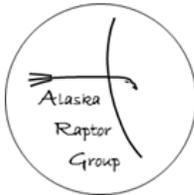


Boreal Partners in Flight / Alaska Raptor Group

2012 Annual Meeting Minutes

22 October 2012, Anchorage, Alaska



E-mail listserve: Contact Jim Johnson (jim_a_johnson@fws.gov) to be added to the BPIF listserve, which provides periodic announcements on topics related to BPIF and other relevant landbird issues in Alaska and northwestern Canada.

Visit the Alaska Landbird Resource Information System, the official website of Boreal Partners in Flight: <http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/bpif/index.php>

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Introduction

The 21st annual meeting of Boreal Partners in Flight was held on 22 October 2012 in Anchorage, Alaska. This year's meeting was attended by nearly 50 individuals representing a variety of state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and universities — from Southeast to the Arctic Coastal Plain. Despite an abbreviated agenda, the meeting covered several topics of interest including: updates on regional and national working groups and conferences, a brief history of BPIF and its organizational structure, an update on the status of the nearly completed Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan, version 2.0, descriptions of new efforts to model changes in the distribution and abundance of landbirds in Alaska, and a summary of an important issue facing interior Alaska — biomass extraction. In addition, several action items were identified for the upcoming year.

This report contains the minutes from the meeting, brief notes on topical discussions, and recommended actions for 2013. Unless noted, Co-Chairs are responsible for the completion of action items.

We offer our thanks to attendees for their participation, and extend an invitation to all who are interested in the conservation and research of northern landbird populations to join Boreal Partners in Flight (contact Jim Johnson, USFWS). Lastly, we would like to thank Michelle Michaud for recording notes during this meeting and for serving as Co-Chair during 2011–2012.

Jim Johnson and Julie Hagelin

Co-Chairs, BPIF

15 November 2012

Leadership of Boreal Partners in Flight, 2013–2014

Co-Chair (2012–2013): Jim Johnson (jim_a_johnson@fws.gov)

Co-Chair (2013–2014): Julie Hagelin (julie.hagelin@alaska.gov)

Committee Coordinators (2013–2014):

Education: Lynn Fuller (lynn_fuller@pcjv.org) and Tricia Blake: (tblake@alaskabird.org)

Management: Cheryl Carrothers (ccarrothers@fs.fed.gov)

Research & Monitoring: Colleen Handel (cmhandel@usgs.gov) and Steve Matsuoka
(steve_matsuoka@fws.gov)

BCR Coordinators (2013–2014):

BCR 1: Steve Matsuoka and Jim Johnson

BCR 2: Susan Savage (susan_savage@fws.gov) and Kristine Sowl (kristine_sowl@fws.gov)

BCR 3: Travis Booms (travis.booms@hotmail.com) and Debbie Nigro (dnigro@blm.gov)

BCR 4: Julie Hagelin and Maureen deZeeuw (maureen_dezeeuw@fws.gov)

BCR 5: Melissa Cady (mcady@fs.fed.us)

Action Plan – 2013

Organization of BPIF

- Action 1: Update the BPIF Terms of Reference using the Alaska Shorebird Group Terms as a template.
 - A subcommittee was formed that includes: Steve Matsuoka (lead), John Haddix, Cheryl Carrothers, as well as BCR Coordinators and Co-Chairs.
 - The revised document will be shared at the 2013 BPIF meeting.

BPIF annual summary reports

- Action 2: Separate Annual Report into 1) meeting minutes and 2) general (i.e., state-wide surveys, etc.) and specific project summaries, and annual publication list (December 2012).
- Action 3: Provide templates that outline suggested structure and content for reports that will be available on the BPIF website (December 2012).
- Proposed Action: Beginning in 2013, the call for project summaries will occur prior to annual meeting. Electronic and/or hardcopies will be provided at annual meeting.

Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan, version 2.0

- Action 4: BCR Coordinators will incorporate final changes into BCR documents and send to Colleen Handel (16 November 2012).
- Action 5: Iain Stenhouse will complete Part II (31 December 2012).
 - Copies of the Plan will be provided at the 2013 BPIF meeting.

