recommendations/action items:

- a) Phil Schempf and Carol McIntyre will lead a raptor group or regular meeting sessions. Report group's activities at BPIF annual meeting.
- b) Dale Rabe will look into forming a game bird working group.
- c) Increase the visibility of raptor and upland gamebird research being done. Devote adequate time to these groups at next year's meeting. Include research in BPIF project summary.
- d) Formally invite (not just through listserve) those raptor and gamebird researchers not involved in BPIF to get involved with BPIF and the working groups.
- e) Be sure to include Yukon researchers.

BIRD CONSERVATION

UPDATES ON THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME'S COMPREHENSIVE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION STRATEGY AND NONGAME PROGRAM

Compiler: Mary L. Rabe, *Alaska Department of Fish and Game*

Completion of Alaska's draft Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) has been a high priority over the past year. Following a 60-day public comment period that closed on 18 April 2005, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) reviewed the information received and made extensive revisions. ADF&G submitted the CWCS on August 26, 2005 for approval by the National Advisory Acceptance Team (NAAT). The NAAT is a national committee comprised of 12 leaders from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies that is responsible for reviewing each state and territories' strategy. If the NAAT determines that Alaska's CWCS meets all eight required elements, Alaska will receive final approval from the Director of the USFWS late in 2005 and become eligible for future Congressional appropriations of State Wildlife Grant (SWG) funds. The SWG program currently funds ADF&G Nongame Program projects, as well as cooperator projects participating in our Partner Program.

Alaska's CWCS is a cooperative effort produced with input from a broad array of participants, including representatives of state and federal agencies, university and non-governmental organizations, hunting and other conservation groups, and members of the general public. The landbird portion of the CWCS was based on information from the Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan, in addition to input from the landbird experts. The CWCS can be viewed on-line at:

http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/ngplan/NG_outline.cfm

Over the next few months, ADF&G staff will develop products based on information in the CWCS; we welcome suggestions from BPIF members. We are especially interesting in developing web-based tools that would allow us to track ongoing activities, incorporate regular updates, and expand the existing material as appropriate.

Other efforts to implement the CWCS likely will include ranking species, including their habitats and specific projects for conservation. While templates were organized in sequential order for the most part, some indication of priority would be helpful. Perhaps some of this need can be addressed in conjunction with future revisions of the Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan.

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Finally, we are continuing to fund a number of landbird projects for ADF&G staff. These include Dave Tessler's Breeding Bird Survey routes and targeted surveys of state land; Steve Lewis' collaboration with others to determine the distribution, abundance, and ecology of forest owls in southeast Alaska; Phil Mooney's preliminary assessment of avian mortality at communication towers in southeast Alaska; Jack Whitman's work on Boreal Owl ecology and diet; and a variety of nesting raptor surveys in northern, northwestern, and Interior Alaska.

Several other projects of interest to landbird conservationists have been funded through our Partner Program, including 1) Breeding Ecology and Habitat Quality for the Arctic Warbler in Interior Alaska, Alaska Bird Observatory; 2) Distribution and Seasonal Habitat Use of American Dippers in Southeast Alaska, Willson Consulting; 3) Distribution, Abundance and Ecology of Forest Owls in Southeast Alaska, a cooperative effort of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and ADF&G; 4) Effects of Forest Management on Bird and Vegetation Communities, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 5) Developing an International All-Bird Conservation Plan for the Northwestern Interior Forest Bird Conservation Region, Alaska Bird Observatory; 6) Identifying Important Bird Areas of Alaska, Audubon Alaska; 7) Developing a Nongame Species Database, Alaska Natural Heritage Program; and 8) GIS Mapping of Terrestrial Ecosystems in Southeast Alaska, The Nature Conservancy.

A complete list of Partner Program projects, along with additional information on the Nongame Program, can be found on our website:

<http://www.wildlife.alaska.gov/management/nongame/nongame.cfm>

Contact: Mary L. Rabe, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, P.O. Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526. Phone: (907) 465-6195; email: mary_rabe@fishgame.state.ak.us

UPDATE ON RUSTY BLACKBIRDS

Compiler: Steve Matsuoka, *USFWS - Migratory Bird Management*

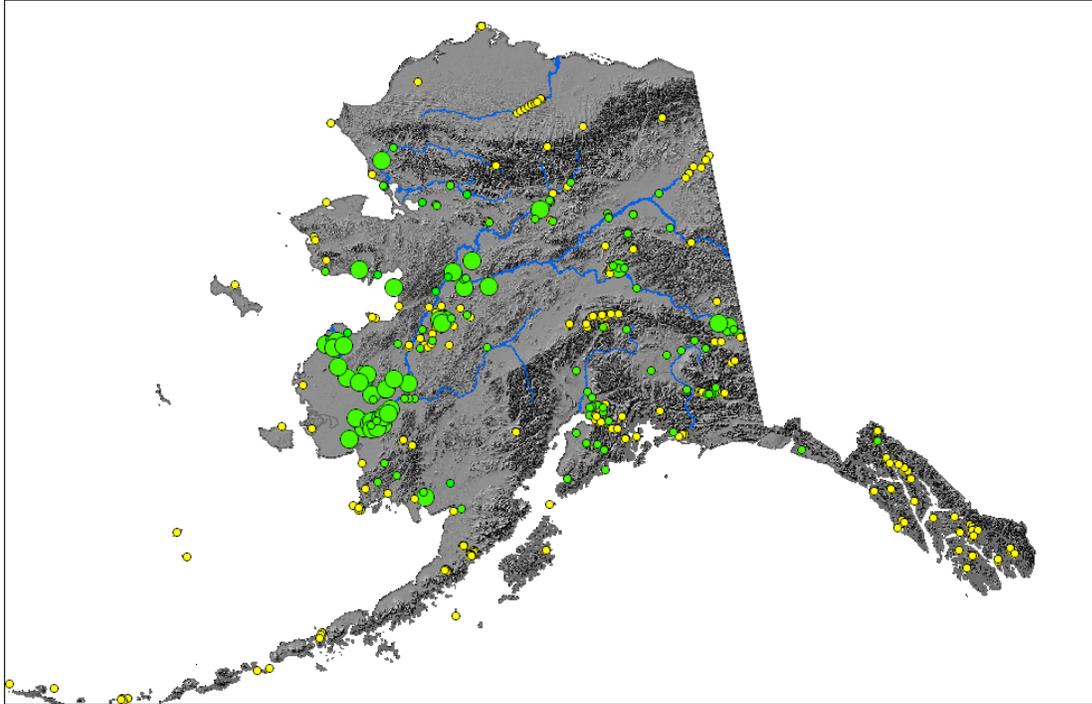
The Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*) has suffered one of the steepest declines of any bird species in North America with populations reduced by 90–98% since 1966. Although this once-abundant bird has been identified as a high priority for conservation at the continental level by Partners in Flight, it has never been studied in detail and the cause of its decline remains unknown. Alaska is particularly important for breeding populations because the species has disappeared from many parts of its breeding range where it was once abundant, but still breeds commonly in wetland habitats in the state.

Efforts were made both in Alaska and across the Rusty Blackbird's range in 2005 to address the species' dramatic decline and educate agencies and the public about this species' plight. A subcommittee of Boreal Partners in Flight met to identify information needs and fill information gaps for this species. As a result the Alaska Natural Heritage Program and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game compiled data on the breeding distribution of the species in Alaska (Fig. 1) to identify important areas for conservation and research. Also, feather samples were collected from Rusty Blackbirds in Bethel, Fairbanks, and Whitehorse as part of a range-wide stable isotope study seeking to link breeding and wintering populations of Rusty Blackbirds. Birds in Bethel were additionally sampled for methyl mercury for comparison to Rusty Blackbirds breeding in the northeastern United States where mercury concentrations are high.

On the broader front, the International Rusty Blackbird Technical Group—which includes representatives from federal, university, and non-governmental agencies in the U.S. and Canada—was formed in March 2005 to increase awareness of the species' plight and develop and implement a coordinated conservation strategy for the species. Visit the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's website to learn more about the Rusty Blackbird's decline and the Technical Group's efforts

(http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/MigratoryBirds/Research/Rusty_Blackbird/).

Fig. 1. Distribution and abundance of breeding Rusty Blackbirds in Alaska based on data from the BBS, Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey, and DoD checklists. Map symbols denote abundance as follows: yellow = absent, small green = rare to uncommon, large green = common to abundant.



Contact: Steve Matsuoka, USFWS Migratory Bird Management, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503, steve_matsuoka@fws.gov.

BIRD CONSERVATION REGION REPORTS

The “greater BPIF” area is comprised of five Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs). The following are reports on primary conservation issues for each BCR, some of the avian fieldwork and outreach performed in 2005, and summaries of break-out sessions held at the BPIF annual meeting. Projects listed with an asterisk (*) have synopses in this document’s sister report, the 2005 BPIF Project Summary.

Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands (BCR 1)

Compiler: Heather Renner, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge (AMNWR)*

BCR1 Current conservation issues:

- Invasive Species
- Endemism
- Shipwrecks

BCR1 Field projects conducted in 2005:

- Translocation of endemic Evermann's Rock Ptarmigan from Attu Is. to Agattu Is. (AMNWR)
- Off-road point counts conducted on Shemya, Buldir, Kasatochi & Ugamak (AMNWR)
- Beach passerine surveys conducted on Buldir, Semidis, and Pribilofs (AMNWR)
- Bird collections at Attu and Shemya to evaluate zoogeographic affinities (UAF)
- Raven control to reduce bird air-strike hazard on Shemya (U.S. Air Force)
- Birding tours conducted on Adak, St. George, St. Paul (various groups)

The BCR1 representative joined the BCR2 group for the break-out session.

Western Alaska (BCR 2)

Compiler: Susan Savage, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Peninsula/Becharof National Wildlife Refuge*

Current conservation issues:

The over-arching issue named for avian conservation in Western Alaska is lack of information and lack of resources to obtain information. The lack of information provides challenges to managers in determining what species may be at risk, the level of potential risk, and the effect of issues on various species and habitats. The lack of transportation infrastructure provides protection for avian habitats in Western Alaska, but also increases the cost of obtaining information. Specific human activities that are, or may pose, conservation issues for landbirds in the next five years are listed below:

Habitat Conversion & Degradation: Housing & Urban Development – Although habitat conversion from housing and urban development is small compared to the overall land area, it is incremental and often targets habitats of higher value to birds. The following developments are planned for the near future:

- Development of Native Village/Corporation lands (new schools in Togiak and Manakotak).
- Increased energy and mining activities (see below) will lead to expansion of remote settlements. Since zoning regulations are generally weak in rural Alaska, this can lead to sprawling development and little control over development in sensitive habitats.
- BLM is completing Native land conveyances in the near future allowing for sale and development of more remote areas in Western Alaska. Often these are along riparian corridors.

