

Integrated Migratory Bird Planning in the Lower Great Lakes/ St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region¹

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Abstract

The Atlantic Coast and Eastern Habitat Joint Ventures hosted two international planning workshops to begin the process of integrating bird conservation strategies under the North American Bird Conservation Initiative in the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region. The workshops identified priority species and habitats, delineated focus areas, discussed population and habitat objectives, and began developing a long-term conservation plan. The objective of this effort is to provide a seamless, coordinated effort to deliver on-the-ground conservation for high priority species among the partners in the United States and Canada in the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region.

Introduction

Habitat conservation planning for migratory birds has evolved at a rapid rate since the signing of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (Plan) in 1986 that articulated population and habitat objectives for waterfowl across the continent. Since the Plan, three other bird conservation initiatives have begun planning on various scales. These initiatives (Partners in Flight, North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, and the U.S. and Canadian Shorebird Conservation Plans) have completed continental, national, or regional plans that set forth population and habitat goals. The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) was

established to integrate planning efforts among these initiatives to deliver habitat conservation in a more coordinated and efficient manner. Bird Conservation Regions (BCR), delineated across North America, were adopted by NABCI as a common geographical language to help planning efforts within regions of similar habitat types and species composition.

The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV) adopted the NABCI concept in 1999 to plan and deliver habitat conservation for all migratory birds along the Atlantic coast. The South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative (SAMBI), the ACJV's first all-bird planning effort, met with great success in identifying important species and habitats and delivering conservation on the ground. The Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain International Bird Conservation Initiative (Initiative) is the second all-bird planning effort in the ACJV (*fig. 1*). This effort differs from SAMBI in that it is international in scope with the BCR split about 50 percent in the United States and 50 percent in Canada and involves coordinating with the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (EHJV), the ACJV's sister joint venture in Canada. The objective of the Initiative is to create a seamless, coordinated effort among the many partners in the United States and Canada to deliver habitat conservation for high priority migratory bird species within the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain BCR.

Process of Establishing International Priorities and Strategies

International Planning Workshops

In December 2000 an initial scoping meeting was held in Gananoque, Ontario to explore a common vision for migratory bird conservation in the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region (BCR 13). The objectives of the meeting were to learn about the structure and delivery mechanisms of the EHJV and ACJV, the status of planning among the four bird conservation initiatives in each country, the importance of BCR 13 to all birds, and potential models for implementation. However, the primary

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objective was to discuss the importance of a cross-border initiative and to begin planning for an international workshop that would identify and set goals for priority species and habitats and develop strategies to deliver conservation within the BCR.

Two international workshops were held to begin the process of integrated bird conservation in BCR 13. The first workshop was held April 17-19 in Alexandria Bay, New York. The emphasis of this workshop targeted planning that involved developing priorities for the BCR. Sixty-five biologists attended representing governmental and non-governmental organizations from the United States and Canada. The major objectives of this workshop were to provide a forum for information exchange regarding the status of planning of each migratory bird initiative within each country, identify priority migratory bird species, identify priority habitats based on the priority species, begin discussion on the process for setting population and habitat goals, and define new or revise existing focus areas. The second workshop was held November 28-29 in Montreal, Quebec. The emphasis of this workshop was on discussing the strategies necessary in achieving the conservation objectives developed in the first workshop. Specifically, the objectives of this workshop were to refine the information generated from the first workshop, discuss potential first-step projects, and generate an outline for a long-term

conservation plan. The make-up of the attendees for the second workshop differed slightly from the first. Forty-five biologists attended the second workshop with a greater percentage of land managers than in the first workshop.

One of the primary objectives of the workshops was the exchange information on the status of planning in the United States and Canada relative to the migratory bird initiatives and to create an open communication link and dialogue between the countries and among the state and provincial jurisdictions. Another objective was to become familiar with the structure, process, and modes of implementation between the countries and among organizations and agencies. The first workshop opened with status reports from representatives of the migratory bird initiatives from each country, the ACJV and EHJV, NABCI, and Audubon's Important Bird Areas program. These reports were designed to inform the attendees of the status of planning within each initiative and joint venture. The second workshop focused more on the identification of projects, funding, and the process of implementing on-the-ground activities. In addition, the coordinator from the South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative presented the progress of this initiative since its inception in 1999. This initiative has been a very successful effort within the ACJV and the presentation was designed to show attendees the potential success of an all-bird effort.

