

That is why I am here, and I look forward to meeting and working with many of you during the course of this week and beyond.

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Prospects for Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation in Canada

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INTRODUCTION

The plan for conservation of Neotropical Migratory Birds - *Partners in Flight* - appeals to many Canadians. The birds themselves are loved for their beauty, their song, their mysterious migration, and their faithful return each spring. They are valued as members of healthy ecosystems, especially when they gorge themselves on caterpillars. Canadians recognize that the conservation of migratory birds should be coordinated internationally. Countries do not own the birds, but only provide accommodation for some steps of a long journey.

Today I will discuss topics that I think are important for neotropical migratory birds in Canada. I will start with some observations on what it would mean to expand *Partners in Flight* outside the United States. I will review the Canadian Wildlife Service forest bird work, and work by others. I will talk about the Canadian forest industry, and what is being done to move it towards sustainability.

Is Canada participating in *Partners in Flight*? Although it sounds as though a yes or no answer would be appropriate, really our first response should be to ensure that the asker and the answerer understand the question in the same way. For a question such as "Am I dreaming?" the answer is not important

until we agree, at least somewhat, on the symptoms that identify this psychological state. The question about Canadian involvement in *Partners in Flight* also needs further definition because, as yet, this initiative has no agreed shape or context outside the United States. Therefore, I propose a list of 6 symptoms that would be evidence of meaningful involvement by Canada.

SYMPTOMS OF COOPERATION IN PARTNERS IN FLIGHT

1. Setting International Objectives for the Conservation of Neotropical Migratory Birds

The Canadian Wildlife Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are responsible for ensuring that their countries observe the Migratory Birds Convention. The Convention states that these birds should not be hunted. But they have no greater plan for the conservation of nongame birds; they don't even use the same lists of birds protected under the Convention. As a first step, Canada and the U.S. should try harder to develop cooperative recovery efforts for threatened and endangered species. Beyond this, they should work on a common vision for all nongame birds. They should try to make an explicit statement

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of what they consider to be responsible management of nongame birds. This would help reduce the largely arbitrary approach now taken for the valuation of wildlife in natural areas.

2. Common Outreach, Marketing

Government agencies love to demonstrate that they are working with partners in joint ventures. The *Partners in Flight* Newsletter has done a fine job highlighting Canadian Wildlife Service projects, for which we are grateful. We also know that there are limits to the common marketing approach. Most non-government organizations survive by voluntary donations in a very competitive environment. They have to be cautious about a united appeal. At present some Canadian organizations may question the value of close association with *Partners in Flight* in their funding drives. One example is the Bring Back the Birds program that Conservation International Canada is promoting. Of course, these people want to cooperate fully with the implementation of *Partners in Flight*. At the same time they need to establish funding and build a program, and for this they need a degree of independence. They must also tailor their activities to the views and wishes of their supporters. Our challenge will be to provide the benefits that a common approach will bring, without imposing costs.

3. Coordination of Research and Monitoring in Breeding Areas

The Breeding Bird Survey has been a joint project of CWS and the USFWS since 1966. Canadian attendance at U.S. *Partners in Flight* meetings has been very valuable. However, it is not practical for Canadians to participate to a great extent in the U.S. meeting schedule, so the main mechanism for coordination is still the traditional contact between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service. *Partners in Flight* is helping - the Canadian Wildlife Service is planning to increase its investment in migration monitoring, and *Partners in Flight* contacts will ensure a greater degree of coordination.

4. Coordination of Neotropical Research and Conservation Efforts

Many Canadian institutions (government, academic, development aid) are involved in research and conservation in Latin America. The Canadian Wildlife Service has its own small but beautiful Latin American Program. There is now little Canada/U.S. coordination of this activity for benefits to wildlife. This could be an important role for *Partners in Flight*.

5. Involvement in Joint Funding

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has helped the Canadian Wildlife Service support work on neotropical birds in the Caribbean, and has shown interest in projects in Canada. Some non-government and United Nation organizations coordinate funding among countries for a variety of nature conservation objectives. These examples do not preclude the generalization that Canadian and U.S. partners do not have a joint approach to funding. More fundamentally, we do not have a joint understanding of the basis for such funding.