Transportation Infrastructure: The development of airports, roads, bridges, power corridors and/or railroads is being proposed in many areas across Western Alaska including:

- King Cove Access project - State of Alaska is proposing a land trade so the road can go through the middle of Izembek NWR. Expect greater user impacts on tundra habitats along the road and more off-road ATV use.
- Bridge from Naknek to South Naknek will open areas south of the Naknek River to ATV use.
- Roads/railroad corridors being discussed for most of the mining developments listed below
- New Airport at Manakotak
- Power corridors being discussed for most of the mining developments below
- Western Alaska has a significant coastline. Shipwrecks along the coast produce spills of fuel and other potentially toxic materials. Although the sea and shorebirds are at greatest risk, other birds, especially raptors that scavenge, could be affected.

Energy & Mining: Because of changing federal regulation and agency policy, areas previously closed to leasing are being opened. As revenue from renewable resources such as fishing decline, local entities are more favorable to non-renewable resource development. New precious metal discoveries in and near the Western Alaska BCR may lead to significant resource development. The ever-increasing price of oil is

forcing remote villages to explore alternate energy sources. In Western Alaska, specific recent activities include:

- Aleutian East Borough supports offshore oil and gas development.
- Oil and Gas leasing in the Port Moller area.
- Pebble Gold and Heavy Metal Mine: Current activity centers on exploration and environmental compliance. Use of helicopters in the area is high.
- Donlin Creek Gold Mine: near the Kuskokwim River just east of Western Alaska BCR. This mine is in the exploration and development state. Potential developments: wind turbine power grid (Kuskokwim Mountains; has been permitted by BLM), power line from Bethel, 25-mile road to Kuskokwim River, access road to the Yukon River near Holy Cross, and limestone mine and coal bed methane development in the nearby Holitna River watershed. Mine would increase barge traffic for transport of ore concentrates and fuel, freight on Kuskokwim River.
- Many villages are erecting wind generators to supplement power (i.e., St. Michaels-Stebbins, Hooper Bay, Chevak, Toksook, Tunanak, Nightmute, Mekoryuk, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok, Kongiganak, Pilot Point, Port Heiden, Nelson Lagoon, Chignik Bay, King Cove, False Pass and possibly Perryville and Egegik). Several of these villages will build interties between the turbine facilities and villages. Many of the villages select locations near the coast which may be important migratory corridors for some bird species.
- The US Air Force's 611th Air Support Group is considering wind turbine use at Tin City Long Range Radar Site (LRRS) near the village of Wales, Cape Romanzof LRRS near Hooper Bay/Y-K Delta NWR, and Cape Newenham LRRS adjacent to Togiak NWR. The addition of a wind turbine at Tin City LRRS would be the test case. In preparation studies have been done during spring and fall migrations using the *Potential Impact Index Checklists* from the *Guidelines to Avoid and Minimize Wildlife Impacts from Wind Turbines* at Tin City.

Impacts from these activities include habitat loss, contamination from toxic materials and petroleum, bird strikes, increased human activity, and increased transportation activities including barge traffic in the ocean and major rivers.

Biological Resource Harvesting: Little information exists about the current level of subsistence resource harvesting in Western Alaska. Some raptors and owls may be taken under the Migratory Bird Treaty amendments: spring/summer bird seasons. On the Seward Peninsula reindeer herding is still practiced. Some herders have expressed concerns that ravens may depredate newborn reindeer calves. Some subsistence users in other areas have expressed this thought about bald eagle depredation of caribou calves. Although documentation is lacking, predator control is a popular topic in Western Alaska.

Recreation & Work in Natural Habitats: As Energy & Mining activities increase, so will human population and the demand for recreation in natural habitats. Off-road vehicle use and power boating will increase. At least one air taxi has expressed interest in using helicopters to transport sport fisherman on to federal lands that are currently closed to that form of transportation. Eco-tourism is slowly increasing, and remote lodge development will increase as private allotments are conveyed and sold.

Pollution: Currently there is little or no information being collected with regard to the effect of globally distributed toxins. This lack of information cripples the ability of managers to focus limited resources to monitor the most important effects.

Invasive & Other Problematic Species & Genes: To date no impacts from West Nile Virus have been noted in Western Alaska. However, Western Alaska's proximity to Asia and its use by birds in the various Pacific and Asian flyways increase the region's likelihood to be one of the first areas to experience the impacts of Avian Influenza (AI). What impact AI will have on bird populations remains to be seen. Several native insect species (birch leaf rollers and spruce bark beetles) have had local outbreaks lasting more than one year. These species could contribute to significant habitat changes affecting the avian community.

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Climate Change: Lack of information prevents managers from making predictions about the effect of climate change on the avifauna of Western Alaska. Potential direct impacts include: habitat loss (coastal erosion, inundation of low-lying wet areas), major shifts in habitat regimes, and changing weather patterns that may affect length of breeding season and migration timing.

BCR2 Field Projects conducted in 2005:

- 1) Breeding Bird Surveys: Cold Bay (Izembek NWR), King Salmon (Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR), Togiak River, Goodnews River, Kanektok River, Dillingham (Togiak NWR), Unalakleet River, and Anvik River (BLM), Nome (ADF&G)
- 2) Landbird nest monitoring (Izembek NWR)
- 3) Landbirds point counts conducted during shorebird point transects, Alaska Peninsula (16 plots, 257 10-minute points) (Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR)
- 4) Spring phenology data collection (Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, Togiak NWR, Izembek NWR)
- 5) Inventory of montane-nesting birds, National Parks of Southwest Alaska (including Katmai NP; USGS/NPS) *
- 6) Bald Eagle nest monitoring (Izembek NWR)
- 7) Develop database and map of raptor nest locations found during other survey activities (Izembek NWR)
- 8) Bald Eagle population survey - Alaska Peninsula / Gulf of Alaska (Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR) *
- 9) Bald eagle productivity surveys (Togiak NWR) *
- 10) Owl surveys (Togiak NWR)
- 11) Gyrfalcon radio tracking (Izembek NWR)
- 12) Gyrfalcon study (Yukon Delta NWR) *
- 13) Raptor survey, lower Yukon River (Unit 18, ADF&G)
- 14) Orientation of sparrows using Emlen funnels (Beringia Project – Yukon Delta NWR) *
- 15) Raptor distribution and abundance, southern Seward Peninsula (Unit 22, ADF&G)

BCR2 Outreach conducted in 2005:

- *Bristol Bay Field Notes* radio show (Togiak NWR); Bird biology and observation information on local radio in Nome (Amy in the AM, KNOM Radio)
- Christmas Bird Counts (Izembek NWR, Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, Togiak NWR, Citizens of Nome)
- Great Backyard Bird Count (Togiak NWR)
- North American Migration Count (Izembek NWR, Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, Togiak NWR)
- Project Feeder Watch (Togiak NWR, Citizens of Nome)
- Raptor First Aid and Transport /collection of carcasses (Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, Togiak NWR, ADF&G)
- 22 landbird presentations to school children (pre-school - 10th grade), Cub Scouts, and Girl Scouts. A bird walk conducted with the 4th grade classes (Togiak NWR)
- Three landbird articles were run in the local *Bristol Bay Times* newspaper (Togiak NWR); Articles on landbirds in Nome Nugget newspaper (Citizens of Nome)
- Citizen Science: Common Ravens nesting near Nome (Alice Sullivan and ADF&G)
- Beringia Birders website and observation database at: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/beringia_birders/ (Citizens, Nome Visitor Center and ADF&G)
- Checklist of Nome Birds (Nome Visitor Center and ADF&G)
- Walking tour for birds in Nome (Alice Sullivan and Nome Visitor Center); Bird walks/field trips along Nome road system (Bering Land Bridge NP)
- Public Service Announcement information about avian influenza (ADF&G)

Summary of break-out session:

The breakout session was attended by Gene Augustine, Jenna Boisvert, Brian McCaffery, Jodi McClory, Heather Renner, Susan Savage, and Bruce Seppi. Others providing information before or after the session included Alan Bennett, Peter Bente, Rob MacDonald, and Kristine Sowl. Our group discussed the various issues listed above. We agreed that the current BPIF section for Western Alaska is out of date with regard to issues and species of concern. Progress has been made on gathering information on McKay's Bunting, and Smith's Longspur should be deleted from the BCR 2 list. More discussion is needed on revision of the plan.

Arctic Plain and Mountains (BCR 3)

Compilers: Debbie Nigro, *Bureau of Land Management-Northern Field Office* and Steve Kendall, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*

The BCR3 breakout group focused their thoughts on conservation actions needed, issues of concern, and prepared a short list of action items to be addressed in the coming year.

BCR3 Current Conservation Issues

- 1) Existing Issues
 - Oil and Gas Development
- 2) New and/or issues increasing in concern:
 - a) Climate Change
 - b) Impacts to river corridors from visitation
 - c) Increase in numbers and extent of CORA
 - d) Potential of mineral development in South NPR-A
 - e) Legalization of harvest—raptors
 - f) Gene Augustine recommended adding wind turbine construction to the list (Cape Lisburn and possibly Point Hope).

Conservation concerns in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge include; 1) the possibility that congress will open the 1002 area to petroleum exploration and development, 2) possibility that recreational use of river corridors and barrier islands could impact breeding raptors and waterfowl via disturbance and habitat alteration, 3) evidence of increasing coastal erosion due to lack of sea ice during the fall storm season (affecting barrier islands which are important breeding sites for Common Eiders, 4) Climate change causing habitat alteration (i.e. changes in hydrology and vegetation communities) and changes in plant phenology, and 5) Subsistence harvest impacting birds via direct take and impacts on habitat by motorized access to hunting areas

Personnel at Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve listed the following as conservation concern for their land management area; 1) Habitat alteration in river corridors due to increased visitation, 2) Arctic haze, 3) Exotic plants altering habitat, and 4) Subsistence harvest

Land managers of the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska submitted the following as issues of conservation concern for their land management area; 1) Extension of Alpine facility drilling pads, roads and bridges into NE NPR-A, 2) evidence of increasing coastal erosion due to lack of sea ice during the fall storm season (affecting barrier islands which are important breeding sites for Common Eiders, 3) Climate change causing habitat alteration (i.e. changes in hydrology and vegetation communities) and changes in plant phenology, and 4) Subsistence harvest impacting birds via direct take and impacts on habitat by motorized access to hunting areas

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BCR3 Conservation Actions

During the break-out meeting, the major conservation actions for BCR3 were determined to be:

- 1) Determine population status of Smith's Longspurs (SMLO) across the BCR
 - a) Produced Species of Concern Poster
 - b) Gates of the Arctic has gained information into SMLO distribution and abundance
 - c) Group forming to look into potential for Smith's Longspur research in BCR 3
- 2) Determine methods for broad-scale monitoring of priority species:
 - a) Gray-cheeked thrush (Gates of the Arctic has gained information into GCTH distribution and abundance)
 - b) Hoary Redpoll

Action Items for BCR3

1. Research into distribution and habitat associations of Smith's Longspurs
2. Inventory of landbirds in South NPR-A
3. Document distribution and habitat associations of GCTH

BCR3 Projects conducted in 2005

In 2005 staff from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Arctic Refuge) conducted 3 studies on shorebirds in collaboration with various partners, these projects are as follows; 1) Partnership with the Manomet Bird Observatory in the development of a predictive habitat association model to map breeding shorebird distribution, 2) the fourth year of data collection on a project investigating nest survival of tundra nesting birds and predator populations relative to human development at multiple sites across the North Slope and 3) a project examining post breeding staging shorebirds on the Hulahula, Okpilak, and Canning River Deltas. Arctic Refuge staff also conducted boat-based surveys of cliff-nesting raptors (focus species included: Arctic Peregrine Falcons, Golden Eagles, Gyrfalcons and Rough-legged Hawks) along the Canning River and Marsh Fork of the Canning River.