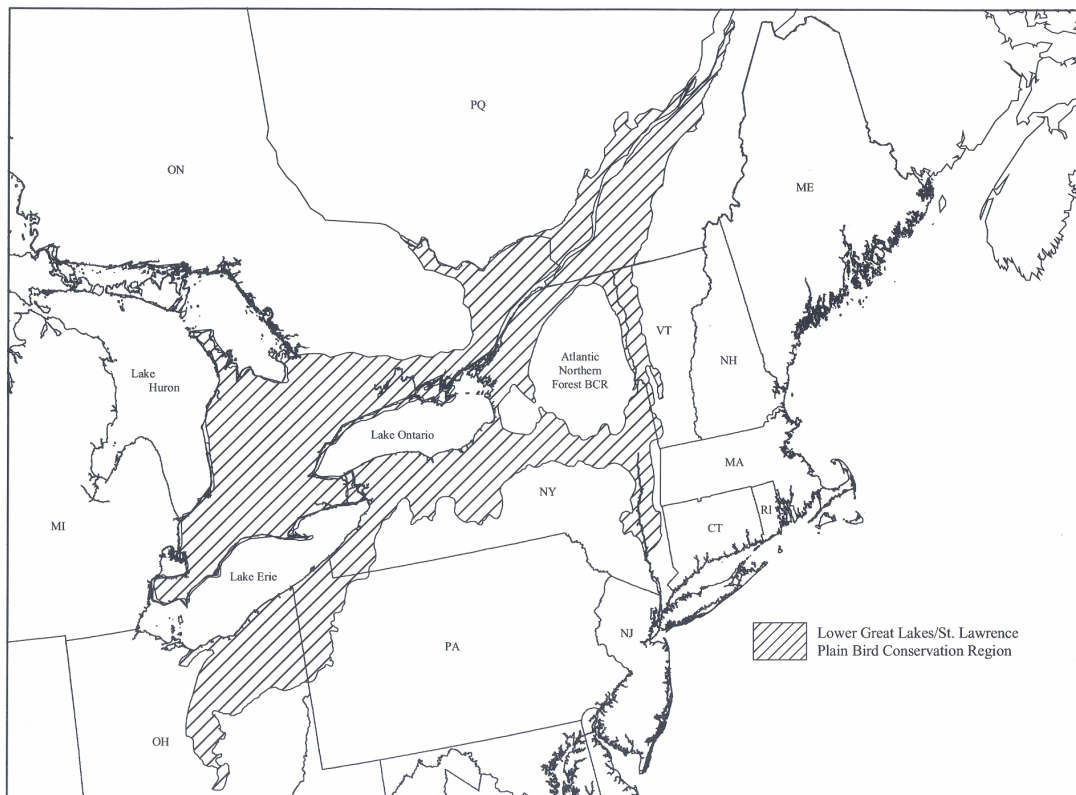


Figure 1— Current boundary of the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region.

The structure of the workshops was centered on breakout groups for each migratory bird initiative; landbirds, shorebirds, waterbirds, and waterfowl. Experts or those interested in a particular initiative met in concurrent and separate groups to develop the information necessary to achieve the goals outlined for each breakout group. In the first workshop each group was charged to develop a list of priority species, priority habitats, delineate focus areas, and discuss the potential for population and habitat objectives. Each workgroup was assigned a United States and Canadian co-leader to guide the discussion and record the information. The information developed during the first workshop was taken back by the representatives of each state and provincial jurisdiction to their respective states or provinces for further discussion and refinement. The structure of the second workshop was similar to the first with each of the initiatives breaking out into separate groups to discuss the information developed in the first workshop and refined by the jurisdictions. Final species lists, priority habitats, and focus areas were generated during the second workshop.

Workshop Results

Priority Species and Habitats

Generating species lists for BCR 13 precipitated discussion on several issues. The lists needed to be inclusive but not so long as to have a dilution effect. We needed to weigh the value of the region to each species. If the species relies on BCR 13 for some portion of its annual cycle, then it should be on the list. However, we recognized that not all species should be treated the same. A three-tiered framework was imposed for including species on the priority list. Tier A included those species in which BCR 13 is critical to their annual cycle, listed as continental or regional priorities by one of the migratory bird initiatives, rare or declining species, or those with significant threats. Tier B species are those birds that are considered important to specific jurisdictions but BCR 13 is not critical to their annual survival. Also, Tier B species may be representative of specific habitat suites considered important in the region. Tier C species are birds of management concern. These include species that have become overabundant or nuisance. Forty-three species were identified in Tier A, 45 in Tier B, and 6 in Tier C (*table 1*).

Priority habitats were identified based on the list of species generated from each working group. Many of

the priority habitats identified were very specific to each working group and to specific species. To create a list of priority habitats common to the BCR for integration among the bird groups, the specific habitats were aggregated into broader categories (*tables 2 and 3*). A common habitat language is being developed to help with communicating habitat types, assessment, and conservation needs across the border and among states and provinces. We believe a common habitat language should be broad in scope to facilitate regional habitat analysis and provide easy communication across jurisdictions. Detailed, project-specific, habitat classifications will default to the classification system in use by each individual jurisdiction.

