
BIRD CALLS--THE NEWSLETTER OF THE POLICY COUNCIL OF AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY

Bird Calls, Vol. 1, No. 2.

A Message from George H. Fenwick, President of American Bird Conservancy: The staff and Board of American Bird Conservancy are proud of our role in bringing conservationists together in efforts to restore and maintain our avian populations. Thanks to your efforts, the Policy Council is a growing force in bird conservation and now numbers 68 member organizations. As you can see from the articles in Bird Calls, ABC, the Policy Council and its member organizations are involved in nearly every major issue affecting birds. We are pleased to send you this issue of Bird Calls and encourage you to circulate it widely. I ask your assistance in: 1) spreading the word on the issues in Bird Calls and writing or calling the officials mentioned in the articles; 2) attending the Policy Council meetings, the next one in Washington, DC on December 9; 3) providing articles for this newsletter on issues with which you are involved; and 4) recruiting new member organizations for the Policy Council. Please feel free to call or E-mail Gerald Winegrad, ABC's Vice President for Policy, about any bird conservation issue or Policy Council matter. I want to give a special thanks to Rebekah Creshkoff of the Linnaean Society who, as a volunteer, assembles this newsletter. Let us here from you as to the contents and format of Bird Calls. To comment or submit an article, contact Rebekah at 212-493-3525 or <rcreshkoff@mindspring.com>.

George H. Fenwick,

President

American Bird Conservancy



HOMER SPIT PRESERVATION

On October 3rd, the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) Trustees Council agreed to purchase 107 acres of habitat along Kachemak Bay on the Homer Spit and Beluga Slough in Alaska. Hosting more than 100,000 migrating shorebirds each spring, this location has been recognized as a site of international importance. This purchase for \$1 million was one of two proposals presented to EVOS that excited the most public interest. Congratulations to all on the American Bird Conservancy's Policy Council who wrote letters and made phone calls supporting this initiative. Contact: Jim Corven, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, 508-224-6521 or <jmcorven@manomet.org>.

SALTON SEA BIRD KILLS

Renowned as a premier birding hot spot, southern California's Salton Sea is a migration stopover and wintering ground for more than two million birds,

hosting the highest concentrations in North America of several species. Formed in 1905 when the Colorado River burst its canal and flooded the alkaline basin of the Imperial Valley, the lake has no outlet and is 25 percent saltier than the Pacific Ocean. At 227 feet below sea level, temperatures exceed 100 degrees for half the year; annual rainfall is less than an inch. In the past decade, the 380-square-mile lake has seen recurrent, massive die-offs of fish and water birds. In 1992, an estimated 150,000 eared grebes died of unknown causes. In 1996, avian botulism killed an estimated 20,000 birds, including 1,200 federally endangered California brown pelicans and 10-12% of the population of American white pelicans west of the Rockies. This year, nearly 6,000 birds died from avian botulism and Newcastle's disease. The '96 and '97 events were associated with a die-off in tilapia, an introduced African fish that is now the predominant species in the lake; diseased fish are suspected to be the source of the botulism toxin. *Vibrio* bacteria may have caused some of the fish mortalities; a lethal parasite of warm-water marine fish has also been identified recently. Under closed conditions, such as aquaria and the Salton Sea, *Amyloodinium ocellatum* can build up to extremely high levels; healthy fish can die after only 12 hours of exposure. The parasite lives only in high-saline conditions. Now that it is present and able to reproduce without control, persistent, chronic die-offs of fish may be expected to continue. The *Amyloodinium* parasite represents a threat to the overall health of the Salton Sea ecosystem. Additional environmental stresses include runoff from 500,000 acres of industrial farmland and 25 million gallons a day of (often raw) sewage from a Mexican border city 30 miles away. Congress has appropriated \$5 million to the Salton Sea Authority in fiscal year 1998 to identify an engineering solution to the sea's rising salinity. On October 3, the House Subcommittee on Water and Power conducted a field hearing in Palm Desert, California, to assess the situation and hear testimony on engineering solutions. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service led a group of nearly 100 scientists and other interested parties in a 5 day workshop that developed a \$36 million needs assessment for research and restoration of the Salton Sea ecosystem. For further information, Contact: Carol Roberts, U.S.FWS, <carol_a_roberts@mail.fws.gov>.