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve conducted point count surveys in the Itkillik (100 Points) and Alatna (50 points) river corridors. Of note on the Itkillik were the numerous Smith's Longspur detections and the documentation of a Smith's Longspur nest. *

Avian studies conducted in the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska in 2005 included the following; 1) participation in a cooperative project examining post breeding shorebirds on the North Slope by staffing the Peard Bay camp, 2) conducted raptor surveys on the Colville River, 3) supported a study on the foraging ecology of common ravens on the upper Colville River, and 4) supported a study investigating the breeding biology and migration of King Eiders on Alaska's North Slope.

Northwestern Interior Forests (BCR 4)

Compilers: Melanie Cook and Carol McIntyre, *National Park Service*

BCR4 Current conservation issues

1. *Avian Influenza:* Dr. Kevin Winker's group at the UA Museum in Fairbanks have been sending bird samples collected in the Aleutians into the USDA Agricultural Research Services (Athens, Georgia) to be tested for Avian Influenza since 1998. To date, no birds have tested positive for strains that can also infect humans. They are willing to facilitate gauging and screening of other folk's bird samples for Avian Influenza. If the bird is not being collected for a museum specimen, the sample can consist of swabbing the cloaca with a Q-tip.

Dr. Jon Runstadler with the UAF Institute for Arctic Biology coordinated the sampling of over 30 species of birds for avian influenza in 2005, including 1,000 birds from the Alaska Bird Observatory migration station in Fairbanks. *

The USGS and USFWS will be heading up field studies to sample for avian influenza in 2006.

2. *Coal Bed Methane*: The State is currently issuing exploratory leases allowing lessees to see if this potential source of energy can be recovered. Concerns arise around the extraction of methane from coal seams due to possible impacts on water quality, wildlife, and property owner's rights.

Current Alaskan Coal Bed Methane Activities:

Matanuska Susitna Borough: On hold?

Healy: Exploration occurring.

Interior Alaska: A partnership between the U.S. Department of Energy, the Bureau of Land Management, the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the U.S. Geological Survey is examining the potential for shallow-gas development near the village of Fort Yukon.

3. *Exotic/Invasive Species*: Exotic birch-leaf miner outbreaks and biological control: Billions of sawflies, birch-leaf miners, are once more attacking birch trees across Anchorage, approximately 138,000 acres. The amber-marked leaf miner - whose larval form tunnels through the green inner layer of birch leaves - also has spread down Turnagain Arm, hit the Kenai Peninsula and the Matanuska Valley, and even infested trees in Fairbanks, Skagway and Haines. Because the pest is not native to Alaska, it has no natural predator here. So, for the second summer in a row, bug experts have released a small batch of the leaf miner's natural enemy, a parasitic wasp gathered by scientists in the Northwest Territories of Canada.

Northern Pike are rapidly spreading across Anchorage. They are endemic to Alaska but not to the Susitna Valley. It is suspected the waterfowl may be avoiding this area due to heavy predation of chicks by invasive northern pike (Herman Griese, Elmendorf AFB).

4. *Flooding*: Extensive flooding in Innoko NWR lasting until July 1, 2005 that impacted waterfowl nesting and flooded out one off-road point-count route (Steve Kovach, Innoko NWR)
5. *Global Climate Change*: Abnormally dry conditions in Southeastern corner of Alaska (including Wrangell-St. Elias NP; <http://drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>).

Forest stress leading to Aspen leaf-miner outbreaks 2005.

Spruce-bark beetle outbreaks 2005:

Kenai Peninsula, Iliamna Lake, Kuskokwim River, Anchorage, and Indian and Bird Creek valleys.

Beetle-killed forest in southwest Yukon now has about 340,000 ha (source: Wendy Nixon).

6. *Land Sales*: The University of Alaska has put a 200-acre parcel of wetlands adjacent to Creamer's Filed Migratory Bird Refuge for sale at fair-market value after being approached by a potential buyer who wants to use the land for wetlands mitigation. (source: Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, 11/19/2005).
7. *Legislation*: SB 85 would repeal a long-standing ban on off-road vehicle traffic along the tundra in the Dalton Highway corridor in Arctic Alaska and SB 170 proposes a variety of changes to the Department of Fish and Game that will eliminate all non-game funding. Both bills stalled during the legislative session due to overwhelming public opposition. Both bills will be back up for legislative consideration during the 2006 session, which begins on January 9.

HB527 would change the way state lands are managed, directly affecting the public process and shifting the burden of proof away from the state and onto vague “persons” to demonstrate environmental impacts.

Sale of mining leases on federal lands.

8. *Activities on Military Bases:* Missile defense folks have done a lot of clearing in the same area as the 1999 Donnelly flats fire near Ft. Greely. The extent of the clearing is not known, as the area is heavily fenced.

Major construction and dramatic development ongoing at Elmendorf AFB. Many of the berry trees are being removed which may alter Bohemian Waxwing distributions.

9. *Military Training Routes:* A proposal is out to move the military training route (military training flightway) 970 and reroute it north of Minto Flats State Game Sanctuary area. In addition, two new Military Training Routes are proposed to allow for military training flightways from the north over Fairbanks.

10. *Mining:* High prices of precious metals such as gold (\$460/oz, nickel, platinum and copper have spurred a boom in mineral exploration not seen since the early 1980’s. Exploration activities are expected to increase in 2006 (*Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, Nov 9, 2005).

Pogo gold mine by Delta Junction (Teck Pogo Inc.), Novagold Resources proposed gold mine development in Rock Creek area near Nome, Novagold Resources, Placer Dome and Calista Corp, potential development of Donlin Creek at headwaters of the Iditarod River in Innoko, Northern Dynasty expects to mine 26.5 million oz of gold and 16.5 billion lbs of copper near Pebble Creek in Southwestern Alaska, Chuitna Development Project expects to begin the permitting process next year to mine 2-10 million tons of coal from massive coal deposit in Southcentral Alaska, True North open pits are the first in a series of satellite open pits that Fairbanks Gold Mining, Inc. plans to develop as additional feed sources for the Fort Knox gold mill.

Tangle Lakes: Conveyance of the Denali Block (located on the east end of the Denali Highway, and including Tangle Lakes, most of the Tangle Lakes Archeological District, and portions of the Delta Wild and Scenic River Corridor) from the federal government to the State of Alaska is complete. Nevadastar Resources (www.nevadastar.com) is planning to conduct exploratory drilling near 14-Mile Lake and Landmark Gap.

11. *Nuclear Power Plant:* Galena’s City Council tentatively accepted a proposal from Toshiba Corporation and the Central Research Institute of Electrical Power Industry of Japan (CRIEPI) to build a small nuclear reactor in the village as a demonstration, the first nuclear power plant to be built since 1978.

12. *Oil/gas exploration:* Oil and Gas exploration license submitted by Andex LLC is currently being sought for state and private lands in Nenana Basin and Minto Flats State Game Refuge (MFSGR). The region would include half a million acres of forest and wetlands. Seismic trails (2.5 miles) put in on Minto Flats State Game Refuge but most of natural gas exploration is currently to the south of the refuge. The conglomerate of four companies doing the exploration is drilling two deep wells outside of the refuge. The findings from those wells will determine if they push forward into the refuge.

PGS Onshore Inc. submitted a permit (permit number MLUP/AK 04-05) which was granted for geophysical and seismic exploration for natural gas within the Nenana Basin (source: Northern Alaska Environmental Center).

ConocoPhillips accepted a contract (Oct 2005) proposed by the State of Alaska that would establish tax, royalty and other financial conditions for the gas pipeline.

Other considerations: an 800-mile (1300 km) pipeline paralleling the existing trans-Alaska oil line that would deliver liquefied natural gas into tanker vessels at the port of Valdez.

13. *Subsistence*: 50 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 92 specifies spring and summer subsistence harvest of migratory birds in Alaska valid through August 31, 2005, including hunting and egg harvest of all migratory birds. Subsistence harvest communities excluded in the regulations are. Anchorage-Matanuska-Susitna or Fairbanks North Star boroughs, Kenai Peninsula, Copper River Region, Cook Inlet or Southeast AK.
14. *Timber*: Some local logging occurring locally in Alaska and in Yukon (see Yukon Forestry site for more information, source: Wendy Nixon).
15. *Transportation: Roads, Railroads, and Airports*: Possible road to be constructed on Selawik NWR from the village of Selawik to the new dump (Selawik NWR).

Extending Stampede Road: ultimate goal is to build a road all the way through the park to Wonder Lake, connecting the proposed 80-mile Stampede Road to the 91-mile road in Kantishna to form a 180-mile loop through the Denali.

Northern Rail Extension: The Alaska Railroad seeks to extend its mainline track from the crossing at Moose Creek/Richardson Highway near Eielson AFB 80 miles southeast to Ft. Greely to provide support for movement of military equipment and supplies to the Tanana Flats and Donnelly Dome Training areas and Fort Greely. The project may include a 15-mile spur to Blair Lakes facility within the Tanana Flats Training Area.

Altogether, DOT plans more than 400 miles of new roads in the state. Murkowski's Industrial Roads Program, "Roads to Resources"

Three new roads are envisioned for the North Slope to speed development of gas and oil reserves: one west along the foothills of the Brooks Range from the Dalton Highway, one east along the Brooks foothills, and one east from Deadhorse to Bullen on the Beaufort Sea.

The Donlin Creek project in Southwest AK-two roads totaling nearly 90 miles that would link ports on the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers to the proposed Donlin gold mine. These would be followed with a third road from the mine to McGrath and Ruby.

Proposed Yukon River road in northwestern Alaska would connect Manley Hot Springs with Nome, Unalakleet and St. Michael.