Delineation of Focus Areas

Delineation of focus areas is the key to efficiently and effectively delivering habitat conservation in the Initiative. Although actual conservation of habitat is performed on site-specific projects, it is important that focus areas are developed within the context of landscape-level conservation and biodiversity. Focus areas should be regionally important to one or more life-history stages or seasonal-use periods of migratory birds and they should be discrete and distinguishable habitats or habitat complexes demonstrating clear ornithological importance from surrounding areas (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1996, Wells 1998). Focus areas must be large enough to supply all the necessary requirements for survival during the season for which it is important. However, small disjunct areas important for the survival of migratory birds should be identified along with their biological connection. For example, a feeding area for nesting herons may be several miles from the heronry. Both areas are important to the survival and nesting success of the herons, but the area between the two important habitats may not be important for herons. This area should not be identified as critical to heron survival. In short, focus areas must be ecologically-based areas of special significance to migratory birds where limited financial or conservation-oriented resources can be expended to have meaningful positive effects on migratory bird populations.

Each workgroup identified and delineated preliminary focus areas in the first workshop. The delineations were digitized and distributed to the state and provincial representatives for further consultation and refinement. Changes in focus area boundaries in the United States were submitted to the ACJV for modification. The boundary modifications were presented at the second workshop with further refinements made to the focus areas (*figs. 2-5*).

Table 1— Priority species list for the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region.

Work group	Species			
	Tier A	Tier B	Tier B	Tier C
Landbirds	American Woodcock (<i>Scolopax minor</i>)	Henslow's Sparrow (<i>Ammodramus henslowii</i>)	Bank Swallow (<i>Riparia riparia</i>)	Long-eared Owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)
	Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	Loggerhead Shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	Belted Kingfisher (<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>)	Louisiana Waterthrush (<i>Seiurus motacilla</i>)
	Bobolink (<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>)	Red-headed Woodpecker (<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>)	Black-throated Blue Warbler (<i>Dendroica caerulescens</i>)	Northern Goshawk (<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>)
	Brown Thrasher (<i>Toxostoma rufum</i>)	Short-eared Owl (<i>Asio flammeus</i>)	Canada Warbler (<i>Wilsonia canadensis</i>)	Northern Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)
	Cerulean Warbler (<i>Dendroica cerulea</i>)	Upland Sandpiper (<i>Barramia longicauda</i>)	Chimney Swift (<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>)	Red-shouldered Hawk (<i>Buteo lineatus</i>)
	Golden-winged Warbler (<i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>)	Whip-poor-will (<i>Caprimulgus vociferus</i>)	Common Loon (<i>Gavia immer</i>)	Sedge Wren (<i>Cistothorus platensis</i>)
			Common Nighthawk (<i>Chordeiles minor</i>)	Wood Thrush (<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>)
			Eastern Wood-Pee-wee (<i>Contopus virens</i>)	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>)
			Field Sparrow (<i>Spizella pusilla</i>)	Yellow Palm Warbler (<i>Dendroica palmarum</i>)
			Grasshopper Sparrow (<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>)	Yellow-shafted Flicker (<i>Colaptes auratus</i>)
Shorebirds	American Golden-Plover (<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>)	Red Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)	Black-bellied Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)	Lesser Yellowlegs (<i>Tringa flavipes</i>)
	American Woodcock (<i>Scolopax minor</i>)	Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>)	Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>)	Semipalmated Sandpiper (<i>Calidris pusilla</i>)
	Buff-breasted Sandpiper (<i>Tryngites subruficollis</i>)	Short-billed Dowitcher (<i>Limnodromus griseus</i>)	Greater Yellowlegs (<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>)	Wilson's Phalarope (<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>)
	Hudsonian Godwit (<i>Limosa haemastica</i>)	Solitary Sandpiper (<i>Tringa solitaria</i>)	Least Sandpiper (<i>Calidris minutilla</i>)	
	Marbled Godwit (<i>Limosa fedoa</i>)	Upland Sandpiper (<i>Barramia longicauda</i>)		
	Piping Plover (<i>Charadrius melodus</i>)	Whimbrel (<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>)		

Table 1— *contd.*

Work group	Species		
	Tier A	Tier B	Tier C
Waterbirds	American Bittern (<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>)	American Coot (<i>Fulica americana</i>)	Sandhill Crane (<i>Grus canadensis</i>)
	Black-crowned Night Heron (<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>)	Caspian Tern (<i>Sterna caspia</i>)	Sora (<i>Porzana carolina</i>)
	Black Tern (<i>Chlidonias niger</i>)	Common Moorhen (<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>)	
	Common Loon	Great Blue Heron	
	(<i>Gavia immer</i>)	(<i>Ardea herodias</i>)	
	Common Tern	Great Egret	
	(<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)	(<i>Ardea alba</i>)	
	King Rail	Green Heron	
	(<i>Rallus elegans</i>)	(<i>Butorides virescens</i>)	
	Least Bittern	Herring Gull	
	(<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>)	(<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	
	Virginia Rail	Pied-billed Grebe	
	(<i>Rallus limicola</i>)	(<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>)	
	Yellow Rail	Red-necked Grebe	
	(<i>Coturnicops noveboracensis</i>)	(<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>)	
Waterfowl	American Black Duck (<i>Anas rubripes</i>)	Greater Snow Goose (<i>Chen caerulescens</i>)	Barrow's Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala islandica</i>)
	Blue-winged Teal (<i>Anas discors</i>)	Lesser Scaup (<i>Aythya affinis</i>)	Common Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>)
	Canada Goose ^a (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)	Long-tailed Duck (<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>)	Common Merganser (<i>Mergus merganser</i>)
	Canvasback (<i>Aythya valisineria</i>)	Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	
	Greater Scaup (<i>Aythya marila</i>)	Wood Duck (<i>Aix sponsa</i>)	
			Northern Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)
			Redhead (<i>Aythya americana</i>)
			White-winged Scoter (<i>Melanitta fusca</i>)
			Canada Goose ^b (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)
			Greater Snow Goose (<i>Chen caerulescens</i>)
			Mute Swan (<i>Cygnus olor</i>)

