



# Steppingstones



NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
PARTNERS IN FLIGHT PROGRAM

## Where Have the Owls Gone?

Monitoring the population of Western Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*) on Kirtland Air Force Base (KAFB) began in 1998 due to concerns about declining numbers across much of the species' range. Several proposed mechanisms may be involved in this decline, including high predation rates, habitat loss, contaminant exposure, military activities, drought, migration, over-winter habitats, and the decrease in burrowing mammal populations.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists Burrowing Owls as a Bird of Conservation Concern in the Southwest Region (USFWS 2008). In New Mexico, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) lists them as a species of greatest conservation need (NMDGF 2006), and both the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) list them as a sensitive species (USFS 2007, BLM 2011).

Research on KAFB examines population status, reproductive success, site fidelity, predation, and prey availability by comparing different base habitats. Scientists conduct dispersal studies to learn more about



*Banded adult Burrowing Owl with insect prey on Kirtland Air Force Base  
Photo: Octavio and Kirsten Cruz*

Although the KAFB population status has varied over the 14 years of study, recent trends have caused alarm. The number of breeding pairs, nest success, and productivity has declined over time. In 2011, the number of owls and their reproductive rates were well below average, and were the lowest since monitoring of this species began. With only 14 pairs breeding on KAFB in 2011, 86 percent failed to produce fledglings.

To investigate the high rate of nest failure, scientists installed cameras at nest burrows during the 2011 breeding season to gain qualitative behavioral information at nest sites. These motion-activated cameras recorded ten-second digital videos each time the sensors detected movement. Cameras recorded images in color during daylight hours and in night vision during nighttime hours. These cameras were located at five active burrows in territories throughout the KAFB owl habitat.

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post breeding owl usage on KAFB and researchers conduct an annual monitoring study to continue efforts to assess population trends and productivity of this species on KAFB. Long-term Burrowing Owl population monitoring projects are rare, and this study provides unique insight into population trends of this species of concern.

## Where Have the Owls Gone? (cont.)

The recorded videos documented many breeding behaviors from the adult owls, including courtship, prey exchanges, and copulation. These videos also recorded the owls bringing prey into burrows to feed their young underground and to nestlings around the burrows. Scientists documented a variety of prey during these instances, including different species of insects, lizards, and birds. Videos of nestling activity around the burrow showed running, hopping, wing-flapping and other social behaviors of this charismatic owl. Cameras also recorded many interspecific interactions between Burrowing Owls and various species of songbirds, rabbits, and prairie dogs.

Videos also recorded disturbance. Low impact human activity, including jogging, walking, and biking near the burrows, showed evidence of disturbance to these owls. Cameras documented evidence of high levels of disturbance from dogs in nest areas and recorded nestlings responding to threats and to the alarm calls from adults.

All five burrow cameras also recorded high levels of badger and coyote activity. Badger activity at nest burrows was greatest during the period after hatching occurred, while the young were still underground. During this time, videos documented badger predation of young owls at three burrows. Video footage showed the adult owls vigorously defending their burrows with aerial attacks, but they were unsuccessful. Night videos documented a coyote preying on two young nestlings, during subsequent nights. Videos also confirmed that an adult coyote preyed upon an adult female Burrowing Owl.

In 2011, the percent of Burrowing Owl nest failure on KAFB due to predation was 58 percent. Badgers preyed upon young nestlings from six different burrows. An additional nesting pair also failed as a result of predation; their first nesting attempt failed due to rattlesnake egg predation and their second attempt failed after coyotes preyed upon the nestlings. Researchers could not determine the causes of failure for the remaining nesting pairs. Other known

Year	Number of breeding pairs	Number of pairs that fledged young	Total number of fledglings	Average fledglings per breeding pair	Average fledglings per successful pair	Nest success rate
1998	52	44	137	2.6	3.1	85%
1999	48	39	125	2.6	3.2	81%
2000	33	23	90	2.7	3.9	70%
2001	20	17	84	4.2	4.9	85%
2002	22	14	37	1.7	2.6	64%
2003	16	13	60	3.8	4.6	81%
2004	19	14	54	2.8	3.9	74%
2005	24	17	93	3.9	5.5	71%
2006	41	23	103	2.5	4.5	56%
2007	34	28	157	4.6	5.6	82%
2008	49	33	113	2.3	3.4	67%
2009	34	22	61	1.8	2.8	65%
2010	26	12	36	1.4	3.0	46%
2011	14	2	11	0.8	5.5	14%
Average	31	22	83	2.7	4.0	67%

*Summary of the Burrowing Owl population trends and reproductive rates from 1998 to 2011 on Kirtland Air Force Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

causes of nest failure documented in previous seasons of research on KAFB include human disturbance (e.g., vehicle collisions, damage to burrows, mowing, prairie dog control, and heavy activity at or near burrows) and proximity to other nesting owls.