AK DOT considering new airfields, including a 5,000-foot jet runway at Noatak to be linked to the Red Dog Mine via a new road of up to 35 miles.

16. *Wildland fires*: In BCR4 in Alaska, approximately 423 fires burned approximately 4,261, 993 acres (source: Jennifer Allen, NPS, Wendy Nixon).

A major environmental event in 2005. Approximately 83 fires burned in Yukon Territory, more than 463,167.5 acres (187, 438.34 hectares) mostly in BCR4 (see also <http://www.nrcan-rncan.gc.ca/cfs-scf/science/prodserv/firereport/graphs>).

Extensive fires in Innoko NWR, Kanuti NWR, Koyukuk NWR, Yukon Flats NWR, Yukon Flats NWR, and Arctic NWR. Fires also in Denali NP&P, Yukon-Charley Rivers NP, Gates of the Arctic NP&P, Noatak NP, and Wrangell-St. Elias NP&P, but acreage was insignificant.

17. *Other Issues* – Sprawl/urbanization, wetland drying, insect infestation, intensive management of predators

Bird Projects completed or ongoing in BCR4 in 2005

1. Seventeen on-road *BBS routes* and two river *BBS routes* conducted.
2. *Christmas Bird Counts*: Christmas Bird Counts conducted in Fairbanks, Anchorage, Eagle River, Denali Park, Delta and Tok.

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3. *ALMS plots*: One plot completed (by Kanuti NWR)
4. *Off-road point counts*: Five in Upper Tanana Valley (Bud Johnson, Tetlin NWR); two in Innoko, one in mixed forest-ridge, one in floating bog, 3rd route flooded out (Steve Kovach, by Innoko NWR); one north of Galena (Brad Scotton, Koyukuk NWR)
5. *Landbirds*:
 - Comparative genetic analysis of spruce grouse populations across the state to determine the validity of the subspecies status (by Sandy Talbot, Judy Gust, Kevin Sage, USGS Molecular Ecology Laboratory)
 - Genetic assessment of relationships among normal-billed vs. abnormal-billed Black-capped Chickadees and determination of extra-pair copulations and parentage (Lisa Pajot, USGS, Colleen Handel, USGS, Sandy Talbot, Judy Gust, Kevin Sage, USGS Molecular Ecology Laboratory) *
 - Point count surveys for landbirds on Alatna River corridor (Nikki Guldager, Gates of the Arctic NP&P)
 - Bird surveys at Chena Lakes (by ABO and supported by the Chena Flood Control Project, Army Corps of Engineers, Tim Feaval)
 - Rusty Blackbird current migration information gathered from the local Fairbanks community on migration location and timing and archival data being compiled (by ABO and USGS)
 - Long-term passerine monitoring program, Central Alaska Network, NPS Vital Signs Monitoring Program (265 point counts with distance sampling) (ABO and Carol McIntyre, NPS) *
 - Songbird migration monitoring near Tok (autumn) (Tetlin NWR), in Fairbanks at Creamer's Field (spring and fall, ABO) and in Denali NPP (autumn) (Denali Institute and ABO). *
 - Second year of study on the ecology of Arctic Warblers and surveys of Blackpoll Warblers and other song birds in the Tangle Lakes area (by ABO with support from BLM, ADF&G) *
 - Ruffed Grouse lek surveys and Sharp-tailed Grouse drumming surveys continued in late April/early May on Ft. Greely (Jeff Mason, Ft. Greely AB)
 - 2nd year of winter Bohemian Waxwing survey routes (weekly to once daily throughout winter) through cantonment area on Elmendorf AFB as part of BASH (Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard) program for flight safety (by Herman Griese, Elmendorf AFB).
 - Ongoing point counts on long-term vegetation monitoring grids (30 in total) on Elmendorf AFB. They would like to convert these point counts or add a BBS route instead and survey 3x/season; late April-early May, June and July.
 - University of Alaska Museum has concluded the last year of several comprehensive collection surveys (collecting voucher specimens for UA Museum) of vegetation, mammals and birds in Unalakleet (also on AK Peninsula, Lake Iliamna and Chilkat areas, outside of BCR4, Dan Gibson, UA Museum).
 - Second year and last year of field work in comparison urban/rural populations of White-crown Sparrows in Fairbanks and Anchorage (urban) vs. Deadhorse/Eureka and Matanuska Glacier area (rural).
 - Yellow-bellied Flycatchers found in Eureka (13 pairs) around Deadhorse Pass along steep slope in the thick, birch/alder (Dan Gibson a co-author on this; source: Frances Bonier, Department of Biology, University of Washington)
 - Examination of population divergence (phylogenetics) and breeding biology of YRWA, ALFL, GCTH, WCSP along a latitudinal gradient including Ecuador, California, Washington and Alaska (Tok, Eureka) (source: Paul Martin and Frances Bonier, Department of Biology, University of Washington)

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6. *Owls:*

- Ongoing late winter owl surveys in Tanana Valley (by Tetlin NWR)
- Owl surveys initiated winter 2004-2005 (March) on Bonfield Trail (Amal Ajmi, Ft. Wainwright AB)
- 4th winter of ongoing aural owl surveys in late February-early March on 4 different routes on Elmendorf AFB, performed 2-3x per winter (Herman Griese, Elmendorf AFB).
- Ecology of Boreal Owls in interior Alaska (Jack Whitman, AK Dept. of Fish & Game) *

7. *Raptors:*

- Phylogenetic analyses of Goshawk populations from Fairbanks, southcentral AK (Palmer, Anchorage bowl), southeast AK, Alexander Archipelago, coastal British Columbia, Vancouver Island and mainland, Kispiox National Forest District in BC, Lakes Forest in BC and Queen Charlotte Islands (Sandy Talbot, Judy Gust, Kevin Sage, USGS Molecular Ecology Laboratory)
- Genetic tagging of Golden Eagles from Denali National P&P to determine nest-site fidelity (by Carol McIntyre, NPS, and Sandy Talbot, Judy Gust, Kevin Sage, USGS Molecular Ecology Laboratory)
- Phylogenetic and population genetic analyses of Peregrine Falcons from Interior AK, the North Slope of AK and throughout the Aleutians and Queen Charlotte Islands to assess the impact of the recent bottleneck caused from decline in these populations (by Sandy Talbot, Judy Gust, Kevin Sage, USGS Molecular Ecology Laboratory)
- Genetic tagging of Gyrfalcons in YK Delta to determine nest-site fidelity (by Travis Booms, UAF, and Sandy Talbot, Judy Gust, Kevin Sage, USGS Molecular Ecology Laboratory) *
- Long-term raptor surveys on nest occupancy and productivity for Bald Eagles, Osprey and Peregrines in GMU12 in Upper Tanana Valley (by Tetlin NWR)
- Counted raptors and ravens scared away from flight-line by BASH Team on Eielson AFB (Tom Slater, Natural Resource Technician/Outdoor Recreation Planner Eielson AFB)
- Peregrine Falcon surveys on upper Yukon River (Nikki Guldager and Skip Ambrose) and Charley River (Carol McIntyre and John Burch, NPS)
- Annual Peregrine Falcon surveys on Yukon between Galena and Ruby (Brad Scotton, Koyukuk NWR)
- Ongoing annual Bald Eagle surveys continued along the Copper River from Chistochina River to Miles Lake for occupancy and productivity (Mason Reid, by NPS)
- Long-term monitoring of reproductive success of Golden Eagles and Gyrfalcons in Denali NP&P (Carol McIntyre, NPS)
- Ongoing annual Bald Eagle nest occupancy and success surveys in Lake Clark NPP. (Buck Mangipane, Judy Putera, Lake Clark NP)
- FWS (ANWR and YFNWR) continued a 10-year ongoing study of Arctic Peregrine Falcons along the Porcupine River and Yukon Flats. Incidental anecdotal data was also collected to generate a bird list (Dave Payer, ANWR)
- Tree- and cliff-dwelling raptor surveys (Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles and Peregrines) this spring (mid May) in the Tanana Flats between Fairbanks and Delta along the proposed AK railroad corridor between Eielson and Ft. Greely (Bob Ritchie, Alaska Biological Research)
- Raptor data collection training and occupancy data from floatable areas of Fortymile Wild and Scenic River management area, South Fork, West Fork, North Fork and main stem of the Fortymile and the Middle Fork (Ruth Gronquist, BLM in Fairbanks)

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- Year 1 of study examining raptor nest densities and habitat affinities on Minto Flats State Game Refuge (Jack Whitman, ADFG) *
 - Raptor breeding activity routes along Tanana River from Fairbanks to Nenana (Jack Whitman, ADFG)
 - Peregrine surveys along lower Yukon River from Holy Cross to Mountain Village (Jack Whitman, ADFG)
8. *Habitat Studies:*
 - Ongoing documentation of spring phenology and spring migration timing in Upper Tanana Valley (by Tetlin NWR)
 - Bird habitat data collected for the bird inventory plots done last year in 2004 (by Kanuti NWR)
 9. *Radar Studies:* Marine radar converted into a dish to measure bird activity and density of birds during migration at airfields on Elmendorf AFB (Herman Griese, Elmendorf AFB).
 10. *Bird sampling training:* Annual distance estimation and bird identification training, two-weeks in late May (by ABO; funded by ABO and NPS)

BCR4 Outreach and Education

1. Alaska Bird Camp, 1 week with 8-9 year olds and 1 week with 10-11 year olds (ABO).
2. International Migratory Bird Day Celebrations in Tok, Fairbanks, and Anchorage.
3. Birds of Denali field seminars, Denali Institute and the Murie Science and Learning Center.
4. Denali Foundation Community Lecture Series.
5. University of Alaska Life Science Seminar Series (ABO).
6. Camp Habitat (Northern Alaska Environmental Center).
7. Lecture Series with Arctic Audubon, Anchorage Audubon, ABO, and others.
8. Birds of the Boreal, bird identification seminar series for public and Alaska Lifelong Learning program in Fairbanks (ABO).
9. Bird-banding demonstrations in Fairbanks, Denali Park, Anchorage, Tok, and Albert Creek.
10. Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival in Fairbanks (Friends of Creamer's Field).
11. Seven birding reports and 11 "Winter Wings" species profiles published in *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* (ABO).
12. Citizen Science: Fairbanks FeederCount; Tree Swallow monitoring with junior scientists (ABO)
13. Captive bird programs (Bird TLC, Sheep Creek Wild Bird Center)
14. Approximately 87 school presentations, family programs, walks, workshops, and slide presentations in Fairbanks, Kodiak, Anchorage, North Pole, Delta, and Eagle (ABO).
15. Fifth Grade Bird Watch in Fairbanks (Alaska Department of Fish & Game).