Monitoring

- Action 6: Discuss the future of BBS and ALMS programs in Alaska (e.g., how to increase participation).
 - Subcommittee members are: Colleen Handel (lead), Cheryl Carrothers, Susan Savage, and Steve Matsuoka.
 - Results from this activity will be presented at the 2013 BPIF meeting.

Management and education/outreach

- Action 7: Discuss issues of connectivity, including how BPIF can be more effective at collaborating with partners across jurisdictional boundaries.
 - A group discussion led by Maureen deZeeuw will occur at the 2013 BPIF meeting.
- Action 8: Co-chairs will initiate discussion with Caroline Van Hemert about preparing periodic email updates on topics of interest.

Other concerns

- Action 9: Julie Hagelin will form a sub-committee to further address the biomass issue.
- Action 10: Summarize available information on the decline of aerial insectivores in Alaska and North America. Include suggestions about how BPIF members can help fill information gaps.
 - Gwen Baluss and Sherri Anderson will prepare and present this information at the 2013 BPIF meeting.

Alaska Raptor Group announcements – Steve Lewis

ARG Steering Committee meeting in January

- Steering committee members (Travis Booms, Erica Craig, Steve Lewis, Carol McIntyre, and John Shook) met in Fairbanks to talk about some of the ARG initiatives we have been working on.
- As part of our effort to make sure information on raptors is not lost, we discussed designing a raptor nest database that could be used to house locations of raptor nests gathered by various agencies and for various purposes within the state. After much discussion, we decided that there were too many issues associated with this that could not be resolved (e.g., where to house such data, how to administer it, who could access it) to proceed with this form of legacy archival. For nesting information, we will encourage that individuals engaged in surveys ensure their data is stored so that it will not be lost.
- We decided to continue to work on our *Statewide Cliff-nesting Raptor Survey Effort Questionnaire* in an effort to get metadata (i.e., the whos, whats, whens, and wheres) for survey work on cliff-nesting raptors going on in the state. Since that meeting, Travis has conducted a few interviews and gotten good feedback. We will continue to gather that information.

Golden Eagle concerns

- There continues to be a lot of buzz about Golden Eagles within US. Most of this is driven by concerns of the species' potentially declining status and definite and growing threats along migration and wintering grounds. The ARG-SC is also concerned about our general lack of knowledge about abundance and distribution of these eagles in Alaska and the "Far North." We have begun to address this with coordinated occupancy and productivity surveys completed in several areas of the state and are looking to expand these efforts in conjunction with establishment of long-term monitoring index areas for cliff-nesting raptors in the state.
- Note: a session was held on Golden Eagles at The Wildlife Society meeting in Portland, Oregon, recently. It can be accessed at:
<http://www.abstractsonline.com/Plan/ViewSession.aspx?sKey=61f9b3fe-9abf-4edc-9172-2a6e0025b58b&mKey=%7b163C84C2-A5DC-43E1-A3BF-2EC9A0FF913A%7d>

Short-eared Owl concerns

- Another species for which some broad-scale bird monitoring programs suggest is declining is the Short-eared Owl. Several members of ARG, most notably Travis Booms, have participated in the forming of a Short-eared Owl Working Group. After a few meetings, that group has drafted a commentary manuscript to raise awareness about Short-eared Owl issues that is in review.

Raptors in the Landbird Management Plan (ALMP)

- The ARG-SC has participated in the revision of the ALMP that has taken place over the last 2 years. We will work with BPIF leadership and Colleen Handel as that plan is completed to ensure that raptors and issues involving raptors will be addressed into the future. Along that line, there has been some discussions among ARG-SC members about updating the Management Plan for Alaskan Raptors put out by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 2001. At this point, we have settled on working on 1-page actions plans for species with updated concerns, research needs, and goals...stay tuned as your expertise will be needed.