RELAXATION OF ANTI-BAITING REGULATIONS PROPOSED

Defenders of Wildlife, National Audubon Society, and American Bird Conservancy have led efforts to resist changes in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's baiting policies under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The proposals that are in draft regulation form would result in the greatest changes to the anti-baiting provisions under the MBTA since the initial regulations were adopted in 1935. U.S.FWS Field Agents are strongly opposed to the changes as is their Federal Wildlife Officers' Association and several State law enforcement agencies such as the Maryland Natural

Resource Police. Conservationists and the agents strongly believe that the proposals to require proof of scienter (knowledge) in all baiting cases and easing the present restrictions allowing for the manipulation of grain crops to attract birds to the gun will seriously undermine the enforcement of the MBTA and anti-baiting regulations. On August 26, representatives of Defenders, Audubon, and ABC met with the Director of the FWS, Jamie Clark, on this issue and subsequently sent a joint letter to her outlining their concerns. The groups detailed their concerns that: 1) the changes could have serious implications for the future viability of the MBTA as a means of protecting migratory birds by relaxing the strict liability standard; 2) the proposed changes rather than simplifying hunters' responsibilities, create loopholes for virtually any hunter who is baiting birds; and 3) allowing hunting associated with manipulated natural vegetation, including millet, will not result in significantly more habitat or food for birds, but will make enforcement more difficult, and will only increase the killing of migratory birds. The FWS is under pressure from some Congressmen and hunters to ease the restrictions on baiting ducks, geese and doves. House Resources Chairman Don Young of Alaska has introduced H.R. 741 to force these changes legislatively. It appears likely that some form of regulations will be forthcoming, probably at the end of this year or the beginning of next year. Write or Call: Jamie Clark, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Contact: Kathleen Rogers, NAS, 202-861-2242 or <krogers@audubon.org>.

DEPREDAATION ORDER FOR DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS AND OTHER BIRDS

In response to complaints from fish farmers (primarily in the Southeast), the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has proposed allowing fish farmers in 33 states to kill an unlimited number of cormorants preying on their fish stocks without obtaining individual permits. According to the FWS, 92,000 cormorants would be killed annually. The population of Double-crested cormorants is estimated at 1-2 million birds and is growing by 8% a year. After reviewing the written concerns of leaders in the bird conservation community led by members of the Policy Council, FWS is revising the rule to be more restrictive. The rule may be finalized later this month. Now, recreational fishermen and guides in the North are seeking similar relief from cormorants and other fish-eating birds that consume wild fish. Fishing and tourism play a significant role in the local economy in depressed rural districts of Minnesota and New York, where many believe cormorants are causing a decline in fish populations. In response to pressure from Representatives Colin Peterson (D-MN) and John M. McHugh (R-NY), FWS has pledged to draft a control strategy by next summer; the congressmen are calling for an interim plan. Further, language was

inserted in the Senate Interior Appropriations Bill requiring the FWS to develop a control strategy for all fish-eating birds that could have led to killing these species at their nesting and roosting sites. When the Ornithological Council brought this to ABC's and Audubon's attention, the groups successfully worked with other Policy Council members to have the language removed in a Conference Committee. The Ornithological Council is compiling scientific information on the dimensions of the cormorant problem and management techniques likely to be effective. Please forward relevant information to B.A. Schreiber, who is preparing a Bird Issue Brief on the subject: phone: 703-768-6726; fax: 703-768-9010, or <schreibere@aol.com> or Contact: David Blockstein, Ph.D., Chair, The Ornithological Council, <oc@cnie.org>.