Other News from BCR4:

1. Welcome new biologists to BCR4 areas: Robin Corcoran, Innoko NWR and Amal Ajmi, Ft. Wainwright.
2. Fall numbers of geese down significantly on Eielson AFB in 2005 (at least by half) from the usual peak of 400-600/day to 200-300/day (99% Canada Geese and a few White-Fronted Geese). Also, last departure much later (1st week of October, 2005) than usual (3rd week of September). (Tom Slater, Natural Resource Technician/Outdoor Recreation Planner Eielson AFB).
3. 10-year ongoing study of Arctic Peregrine Falcons along the Porcupine River and Yukon Flats. Incidental anecdotal data was also collected to generate a bird list (Harlan's Hawks were also observed). 2005 was significant as the first year a pair of nesting Golden Eagles was observed here and may indicate that Golden Eagles are returning to the Interior of Alaska. Dave Payer

would like to get feedback on other's observations of nesting Golden Eagles to see if they support this concept (Dave Payer, ANWR).

4. In 2005, Eielson had trouble with a large number of raptors crossing the flight-line. The voles were extremely high this year contributing to the problem. They would like to ask advice on how to deal with the problem from other raptor researchers and would like to know if numbers of raptors were higher this year across the state. (Tom Slater, Natural Resource Technician/Outdoor Recreation Planner Eielson AFB).
5. BASH Program (program on military reservations to scare/keep birds from flight line, airfields and interfering with aircraft) not well established on Ft. Greely. This program may be implemented in future as Ft. Greely upgrades and expands its airfields. Spring and fall migrants to Ft. Greely include swans and Sandhill Cranes (Jeff Mason, Ft. Greely AB).
6. Osprey are expanding their range in Anchorage (due to stocking of lakes?) and are nesting on military communications towers.
7. The military is considering and comparing a few different "bird avoidance models" for all aircraft as a Legacy project; all models will be tested before one is adopted.
8. Vernon Bird and Dan Gibson are in the process of publishing their massive tome on the Birds of the Aleutian Islands. It should be out next spring. (I know this isn't in BCR4 but thought folks would want to know this anyway).
9. Kevin Winker's group at the UA Museum in Fairbanks is willing to facilitate gauging and screening of other folk's bird samples for Avian Influenza (see Kevin Winker's and Dan Gibson's contact information below). If the bird is not being collected for a museum specimen, the sample can consist of swabbing the cloaca with a Q-tip.
10. Legacy proposal to do research on Rusty Blackbirds on Military Lands has reached the next level of acceptance. This work is to be done with Steve Matsuoka (Herman Griese, Elmendorf AFB).
11. Large numbers of Great Gray Owls seen in Interior Alaska this year (Ft. Wainwright, Tanana Flats between Fairbanks and Delta, a few on Elmendorf AB).
12. Lots of Woodpeckers, Hawk Owls seen in burned areas in and around Tok and shrub-nesters back this year (Frances Bonier).

Summary of BCR4 break-out session:

Attendees: Dave Tessler, Tracey Gotthardt, Chris Harwood, Jack Whitman, Susan Sharbaugh, Robin Corcoran, Amal Ajmi, Herman Griese, Ruth Gronquist, Judy Putera, Hank Timm, and Carol McIntyre

The majority of discussion during the BCR 4 breakout group focused on reviewing the Landbird Conservation Plan for Alaska Biogeographic Regions Version 1.0 (Andres 1999) in relation to contemporary conservation issues in Central Alaska, discussing what we have accomplished since 1999 in terms of conservation and studies of species of conservation concern, and reviewing and discussing the current BCR 4 conservation issues summary prepared by Mel Cook. After reviewing Mel Cook's comprehensive summary, we provided suggestions for combining some of the conservation issues and added some new issues including sprawl (suburbanization and urbanization), wetland drying, insect infestation, and the potential cascading effects of intensive predator control on landbirds. We agreed that the Landbird Conservation Plan for BCR 4 (central Alaska) needs to be revised to reflect contemporary conservation issues. It also appeared that little to no progress had been made to gain a better understanding of the status of most of the species of conservation concern listed in the Landbird Conservation Plan including White-tailed Ptarmigan, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Hammond's Flycatcher, Northern Shrike, American Dipper, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Varied Thrush, Bohemian Waxwing, Townsend's Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Smith's Longspur, Rusty Blackbird, and White-winged Crossbill. We suggested that studies are needed to assess the population trends and conservation status of these species as well as a suite of boreal

wetland nesting species including (but not limited to) Horned Grebe, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Short-eared Owl, Blackpoll Warbler, and Rusty Blackbird, and a suite of upland game birds including (but not limited to) Willow Ptarmigan, White-tailed Ptarmigan, and Rock Ptarmigan

Northwest Pacific Rainforest (BCR 5)

Compiler: Michelle Kissling, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Juneau Field Office*

BCR5 Broad-scale monitoring projects

Biologists from the Tongass National Forest and Chugach National Forest and their cooperators participated in the Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey (ALMS) and Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) during 2005.

BCR5 Research and fine-scale monitoring projects

(1) *Distribution and seasonal habitat use of American Dippers in the Juneau area* – Third year of a study of dippers in the Juneau area. (Mary Willson, Willson Consulting, mwillson@gci.net). *

(2) *Ecology of bark and cavity-nesting birds* – The USFS and USFWS are collaborating on a study of the nesting ecology of cavity- and bark-nesting birds in southeast Alaska. A final report will be available by December 31, 2006. (Michelle Kissling, USFWS, michelle_kissling@fws.gov). *

(3) *Owl surveys* – Repeated surveys were conducted in the Petersburg and Juneau areas to develop a standardized survey technique for nocturnal owls in southeast Alaska and to determine the influence of temporal, weather, and lunar factors on vocalizations of forest owls. A pilot radio-telemetry study was also conducted to prepare for field efforts planned for 2006 breeding season. (Michelle Kissling, USFWS, michelle_kissling@fws.gov, and Steve Lewis, ADFG, steve_lewis@fishgame.state.ak.us). *

(4) *Status of Prince of Wales Spruce Grouse* – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funded two complimentary studies in 2004 to begin evaluating the status of POW Spruce Grouse. These are ongoing efforts as long as funding allows.

Spruce Grouse Population Assessment in Southeast Alaska

First year of a multi-year study to assess the distribution and relative abundance of Spruce Grouse and other gallinaceous birds in Southeast Alaska. (Dale Rabe, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Douglas, Alaska, dale_rabe@fishgame.state.ak.us). *

Developing mitochondrial and microsatellite DNA markers for evaluating the phylogeography of the Prince of Wales Spruce Grouse

USGS Alaska Science Center is developing genetic markers for future studies to investigate the phylogeography of this species throughout southeast Alaska. The primary objective of this study is to develop the appropriate genetic (mitochondrial DNA control region and nuclear microsatellite) markers required to assess the population status of the POW Spruce Grouse. These markers are needed to verify the taxonomic distinctiveness of the Southeast Alaska population of Spruce Grouse and measure the degree of isolation from and direction of gene flow with nearby populations of Spruce Grouse. Although microsatellite markers are currently not available specifically for spruce grouse, they may be tested and modified if necessary from markers developed for other Tetraonid species. Genetic information from both marker types is needed to help prioritize the conservation of this subspecies against numerous other taxa in the region. (Sandy Talbot, USGS-ASC, sandy_talbot@usgs.gov).

(5) *Effects of timber harvest and forest management on bird and vegetation communities of southeast Alaska*. This project replicates an earlier study to evaluate the longer-term benefits of second-growth management to birds in Southeast Alaska, and develop effective conservation strategies. (Steve Matsuoka, USFWS, steve_matsuoka@fws.gov). *

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Education notes

International Migratory Bird Day - USFS, ADFG, Juneau Raptor Center, and USFWS held an International Migratory Bird Day event at the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center.

Banding demonstrations - USFS continued to hold banding demonstrations in middle-school classrooms in Juneau and the Hummingbird Festival in Ketchikan.

Seaweek – Many BPIF members contributed to Seaweek, an annual event for Juneau 4th grade student. During this May event on the Mendenhall Wetlands, biologists and naturalists teach short, hands-on lessons about birds to students.

Southeast Alaska Owl Network – USFWS, ADFG, and the Juneau Raptor Center collaborated on development of a citizen-science project. Volunteers from 12 communities in southeast Alaska conducted nocturnal owl surveys and completed owl-sighting cards during 2005. Several presentations were given around the region. This project will continue into 2006.

Summary of BCR5 breakout session

Attendees: Paul Meyers, Marty Bray, Steve Lewis, Caroline Van Hemert, Mary Anne Benoit, Melissa Cady, Maureen deZeeuw, Mary Rabe, Ellen Campbell, Iain Stenhouse, Steve Matsuoka, and Michelle Kissling

The majority of discussion during the BCR5 breakout group focused on the upcoming Tongass National Forest (TNF) Plan Revision and review of the existing conservation strategy. As a group, we discussed the value of writing a letter to the TNF describing terrestrial bird species of conservation concern and of significant importance in southeast Alaska. We discussed the content of the letter, including recommendations, and the logistics of writing a letter that represents the views of BPIF. We developed a timeline and assigned tasks to complete the formal letter.

Iain Stenhouse gave us a quick overview of the updated Audubon WatchList.

We briefly reviewed ‘Conservation Actions’ identified for BCR5 in the Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan (BPIF 1999). We concluded the following:

1. Determine population status of Vaux’s and Black Swifts and riparian breeders – We felt that this conservation action had been addressed since 1999. U.S. Forest Service and others have conducted numerous surveys for both swift species in southeast Alaska, where these species were expected to breed. In 2003, Jim Johnson completed his Master’s thesis titled, “Breeding bird communities of major mainland rivers in southeastern Alaska”.
2. Monitor changes in mature forest cover and construct bird-habitat models – We agreed that this objective has not been met, but that data exist to address this task. We decided to include this conservation action as a recommendation in our letter to the TNF. Melissa Cady agreed to take the lead in finding funding and analysis; however, she noted that she could not begin this work until 2007.
3. Broad-scale population monitoring – With the initiation of ALMS, we agreed that this conservation objective has been met for most species. Priority species identified in association with this objective include Blue Grouse, Northwestern Crow, Blackpoll Warbler, and Golden-crowned Sparrow. Of these Blue Grouse, and perhaps Northwestern Crow, require species-specific monitoring or a different survey protocol. We discussed this conservation action the least of the three; however, we did agree that effort should be made to monitor Blue Grouse in particular, given population declines and importance of this species as prey to raptors. We decided to include monitoring of this species as a recommendation in our letter to the TNF.

