

Partners in Flight: Past, Present, and Future

A Government Perspective

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On behalf of the fourteen Federal agencies represented on the Federal Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Committee, welcome to this first national workshop on management of neotropical migratory birds. The response and interest in this workshop and *Partners in Flight* has been tremendous. Your participation this week is evidence of the serious commitment of your agencies and organizations, and you personally to this effort.

An exciting new development for *Partners in Flight* is the formation of a State Agency Committee to facilitate State natural resource agency involvement. On Monday, the State committee met for the first time in joint session with the Federal and NGO Committees. They are a welcome addition to our committee structure. The States are vital players in this effort, in large part because much of the really important management and conservation work occurs at the local level, on the ground, where states have the expertise and the relationships with landowners to put the objectives of *Partners in Flight* into action. Most of these state wildlife resources agencies are represented here today.

States have long been leaders in nongame conservation efforts and are making valuable contributions to *Partners in Flight*. Active participants in regional and technical working groups, many States are taking this commitment a step further by the creation of individual and joint State working groups. Examples of State commitment include Wyoming, where a new state working group is in action, priorities include the development of monitoring programs and management strategies. In Alaska, summer home of many of our boreal breeding birds, groups are also well organized in a newly formed Alaska *Partners in Flight*. Important research and management is also occurring on state and private lands. In the Northeast, the Mid-Atlantic Migratory Bird Corridor Study is adding to our knowledge of migratory habitat use patterns. In Minnesota, a cooperative venture is underway to develop and implement a landscape management program to protect the avian diversity of that state's northern forests.

The Federal Committee continues to grow. There are now fourteen Federal agencies that are parties to this program. Our newest members are the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Bureau of Reclamation. All fourteen are represented here. Our Federal partners have many roles to play in *Partners in Flight*. The responsibilities range from Congressional mandates and regulatory authorities for migratory birds, to stewardship of millions of acres of public lands such as national forests, parks and rangelands; protection of the nation's land, air and waters from environmental contaminants; national defense; economic assistance to developing countries; and educational outreach efforts.

Upon reviewing the list of participants, most will agree that this is one of the most impressive partnership efforts ever undertaken in the conservation of natural resources. Our collective efforts have great potential. Individual Federal agency efforts are already too numerous to list. The following representative sample of agency activities speaks to the dedication of the Federal agencies involved in *Partners in Flight*.

The Forest Service has developed a Sister Forest Partnership Program that will serve an important function as we expand our outreach into Latin America. National Forests in Texas are linked with Panama, and Cherokee National Forest in North Carolina with Jamaica. Training has been identified as the greatest need, with emphasis on integrated resource planning, fire management and agro-forestry techniques. Outreach programs such as these provide a firm foundation for future international cooperation.

As a lead agency in this initiative, the Fish and Wildlife Service has been implementing management, monitoring and research projects continent-wide. The depth of Service commitment was demonstrated by placement of migratory nongame bird coordinators in each regional office and a full-time neotropical migratory bird coordinator in Washington D.C. In cooperation with State, Federal and nongovernmental partners, the Service has funded a minimum of 108 different projects in 34 states, as well as 15 projects in Mexico. In addition, the geographic coverage of the North American Breeding Bird Survey was expanded by adding 250 additional survey routes.

The Bureau of Land Management has put together a comprehensive Nongame Migratory Bird Habitat Conservation Plan, with neotropical migrants figuring prominently in the

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strategy. They have also hired a full-time coordinator to oversee implementation of this plan. One of the habitat management projects with direct benefit to neotropical migrants is restoration and management of sensitive riparian habitats in the southwest. This includes planting native trees, fencing riparian wetlands, evaluating and redesigning grazing systems, and providing artificial nest structures.

The Department of Defense is also an active participant in natural resources conservation. With stewardship responsibility for over 25 million acres of land, conservation and management of natural resources is a high priority. With several installations participating in such projects as Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship, the military continues to make significant contributions to research and monitoring efforts for neotropical migrants.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is well known for its role in improving and maintaining environmental quality. As an active member agency of *Partners in Flight*, EPA has dedicated a significant amount of funding to information and education efforts. In the months to come, EPA, in cooperation with other partners, will be working to develop outreach materials concerning impacts of various land uses on neotropical migrants for distribution to land use planners and developers.

Those are but a few of the many activities that governmental partners are undertaking. Although our agency missions may differ, our concern for and commitment to this resource is a common bond. Neotropical migratory bird conservation offers all of us the opportunity to address the needs of a declining resource.

Management of neotropical migrants brings us together this week. How do we manage them? Where do we start? What are our priorities? These questions and more will be addressed in the days to come, and many more will be asked. As we continue to work together, I think you will find that our diversity as agencies and individuals is our greatest strength. Today, conservation of migratory birds is, and will continue to be, a complicated and challenging mission. The international and hemispheric dimension of *Partners in Flight* offers an opportunity for cooperative, international conservation on a scale seldom seen. There are many questions to answer and much work to be done. Collectively, we have the expertise, the personnel and the motivation to answer questions and meet challenges offered this week and in weeks to come.

Nongovernment Organization Perspective

Stanley E. Senner¹

More than 20 nongovernmental organizations have signed a memorandum of understanding committing them to participate in *Partners in Flight*. Several more organizations will be signing the memorandum in the near future. Others may never sign the agreement but are contributing substantially to the program.

Partners in Flight was the brainchild of Amos Eno at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Amos, Peter Stangel, and the other foundation staff, deserve enormous credit for the enterprise they launched. Although the program is innovative, the concept underlying it is simple: The problems confronting migratory birds today--to say nothing of the environment in general--are so complex and are of such broad scale that no single agency or organization operating on its own can address them successfully.

Cooperation and partnerships are required if significant and lasting results are to be achieved. Indeed Congress recognized this fact in its 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (P.L. 100-653), which directs the Secretary of the Interior to undertake research and conservation activities to

benefit migratory nongame birds "in coordination with other Federal, State, international and private organizations..." *Partners in Flight* is exactly that--a cooperative enterprise among Federal, State, international, and private organizations.

There are many different types of participants in *Partners in Flight*: governmental and nongovernmental, state and federal, corporate and environmental, regulatory and military, and regional, national, and international. Different participants bring different mandates and perspectives, and there are many issues that divide us. One need only mention the spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis*), for example, to bring those differences to the surface.

Through *Partners in Flight* we have the chance to rise above the issues that divide us and apply our collective resources and expertise on problems for situations that are not yet highly polarized. This is not to say that there are no crises and difficult decisions in the conservation and management of neotropical migratory birds. But for the most part there is time--albeit not a lot of time--to be preventative rather than only reactive in our approach.

With that brief perspective, I offer comments on five issues to stimulate your thinking during the course of this meeting:

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