National and regional updates for PIF – Colleen Handel

5th International PIF conference

- The 2013 meeting's theme is: The Life Cycle of Migratory Birds: Conservation across the Americas. The meeting will take place 26–28 August 2013 at Snowbird, UT.
- Emphasis is on migratory connectivity (i.e., breeding, stopover, and wintering areas) and full life-cycle population modeling (i.e., carryover effects between seasons, partitioning by age and season, and density-dependent effects).

2011 State of the Birds

- The 2011 report focused on a national assessment of bird distribution on public lands, which will assist public agencies identify species for conservation by habitat type.
- Public lands support significant numbers of species, provide the largest blocks of unfragmented forests, support 86% of arctic and alpine bird distribution, and provide wetland-associated species with network of NWRs and other publicly protected wetlands throughout the annual cycle.

5th North American Ornithological Congress

- Occurred 14–18 August 2012 at Vancouver, BC.
- Several talks were highly pertinent to Alaska bird efforts, including: “An odyssey of boreal forest bird research and conservation in Canada.” – Fiona Schmiegelow; “Studying birds in the context of the annual cycle: Carry-over effects and seasonal interactions.” – Peter Marra;

and “Grinnell’s legacy: Effects of a century of climate change on species occurrence and community composition in the Sierra Nevada.” – Morgan Tingley.

NAOC presentation of interest

- “Extinction risk estimated for bird adequately surveyed by the North American Breeding Bird Survey” – Wayne Thogmartin.
- Thogmartin estimated the potential extinction risk for every bird adequately surveyed by the NA BBS. Species that have the highest risk of extinction of all NA species: Rusty Blackbird (100% extinction by 2060), Blackpoll Warbler (>90% by 2060), and Short-eared Owl (100% by 2060). Note: the scale of reference includes area covered by the NA BBS program.

PIF symposiums of interest

- “Hot topics in the Tropics: Research to support full life-cycle conservation of migrants.” This emphasized migratory connectivity and looked at carryover effects.
- Aerial Insectivore Conservation Meeting led by David Winkler of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology discussed continued concern that aerial insectivores are declining.

PIF Western Working Group meeting

- We are a member, but we really don’t participate in these meetings. The WWG meets at least twice yearly. The last meeting was held in conjunction with PIF Symposium.
- The Tri-national collaborations of the WWG are currently focused on NA grasslands conservation, Western Hummingbird Partnership, forming alliances with specific ecoregions and MX, Best Management Practices for range conservation, identifying conservation areas in Mexico and US, and life-cycle modeling.
- As part of the PIF Strategic Action Plan, Klamath Bird Observatory, US Forest Service, and Cornell University are leading an initiative to develop a Decision Support Tool for Northwestern Forest Birds. The intent is to incorporate monitoring and evaluation programs into conservation planning. The initiative focuses on broad-scale monitoring for ecosystem health instead of focal or endangered species.
- Canadian partners are developing BCR-level plans. They are: identifying priority species of concern/stewardship, identifying BCR specific habitat requirements, quantifying population-level objectives, and identifying conservation threats/actions.
- Lisa Mahon, Canadian Wildlife Service, is leading an effort in the Boreal Taiga Plains (in Alberta) to assess the amount of ‘Future Habitat Supply’ that will be available for boreal landbirds. The effort entails characterizing available habitat by forest age and structure, intersecting that with data on the current human footprint, building bird-habitat models, and running simulations incorporating different scenarios of land use, forest harvest, and impacts of natural wildfire to assess future availability of forest habitat by age and structure.

- Northwest Raptor Symposium (including AK) discussed the process of assessing anthropogenic mortality and estimating population sizes and trends for raptors in the west. There is interest in collaborating with AK groups.
- IAFWA's Southern Wings program is essentially a mechanism to promote partnerships; 26 states are involved thus far. States contribute funds and can direct how contributions are allocated among existing projects.
- PVC pipes at mining claims act as traps for cavity-nesting/roosting species. This is a much greater concern in the western US, but cavity-nesting birds (and mammals) in AK are affected (e.g., outhouse vent pipes).
 - Discussion: BLM in AK is not doing any retro-fitting *per se*, but they have been put on notice to ensure that birds are not being impacted at certain structures where PVC pipes are used.