^aCanada Goose includes the Atlantic Population and Southern James Bay Population.^bCanada Goose in this list refers to resident Canada geese.

Table 2— Aggregate wetland habitat types and definitions from the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region workshops.

Aggregate category	BCR 13 workshop habitat classification	Definition
Open Water (open water)	Open Water - <i>Waterbirds</i> Palustrine Open Water - <i>Waterfowl</i>	Open water lacking any vegetation. Make up of the bottom is unconsolidated material, bedrock, or unknown. Lacustrine, riverine, palustrine, and estuarine.
Emergent Marsh (open wetland)	Sedge Meadow - <i>Waterbirds</i> Freshwater Wetland - <i>Waterbirds</i> (Open) Wetlands - <i>Waterfowl</i> Marsh-Wetlands - <i>Landbirds</i> Small, dispersed, marshy, shallow wetlands (ranging from ditches to lakeshores) - <i>Shorebirds</i>	Emergent marshes dominated by persistent and non-persistent vegetation. Lacustrine, riverine, palustrine, and estuarine. Includes sheetwater wetlands important in the St. Lawrence Plain.
Scrub-Shrub	Forested Wetlands - <i>Waterfowl</i>	Wetlands dominated by woody vegetation less than 6 m tall. Includes shrubs, young trees, or stunted trees and shrubs. May represent a successional stage leading to forested wetlands. Lacustrine, palustrine, and estuarine.
Submerged Aquatics (open wetland)	(Open) Wetlands - <i>Waterfowl</i>	“Open” water wetlands dominated by plants that grow principally at or under the surface of the water. Lacustrine, riverine, palustrine, and estuarine. Includes aquatic beds of NWL.
Forested (treed wetland)	Riparian Forest - <i>Waterbirds</i> Floodplain or Bottomland Forests - <i>Waterfowl</i> Forested Wetlands - <i>Waterfowl</i> Riparian (including beaver flowages) - <i>Waterfowl</i>	Wetlands dominated by woody vegetation 6 m or taller. Generally, associated with palustrine systems adjacent to riverine systems, including beaver flowages.
Unconsolidated Shore - Sand	Broad sand and gravel beaches of the southern Great Lakes - <i>Shorebirds</i> Mud- and sandflats and sandspits, particularly in the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes - <i>Shorebirds</i> Bare shoreline shoals - <i>Waterbirds</i>	Generally, these habitats would be described as sandy shores, exposed sand flats, sandspits, and gravel beaches. The flooding regime is that of irregularly exposed, regularly flooded, irregularly flooded, seasonally flooded, temporarily flooded, intermittently flooded, saturated, or artificially flooded. Lacustrine, riverine, palustrine, and estuarine. Includes unconsolidated bottom. Also, estuarine systems can be both subtidal and intertidal.
Unconsolidated Shore - Mud	Mud- and sandflats and sandspits, particularly in the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes - <i>Shorebirds</i>	Areas dominated by particles smaller than stones with virtually no vegetation. See Unconsolidated Shore - Sand for definition of flooding regimes. Lacustrine, riverine, palustrine, and estuarine.

Table 3— Aggregate upland habitat types and definitions from the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region workshops.

Aggregate category	BCR 13 workshop habitat classification	Definition
Deciduous Forest (deciduous forest)	Uplands Associated with Wetlands - <i>Waterfowl</i> Deciduous Forest - <i>Landbirds</i>	A diverse assemblage of deciduous hardwoods make up the forested component of this BCR including maple, oak, hickory, beech, and birch associations.
Mixed Forest (mixed forest)	Uplands Associated with Wetlands - <i>Waterfowl</i> Mixed (northern hardwood/coniferous) Forest - <i>Landbirds</i>	See Deciduous forests with a conifer mix. Dominant species?
Shrub/Early Successional (transitional)	Uplands Associated with Wetlands - <i>Waterfowl</i> Shrub-early successional - <i>Landbirds</i> Early successional woodlots, short shrub - <i>Shorebirds</i>	Includes shrubs such as alders and seedling/sapling trees such as aspen and birch.
Grassland - native or artificial (hay and pasture)	Uplands Associated with Wetlands - <i>Waterfowl</i> Grasslands - <i>Landbirds</i> Agriculture/Grasslands - <i>Waterbirds</i>	This category mainly includes pastures, haylands, and fallow fields.
Agriculture (agricultural)	Uplands Associated with Wetlands - <i>Waterfowl</i> Onion fields in SW Ontario - <i>Shorebirds</i> Agriculture/Grasslands - <i>Waterbirds</i>	All agriculture not associated with pastures/grasslands. Row crops.
Artificial Cover	Other - <i>Landbirds</i>	Rooftops