GOLDEN-CHEEKED WARBLERS AND THE FAILURE OF THE TEXAS PLAN

Described by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt as one of the most creative urban conservation efforts in the country, a plan to protect the nesting habitat of endangered Golden-cheeked warblers in Travis County, Texas, is itself imperiled. Approved by Interior in May 1996, the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan was designed to protect the warbler by charging developers as much as \$5,500 per acre for the right to build in lower-quality habitat. The funds raised would then be used to purchase high-quality habitat for preservation. So far, the anticipated funds have failed to materialize. Instead of participating in the Balcones plan, most developers have sought permits from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to build on land designated by the agency for preservation. According to the FWS, the loss of prime habitat will eventually jeopardize the species; the Service may stop issuing development permits until another 7,500 acres of the best land are acquired for habitat. A lawyer for the developers says such a move would provoke landowners to sue, claiming their property was taken without compensation. Some conservationists are advocating the acquisition of the necessary habitat for inclusion in a planned National Wildlife Refuge. Contact: Gerald Winegrad, ABC, phone: 202-778-9666 or <gww@abcbirds.org>.

MONOCROTOPHOS KILLS NEARLY 100,000 BIRDS IN ARGENTINA

Unfortunately, since our success on the Swainson's Hawk, there has been a massive bird kill reported in Entre Rios, Argentina. Over 62,000 birds have been confirmed dead and the toll is likely to reach 100,000 on one 60 hectare farm. We have been advised that local Argentinean agricultural officials advised farmers to avoid bird damage when planting by coating grains (rice and corn) with monocrotophos to kill the birds. We believe

this practice has occurred on other farms. As you know, monocrotophos is the insecticide that killed the Swainson's Hawks and is extremely and acutely toxic to birds. Many conservationists believe it should be prohibited for any use as is the case in the U.S. and Canada and many other nations. ABC has urged our Argentinean partners, both NGO's and Governmental agencies, to seek legal sanctions for those involved in this illegal activity and to act to eliminate the use of monocrotophos in Argentina. Gerald Winegrad continues to work with Novartis (successor to Ciba-Geigy) to promote safer use of pesticides and has been involved in World Bank meetings to promote IPM policies in all World Bank funded agricultural projects. For more information on the pesticide issue, Contact: Gerald Winegrad at ABC.

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BIRDS AND THE BAY

A new curriculum related to bird conservation has been developed for use in Maryland schools. "Birds and the Bay" is based on the notion that habitat restoration projects targeted to neotropical migrants will also aid the recovery of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Originally conceived by ABC's Gerald Winegrad, this project has been developed for use in Maryland schools by Don Messersmith, an active member of the Policy Council. Several six-hour workshops for teachers, naturalists, and others have been conducted and more are scheduled. The workshop's centerpiece is an interdisciplinary manual, One Bird -- Two Habitats, that has been modified for use in Maryland. Emphasis is placed on the habitat requirements of migratory birds. This manual and other activities are demonstrated in the workshops, then given to participants for their own use. Workshops and materials are free to participants. Funding comes from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, Maryland Ornithological Society - Anne Arundel County Chapter, and the Maryland State Department of Education. It is co-sponsored by the American Bird Conservancy and the University of Maryland. Contact: Dr. Don Messersmith, 301-405-3924 or <dm88@UMAIL.UMD.EDU>.

BIRD COLLISIONS

Having effectively documented the problem of night migrants becoming disoriented by illuminated buildings, Toronto's Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) has persuaded managers at more than 100 buildings to turn off the lights at night. Inspired by FLAP's success, a similar (if smaller-scale) effort is under way in New York City. Working alone, one volunteer has documented 180 birds of 43 species killed by glass at tall

buildings so far this season; another 90 have been rescued and released. White-throated sparrow is the most frequently found species, followed by Common yellowthroats. At an event hosted by Architects, Designers & Planners for Social Responsibility in October, Dr. Dan Klem of Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA, spoke about the hazards of glass to birds. Rebekah Creshkoff of the Policy Council discussed the danger of night lighting. It is hoped that FLAP Programs can be started in New York and in other American cities to help prevent the death and injury of millions of migratory birds. Contact: Rebekah Creshkoff, Linnaean Society, 212-493-3525 or <rcreshkoff@mindspring.com>.