Looking back on 21 years of Boreal Partners in Flight: What have we achieved, where will we go next – Steve Matsuoka

- 1989: During 1982–89 3% of talks at the ABC were on songbirds, in 1989 18 BBS routes were inconsistently surveyed, little was known about songbirds in AK, biologists were concerned.
- 1991: “Monitoring trends of passerine bird populations in Alaska: a preliminary workshop” was held in Anchorage. Several respected ornithologists working in AK and lower 48 states attended. The Alaska Working Group of Partners in Flight was formed.

BPIF Milestones

- 1991: Alaska Bird Observatory founded, Alaska PIF formed.
- 1992: 1st Annual meeting of Alaska PIF; emphasis was on inventory and monitoring.
- 1993: BPIF charter completed, 1st International Migratory Bird Day.
- 1994: Changed name to Boreal Partners in Flight in recognition of similar goals and share species in AK and western Canada. 79 BBS routes surveyed, 27 MAPS operational, 7 fall banding stations active, and 2,000 point counts conducted.
- 1996: Spruce beetle outbreak.
- 1997: Emphasis on conservation planning for Biogeographic Regions.
- 1998: AK Raptor Management Plan completed, BPIF website online, NPS I&M program developed.
- 1999: AK Landbird Conservation Plan 1.0 completed, 22% of ABC talks focused on songbirds.
- 2000: Alaska Raptor Working Group joins BPIF, emphasis on understanding causes of beak deformities in Anchorage area.
- 2001: Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey created, AK MAPS evaluation completed.

- 2002: International BPIF/WWG meeting in Whitehorse, YT, ADF&G Wildlife Diversity Program was created.
- 2004: Species at Risk presented at annual meeting, Executive Steering Committee formed, and annual project summary report begins.
- 2006: Focus was on Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan and Avian Influenza surveillance.
- 2008: Alaska Raptor Group formed.
- 2010: AK Landbird Conservation Plan 2.0 initiated.
- 2011: BPIF celebrates 20 years!
- 2012: 26% of ABC talks on landbirds, emphasis on population changes, climate change, and species distribution models.
- 2013: AK Landbird Conservation Plan 2.0 completed.
- 2014–: Implement plan recommendations.

Recommended action(s)

- **Action:** Group voted to not reinstate Steering Committee. Instead, BCR Coordinators will act in this capacity. Also, small sub-groups will be formed on an as needed basis (e.g., to revise Terms, prepare position statements, etc.).
- **Action:** Group decided that an updated Terms of Reference was needed. A subcommittee to accomplish this is comprised by: Steve Matsuoka (lead), John Haddix, Cheryl Carrothers as well as BCR Coordinators and Co-Chairs.

Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan (Part I and II) – Colleen Handel

BCR break-out

- Break-out session by BCRs to review Part II and identify potential changes. The following lists suggested changes/improvements:
 - BCR 1: consider adding NRDA process to list of oil and rat spill response measures, ask for input of BCR LCC science coordinator.
 - BCR 2: made a few changes to priority species list, confirmed what was on threats and actions lists and added a few things, better “capturing” climate change.
 - BCR 3: added wind development and mining as threats.
 - BCR 4: Identified importance of partnering with other entities (e.g., LCCs, strengthening ties with Canada), noticed fewer species – will make sure nothing was missed, habitat types occurring in BCR must be added, additional conservation needs were identified (information on pre- and post- disturbance and range expansions following climate change).
 - BCR 5: Confirmed priority species list, added disease, mining, entrapment, cats, and bird strikes to threats list.

Recommended action(s)

- **Action:** BCR Coordinators will incorporate changes to their respective sections and send to Colleen Handel by 16 November.
- **Action:** Iain Stenhouse will complete Part II by 31 Dec.

Monitoring and research

Breeding Bird Survey – Colleen Handel

- The state-wide target for BBS routes surveyed/year is 75 routes. Since 2000 there have been only three years where we have met or exceeded 75 routes (2000, 2004, 2008). In 2011, 66 routes were surveyed. Despite the fluctuating number of routes surveyed each year during 2000–2011, the numbers of total and landbird species detected were similar.

Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey – Colleen Handel

- The target number of blocks surveyed/year is 50. Effort has decreased since 2010, which was the year with highest effort (42 blocks surveyed). Critical mass is needed in order to detect trends. **ABO has funds available to set-up and survey new blocks for one year.**
- NA and AK trend estimates for six Species of Conservation Concern were shared:
 - RUBL: AK = -1.5% (-6.3, 3.2) 45; NA = -6.2% (-11.1, -1.5) 222
 - BLPW: AK = -4.8% (-6.9, -2.7) 68; NA = -5.8% (-24.4, -0.1) 225
 - OSFL: AK -1.9% (-3.7, -0.1) 70; NA = -3.5% (-4.7, -2.8) 1210
 - SEOW: AK = no data; NA = -2.5% (-6.5, -0.1) 437
 - WIWA: AK = -0.3% (-2.0, 1.7) 103; NA = -2.1% (-3.2, -1.4) 909
 - RUHU: AK = 2.6% (0.4, 4.8) 20; NA = -2.2% (-2.8, -1.5) 339
- Several examples were provided for a GIS data-driven selection process tailored for scientists and managers. Attributes include habitat class, species presence/absence and abundances, and year.

Recommended action(s)

- **Action:** Discuss the future of BBS and ALMS programs (e.g., how to increase participation, initiate peer-review process of ALMS methods and results, etc). Subcommittee members to accomplish this are: Colleen Handel (lead), Cheryl Carrothers, Susan Savage, and Steve Matsuoka.

Hierarchical models of bird distribution and abundance across the SWAN parks – Courtney Amundson

- Spatially-replicated counts were analyzed using distance/time removal, mixture models, and max. entropy methods to derive predicted values of abundance.
- In the future, ALMS data will be analyzed. Spatially-replicated annual counts will be used to estimate abundance trends. Spatial covariates will include habitat and physiographic variables. Temporal covariates include temperature, precipitation, vegetation phenology, and extreme weather events.
- Questions for the ALMS data include: what are a species' distribution, abundance, and habitat associations? What factors affect a species' population trend? How will a species' distribution change through time following changes in environmental conditions?

Potential changes in avian distribution, abundance, and demography within a shifting ecotone in northern Alaska – Lance McNew

- This project is part of the USGS Changing Arctic Ecosystems program.
- Objectives include: assess environmental correlates of species abundance and richness, evaluate relationships between habitat changes and rates of change in abundance and distribution, measure demographic rates of focal species across environmental gradients, and synthesize results to forecast habitats and species that are most vulnerable to projected climate changes.
- First year of data collection on the Seward Peninsula was completed in 2012. Focal habitats were low-shrublands, tall shrublands, and spruce forest.
- Point-transects, mist-netting, vegetation characterization, and invertebrate sampling were primary activities, but a few geolocators were attached to Gray-cheeked Thrushes to determine annual movements and seasonal carry-over effects.
- The ultimate goal of the study is to project changes in species abundances and distributions and identify hotspots for conservation.

Management and education – Open Discussion

- Colleen Handel noted that BPIF has not focused much on management needs and that we need to talk about what the principal management needs are and what we can do to fulfill them.
- Colleen Handel reminded the group that there are BPIF Committee Coordinators elected to address: 1) monitoring, 2) education and outreach, 3) management, 4) research, and 5) international outreach.
- Maureen de Zeeuw mentioned that the group did not talk about the issue of connectivity for landbird populations throughout their flyways, which is a focus at the national and international levels. What information and programs do we need to address these connectivity issues for Alaskan populations? Habitat loss in Alaska, with the exception of wetlands, is not currently mitigated and potential impacts at the population level are unknown. She would like to have a continued discussion about the topic of connectivity. She poses the question: What can BPIF do to promote landbird conservation throughout the flyways used by Alaskan populations?

- Caroline Van Hemert offered to assist with outreach issues and is willing to send out a monthly email about climate change issues.