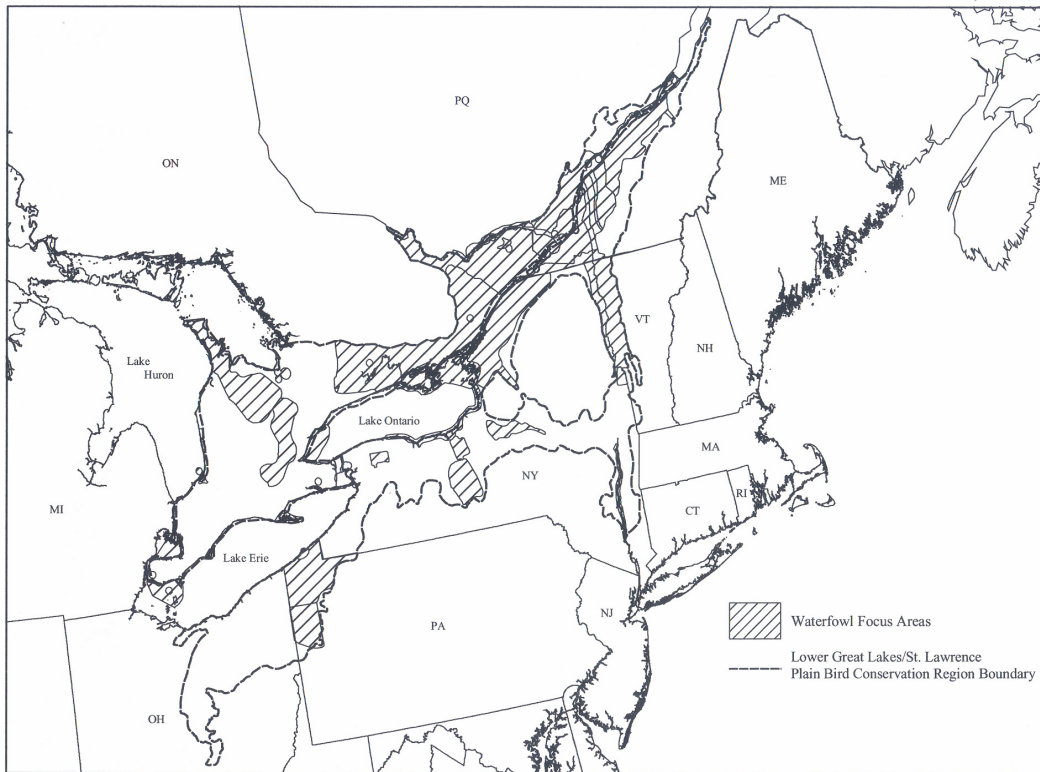


Figure 2— Waterfowl focus areas identified for the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region.