Canada and the United States share concern for the welfare of neotropical migrants in Latin America. To what extent do they share concern for what happens here in the north? Consider two questions. What would it mean to the United States if the breeding populations of warblers in Canada were reduced by half? (Canada has about 90% of North America's boreal forest habitat.) What would it mean to Canada if the U.S. could not maintain breeding habitat for Prothonotary, Blue-winged, and Golden-winged warblers near the Canadian border? (These are 3 species with only limited range in Canada, that may exist there only because of larger nearby U.S. populations). Questions of this kind, with ducks and geese as the subjects, helped establish the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. In the case of game birds with exploited populations, the answers are quite straightforward and easily explained to a large part of the public. For neotropical migrants, the answers are not so obvious, and not so easy to explain to others, partly because there is less common understanding of what people value in nongame birds.

6. Development of a Parallel Organization in Canada to *Partners in Flight*

I have left this symptom of Canadian participation in *Partners in Flight* until last, because I feel that real cooperative activity is more important than outward, visible signs. Organization of Canadian effort in *Partners in Flight* will develop, but it may use some different terminology and different structure than what is familiar in the U.S. Canadian wildlife non-government organizations have indicated that they will back a Canadian implementation of *Partners in Flight*. They have indicated, however that they would want to do this according to a Canadian Landbird Conservation Strategy that would also be concerned with resident species and short-distance migrants. Forestry Canada has expressed interest in *Partners in Flight*, but their participation would naturally occur in the context of the Canada Forest Accord (see below).

At this meeting an informal network of Canadian and Alaskan biologists will be set up. It is too soon yet to say whether this will lead to a Boreal Working group for *Partners in Flight*.

Initiatives in Canada for Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation

Much of relevance to neotropical migrants has been happening in Canada since my last report to *Partners in Flight*. Exciting changes have been taking place in the Canadian forest products industry. Within the Canadian Wildlife Service a new program for forest wildlife has developed.

Canada provides breeding habitat for large numbers of neotropical migratory birds. This habitat is also the scene of a major forest industry. Canada is the world's top exporter of pulp, newsprint, and softwood lumber, mostly to U.S. markets. It is the top producer of newsprint, the second-ranking producer of pulp (after the U.S.) and the third producer of softwood lumber (after the former USSR and the U.S.). Forest products contribute more to the Canadian balance of trade than agriculture, fishing, mining, and energy combined.

There are economic problems facing this industry. Exports are declining. The industry is "restructuring", with the result that mills in some areas are closing and unemployment is rising. Forest planners have been using sustainable yield models to determine allowable annual cuts, and the industry is falling short of this harvest by about 17%. Nevertheless, from 1986 to 1989 the commercial stock declined by about 400 million cubic meters, because of unforeseen losses to fire and insect pests¹. Another worry for the forest industry has come from environmental groups with concerns about old growth forest, clearcutting, and forest harvest in parks and lands traditionally used by aboriginal people.

What is happening in the Canadian forest? Old growth forest is declining in British Columbia and Ontario. Over much of the country the structure of the exploited forest resembles that of land that has not been logged, at least for the 3 or 4 major trees species in any area. However, this is not true for some species, such as white pine, that have declined. Regarding the boreal forest, from 1980 to 1990 fire still accounted for loss of trees over an area about 3 times larger than that which was harvested. But major expansions of forestry into the boreal forest are underway.

In Canada, 90% of the productive forest land is owned by the public, mostly through provincial governments. This means that forest management must respond quickly to changes in public attitude. Almost 3/4 of the Canadian forest industry is controlled by Canadian-owned companies, which again facilitates response to changing attitudes. The public is demanding responsible use of the environment, and these concerns are being addressed vigorously. The use of insecticides is down, and, of these, biological controls have grown from 2% in 1981 to 62% in 1991. Mill effluents are cleaner, with decreases in total suspended solids and biological oxygen demand, and new regulations in place for dioxins and furans. The use of recycled sawmill waste has increased to 60% of the fibre for pulp and paper. Newsprint recycling has increased.