Recommended action(s)

- **Action:** Schedule time at the 2013 BPIF meeting to discuss issues of connectivity. How can BPIF be more effective at collaborating with partners across jurisdictional boundaries? (led by Maureen deZeeuw).
- **Action:** Co-chairs will initiate discussion with Caroline about climate change e-mail updates.

Other concerns

Biomass issue in interior Alaska – Julie Hagelin

- A nationwide increase in biomass extraction follows a Farm Bill measure to decrease reliance on foreign oil by 30%. This poses significant impacts for wildlife habitat.
- There are currently five proposals on the table for biomass extraction in the Fairbanks area. The area impacted would cover over 1,000 mi² and produce ~320,000 green tons/year.
- The Department of Forestry has been reorganized to deal with increased requests for biomass extraction permits.
- ~6,650 acres/year could be extracted in the region; Fairbanks' 20 year average is 542 acres/year.
- A 25-year contract could impact 166,000 acres, if all five proposals are approved. Multiply by an 80–120 year rotation for trees = 532,000–798,000 acres could be impacted. Small (< 5 cm dbh) to large tree size classes are harvested.
- Fort Greely is seeking to become a biomass-fueled facility by November 2013.
- There are also small-scale requests to use biomass for pellet production. The amount of timber harvested by small-scale operations would double the amount already harvested in the Fairbanks area.
- There is a growing interest in this topic. There are currently data gaps and existing models used by State Department of Forestry are not taking into account climate change scenarios. The potential impacts to wildlife are unknown.

Aerial insectivores

- Colleen Handel asked for volunteers to present information about aerial insectivore declines at the 2013 BPIF meeting. Gwen Baluss and Sherri Anderson agree to do this.

Recommended action(s)

- **Action:** Julie Hagelin will form sub-committee to further address biomass issue.
- **Action:** Gwen Baluss and Sherri Anderson will prepare an overview presentation on the decline of aerial insectivores that includes suggestions about how BPIF members can help fill information gaps.

BPIF annual summary template – Open Discussion

- Jim Johnson mentioned that there is no agreed upon structure and content for the annual summary, and as a result reports vary from year to year. He recommended that the 2012 and subsequent years' reports are separated into: 1) annual meeting agenda and minutes and 2) general (i.e., state-wide surveys, etc.) and specific project summaries, and annual publication list. Also, templates for each report will be made available on the BPIF website. There were no objections from the group.

Recommended action(s)

- **Action:** Separate Annual Report into 1) meeting agenda and minutes and 2) general (i.e., state-wide surveys, etc.) and specific project summaries, and annual publication list.
- **Action:** Provide templates that outline suggested structure and content for reports.
- **Proposed action:** Beginning in 2013, the call for project summaries will occur prior to annual meeting. Electronic and/or hardcopies will be provided at annual meeting.

Appendix 1. Meeting agenda

1:00–1:10	Welcome & Meeting Overview	Michelle Michaud Jim Johnson, USFWS
1:10–1:30	Introductions & General Announcements	All
1:30–2:00	Alaska Raptor Group Announcements	Steve Lewis, USFWS
2:00–2:10	National & regional updates for PIF	Colleen Handel, USGS
2:10–2:40	Organization & goals of BPIF	Steve Matsuoka, USFWS
2:40–3:30	Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan (Part I & Part II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview & progress • BCR break-outs 	Colleen Handel, USGS BCR Plan Coordinators
3:30–3:40	Break	
3:40–4:10	Monitoring & Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey • Boreal Avian Modelling project • Bird-landscape modeling • Arctic-boreal transition zone • Others? 	Colleen Handel, USGS Steve Matsuoka, USFWS Courtney Amundson, USGS Lance McNew, USGS All
4:10–4:20	Management & Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency & LCC needs • Public involvement • Others? 	Open discussion
4:20–4:30	Other concerns & goals for 2013	Open discussion
4:30–4:45	BPIF Annual Summary	Michelle Michaud
4:45–5:00	Election of new Co-chair, BCR coordinators, and Committee coordinators; Meeting Wrap-Up.	All

Appendix 2. Meeting attendees

Name	Affiliation	Email
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