LANDBIRD CONSERVATION PLAN

REVISITING THE LANDBIRD CONSERVATION PLAN: DISCUSSION

Moderated by Steve Matsuoka, *USFWS – Migratory Bird Management*

There was unanimous agreement among the group that BPIF needs to update the 1999 Landbird Conservation Plan. Our plan can draw from the new Alaska Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy developed by ADF&G (as well as other plans), but it can be more specific. A target date of 2007 for completing the plan seems realistic. This will be a very time-consuming process and although Steve Matsuoka will take the lead, it will require the efforts of many people.

Several people suggested we use the Shorebird Group's new Five-Year Plan as a template and develop a similar list of "action items" for the revised landbird plan. Other suggestions included:

- Develop plan at the BCR level to help partition the workload, but don't lose sight of species that must be addressed at a larger scale (such as Rusty Blackbird).
- When developing the revised list of priority species, start with the existing continental list, break out by BCRs, make adjustments based on regional population trends (Alaska BBS data), let BCR groups review and fine-tune.
- Be sure to define a way to track our progress on action items.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

ACTIVITIES IN 2005

Compiled by Tricia Blake and Nancy DeWitt, *Alaska Bird Observatory*

More people are needed on the BPIF education and outreach committee!

A comprehensive list of on-going education activities, outreach efforts, and teaching materials related to birds is posted on the BPIF website at <http://www.absc.usgs.gov/research/bpif/bpif.html>. Some **new** developments in 2005 are listed below. Please see the BCR reports in this document for other education and outreach activities conducted this year.

- *Alaska Audubon*: Bucky Dennerlein has left, but Bird Academy will continue.
- *Alaska Bird Observatory*: New "Birds of the Boreal" series of bird-identification workshops (up to 60 people attended sessions!); new junior bird club; citizen science – Susan Sharbaugh has revitalized the Fairbanks FeederCount program in conjunction with ADF&G; slide shows in Kodiak, Anchorage, Eagle River, and Fairbanks; new "Winter Wings" series of resident bird profiles published in *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*
- *Alaska Department of Fish & Game*: Citizen science program - Expansion of Loon Watch, new wood frog project (David Tessler); revision and reprinting of the *Owlmanac* and *Grouse & Ptarmigan of Alaska* (Mike Taras)
- *Alaska Museum of Natural History*: "On the Wing" display on bird migration
- *Alaska Native Knowledge Network* (www.ankn.uaf.edu): *Birds Around The Village*, *Atkan Birds*, and *Index to Alaska Native Songs and Legends* produced

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- *Cordova Ranger District*: Wetlands workshop (Paul Meyers)
- *USDA Forest Service*: Birdhouse Network, Adopt-An-Owl nest box program, Band-tastic program at Tern Lake, owl survey volunteers (Mary Ann Benoit)
- *USFWS*: Shorebird Curriculum has been revised and is on-line (Tamara Mills); Nocturnal Owl Surveys by volunteers, presentations on owls in Southeast (in cooperation with ADF&G and Juneau Raptor Center); Gyrfalcon presentations in schools (Travis Booms, Yukon-Delta NWR and UAF); *Bristol Bay Times* articles, *Bristol Bay Field Notes* on KDLG AM, and 22 landbird presentations for kids (Togiak NWR); Kenai Peninsula bird list developed, 2-day workshop at Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival on shorebird identification and biology (Kenai NWR); Migratory Bird Kit, environmental book groups, and school presentations (Tetlin NWR)

Reports on new education and outreach programs conducted in your BCR in 2006 should be submitted to Tricia Blake prior to the BPIF annual meeting. Very few people responded to our e-mail request this year, although it appears a lot is happening around the state.

There will be an education and outreach workshop prior to the Alaska Bird Conference in Juneau in February. Contact Tamara Mills for more information at Tamara_Mills@fws.gov

Contact: Tricia Blake, Alaska Bird Observatory, PO Box 80505, Fairbanks, AK 99708, tblake@alaskabird.org

2006 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

Next spring IMBD is scheduled for 13 May 2006, but communities can celebrate on another day. The 2006 theme is “North America’s Boreal Forest,” which is very appropriate for Alaska. Several communities in Alaska celebrate IMBD and would appreciate ideas for activities or displays at their festivals. Information about IMBD is at <http://www.birdday.org/>, where you can also order posters and educational materials to distribute. The Alaska Bird Observatory’s *Songbird Activity Book* is being adapted for the entire North American boreal forest by the IMBD folks and is for sale on the website. The 2007 IMBD theme will be “Climate Change,” another appropriate theme for Alaska.

BPIF WEBSITE

The website needs updating, which has become more difficult to do because of security issues. The following agreed to be on a website committee to review content and discuss adding other sections: Colleen Handel, Maureen deZeeuw, Carol McIntyre, Paul Meyers, Steve Lewis, and Iain Stenhouse. Steve will be sure to get changes and new content uploaded.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & CONFERENCES

ALASKA BIRD CONFERENCE – February 2006 in Juneau

Michelle Kissling encouraged everyone to attend the conference. She and her committee have been hard at work raising funds to pay for the keynote speaker and scholarships for student presenters. The keynote speaker will be David Quammen, author of *Song of the Dodo* and *Outside* magazine’s “Natural Acts” columns.

A suggestion was made to combine the annual BPIF meeting with the bird conference in future years. However, the bird conference is only held every other year, and many felt that adding a 2-day meeting on top of the conference would be overwhelming.

PIF WESTERN WORKING GROUP MEETING – 15-17 March 2006 in Missoula, MT

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY MEETING – September 2006 in Anchorage

This conference will provide an excellent opportunity to showcase Alaska work. Several people suggested that BPIF give an oral or poster presentation. David Tessler and Paul Meyers will investigate this.

MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS & DISCUSSIONS

AVIAN INFLUENZA

Dirk Derksen with USGS gave a presentation on the current status of H5N1 avian influenza (AI) and the \$6.1 million proposed for targeted surveillance in Alaska in 2006. Although the focus will likely be on waterfowl, two landbird species identified as high priority for AI risk are Arctic Warbler and Eastern Yellow Wagtail.

Contact: Dirk Derksen, USGS, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99501, dirk_derksen@usgs.gov

RECOMMENDED TIME PERIODS FOR AVOIDING VEGETATION CLEARING IN ALASKA IN ORDER TO PROTECT MIGRATORY BIRDS

Compiled by Maureen deZeeuw, *USFWS - International Conservation*

Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (16 U.S.C. 703), it is illegal for anyone to "take" migratory birds, their eggs, feathers or nests. Destruction of active bird nests, eggs, or nestlings that can result from spring and summer vegetation clearing, grubbing, and other site preparation and construction activities would violate the MBTA. The Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Field Office has developed statewide timing recommendations to help land managers, developers, and anyone else involved in construction site preparation to avoid illegal take during the local nesting seasons. Not all birds can be effectively hazed, people often do not realize how difficult it is to locate nests, nest density is often such that trying to protect the nests one happens to find by working around each one with heavy equipment is seldom practical, and it is not legal to move an active nest. Therefore, the most reasonable general recommendation for avoiding take is to simply avoid land clearing during the nesting season. After an extensive literature review and interviews with researchers statewide, a timing table has been developed according to regions of the state and habitat type, from a developer's viewpoint (see Appendix B). The timing guidelines are not regulations, but are intended as recommendations to help citizens and agencies comply with the MBTA. Because of the workload associated with the scale of land clearing and potential take in Alaska, a general recommendation was necessary. People are still welcome to contact the USFWS with site-specific questions should they believe that their particular situation may differ from the table.

Directions that accompany the timing table:

1. Apply timing window guidelines to your project planning, unless project-specific review results in unique guidelines from the USFWS for your project.

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2. If you encounter an active nest *at any time*, including before or after the local timing window, leave it in place and protected until young hatch and depart. “Active” is indicated by intact eggs, live chicks, or presence of adult on nest. Timing guidelines should considerably reduce the risk of inadvertent nest destruction, but final compliance with the law is your responsibility: do not destroy eggs, chicks, or adults of wild bird species.
3. If you have any questions regarding the MBTA and the timing guidelines, including projects that may occur in “boundary areas” between regions described on the matrix, contact your local Fish and Wildlife Field Office for assistance.

Contact: Maureen deZeeuw, USFWS International Conservation MS 121, 1011 East Tudor Rd., Anchorage, AK 99503, 907-786-3866, Maureen_deZeeuw@fws.gov.

DISTANCE-ESTIMATION TRAINING NEEDS: DISCUSSION

Moderated by Carol McIntyre, *National Park Service*

Carol began the discussion by asking if people felt that distance-estimation training was important; everyone agreed that it was. Carol then asked for more specifics about existing training and testing methods. Responses included:

1. *Training*: Utilize *Bird Master* software. Send trainees to ABO. Spread training over several weeks so new birds are incorporated into training over time and not all at once.
2. *Length of training*: Ranges from 2 to 10 days.
3. *Testing observer skills*: Spot checking by trainer. Do sample point counts together and compare results. Play a recording at a specific distances. During training, everyone estimates distance and then pace off or measure to check accuracy.
4. *Hearing tests?* Some agencies have been told that asking about or testing hearing ability are not allowed; however, if being able to hear a broad range of frequencies is a condition of employment, requiring a hearing test is legal.

Debbie Nigro, Tim Walker, Colleen Handel, Melissa Cady, Michelle Kissling, and Carol McIntyre agreed to serve on a “loose” committee to work on standardizing distance-estimation training. Tim noted that ABO would soon be posting a distance-estimation training manual on their web site (<http://www.alaskabird.org/ABOResearchHome.html#Recommendations>), and that this could serve as a starting point for the committee.

INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN BPIF

Much lively discussion ensued on this topic. We need more people to help on committees. BPIF is lacking representatives from the universities, industry, general public, and some land-management offices. Should we make more effort at recruiting participants? Although BPIF would benefit from involvement by more people, they need to feel that their participation would benefit/complement their own work. Suggestions included:

1. Recruit at the BCR level. Send out personalized invitations to bird biologists and wildlife educators in your BCR.
2. Consider rotating annual meetings between Anchorage and Fairbanks, or at least hold local meetings in your BCR.
3. Need someone to write a short statement describing BPIF and how to get involved. Post this on website, send to newsletters (Audubon, Wildlife Society, ABO, many other organizations have newsletters...).

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4. Get the public more involved by doing hands-on projects, not just coming to meetings.
5. Look at how other PIF chapters recruit.
6. Know what our goals and measurable objectives are, and target people who will help us achieve those goals.
7. Do more to promote how successful BPIF has been, what goals we have achieved since we started. We have made a lot of progress! Need to *inspire* people to get involved.

BCR COORDINATORS

A new coordinator is needed for BCR4. Because this BCR is so large, two coordinators would be more appropriate. In addition to coordinators, each BCR needs their own lead for inventory/monitoring, research, education/outreach, and possibly a “coordination coordinator” to ensure good communication.

Each coordinator needs a list of BPIF member in their BCR. David Tessler will send out an e-mail asking members to update their information.