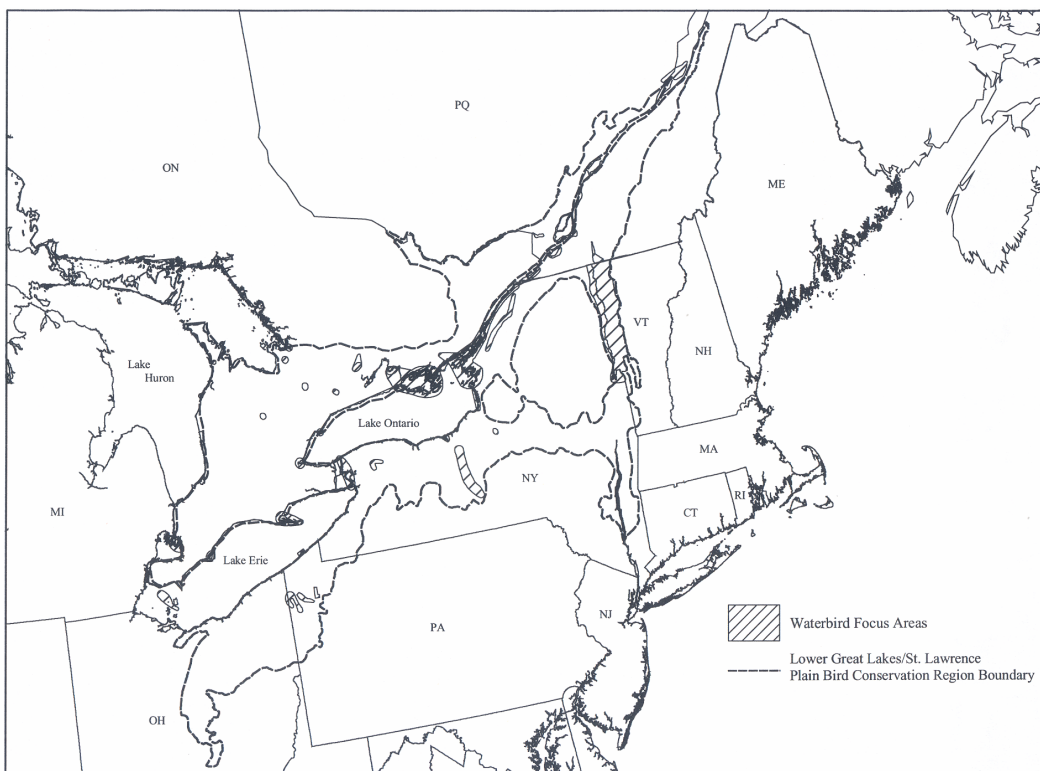


Figure 3— Waterbird focus areas identified for the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region.

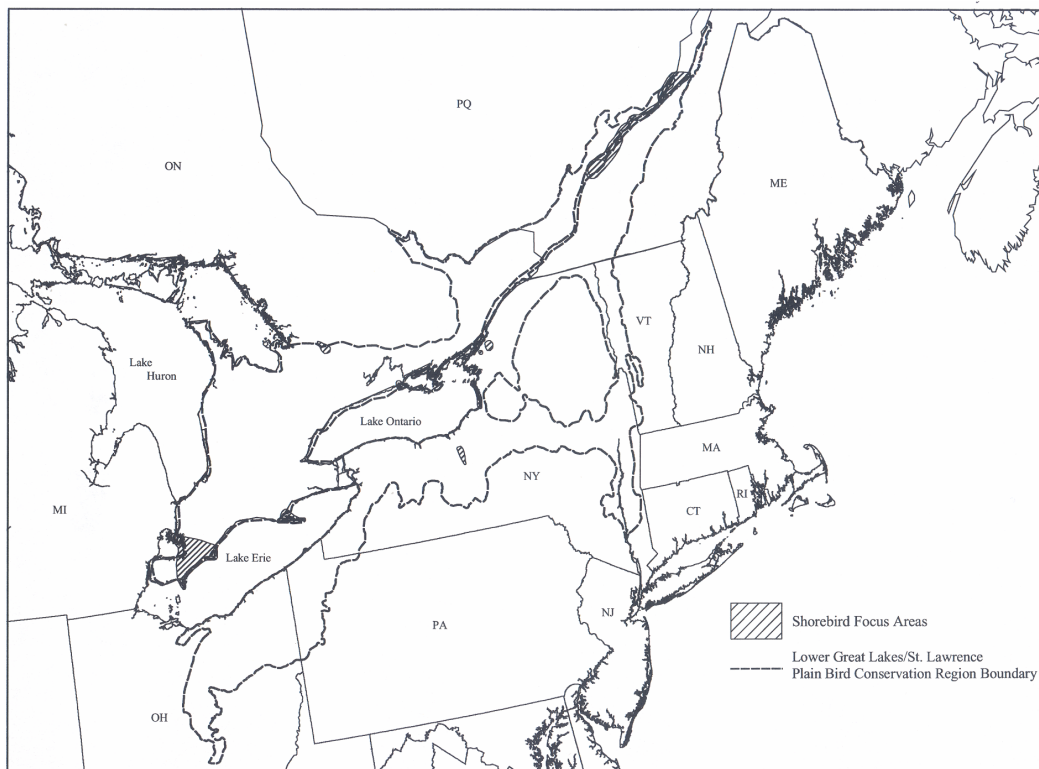


Figure 4— Shorebird focus areas identified for the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region.