High predation rates are often cited as a possible cause for the decline of the Burrowing Owl. Possible Burrowing Owl predators in New Mexico include snakes, badgers, coyotes, bobcats, domestic dogs and cats, diurnal raptors, and other owl species. In addition to snakes, badgers, and coyotes, Cooper's Hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*), Swainson's Hawks (*Buteo swainsoni*), Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Ferruginous Hawks (*Buteo regalis*), Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Merlins (*Falco columbarius*), Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*), Prairie Falcons (*Falco mexicanus*), Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*), and Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) have all been recorded living in Burrowing Owl habitat on KAFB.

Burrowing Owl monitoring on KAFB will continue in the 2012 breeding season, with the addition of a new project to survey for Burrowing Owl predators. This project will help determine the abundance and distribution of known and potential Burrowing Owl predators during the breeding season, and examine their impact on the owl population at KAFB.

*- Kirsten Cruz-McDonnell, Envirological Services, Inc.,  
Octavio Cruz-Carretero, Envirological Services, Inc., and  
Carol A. Finley, Kirtland Air Force Base*

## New Partners in Flight Strategic Plan

The Partners in Flight (PIF) Steering Committee held a facilitated strategic planning session on September 11-12, 2011, near Omaha, NE. The 21 participants reaffirmed the value and centrality of PIF's mission and goals, and drafted several strategies for action. PIF identifies, refines, and prioritizes specific tasks to implement these strategies. The timeline for accomplishing these tasks should take a maximum of 36 months, which is substantially shorter than what is typical for this sort of exercise. We believe that this short timeline will lead to identifying more specific tasks that we can realistically accomplish and fewer tasks that are too grand to achieve.



*The Red Knot makes one of the longest yearly migrations of any bird, traveling 9,300 miles from its Arctic breeding grounds to Tierra del Fuego in South America.*

*Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

Participants drafted strategies for PIF to:

- ✦ institutionalize PIF landbird priorities and objectives into agency resource management and evaluation through PIF science-based tools within the planning and implementation process;
- ✦ incorporate effective evaluation programs into local, regional, and international conservation efforts to track progress, identify gaps, and prioritize needs;
- ✦ increase our capacity to support full lifecycle conservation by identifying and addressing limiting factors, supporting international partnerships, and leveraging and securing additional funding sources;
- ✦ develop a communications strategy to effectively deliver PIF conservation priorities and messages to key audiences;
- ✦ strategically align Joint Ventures (JVs) and PIF science and implementation actions to enhance shared objectives and conservation goal achievement;

- ✦ integrate PIF science-based tools within key partnerships (e.g., JVs, federal resource management agencies) at relevant scales (e.g., local, management unit, Bird Conservation Region);
- ✦ align education and outreach programs (e.g., International Migratory Bird Day, bird observatories, Audubon centers) to strategically address landbird conservation priorities;
- ✦ integrate landbird conservation priorities with private lands conservation programs (e.g., Farm Bill conservation programs, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Cooperative Extension programs); and
- ✦ reduce sources of landbird mortality through evaluation of cumulative effects and relative importance of anthropogenic sources of mortality of landbirds (e.g., energy development) and create a strategy to address the greatest threats.



The penultimate draft of this plan was widely distributed on March 1, 2012, and was discussed during various committee meetings at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Atlanta, March 10-15. If you are not on one of the PIF listservs and would like to receive a copy of the Strategic Plan for review, please contact Terry Rich ([terry\\_rich@fws.gov](mailto:terry_rich@fws.gov)).

*- Terry Rich, Partners in Flight*

### Call for Examples!

Send **program-wide NR accomplishments** to use in speeches, testimonies, etc. to [DoDNRConservation@bah.com](mailto:DoDNRConservation@bah.com).

- ✦ Provides and protects access to land, sea, and air assets through regulatory compliance;
- ✦ Meets missionscape requirements for military use;
- ✦ Protects endangered and threatened species, and avoids critical habitat designation through effective management;
- ✦ Avoids or minimizes adverse regulatory actions;
- ✦ Seeks to minimize restrictions/encroachment to testing and training;
- ✦ Ensures sustainable use of lands and no net loss of wetlands;
- ✦ Promotes enhanced public awareness of DoD's mission, its requirements and its accomplishments; and
- ✦ Provides recreational opportunities for soldiers, their families and the public.

## Partnership Focus: Cornell Lab of Ornithology



The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, founded in 1915 by Arthur Allen, is a uniquely positioned research and conservation organization that sits

within a major university. Our mission, “to understand and conserve the earth’s biodiversity through research, education, and citizen science, focused on birds”, speaks to our parallel long-term goals of advancing the science of ornithology, while communicating about science and the wonder of birds in an accessible way to the general public. As a conservation organization, we advocate for the use of sound science in policy decision-making and resource management, and for the importance of birds as indicators of environmental health and human quality of life. Although the Lab is an academic unit of Cornell University, we operate as a non-profit organization supported by membership (roughly 45,000), private donations, and grants and contracts from foundations, government agencies, and commercial entities. Our home since 2006 is the world-class Johnson Center for Birds and Biodiversity, built next to Sapsucker Woods in Ithaca, NY, and houses an interactive visitor center as well as rotating art exhibits.

