

Department of Defense

Partners in Flight

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



Mission Support through Focused Conservation!

Department of Defense (DoD) lands provide a critical network of habitats for migratory birds, offering stopover areas for resting and feeding, and sites suitable for nesting and rearing their young. A large workforce of dedicated DoD biologists and natural resource managers implement a vast array of initiatives and management actions to conserve and enhance these valuable habitats and public lands in support of the military testing, training, and operational missions.

The DoD first partnered with the budding national Partners in Flight (PIF) initiative in 1991. Since then, DoD has been a leader in bird conservation as it works to balance conservation actions with military preparedness on its lands. DoD PIF facilitates a wide variety of bird conservation activities and initiatives that include all species of birds.

A network of DoD natural resource professionals work as DoD PIF Representatives to support and communicate with installation personnel, state and regional PIF working groups, non-government organizations, academic researchers, and natural resource consultants to collectively promote and coordinate bird conservation across DoD lands.

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Our Mission

Providing expertise on the management and conservation of birds and their habitats to sustain and enhance the military mission

DoD PIF 2018 Accomplishments



Broad-tailed Hummingbird —
Tiffany Shepherd

- ◆ Held the DoD PIF Annual Strategic Planning Meeting at NAS Key West, Florida in August 2018. The 2018 meeting concentrated on the development and implementation of a focused business plan as a means to increase productivity, as well as to optimize mission support for the Military Services. Outcomes included: commitment to providing tangible products in support of military missions; developing an updated mission statement, DoD PIF tagline, and refreshed logo; and adding a Technical Coordinator. Other highlights included discussions of regional installation actions and issues, recent changes in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) interpretation of incidental take under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and meeting with the NAS Key West installation Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) and Natural Resources teams.
- ◆ Successfully migrated DoD PIF website to DENIX. New website can be found at: <https://denix.osd.mil/dodpif>.
- ◆ Created master DoD PIF subject matter expertise (SME) list, identifying contacts for DoD-wide subjects, geographic area, and avian taxa.
- ◆ Actively engaged with the USFWS Division of Migratory Bird Management to implement policy and guidance, and to discuss issues relevant to managing and monitoring migratory birds on military lands.
- ◆ Participated in the DoD Conservation Committee to ensure migratory bird related activities and issues were properly communicated to the Military Services and Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Natural Resources leadership. Following release of the Department of the Interior Solicitor's M-Opinion reinterpreting incidental take under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), worked with OSD to release guidance directing installations "stay the course" for migratory bird conservation.
- ◆ Continued to lead and engage in a number of working groups to further bird conservation across DoD. Priorities and accomplishments for each of the active 2018 working groups are included below.
- ◆ Provided instruction about the Migratory Bird Treaty Act at a U.S. Naval Civil Engineer Corps Officers School (CECOS) course, and delivered a MBTA training session with USFWS at the Sustaining Military Readiness Conference in St. Louis, MO.*
- ◆ Contributed three articles to the DoD Natural Resources Program's *Natural Selections* newsletter.*
- ◆ Reviewed and ranked all avian-related DoD Legacy Program pre-proposals.

*DoD PIF National Coordinator



Tufted Titmouse — Paul Block

Working Group Updates

Research and Monitoring

Priorities

- ◆ Identify research-related bird conservation issues of highest relevance to mission requirements and installation needs.
- ◆ Develop ideas and projects to facilitate bird and habitat-related research projects important to DoD.
- ◆ Contribute DoD data to regional bird conservation projects.
- ◆ Encourage appropriate collaboration with research efforts (e.g., Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units, Joint Ventures).
- ◆ Develop partnerships with leaders in emerging fields of research, such as the Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program/Environmental Security Technology Certification Program (SERDP/ESTCP), and others.
- ◆ Provide technical assistance to installation biologists so monitoring programs support both the mission and migratory bird and bird habitat management.
- ◆ Promote the use of Coordinated Bird Monitoring (CBM) Plan Technical Recommendations, including standardized protocols and methodologies for bird monitoring, data entry, and archiving.
- ◆ Provide technical assistance to installation biologists so DoD monitoring efforts provide pertinent data for Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents.
- ◆ Identify and resolve questions relevant to avian monitoring on military installations.