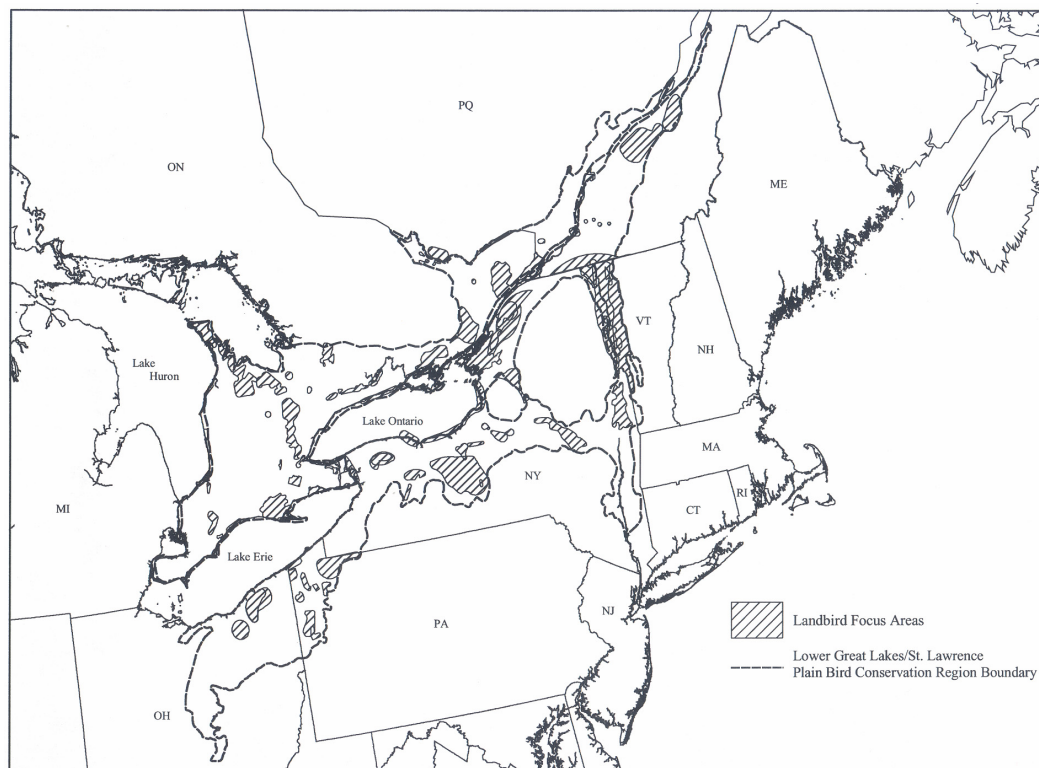


Figure 5— Landbird focus areas identified for the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region.

Population and Habitat Goals

Although population and habitat goals were addressed, specific goals were established for relatively few species. We recognized the lack of basic population information for many species and the migration/staging emphasis of BCR 13. It was agreed that more basic demographic information was needed for most species to establish and monitor population objectives. The lack of discrete population objectives prevented establishing habitat objectives, although the consensus among the working groups was that the lack of population or habitat goals should not impede progress in protecting critical habitats identified by the workshop within focus areas. We may choose to focus on a few key species with the greatest needs to represent other species and priority habitat types.

Population estimates have been derived for the landbird species through the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) in the Partners in Flight Physiographic Plans (Rosenberg 2001). Habitat objectives have been extrapolated from the estimates. However, alternative methods for population goals were discussed that included monitoring Breeding Bird Atlas blocks for changing distribution in atlas blocks. This method may be more appropriate for those species difficult to detect on the BBS. The landbird group decided to maintain current populations and distribution except where species showed significant declines where the goal would be to stop the decline. The shorebird working group concluded that insufficient information exists to set meaningful population or habitat goals for breeding or migrant species. However, improved surveys would allow for setting justifiable goals. A better understanding of carrying capacity is needed to set habitat goals especially for migrant shorebirds. The waterbird working group developed population goals only for the colonial nesting species (6 of 16 species) because population estimates were not available for secretive marsh-nesting birds. Population goals for many species of waterfowl may not be relevant in this BCR. Only a few species breed in BCR 13 with any density, such as mallards. The waterfowl group agreed that maintenance of quality habitat to support the populations that currently exist would be sufficient until better information becomes available.

Perspectives on Integrated Bird Conservation

The vision statement developed for this Initiative states to “Integrate international planning and implementation efforts among the four migratory bird initiatives across the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region.” The workshops were designed to follow the major tenet of NABCI, that is, to maintain the autonomy of each migratory bird initiative but open

communication among the initiatives to facilitate integration. We did this by having each initiative develop their own priorities based on established national or regional planning efforts. Integration among the initiatives is generated by bringing together the priorities of each group and evaluating overlaps in these priorities, mainly through priority habitats.

To facilitate developing integrated, cross-border projects, the BCR was divided into three focus regions to pursue first-step projects. These focus regions are areas of overlap of high priority species and habitats and should be more successful at capturing funds, generating multi-agency collaboration, and benefitting the most species. A number of priority species identified use the extensive agricultural landscape in both the United States and Canada and the extensive wetlands within these areas. The focus regions identified for first-step projects were the Lake Champlain/Richelieu River/Ottawa River region, the Lake Ontario Plain/Upper St. Lawrence River Valley region, and Lake Erie/Niagara River region (*fig. 6*). Participants of the second workshop formed breakout groups for each focus region. The breakout groups discussed the priority species and habitats found within each region and potential first-step projects. Although habitat-oriented conservation projects were targeted, it did not limit the discussion. Many topics were discussed including expanding research and monitoring efforts.