The Cornell Lab focuses its science and outreach activities in nine program areas ([www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu)), including basic and applied research in bird population studies, evolutionary biology, bioacoustics, conservation science, and information science. Our education program integrates birds into Kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade school science curricula as well as both global and local outreach. A unique program in Citizen-Science engages more than 200,000 participants of all skill levels in projects ranging from simple bird observations (eBird, [www.eBird.org](http://www.eBird.org)) to complex studies of nesting biology and habitat fragmentation. Another signature Cornell Lab program is the Macaulay Library, which archives and makes available the world’s largest collection of natural sounds and videos of animals. Our newest program is a state-of-the-art Multimedia production unit that leverages the Lab’s audio and video resources into compelling communications pieces ranging from pressing conservation issues (e.g. *State of the Birds*, [www.stateofthebirds.org/2009/](http://www.stateofthebirds.org/2009/)) to training for birders and scientists (e.g., All About Birds, [www.allaboutbirds.org/page.aspx?pid=1270&ac=ac](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/page.aspx?pid=1270&ac=ac)), to the absolute wonder of birds (Cornell Lab of Ornithology, [www.youtube.com/LabofOrnithology](http://www.youtube.com/LabofOrnithology)). As part of our overall communications effort, the Lab publishes the award-winning *Living Bird* magazine and offers a wide

variety of web resources, including Birds of North America Online ([www.bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/](http://www.bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/)).

Across all of the Cornell Lab programs run the themes of cutting-edge scientific research, training of both professional and amateur scientists, innovative technology development and application, acquisition and management of massively large databases, engagement of diverse audiences, and global reach in conservation through strategic partnerships. Often serving as the interface between science and policy, Cornell Lab scientists and educators play leadership roles in numerous conservation partnership initiatives, including Partners in Flight, North American Bird Conservation Initiative, U.S. State of the Birds, and Bird Education Alliance for Conservation. In addition, the Lab’s Neotropical Conservation Initiative focuses on training, bird monitoring, and conservation activities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean regions.



*The Henslow’s Sparrow, a DoD PIF species of concern, breeds in weedy grasslands of the east-central United States.*

*Photo: U.S. Forest Service*

Among the Cornell Lab’s most valued partners in research and conservation is the Department of Defense (DoD). Through DoD’s Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP) and Legacy Resource Management (Legacy) Programs, the Lab has been working over the past decade to design and develop technologies and analysis systems for remote acoustic monitoring for hard-to-detect birds and other wildlife. These efforts build on previous and ongoing work with the U.S. Navy to develop and apply passive acoustic methods for monitoring marine mammal populations on ocean basin scales, and studying potential effects of

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## Partnership Focus: Cornell Lab of Ornithology (cont.)

anthropogenic noise on baleen whales. The terrestrial monitoring work began at Fort Hood, TX, where a team from Cornell's Bioacoustics Research Program sought to develop a monitoring system for the federally endangered Black-capped Vireo and Golden-cheeked Warbler in inaccessible portions of the base due to unexploded ordnance (UXO). The team developed the first prototype of an automated remote recording unit (ARU), as well as software to extract and classify the target bird songs within the ambient recordings. The most innovative aspect of this project was the use of a radio-controlled, helium-filled balloon that carried the microphone across vast UXO zones, resulting in the recording and accurate census of hundreds of vireos and warblers.

Building on the success of the work at Fort Hood, the Cornell Lab partnered with DoD on a series of Legacy projects to further develop and implement remote acoustic monitoring on and around military bases. From 2005-2007, we established a transect of six bases in the northeastern U.S., from Fort Drum, NY, to Patuxent Naval Air Station, MD, where we deployed ARUs programmed to record the calls of nocturnally migrating birds. The goal of this study was to test a system that could monitor fall and spring migration in the airspace above these military bases, relate the abundance and composition of bird migration to military use of this airspace (to assess potential bird-airplane strikes), and to assess the importance of military lands as potential stopover sites for migrant birds

throughout the region. During the same time period, we collaborated with Rich Fischer, Army Corps of Engineers, on a study of bird migration along the Lower Colorado River near Yuma, AZ. We also conducted test deployments to record nocturnal migration at additional western military bases, including Yakima Training Center, WA, Camp Pendleton, CA, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, CA, and began deployments to monitor nocturnally calling Whip-poor-wills – a species of conservation concern at Fort Drum. The success of this latter work, which included the development of highly accurate detection software, led to the expansion of surveys for the Mexican Whip-poor-will and Mexican Spotted Owl at Fort Huachuca, AZ.