2006 GOALS FOR BOREAL PARTNERS IN FLIGHT

1. Diversify our membership.
2. Start revising the Landbird Conservation Plan.
3. Review BPIF objectives, revise as needed, and discuss approaches to meet each objective.
4. Species at Risk! Develop new conservation actions (accomplish some small projects and identify larger, cooperative projects).
5. List priority species for each BCR.
6. Finish and make available a distance-estimation training protocol.

Many thanks to Maureen deZeeuw for taking minutes at the annual meeting!

Appendix A

Department of Defense Partners In Flight, Annual Representatives Planning Meeting (Fairbanks AK 14-16 June 2005)

Compiler: Gene Augustine, 611 CES/CEVQN Alaskan Remote Air Force Sites (unabridged* version)

TUESDAY, 14 JUNE – PARTNERS MEETING

Overview of DoD PIF and Representatives network: Four Regional Working Groups and Technical Working Groups, both aligned with national PIF and specific needs within DoD (e.g., BASH).

DoD PIF Fact Sheets: Important Bird Areas, West Nile Virus, International Conservation, BASH, Bluebirds on Military Lands, DoD Bird Conservation Database, and Species of Concern. In progress: Invasive Species.

Coordinated Bird Monitoring: Led by the landbird and shorebird initiatives, that has already produced numerous products. Vision of CBM is that monitoring should be: management-driven science-based, scale-dependent, and implemented through partnerships. No authority to compel anyone to do anything; just a bunch of advice. Effort to increase efficiency and utility of bird monitoring through improved coordination: between the initiatives, between field workers and statisticians, between decision-makers and technical experts. Major components to CBM include improving the infrastructure for monitoring looks at: conceptual framework (vision, goals, objectives), long-term, large-scale programs (how many, what kind), agreement on field survey methods, a robust data management system, and defining appropriate reports and the responsibilities for producing them. Major components to CBM include Regional and Organizational CBM Plans. State Plans: NV, ID, MT, UT, CO, WI, TN, NJ, NY. Organization Plans: IWJV, and just beginning is DoD. DoD PIF is working with Jon Bart/USGS to **develop a CBM plan for DoD lands**. The deliverables of this strategy will include: a review of existing bird monitoring programs on DoD lands, guidelines for the design of bird monitoring surveys on DoD lands, a plan for monitoring bird species of special concern on DoD lands, and recommendations for DoD's role in continental bird monitoring programs. CBM plan to effectively address the requirements set forth in the 2003 NDAA and EO 13186, a comprehensive, coordinated monitoring strategy needs to be implemented.

Species of Concern database: Search by BCR, then Installation. Identifies species on 7 species of concern lists: Birds of Conservation Concern 2002, PIF, Shorebirds, Waterbirds, and Waterfowl lists, Game Birds Below Desired Condition, and T&E species. Currently shows species for whole BCR. Actively working to provide installation specific species lists.

National Geographic map: Request corrections to first edition underway, revision and reprint expected this summer

Acknowledgements of Guest: Nancy DeWitt of Boreal Partners in Flight, and the Alaska Bird Observatory. ABO Board of Directors, Ted Swem (USFWS). Bob Day (ABR). Alaska DoD PIF Installation Representatives: Walt Clevenger (Ft Richardson), Herman Griese (Elmendorf AFB), Brent Koenen & Jim Nolke (Eielson AFB), Emerson Krueger (AK Army NG), Jeff Mason (Donnelly Training Area), and Steve Reidsma (Ft Wainwright).

Partner Updates:

Nancy DeWitt for **Boreal PIF**: Originally Alaska PIF, then brought in Yukon and changed name; hosts AK Bird Conference every 2 years; wrote and maintains the AK Landbird Conservation Plan; developed ALMS – Alaska Landbird Monitoring System a standardized monitoring protocol across AK (remote locations, high costs with helicopters); writing a Monitoring protocol; State Wildlife Grant for BCR 4 bird conservation plan (BCP) combines multiple BCPs and lists; developed 5 species at risk posters in 2003; expects Rusty Blackbird focus at next meeting. Nancy DeWitt for **Alaska Bird Observatory**: 1991 founded at Creamer's Refuge, incorporated in 1992; part of the AK-Yukon migration monitoring network; accomplished bird surveys in Denali for NPS for 13 years including remote locations and helps implement NPS long-term monitoring plan; conducts survey training for AK biologists; study of Arctic Warbler ecology (breeds in Alaska and winters in Philippines); and Rusty Blackbird status review. ABO has done 3 major projects with DoD: Pt counts at Ft Rich, Ft Greeley, and at Ft Wainwright has long-term monitoring should focus on ALMS; Habitat associations of landbirds at Tanana Flats and Yukon Training Area; 3 year project at Eielson AFB, impacts of noise on NTM, study site at end of runway and control in Boreal forest (need additional funds to prepare manuscript). Challenges for Alaska's birds: climate warming (fires, insect outbreaks (spruce bark beetle, aspen leaf miner), wetlands drying, receding glaciers (murrelets), melting pack ice (guillemots)). Challenges for biologists: survey start times, fires, remoteness (higher funding needed for helicopters,

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etc), insect outbreaks. Bob Day provided a summary of project accomplished by **ABR, Inc.**: Kittlitz' Murrelet – 4 sites in W and NW AK (nest found at Tin City LRRS); threatened eider studies for Air Force includes habitat mapping, population studies; also has done habitat mapping for other birds on DoD lands; collision avoidance at Tin City LRRS for a proposed wind turbine study; and have accomplished Peregrine Falcons studies of effects of Military Operation Area (MOA) flights and noise on nesting ecology (also eagles); and nesting seabirds in Alaska and Pohakuloa Training Area (Hawaii). Ted Swem (ABO Board Member) on behalf of **USFWS**: described the AK-wide assessment of Rusty Blackbird; also his and Bob Dittrick's private Boreal Owl nest boxes at Ft Richardson. BLM, NPS and USGC were in the field and unable to sent an update. Dan Gibson was not able to attend but provided advance info on the **UA Museum** major renovation, as well as ongoing work on avian diseases, specifically spread of West Nile Virus into the old world via interaction of Neotropical and Palearctic bird species, and the collection of Palearctic migrants, including numerous specimens from Eareckson Air Station (Shemya Island).

Fort Richardson's collaboration with TNC on banding was presented by Walter Clevenger, as well as a discussion of Boreal Owls boxes by volunteers "undercover" to protect location of nests, issues to get access for birding or hiking. From the **Donnelly Training Area** Jeff Mason provided a History Of US Army Alaska Bird Surveys. Bird conservation projects at **remote Air Force sites in Alaska** were summarized by Gene Augustine. Emerson Krueger discussed the surveys at the **Alaska National Guard Stewart River Training Area**, near Nome. MSgt John Kelleher was present on behalf of Heidi Young, Environmental Coordinator for **Clear Air Force Station**. Brent Koenen and Jim Nolke presented information on **Eielson Air Force Base**, manage of their own BASH program (Aug 26-29 - ~ 350 geese) and after Sept 1 (after hunting season) increases by 100. They also do spring migration inventory, mentioned the affects of Utilidores (heated utility boxes) creating thaw before other parts of Interior and attracting waterfowl usually 2 days earlier than Creamer's Refuge, target prey species is fish. Necessary to encourage bird to habitats away from runways, and radar work targets large-bodied birds were also mentioned. Representing **Elmendorf Air Force Base**, Herman Griese described the installation and the interpolated Fort Richardson data to Elmendorf. Given the 1995 bird strike involving Canada Geese and accident focused BASH efforts recent experiential work with a radar called BirdRad is being used to support the bird aircraft strike hazard (BASH) reduction program. He also mentioned LCTA-analogous monitoring program, difficult to coordinate with ALMS.

FWS – DoD partnerships:

Marie Strassburger **USFWS Migratory Birds** summarized MOU under development regarding the non-readiness activities, non-authorizing document, the **DoD MOU** could be one of the first ones signed, and INRMPs will be main tool to for implementing MOU, Executive Order 13186. NDAA 2003 exemption for unintentional take during military readiness activities was discussed for the **Migratory Bird Rule**. Development of Conservation Measures, update of 50 CFR 10.13 list, non-native species list, underway; out by end of 2005, Birds of Conservation Concern, Species of Concern database; and Sikes Act guidance for INRMPs is being prepared. A **USFWS MBTA Course** with 10 DoD seats being held for next class, 12-16 Dec 2005, at USFWS NCTC and a **DoD-oriented class** to be held in 2006. Bald and Golden Eagle status update, Proposed delisting of BAEA; continued protection under MBTA and BGEPA. **Wind turbines, communication towers and aerial power lines** were discussed and the document *Tower and Turbines* was provided. Steve Helfert represented USFWS in the interface on **regional and national levels between DoD & USFWS**.

BIRD RAD – Avian radar overview, SERDP project presentation by Rich Fischer **USACE/WES** and provided document Radar Ornithology. BirdRad – Herman Griese **USAF/3CES** presentation on provided EAFB BIRD RAD Use 2003-05. Matt Klope **USN/BASH** presentation for SICOM Systems on eBirdRad and a document.

WIND TURBINES / COMM. TOWERS / POWER LINES ON DOD LANDS – ALASKA update by Gene Augustine, **Tin City LRRS Wind Turbine preconstruction study**: field work during fall and spring migration complete, report for fall available, and spring report in process. Chris Eberly reported the **DoD PIF Fact Sheet** will be completed on Wind turbines by late summer; other topics to follow.

RUSTY BLACKBIRD STATUS Breeding assessment in Alaska: [Status Review and Conservation Plan for the Rusty Blackbird in Alaska \(2003 - 2004\)](#) and other ABO research reports. Ft Richardson/Elmendorf AFB working on assessment of Rusty Blackbirds. Ft Wainwright has good breeding population on Tanana Flats Training Area,

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possibly other areas. International Rusty Blackbird Technical Group: Chris Eberly and Steve Matsuoka (USFWS-Alaska) are participants. Focus is to identify knowledge gaps, prioritize research needs.

PARTNER-ORIENTED PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES discussed throughout the day, Rusty Blackbird, Monitoring, especially protocols and programs designed for uniqueness of remote habitats and conditions in AK.

WEDNESDAY, 15 JUNE – DOD PIF Regional Representatives and Technical Working Groups

USFWS MBTA COURSE [*Migratory Bird Conservation - A Trust Responsibility*](#) at USFWS National Conservation Training Center in 13-16 Dec 2005, 10 seats reserved for DoD – first come basis and DoD specific course @ Ft Carson in Feb/Mar 2006. It will also discuss how Service programs can potentially incorporate migratory bird conservation into their activities in accordance with Executive Order 13186. Discuss the problems and challenges that led to a variety of initiatives and partnerships to address migratory bird conservation and what these partnerships are doing. Discuss existing resources and opportunities that address migratory bird conservation and future needs to further avoid or minimize adverse effects on migratory birds.