Overall, the investment by government and industry in "environmental" forestry projects has increased from 8% in 1989 and 16% in 1990 to 27% in 1991².

In 1990 the government of Canada announced a major initiative for sustainable development, Canada's Green Plan for a Healthy Environment³. This led to action by several federal departments to increase the protection of the environment. Within Forestry Canada a significant new program, Partners in Sustainable Development, was allocated \$100 million over six years. Of most interest to those who care about forest birds will be the Model Forests program. The model forests are to be demonstrations of the shift from sustained yield to sustainable development in large scale productive forests selected across Canada. The model forests are expected to preserve biological diversity, and environmental and social values in addition to economic values and the future productivity of the forest.

The shifts in Canadian forest policy have lead to a National Forest Strategy⁴ and the Canada Forest Accord⁵. The new policy of sustainable forestry has the goal to "maintain and enhance the long term health of our forest ecosystems, for the benefit of all living things both nationally and globally...". These forest managers will surely find common ground with *Partners in Flight*.

Canada's Green Plan has also provided support for the Canadian Wildlife Service. The strategy for wildlife flows from *A Wildlife Policy for Canada*⁶, which in turn refers to the World Conservation Strategy. The goals are to maintain and restore ecological processes, biodiversity, and to ensure that all uses of wildlife are sustainable.

The Green Plan has allowed a revitalized songbird conservation program to develop in the Canadian Wildlife Service. The top priorities being considered are forestry and agricultural practices (management issues), songbird population monitoring, volunteer participation (methodology), and a focus on neotropical migrant species⁷. Clearly this view coincides with *Partners in Flight*.

The need to make sense of songbird monitoring projects is typified by a review carried out recently in Ontario. There, eleven cooperative, province-wide activities are now being done, and 3 more are proposed. All 14 use volunteer participants. None are unique to Ontario, although the Forest Bird Monitoring Program, the Ontario Rare Breeding Bird Program, Project FeederWatch, and the Long Point Bird Observatory's brand of migration monitoring all have roots there. The Canadian Wildlife Service has only recently begun trying to systematically combine results from this variety of surveys to understand population trends⁸.

Migratory birds that breed in the boreal forest are difficult to monitor. Access to these birds by the Breeding Bird Survey is limited by the availability of passable roads, and the shortage of volunteers in sparsely populated areas. The Canadian Wildlife Service is supporting an expansion of migration monitoring using the Long Point Bird Observatory technique at a series of sites in Canada, in an attempt to sample populations of migrants that are not counted on the breeding ground.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Canada signed the Convention on Biological Diversity in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This is subject to ratification. Article 8 of the Convention discusses protected areas, regulated use of wildlife resources, and efforts to protect endangered species. Forest wildlife, and neotropical migratory birds in particular will have to figure high in Canada's implementation of the Convention. Canada's aggressive stance on the Convention typifies a growing emphasis on international conservation efforts.

Canada has moved in new directions in foreign policy respecting Latin America. It joined the Organization of American States in 1990. A strategy for the Canadian aid program in the Americas was set at that time, including emphasis on democracy and human rights, debt reduction and economic development, environmental protection, and international trade⁹. Africa and Asia dominate as recipients of Canadian aid, but the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and its partners provided \$343 million to the Americas in 1989. Clearly, this could be a potent force for conservation, if properly applied. In fact, CIDA is increasing its emphasis on sustainable development. A recent example was a project to help direct its activity to benefit wetlands in Central America. One non-government organization that CIDA has assisted is the Treeroots Network, which works for the "sustainability of local ecosystems through community control of trees, and forests..."

SUMMARY

The signs are positive for active participation by Canadians in many aspects of the *Partners in Flight* effort to conserve neotropical migratory birds. The Canadian forest industry is shifting from a reliance on sustained yield models, to a belief

in sustainable forestry, which recognizes the value of habitat for forest birds. Canada's Green Plan has given a boost to forest wildlife programs. Canada's international programs are becoming more environmentally responsible. It still remains for the United States and Canada to create an effective mechanism to coordinate their nongame bird programs. I suggest that the two federal wildlife services draft a strategy for linking Canada to the United States via *Partners in Flight*.

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