In addition to providing vital support and partnerships during all phases of our acoustic monitoring research, DoD partnered with the Cornell Lab to create a controlled-access DoD portal to eBird ([www.ebird.org/content/dod](http://www.ebird.org/content/dod)). This portal archives bird observations and survey data from military lands in an easily accessible database, and combines them with bird data from surrounding regions. Both DoD eBird and acoustic monitoring were integrated into the overall bird monitoring strategy for DoD, which Cornell Lab scientists helped develop. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is proud to host the annual DoD Partners in Flight meeting in May 2012.

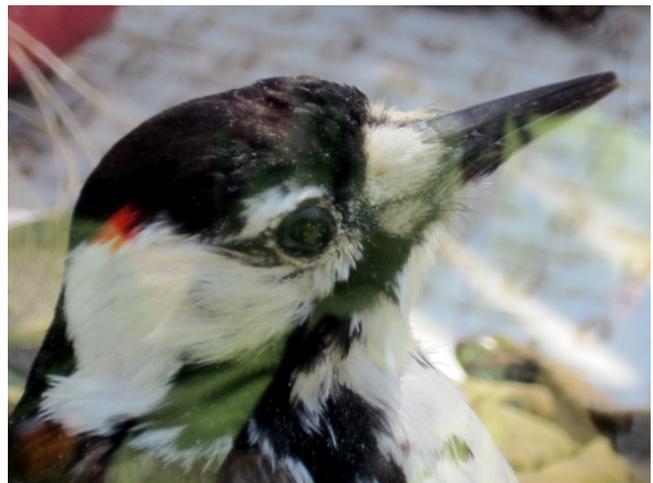
- Ken Rosenberg, Director of Conservation Science at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

## Policy Perch

I saw my first Spring Robin on Leap Day and heard a chorus of Spring Peepers the next evening, sure signs that a rush of other spring activities are upon us. Management reviews, legislative hearings, budget battles, DoD Legacy Resource Management Program (Legacy) project awards, and National Military Fish and Wildlife Association and DoD Partners in Flight (PIF) meetings.

You can read updates on some of these broader DoD Natural Resources Conservation Compliance Program topics in my *Naturally Speaking* column in the Winter 2012 *Natural Selections* newsletter, "More Challenges, More Oversight, Fewer Resources." Subjects covered include budget, metrics and management reviews, candidate species, and climate change Impacts. Hence, in this column I'll focus on more bird-centric topics. To read the full article please visit:

[www.dodnaturalresources.net/Resources.html](http://www.dodnaturalresources.net/Resources.html).



*An endangered male Red-cockaded Woodpecker seen at Fort Benning, GA, during the 2012 National Military Fish and Wildlife Association Training Workshop field trip.*

*Photo: Peter Boice*

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## Policy Perch (cont.)

### New DoD PIF Fact Sheets

This new series of eight fact sheets summarizes the key focus areas from the *DoD PIF Strategic Plan* that support and enhance the military mission: stewardship, partnerships/cooperation, communications, habitat and species management, bird/animal aircraft strike hazard, monitoring, research, and information and education. Each fact sheet describes the focus area goal, provides background information, and summarizes key priorities. Although the updated *Strategic Plan* remains on hold, we felt it important to share some of the Plan's key elements.



develop guidelines for incidental take permits for bald and golden eagles. I expect this may change once ongoing wind energy permitting issues have been resolved. Until that happens, our office has little support to develop proactive DoD policy.

### DoD Legacy Program Update

We recently received final products for three bird-related Legacy projects. Each of these has been posted on DENIX and the DoD PIF Web site:

- ✦ Migratory linkages of Burrowing Owls on DoD installations (Project 09-243);
- ✦ Assessing BASH risk potential of migrating and breeding Osprey in the Mid-Atlantic Chesapeake Bay Region (Project 08-292); and
- ✦ Tracing the geographic origin of migratory birds breeding on DoD lands using stable isotopes (Project 09-427).

### Endangered Species Day

The DoD Natural Resources Conservation Compliance Program will join the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Endangered Species Coalition, and other groups and agencies at the Endangered Species Day Festival at the U.S. Botanic Garden on Friday, May 18, 2012. While this relatively new celebration, created by the U.S. Senate in May 2006, might appear to compete with International Migratory Bird Day for scarce outreach resources, I feel it's a complementary option to reach out to your surrounding communities. This is especially true since efforts to protect federally-listed birds and their habitats have dominated DoD's endangered species expenditures for the past 20 years; 45 percent of our total expenditures over this period (\$380 million) have gone to some 69 listed bird species. Also, eight of the top ten species (by cumulative expenditures) and four of the top seven new candidate species (see below) are birds. MG Mike Lehnert, USMC (ret) provides more detail on Endangered Species Day in his article, "Not Such an Unlikely Alliance," in the Winter 2012 *Natural Selections*.

### Candidate Species

As I mention in *Natural Selections*, the Multi-District Litigation court settlement between USFWS and the Center for Biological Diversity and Wild Earth Guardians requires USFWS to evaluate 251 candidate species by 2017 for potential addition to the Endangered Species list. The Military Departments have identified 60 of these species on or adjacent to DoD lands, including nine with the potential to impact military activities, if listed. Four of these species are birds—Greater Sage Grouse, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red Knot, and Streaked Horned Lark. We are working with both the USFWS and the Military Services to identify ways to enhance information flow and identify alternative means to protect both species and the military mission.