Long-tailed Duck — Charlie Van Tassel

- ◆ Participate in Avian Knowledge Network (AKN) through the Federal Avian Data Center (FADC) to access best available information, data, and decision support tools.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Helped develop the Collaborative Wildlife Protection and Recovery Initiative, an interagency team that seeks to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and predictability of conservation, management, and consultation outcomes for federally listed species.
- ◆ Provided general monitoring recommendations to a variety of DoD installations.
- ◆ Initiated a DoD Legacy Program project designed to archive more than 1 million avian monitoring data points from DoD installations into the AKN (<http://www.avianknowledge.net/>) and provided input into design and function of FADC (<https://data.pointblue.org/partners/fedadc/>).



Northern Flicker — Paul Block

Climate Resilience & Adaptation

Priorities

- ◆ Identify bird species that are more vulnerable to or already impacted by changing climatic conditions, and develop recommendations to mitigate that vulnerability, prevent listing, and enable military readiness.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Fact Sheet upon release of guidance on *Climate Adaptation for DoD Natural Resources Managers* (<https://denix.osd.mil/NR/DoDAadaptationGuide/>).
- ◆ Ongoing research to identify species vulnerabilities. This research is 50% complete.



Energy

Priorities

- ◆ Stay abreast of current trends in renewable energy projects on DoD installations.
- ◆ Share information on bird interactions with energy and associated utilities such as power lines, solar facilities, outdoor lighting, and tall towers.
- ◆ Develop and disseminate best management practices to avoid and minimize negative effects of energy utilities and projects on migratory birds.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Developed and submitted a Legacy Program proposal to train DoD personnel on writing avian power line protection plans and implementing avian protection actions.
- ◆ Disseminated USFWS guidelines for tall towers, and information about raptor protection on power lines to the DoD PIF community.
- ◆ Researched best practices for reducing negative effects of bright outdoor lighting on migratory birds.
- ◆ Interacted with DoD PIF community regarding solar facilities on DoD installations, including best management practices.

Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan Guidance

Priorities

- ◆ Ensure migratory birds are sufficiently addressed in INRMPS.
- ◆ Provide up-to-date information on legislative and policy changes affecting management of migratory birds on DoD lands and waters.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Worked with the OSD Natural Resources Program to finalize and disseminate *Addressing Migratory Bird Management in Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans – Guidance*.



Seabirds

Priorities

- ◆ Identify important seabird conservation issues relevant to mission requirements and installation needs.
- ◆ Coordinate with shore and at-sea operators to minimize impacts of operations on seabirds.
- ◆ Develop ideas and projects that help facilitate seabird-related research projects important to DoD.
- ◆ Encourage collaboration with seabird researchers.
- ◆ Provide technical assistance to installation biologists ensuring seabird monitoring programs support both the mission and migratory bird management.

Accomplishments

- ◆ To reduce BASH incidents, military biologists at Wake Island experimented with decoys and acoustic attraction techniques to lure Sooty Terns and Gray-backed Terns to areas with lower BASH risks.



- ◆ Navy biologists worked with stakeholders, including the USFWS and the State of Hawaii, to secure a Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program project for Hawaiian Seabird Conservation on the island of Kauai. This project will support predator control efforts to benefit the listed Newell's Shearwater which, in turn, provides additional assurance that military readiness activities at the Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF) can continue.

Mission-Sensitive Species

Priorities

- ◆ Keep the list of DoD Mission-Sensitive species (species, that if listed, would significantly impact mission) updated so that installations can prioritize monitoring programs and NEPA documents, and guide the development of conservation actions to support Executive Order 13186 (*Responsibilities of Federal Agencies To Protect Migratory Birds*), the associated Memorandum of Understanding with USFWS, and the Migratory Bird “Readiness” Rule.
- ◆ Confirm presence of Mission-Sensitive bird species on specific installations, and determine the degree of impact to installation mission.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Reviewed INRMPs for presence of at-risk bird species on military installations, and degree of potential impacts their listing would have on implementing missions activities.
- ◆ Ranked bird species based on population status and potential sensitivity to listing with frequency of occurrence on military installations and degree of impact to mission if listed.
- ◆ Submitted final ranked list of highest priority birds to the DoD PIF Representatives for review and comment.
- ◆ Provided the draft list to a number of natural resources leads for review and input.