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER

An earlier issue of Bird Calls reported on funding difficulties for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's (FWS) cowbird control program on the Michigan Kirtland's warbler breeding ground. The FWS East Lansing, MI Field Office was not fully funded for the program, but obtained enough additional funding and other assistance to operate a modified control program in 1997. The Service used a combination of its own temporary employees, local community college work study students and volunteers on the project. Overcoming funding difficulties that ABC and its Policy Council members worked to resolve, 64 cowbird traps were operated in nine counties, an increase over the 59 traps used in 1996. 3,860 cowbirds were caught, an increase over 1995 numbers. Cowbird trap numbers and locations change each year in response to changes in warbler numbers and distribution. This species' survival depends on habitat maintenance and cowbird control. Nests are not monitored for cowbird young as checking nests is expensive and would increase the risk of nest failure. Instead, the annual singing-male census is used to judge the population's response to the quantity of breeding habitat available. This year, 733 singing males were counted, including four unmated males in northern Wisconsin and 19 (at least some mated) on Michigan's upper peninsula, where eight males were first seen in 1995. The remaining 709 males were on the main northern breeding grounds in lower Michigan. Breeding habitat -- young jack-pine stands six to 22 years old of 200 acres or more -- increased significantly in the early 1990's. The warbler population increased accordingly, from 214 males in 1989 to a record 765 males in 1995. Habitat figures indicate that the singing-male count may hover in the 600-700 range for a few years. However, the Kirtland's warblers' continued existence depends entirely on human management and protection. Annual cowbird control will probably be necessary for as long as we want the Kirtland's warbler to exist. Cowbird control currently costs \$100,000 a year, which includes free tours of the breeding areas that are otherwise posted and closed to the public. But cowbird control is less costly -- and less important -- than habitat management for Kirtland's warbler recovery and survival. As jack-pine stands age, warblers must seek

new habitat elsewhere. In their natural state, stands were regenerated by fire, but today wildfires must be extinguished promptly to protect human lives and property. Therefore, the FWS, U.S. Forest Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) plant jack-pine on 2,000-2,500 acres every year to maintain enough breeding habitat for about 1,000 pairs of warblers. Costs are estimated at about \$400 per acre, or \$800,000-\$1 million each year. To date, these activities have been financed by public appropriations, and thus are subject to changing political moods. While some costs can be recovered by logging jack-pine stands that have grown too old to support warblers, that income cannot fully fund the program. Recent changes in politics and fiscal policy have jeopardized the warbler recovery program. For years, FWS has transferred Endangered Species Act Section 6 matching funds to MDNR to help with jack-pine management; these funds averaged \$180,000 a year from 1985 through 1993. But beginning in 1994, Section 6 funding declined sharply, to \$67,000 in 1997, with a further decline expected next year. MDNR is currently meeting its habitat quota with other short-term funds, but will face problems soon. The Forest Service wildlife budget, which includes endangered-species work, has been significantly reduced in the last two years with little public fanfare. The Huron-Manistee National Forests did not meet the habitat quota in 1997, and expects greater difficulties in 1998. While it's probably too late to affect agency appropriations this year, you can help by insisting that Fish & Wildlife Service and Forest Service agency heads provide adequate funding for warbler recovery. For the future, a line item in the Interior Department budget for both federal agencies would be helpful. A private or corporately sponsored trust fund could alleviate the warbler's dependence on public funding. Please write to: Jamie Clark, Director, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Washington, DC 20240 and Mike Dombeck, Chief, U.S. Forest Service, Box 96090, Washington, DC 20009. Consider: Launching campaigns to persuade Michigan-based corporations to fund warbler management. Contact: Mike DeCapita, Wildlife Biologist/Endangered Species Coordinator, FWS, East Lansing Field Office, 517-351-6274 or <mike_decapita@mail.fws.gov>.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT REAUTHORIZATION: DUELING BILLS