### Bald and Golden Eagle Guidance

There's been little recent movement from USFWS to

In addition, we've finally been able to release FY2012 funds for about 40 natural and cultural resources projects. Among those funded projects, the following are bird-related:

- ✦ Habitat use at multiple scales by Pinyon-juniper birds;
- ✦ Great Basin bird species-at-risk and invasive species management partnership;
- ✦ Meta-population dynamics of Le Conte's Thrasher: a species at risk on three southwestern military installations;
- ✦ Implementation of the DoD Coordinated Bird Monitoring Plan;
- ✦ Bird population estimates for priority species on military installations;
- ✦ Identifying migratory routes and wintering grounds of Burrowing Owls that breed on DoD installations throughout the western United States; and
- ✦ Assessing the importance of wetlands on DoD installations for the persistence of wetland-dependent birds in North America.

I hope to get approval for releasing additional funds within the next 4-6 weeks.

These are extremely challenging times for all of us – natural resources professionals, military testers and trainers, budget officials, and regulators, to name just a few. Please let me know if you see ways in which my colleagues and I in the various Headquarters offices can help you meet your mission support and stewardship responsibilities.

- Peter Boice, Deputy Director, Natural Resources

## Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative

All of the countries in the Western Hemisphere share a common biological, cultural, and economic heritage — our migratory birds, whales, bats, sea turtles, and butterflies. As these species' ranges span international boundaries, conservation stakeholders throughout the Americas need to work closely together to ensure the protection and conservation of their myriad of habitats and migratory routes.



### Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative

WHMSI is a non-binding mechanism that in no way addresses claims of sovereignty over disputed territories among any interested states. Its principles and objectives represent a consensus among all participants. WHMSI is non-prescriptive and was created to facilitate cooperation among both governmental and non-governmental interests throughout the hemisphere. Therefore, WHMSI focuses only on migratory species conservation matters of broad common interest, particularly those which will deliver positive results on the ground.

The Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative's (WHMSI) mission is to significantly contribute to the conservation of the migratory species of the Western Hemisphere by strengthening cooperation and communication among states, countries, international initiatives, and civil society, and by expanding constituencies, awareness, and political support. All countries in the Western Hemisphere are parties to international conventions, treaties, and accords by which they are committed to the conservation of migratory species. WHMSI assists countries in fulfilling this commitment.

Wildlife agency directors and other senior officials established WHMSI when they gathered in Chile in 2003 as a cooperative hemispheric mechanism to conserve shared migratory species. Based on the priorities identified at that meeting, WHMSI seeks to:

- ✦ build country capacity to conserve and manage migratory wildlife;
- ✦ improve hemispheric communication on conservation issues of common interest;
- ✦ strengthen the information exchange needed for informed decision making; and
- ✦ provide a forum through which emerging issues can be identified and addressed.



*The Rusty Blackbird, a DoD PIF priority species, is one of North America's most rapidly declining species. It spends both the breeding and non-breeding seasons on military lands.*  
Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



*The Long-billed Curlew, a DoD PIF priority species, is North America's largest shorebird. It breeds in the grasslands of the Great Plains and Great Basin.*

Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The WHMSI web site offers a number of resources, including a database of organizations and experts working to conserve migratory species in the Americas that is searchable by organization, country, and taxa. Organizations have the option of adding resources (e.g., project results, reports, monitoring programs) that WHMSI users can access. The Department of Defense is currently listed as a partner organization. If you have projects or monitoring programs that you would like included on this resource, contact Chris Eberly. For more information, see [www.whmsi.net/index.cfm](http://www.whmsi.net/index.cfm).

- Chris Eberly,  
DoD PIF Program Coordinator

## View From the Eyrie

I hope you all had a great time at the National Military Fish and Wildlife Association (NMFWA) Annual Training Workshop in Atlanta, GA! We held a DoD Partners in Flight (PIF) meeting as a forum for information exchange on key issues related to bird conservation and sustaining the military mission, including eagles, mission at-risk species, DoD Legacy Resource Management Program (Legacy) and Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP)/Environmental Security Technology Certification Program (ESTCP) funding, International Migratory Bird Day, Endangered Species Day, and the national PIF Strategic Work Plan.



*During the NMFWA Workshop, participants went on a field trip to Fort Benning. Fort Benning supports the second largest red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) population in Georgia and is considered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a recovery population for the species. Fort Benning's RCW population continues to be monitored, and on-site personnel utilize prescribed burning and forestry practices as the main habitat management tools for the species. Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

During the weekend prior to the NMFWA Workshop, the International PIF Steering Committee held its spring meeting in Athens, GA, where participants finalized a new Strategic Work Plan. The Plan, initiated at the fall meeting in Nebraska, currently has three main goals to address over the next three years:

1. Increase the capacity to support full life-cycle conservation;
2. Integrate and institutionalize the PIF approach, priorities, and objectives into agency, Joint Venture, and private land management and conservation systems; and
3. Expand PIF's constituencies, audiences, and partners through more effective communications, education, and outreach about PIF conservation priorities and messages.