Grasshopper Sparrow — Jeff Bolsinger

National Environmental Policy Act Guidance

Priorities

- ◆ Develop and distribute information about how to properly incorporate migratory birds within NEPA and other planning documents.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Developed a draft document titled, “Recommendations for Addressing Migratory Birds in NEPA Documents.” The working group is amending the document to incorporate new draft NEPA guidance from the USFWS, as well as changes in interpretation of the MBTA due to the 2018 Solicitor’s Opinion on incidental take.
- ◆ The working group continued to coordinate with USFWS Migratory Bird Office on changes to interpretation of incidental take and is conducting additional internal review of the draft document by DoD NEPA subject matter experts.



California Quail — Gary Cottle

Invasive Species

Priorities

- ◆ Provide information and assistance to land managers who are trying to minimize the spread of invasive species to preserve migratory bird habitats.
- ◆ Catalogue invasive species resources and literature, with an ultimate intent to provide a searchable online bibliography.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Worked with National Park Service (NPS) at two units, three military bases, and two State Parks consulting on best management techniques for the control of the invasive plants, *Microstegium*, Chinese Privet, and *Phragmites*.
- ◆ Working group chair spoke at a joint agency (DoD, NPS, State) meeting on Sentinel Landscapes in the mid-Atlantic to discuss the role of invasive species on sensitive plant and animal communities. *Microstegium* is a serious issue in the eastern U.S. with landowners starting to see measureable reductions in Kentucky Warbler, Ovenbird, and, to a lesser extent, Wood Thrush populations.



Acadian Flycatcher—Dana Bradshaw

Education & Outreach

Priorities

- ◆ Educate DoD senior leadership about national and regional bird conservation organizations and initiatives, and how they support mission relevant goals.
- ◆ Inform military and installation civilians about complying with migratory bird policy on DoD lands.
- ◆ Promote and distribute educational and outreach materials about important or timely issues.
- ◆ Develop, distribute, and post success stories about conservation and mission interactions.
- ◆ Participate in educational outreach events to installation personnel, the public, and partners both nationally and internationally.
- ◆ Develop and conduct webinars for DoD personnel on bird conservation topics of mission relevance.
- ◆ Post and/or distribute approved migratory bird guidance documents to inform INRMPS, NEPA, and other planning documents.
- ◆ Provide technical guidance to DoD leadership and resource managers on the implementation of Executive Order 13186, DoD/USFWS MOU, the Migratory Bird “Readiness” Rule, and the DOI Solicitor’s M-opinion.

Accomplishments

- ◆ National Coordinator contributed to the DoD Natural Resources Program’s *Natural Selections* newsletter, including articles on rehabilitating riparian habitat for the Least Bell’s Vireo in California, and the importance of riparian plant communities as a landscape component for both birds and training exercises.
- ◆ Coordinated with U.S. Geological Survey Northern Prairie Research Center to provide a joint DoD NR/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Environmental Stewardship presentation on the role DoD and Civil Works projects play in Whooping Crane migration ecology.
- ◆ Distributed information on migratory bird issues via DoD PIF listserv.
- ◆ Maintained the DoD Bird Conservation Photo “Shutterfly” image library.
- ◆ National Coordinator instructed on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act at a U.S. Navy CECOS course.
- ◆ Hosted bird education and outreach events (e.g., World Migratory Bird Day, National Public Lands Day) throughout the country, highlighting DoD’s commitment to bird conservation.



Snowy Plover—Maggie Lee Post

Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard

Priorities

- ◆ Explore, test, and disseminate information on the newest technologies and management techniques that emphasize non-lethal methods of mitigating BASH.
- ◆ Improve communication, coordination, and cooperation between Air Operations and Natural Resource programs.
- ◆ Coordinate data collection between BASH and Natural Resources programs and promote the integration of BASH plans into INRMPs.
- ◆ Train staff about, and communicate the importance of, reporting all bird strikes and sending strike samples to the Smithsonian Feather Identification Lab.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Completed a USDA-led assessment of the most hazardous species to a safe, military-flight environment.¹ This study mirrors the previous USDA study that identified the most hazardous species using FAA data. This study used Navy and Air Force data for the analysis.
- ◆ National Coordinator led a vegetation height investigation conducted by the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC). This study addresses the most hazardous species (FAA list) and their preferred habitats by Navy Region associated with regional preferences. The study recommends regional vegetation heights designed to be used in the airfield environment to decrease the threat these hazardous species pose. This study was completed in 2018. Looking ahead, the working group will help align ERDC to field-test this study.
- ◆ Participated in the development of new DoD-PIF fact sheet for BASH Program and the administration of the DoD-PIF Photo Library website.