DEVELOPMENT OF CONSERVATION MEASURES EO MOU and Migratory Bird Rule require “conservation measures,” Habitat based, not species based; consider the species for those habitats; Intent – use existing information; Working Group (Emerson Krueger, Alan Schultz, Jeff Keating, Greg Fleming, Mike Farrell, Matt Nowak, Chris Dobony, with alternate Rich LeClerc), wait for NRCS draft to determine DoD action, then draft/facilitate.

SPECIES OF CONCERN DATABASE – Refining installation lists; Regional Reps get installation bird lists, from installation checklists, INRMPs, and survey data, and encourage installation to enter all bird project data into Bird Conservation Database, species checklists – at least 30 available on DoD PIF web site.

DOD PIF – NMFVA LINKAGES – Partners in Flight Working Group a possibility. Concern about justification of attending NMFVA meetings and authorization to attend DoD PIF Planning Meeting; possibly a different name, NMFVA requirements discussed.

COORDINATED BIRD MONITORING – Overview of the 2005 Legacy project DoD PIF role in implementing the Legacy project, need management question, methodology, and results and data. Monitoring programs: LCTA/RTLA – the “monitoring” at Ft Drum, other Army sites; LCTA – Land Condition Trend Analysis; RTLA – Range and Training Land Assessment; Gather LCTA/RTLA protocols and data; Army NR program cannot do monitoring; “Planning level surveys;” and define timeframe for monitoring – annual, every 5 years, etc. Research & Monitoring WG will produce a document on what is needed to be used as a template for contacting installations.

FACT SHEETS – Reviewed and updated matrix, completed, proposed, new topics, deleted topics OBE or outdated; re-assigned topics, as appropriate; completion target – 4 per year (1/quarter), 2 DoD PIF fact sheets (Invasive Species, Wind Energy development), 2 I&E Working Group fact sheets (Greater Sage-Grouse, Red-cockaded Woodpecker)

THURSDAY, 16 JUNE – DOD PIF Regional Representatives and Technical Working Groups

BASH / RADAR – North American Bird Strike Advisory System Strategic Plan: developed through Air Force Academy for the Institute for Information Technology Applications, in conjunction with FAA, Air Transport Canada; waiting to be presented to Congress; proposal is a 5 year project with a budget of \$16 million. BASH reduction plans and INRMPs: BASH plans should be an Appendix in the INRMP, therefore covered in the EA and covered in the 5 year review cycle.

LEGACY REVIEW CRITERIA – Rating, *Legacy bird proposals criteria detail* document revised, Legacy Program Guidebook, available soon on Legacy Tracker, and Legacy 2006 areas of emphasis

DOD PIF REPRESENTATIVES – Letter of support/endorsement for each service needed when a new CO comes in; use of each service’s logo on letter; Strategic Plan is endorsed by Asst. Dep. Under Secretary of Def.; Money vs. Authority; should a meeting invitation be sent to higher level requesting attendance; works in some cases, hurt in

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others; working thru DoD Conservation Committee to find best path to endorsement. Roles and responsibilities document updated; DoD PIF is a DoD program; Reps bring their experience and point of view to share with the larger group; DoD PIF provides guidance to installations; and can't represent the views of installations.

FUNDING OF BIRD CONSERVATION PROJECTS – Possible funding: Legacy, SERDP, National Public Lands Day, Pulling Together Initiative, Neotrop Act, NAWCA, and CWCS (States)

NATIONAL WILDLIFE ARTICLE – *TOP 10 BIRDING SITES ON MILITARY LANDS*: where, what birds to see, time of year to go, contact info, good geographic and seasonal spread. Potential sites: CA-NAB Coronado (bike path looking into tern nesting area), CA-Tijuana Slough NWR/Imperial Beach NOLF, CA-Point Loma, CA-NWS Seal Beach, AZ-Ft Huachuca, AZ-Barry Goldwater Range, MS-Meridian, FL-Avon Park AFR, FL-Eglin AFB, NS-Ft Bragg, NY-Ft Drum, KS-Ft Leavenworth, KS-Ft Riley, VA-Ft Belvoir, OK-Ft Sill, WI-Ft McCoy, NY-West Point, HI- (research potential sites). Compile table of geographic location and season, and make contact for info regarding birding access at best sites for inclusion.

INFORMATION RESOURCES –

1. *Birds of North America Online* – 500 DoD access codes funded through Legacy for use by installation natural resources personnel.
2. *BLM Library* access for Army personnel, contact your favorite Army rep to take advantage of this free (to the Army) service.
3. *Army Knowledge Online (AKO)*, open to Army, “Army Guests,” Army Guests need an Army sponsor, contact your favorite Army rep to see if he/she will be your sponsor, and Army Library section has “A-Z Journals” section with virtually all natural resource and conservation journals available. *Current volumes* of ornithology journals are available in most cases.

AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION – PUBLICATIONS UPDATE –

1. *Birding* – 2006 feature article on TNC – DoD partnership in Central Shortgrass Prairie
2. *Winging It Done* – Vandenberg AFB, Eglin AFB, Fort Belvoir, Winter Harbor/Cutler (Navy), and Fort McCoy; Future – Dare County Range/Alligator River NWR.

BIRD CONSERVATION MAGAZINE SPECIAL ISSUE #3 – Focus of issue: partnerships (ACUB, TNC stuff, etc), and bird conservation topics (BCC, spp. of concern); Articles (12 pages): National PIF, NMFWA award winners, partnerships (CSP, Ft Campbell/grasslands, RCW, military buffers), sustainability, Legacy projects (BUOW, WESP), IBAs and military installations, AF falcon work, Aplomado Falcon reintro, Game bird successes (Ft Drum woodcock, grouse), CBM, if need to pick, choose regional focus vs species specific/local; additional funding could increase to 16 or 20 pages.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC / DOD PIF MAP – Changes, Additions, Deletions to Chris –5 July 2005 suspense, then reprint, 20,000 for *Birding* magazine, thousand for Pentagon in conjunction with Display, for our use at least 10,000, laminated maps (100 unfolded version) – to be accomplished through Brent Koenen, Eielson AFB, or Ft Leavenworth or Ft Riley as backups.

2006 NMFWA, COLUMBUS OH – 2 hour DoD PIF session; special session for 2007 NMFWA in Portland OR.

2006 DOD PIF PLANNING MEETING – (Tentative August) Winter Harbor, Maine – boreal, coastal emphasis, local host – Norman Famous.

* “Unabridged” since this contains far more detail than presented at the 7 Dec 05 BPIF meeting. DoD PIF believes BPIF members may benefit and more fully understand the national focus. DoD PIF greatly appreciates the support given by BPIF, Alaskan DoD installations and staffs, ABO, and other agencies in preparation for and during the June 05 meeting.

Appendix B

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

ADVISORY: Recommended Time Periods for Avoiding Vegetation Clearing in Alaska in order to Protect Migratory Birds

General Information:

Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (16 U.S.C. 703), it is illegal for anyone to "take" migratory birds, their eggs, feathers or nests. "Take" includes by any means or in any manner, any attempt at hunting, pursuing, wounding, killing, possessing or transporting any migratory bird, nest, egg, or part thereof. The MBTA does not distinguish between intentional and unintentional take. In Alaska, all native birds except grouse and ptarmigan (protected by the State of Alaska) are protected under the MBTA.

Destruction of active bird nests, eggs, or nestlings that can result from spring and summer vegetation clearing, grubbing, and other site preparation and construction activities would violate the MBTA. The following timing guidelines are not regulations, but are intended as recommendations to help you comply with the MBTA. Some species and their nests have additional protections under other federal laws, including those listed under the Threatened and Endangered Species Act (ESA), and bald and golden eagles (protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act or BGEPA). Please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure compliance with ESA and BGEPA if these species may be present in your project area.

These Timing Guidelines are current for 2006.

Directions:

4. Apply timing window guidelines to your project planning, unless project-specific review results in unique guidelines from the USFWS for your project.
5. If you encounter an active nest *at any time*, including before or after the local timing window, leave it in place and protected until young hatch and depart. "Active" is indicated by intact eggs, live chicks, or presence of adult on nest. Timing guidelines should considerably reduce the risk of inadvertent nest destruction, but final compliance with the law is your responsibility: do not destroy eggs, chicks, or adults of wild bird species.
6. If you have any questions regarding the MBTA and the timing guidelines, including projects that may occur in "boundary areas" between regions described on the matrix, contact your local Fish and Wildlife Field Office for assistance:

Anchorage (907) 271-2888
Fairbanks (907) 456-0203

Kenai (907) 262-9863
Juneau (907) 780-1160

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Recommended Time Periods for Avoiding Vegetation Clearing

HABITAT TYPE —	Forest or woodland ⁱ (i.e., trees present)	Shrub or Open (i.e., shrub cover or marsh, pond, tundra, gravel, or other treeless/shrubless ground habitat)	Seabird colonies (including cliff and burrow colonies)	Raptor and raven cliffs
REGION				
Southeast	April 15 – July 15	May 1 – July 15 ⁱⁱ	May 1 – September 15 ⁱⁱⁱ	April 10 – August 10
Kodiak Archipelago			April 15 – September 7 ⁱⁱⁱ	
Southcentral (Lake Iliamna to Copper River Delta; north to Talkeetna)	May 1 – July 15 ⁱⁱ			
Bristol Bay/AK Peninsula (north to Lake Iliamna)	April 10 – July 15	May 1 – July 15 ^{ii, iv}	May 10 – September 15	
Interior (north of Talkeetna to south slope Brooks Range; west to treeline)	May 1 – July 15 ⁱⁱ		May 1 – July 20 ^v	April 15 – August 1
Aleutian Islands		April 25 – July 15	May 1 – September 15 ⁱⁱⁱ	April 1 – August 1
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta (east to treeline)		May 5 – July 25 ^{ii, iv}	May 20 – September 15	April 15 – August 15
Seward Peninsula		May 20 – July 20 ^{iv}		
Northern (includes northern foothills of Brooks Range)		June 1 – July 31 ^{iv}		
Pribilof and Bering Sea Islands		June 1 – July 15	May 25 – September 1	

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ⁱ Owl species may begin to nest two or more months earlier than other forest birds, and are fairly common breeders in forested areas of Alaska. You may wish to survey for nesting owls (or other early spring tree-cavity nesters) prior to tree-cutting. It is your responsibility to protect active nests from destruction.

ⁱⁱ Canada geese and swan habitat: begin April 20

ⁱⁱⁱ Storm petrel burrow habitat: April 1 – October 15

^{iv} Black scoter habitat: through August 10

^v Seabird colonies in Interior refer to terns and gulls