DoD PIF is holding its annual planning meeting in May at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Cornell Lab scientists will give presentations about Legacy- and SERDP-funded projects. To help DoD PIF become more fully versed on full-life cycle stewardship, Peter Marra from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center will give a presentation and lead a discussion on what this means for DoD resource managers. Other key topics will include monitoring implementation and priority species, Legacy and SERDP funding, and strategic performance goals and measures.

We will finalize the DoD Coordinated Bird Monitoring Plan in the very near future, and will post it on the DoD PIF website. Currently, we are working with the American Bird Conservancy, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the Great Basin Bird Observatory on a Legacy-funded project to develop population estimates for the highest priority bird species at each military installation. This resource provides natural resources managers with a tool to better identify and prioritize monitoring activities for those species which, if current population trends continue, could become federally-listed in the future. These species are consequently those that have the most potential to negatively impact the Military's training mission. We hope this tool helps DoD resource managers apply scarce monitoring resources to the species that need it the most, protecting the future mission through fewer listings of species under the Endangered Species Act. The current list of priority species is available as a DoD PIF Priority Species for Monitoring fact sheet at [www.dodpif.org/publications/factsheets.php](http://www.dodpif.org/publications/factsheets.php). Installation population estimates for these priority species are forthcoming.

Lastly, I am pleased to see the DoD Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) effort moving forward. DoD PIF and DoD PARC have much synergy in our missions. While we focus on different taxa, we both strive to sustain and enhance the military mission by conserving priority species and their habitats. DoD PIF will continue to work with and support DoD PARC in their ongoing efforts to provide resources to assist DoD personnel in doing their jobs more efficiently. We hope the successes of DoD PIF will lead to similar progress for DoD PARC and other taxonomic groups (e.g., bats) within DoD.

- Chris Eberly, DoD PIF  
Coordinator



## Bird Conservation Initiative Updates

### Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds

Executive Order (EO) 13186, *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, established the Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds (Council) and identified four duties related to implementing the EO:

1. Share the latest resource information to assist in the conservation and management of migratory birds;
2. Develop an annual report of accomplishments and recommendations related to the EO;
3. Foster partnerships to further the goals of the EO; and
4. Select an annual recipient of a Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award for contributions to the protection of migratory birds.

Mr. John Conger, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Installations & Environment), represents DoD on the Council, and Mr. Chris Eberly and Mr. Peter Boice provide staff support to Mr. Conger. The Council will hold its annual meeting on April 4, where they will review Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award nominations and select the winner.

A Council subcommittee is currently preparing the first annual report. Various agencies were asked to complete a survey with questions related to implementing the EO. Each agency received respective survey results, but the report will only present information relative to all of the agencies combined. The intent of the report is not to single out an agency (for positive or negative reasons), but rather to allow the Council to see how well agencies as a whole are implementing the EO. The report will be released at the Council's April meeting. Additional subcommittees are working on:

- ✦ **Conservation Measures** – compiling existing measures (best management practices) and making these available for agencies to view and use.
- ✦ **Avian Resources** – providing a mechanism for agency personnel to search available bird data resources.

### Partners in Flight

#### Steering Committee

The Partners in Flight (PIF) Steering Committee is finalizing a Strategic Work Plan. This process began last September at a meeting in Omaha, NE. A follow up spring meeting was held in Athens, GA, March 10-11. The Plan focuses on tasks that can be completed in the next 36 months. The Committee is currently reviewing the initial list of nine goals; each goal has several specific tasks aligned to it. Implementing the priorities and methodologies of the PIF planning process into agency planning and management is a key focus of the Plan.

#### Federal Agency Committee

The federal agencies participating in PIF are evaluating the effectiveness of current activities, including how this committee can best complement the EO Council and the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. Other actions include stepping down the 2011 *State of the Birds* report on public lands within individual agencies.

#### Science Committee

The Science Committee continues to meet several times a year. Committee priorities include the Species Assessment Database, Neotropical Birds species accounts, full life-cycle modeling, population objectives and Joint Venture (JV) science support, North American Wetlands Conservation Act maps for landbirds, the 2012 North American Ornithological Conference symposium, *State of the Birds* 2011 step-down products, Audubon/PIF forest bird Important Bird Areas, and maintaining/improving communications with Canada and Mexico.