¹ Pfeiffer, M.B., DeVault T.L., & B.F. Blackwell. 2018. Relative wildlife hazard scores for U.S. Navy, Marine Corp, and U.S. Air Force fixed-wing aircraft. U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force. USDA APHIS WS National Wildlife Research Center, Sandusky, Ohio, USA.



Mourning Dove — Paul Block

National Military Fish and Wildlife Association Bird Conservation Working Group

Priorities

- ◆ To maintain an active Bird Conservation Working Group (BCWG) within NMFWA.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Held the 2018 working group meeting, attended by 87 of the group's 203 members, featured discussions on Avian Knowledge Network data products and analysis capabilities, defense-wide projects such as ongoing eagle project with AFCEC, whooping crane management plans for USACE from Friends of the Wild Whoopers, recent changes and strategies on the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and MBTA, and installation success stories.
- ◆ Published articles in several issues of NMFWA's *FAWN* newsletters, including good news stories from installations, press from DoD PIF partners, and requests from the working group. The group's contact list served as an open forum for members to discuss issues installation-to-installation, and promote best management practices.
- ◆ Supported the Avian Knowledge Network's Federal Avian Data Center which includes formatting existing data in the Coordinated Bird Monitoring Database, developing a bulk upload tool and the configuration of protocols within the AKN for upload crosswalks, and began the development of specialized analysis tools.
- ◆ Gathered final recommendations on the eBird White Paper from DoD PIF Steering Committee members. The next phase will be to circulate a draft for Military Service and OSD approval.



Pileated Woodpecker—Tammy Conkle



Northern Harrier — Jim McClellan

List of Representatives

Regional Representatives

Jeff Bolsinger, Fort Drum – NY, VT
Trish Cutler, White Sands Missile Range –
West TX, NM, CO
Jackelyn Ferrer-Perez, Fort Hood – East TX,
AR, LA
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MO, WI
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Beach - CA
Tiffany Shepherd, Luke AFB – AZ
Diane Walsh, MCAS Camp Pendleton –
Marine Corps Western Installations
Kevin Warner, Idaho Army NG – NV, ID, WY,
MT

Michael Wright, NAS Oceana – VA
Tim Burr, Junior Kerns, & Joe Hautzenroder -
Reps Emeriti

Program Representatives

Program Manager — Alison Dalsimer
National Coordinator — Rich Fischer
Technical Coordinator — Elizabeth Neipert

DoD Representatives

Army – Brian Moyer
Air Force – Jason Gibbons
Navy – Tammy Conkle
Marine Corps – Jacqueline Rice
Army National Guard – Jay Rubinoff
Army Corps of Engineers – Rich Fischer
DoD Natural Resources — Alison Dalsimer

USFWS Liaisons

Migratory Birds – Eric Kershner
Endangered Species – vacant
Sikes Act – Jarrad Kosa





Working Group Members

Monitoring & Research

R. Fischer (chair), T. Burr, T. Shepherd, D. Bradshaw, G. Fleming, M. Wright, D. McNaughton, E. Neipert

INRMP Guidance

R. Fischer (chair)

Climate Resilience & Adaptation

D. Walsh (chair), D. Bradshaw

Energy

T. Cutler (chair), D. Walsh

Mission Sensitive Species

G. Fleming (chair), R. Fischer, J. Bolsinger, J. Rubinoff, J. Keating

Seabirds

B. Schallmann (chair), C. Kunz, F. Juola, G. Fleming

Invasive Species

D. Bradshaw (chair), E. Gaydos

Education & Outreach

B. Schallmann (chair), J. Ferrer-Perez, E. Gaydos, T. Burr, T. Shepherd (annual reporting), A. Schultz, D. McNaughton, E. Neipert (website)

BASH

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NEPA Guidance

G. Fleming (chair), J. Rubinoff, J. Hautzenroder, J. Keating

NMFWA Bird Conservation Working Group

G. Fleming (co-chair), A. Schultz (co-chair)