Successful first-step projects are a key to building momentum and interest in partners. The South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative was able to establish a number of successful first-step projects. These successes have generated interest in SAMBI from a number of different partners and has led to many more projects and, importantly, many new partners. The goal of the first-step projects in BCR 13 is to establish the ability to get cross-border projects identified, funded, and completed. The focus of first-step projects is to be on habitat conservation and generate support for NABCI (i.e., multiple species). The differences in funding processes and timing between Canada and the United States was not considered a problem relative to funding through the North American Wetlands Act, currently the major source of conservation funding. Communication would be critical in establishing linked, cross-border projects. Many of the partners currently are working towards first-step projects with some in the development stage. For example, partners from the United States and Canada are currently working toward a cross-border project in the Lake Champlain/Richelieu River/Ottawa River Focus Region. Also, participants of the BCR 13 workshops recognize the importance of pursuing important priorities for single bird groups such as shorebirds or landbirds. Therefore, future projects will not be dictated solely on their contribution

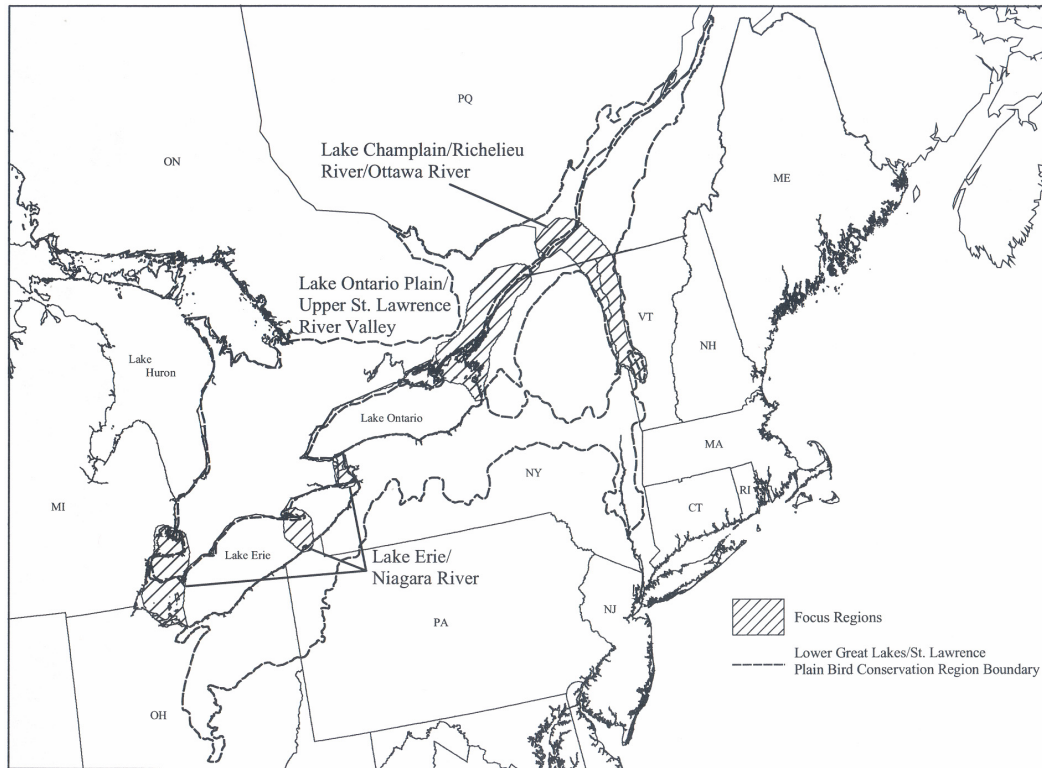


Figure 6— Focus regions identified for the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region.

to multiple species but, also, to their contributions to regional biodiversity.

A conservation plan for the Initiative currently is being developed. The plan will incorporate the objectives developed in the two workshops with periodic updates as more information becomes available. The elements of the conservation plan should provide biological guidance to all jurisdictions regardless of strategies used to obtain goals and it must recognize the role this BCR plays in the continental perspective. It must define what the BCR landscape will be in the future to help guide conservation actions. The science needs of BCR 13 are important and will be addressed. We lack much of the basic information needed to establish defensible population objectives and, thus, habitat objectives. Also, we need to establish evaluation methods to provide feedback in our efforts to protect priority habitats for priority species.

Conclusion

The interest in the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Initiative proved to be beyond original expectations. The issue of an international border splitting the BCR was not considered an impediment to accomplishing the goals set forth by the workshops. The work-

shops were very successful in achieving the goals; identifying priority species and priority habitats, delineating focus areas, discussing population and habitat goals, and beginning the process of developing integrated projects. A number of tasks and issues remain to be resolved within the BCR 13 initiative with some of these in a constant state of revision. These include further development of a common habitat language, discussion of population and habitat objectives, pursuit of research and monitoring needs and funding, and continued communication among partners in all the jurisdictions in the United States and Canada. A conservation plan is being developed that will bring all this information together and provide strategies and guidance in achieving the stated goals. The plan will be simple by establishing what we know about the priority species and habitats based on the best information available, establish focus areas, identify science needs and the resources needed to address the needs, and have a vision for the Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region that all partners can agree upon.

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