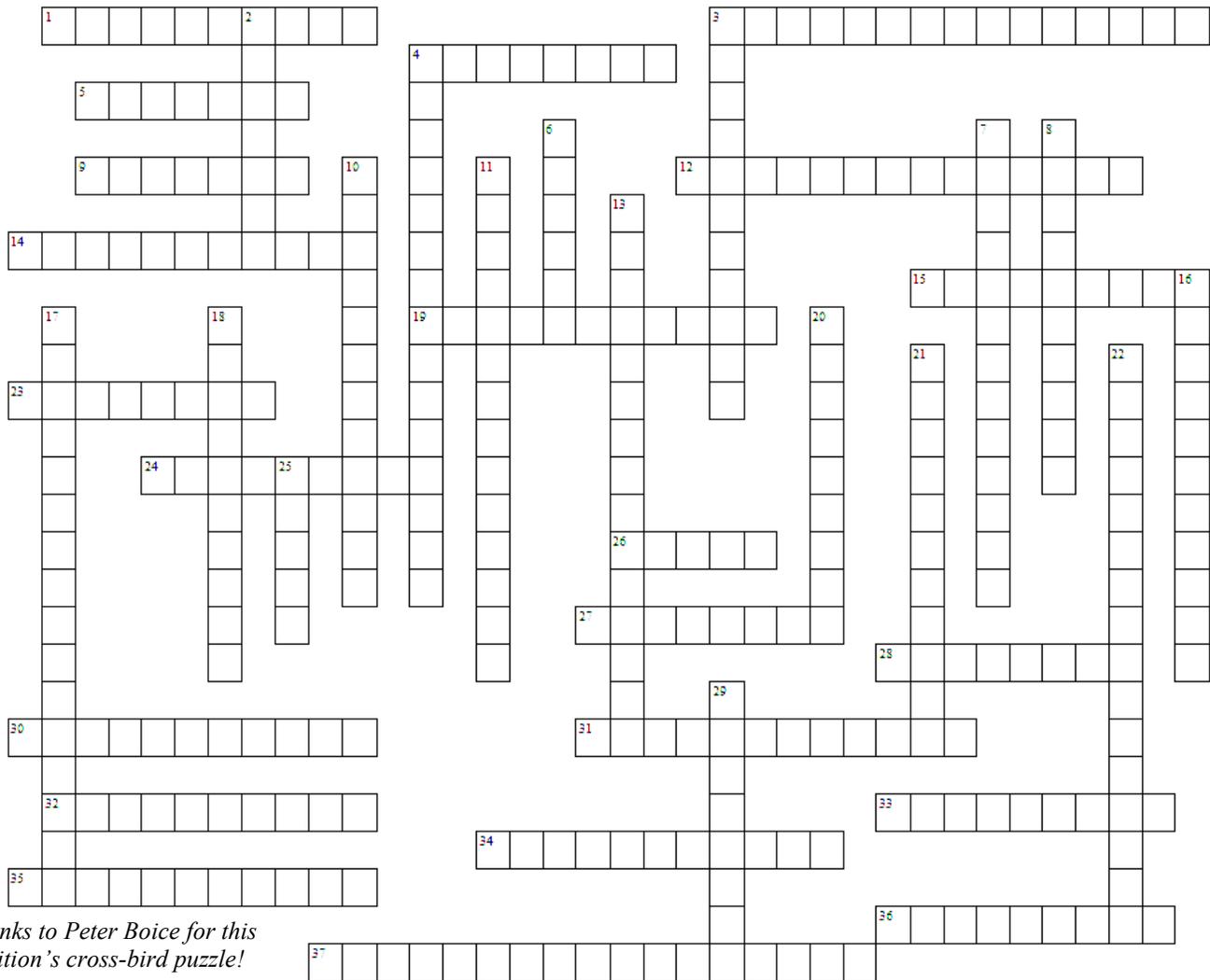
The new Tri-Initiative Science Team (TRIST), created to facilitate scientific communication and collaboration among the bird habitat JVs and the landbird, shorebird, and waterbird conservation partnerships in North America, has an initial focus on population objectives, effectiveness monitoring, and geographic priorities.

### North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI)

The U.S. NABCI Committee met in Arlington, VA in January. Mr. Paul Schmidt, recently retired from his position as Assistant Director of Migratory Birds for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), was announced as the new PIF representative to the U.S. NABCI Committee. Mr. Schmidt is now the Chief Conservation Officer for Ducks Unlimited. Current members of the U.S. NABCI Committee include federal agencies (e.g., USFWS, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Defense, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency), state agency groups (e.g., Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies [AFWA], Resident Game Bird and Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Working Groups of AFWA), non-governmental groups (e.g., American Bird Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, Ducks Unlimited), and bird initiatives (e.g., PIF, North American Waterfowl Management Plan, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, Waterbird Conservation for the Americas, National Flyway Council, JVs).

- Chris Eberly,  
DoD Partners in Flight

## Cross-Bird Puzzle: Birds in Song



*Thanks to Peter Boice for this edition's cross-bird puzzle!*

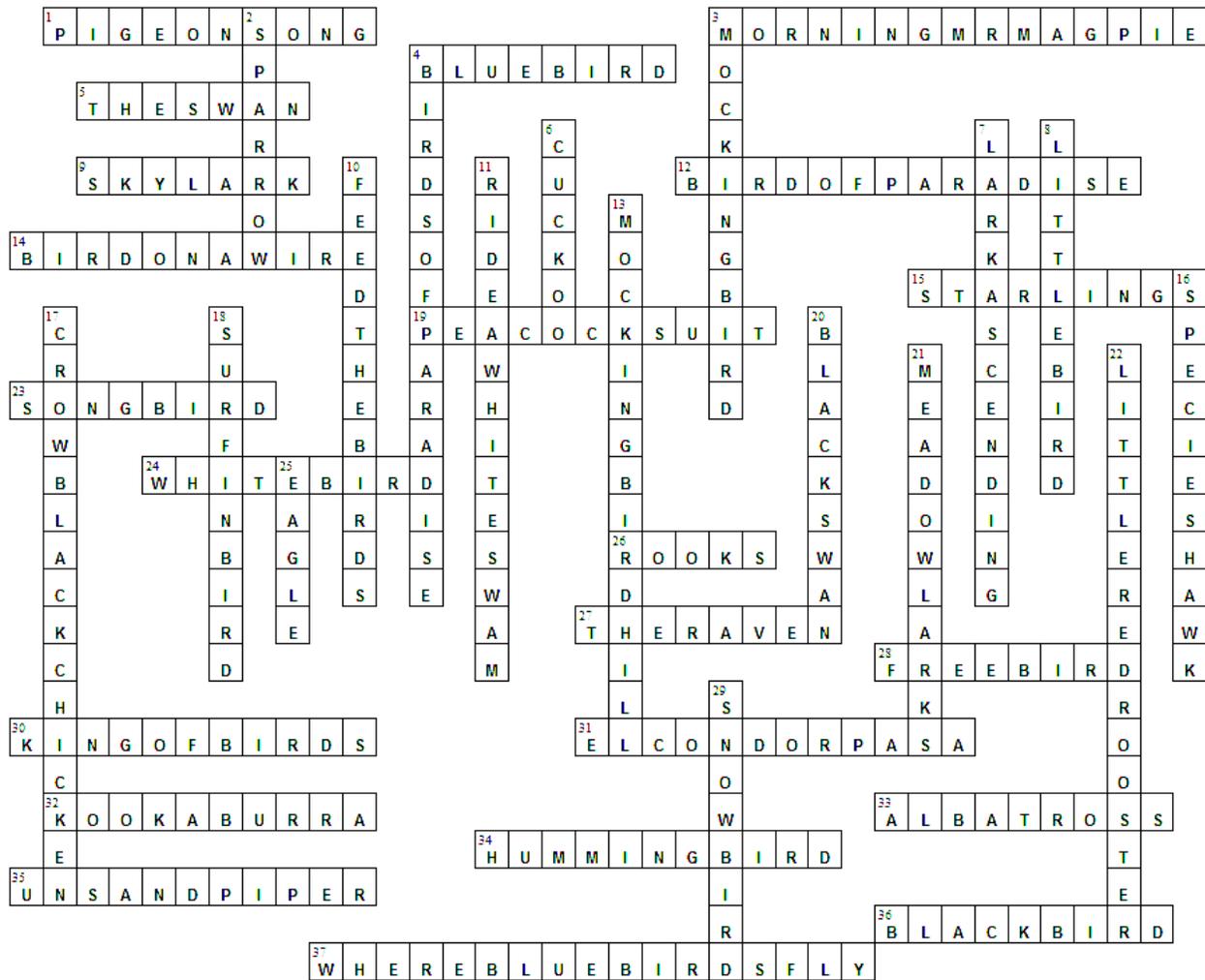
### Across

1. Alela Diane
3. Radiohead
4. Buffalo Springfield
5. Saint Saens
9. Aretha Franklin
12. Snowy White
14. Leonard Cohen
15. Elbow
19. Paul Weller
23. Oasis
24. It's A Beautiful Day
26. Shearwater
27. The Stranglers
28. Lynyrd Skynyrd
30. REM
31. Simon and Garfunkel
32. Australian Nursery Rhyme
33. Fleetwood Mac
34. John Mayer
35. Kyuss
36. The Beatles
37. Radiohead

### Down

2. Simon and Garfunkel, aslo Marvin Gaye
3. Eminem
4. Little Jimmy Dickens
6. Long John Baldry, also Kaleidoscope
7. Vaughn Williams
8. The White Stripes
10. My Fair Lady
11. T Rex
13. Burl Ives
16. The Guess Who
17. New Lost City Ramblers
18. The Trashmen
20. Thom Yorke
21. Fleet Foxes
22. TheRollingStones
25. ABBA
29. Anne Murray

## Cross-Bird Puzzle Answer Key



### CONTRIBUTING TO THE DoD PIF NEWSLETTER IS EASY!

*Want to highlight bird conservation efforts on your installation?  
Have a great bird image you just have to share?  
Send your ideas and images to Chris or Erica.*



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