On September 30, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved S. 1180 to reauthorize the Endangered Species Act. Sponsored by Senators Dirk Kempthorne, John Chafee, Max Baucus and Harry Reid, the bill was introduced on September 16. The bill has the support of the Clinton Administration, but not of the environmental community. S. 1180 has a number of economic incentives to reward landowners for restoring and managing habitats; strengthens mitigation requirements imposed on Federal agencies when they seek approval of projects that may result in harm to endangered species; and enables landowners to enter into agreements with the government to protect species before they are listed. However, among other

flaws, the law does not contain any dedicated funding source to pay for the incentives, which means they are unlikely to be fulfilled; it codifies the Administration's unpopular "no surprises" policy; and it imposes significant procedural hurdles to new listings of endangered species and the development of recovery plans. Although the bill's sponsors had hoped to bring it to the floor of the Senate in November, action now seems unlikely until next year. In the House, many environmental groups have given their support to H.R. 2351, the Endangered Species Recovery Act, introduced by George Miller. Over 76 House members have signed on as co-sponsors. However, this bill will have a difficult time reaching the floor, given strong opposition from more conservative members. Contact: David Wilcove, Environmental Defense Fund, 202-387-255 or <david_wilcove@edf.org>.

SAN CLEMENTE LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE

Efforts to prevent the extinction of the endangered San Clemente Island Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi*) have continued. This subspecies is found only on San Clemente Island, an island some 60 miles off of San Diego, and controlled by the U.S. Navy for off-shore bombardment. Unfortunately, the captive breeding program failed to produce any fledglings despite the production of 51 eggs, 18 of which hatched. Three juveniles were hatched in captivity from eggs taken from the wild and will be added to the captive breeding population now numbering 13. In the wild, 17 active nests produced only six fledglings, two of which could not be found shortly after fledging. The net result: perhaps 18 to 20 wild birds left and 13 in captivity. Predation of the wild nests, primarily by cats and foxes, was believed to be the main cause for the lack of success in the wild population. The diet of the captive birds that seemed to result in underweight eggs and hatchlings may be responsible for the failure of the captive breeding program to produce any fledglings. Gerald Winegrad of ABC met with the Navy leaders and the biologists and other personnel involved in Shrike recovery in San Diego and in touring San Clemente Island and its facilities in September. The Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station, San Diego spent considerable time discussing the concerns of conservationists that included: 1) comprehensive efforts to control cats, foxes, and rats; 2) the granting of access for biologists and predator control personnel to shrike habitat despite military operations; 3) continuing measures to prevent and suppress fires; and 4) the need for a technical co-ordinator for the Shrike recovery. The San Diego Zoo has taken steps to assure better success in the captive breeding season next year and the Navy has made a strong commitment to Shrike recovery. Contact: Gerald Winegrad 202-778-9666 or <gww@abcbirds.org>.

HORSESHOE CRABS AND SHOREBIRDS THREATENED

Each spring, Delaware Bay beaches in New Jersey and Delaware are the scene of one of nature's truly great phenomenons --- the concentration of hundreds of thousands of shorebirds feeding frantically on the protein rich eggs of spawning Horseshoe crabs (*Limulus polyphemus*). These birds increase their body weight for their flight to breeding grounds in the Arctic by as much as 100% while feeding non-stop for two weeks on the crab eggs laid on the beaches. Without the Horseshoe crab eggs, several species of birds' hemispheric populations could be adversely affected. These include Red knots (about 80% of the hemispheric population feeds in Delaware Bay), Sanderlings (30% of the hemispheric population), Ruddy turnstones, and Semi-palmated sandpipers. Many Dunlins and Short-billed dowitchers, along with 15 other avian species, also concentrate in Delaware Bay to join in the feast. Appropriately, Delaware Bay has been recognized as a globally important Hemispheric Site under the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network and an Important Bird Area by American Bird Conservancy and National Audubon Society. Unfortunately, the taking of Horseshoe crabs by hand harvest and trawl for eel and conch bait has increased substantially and the number of crabs and their egg availability for shorebirds has declined significantly. American Bird Conservancy and National Audubon Society are leading the way with local and national partners such as the New Jersey Audubon Society to protect the Horseshoe crab and the shorebirds. Efforts are underway to enact tighter restrictions on the take of the crabs in New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland and to have the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission adopt a strong management plan limiting the take of the Horseshoe crab along the entire Atlantic coast. New Jersey has enacted very strong conservation measures and we need the help of conservationists in writing the Governor's of Delaware and Maryland to do the same. This ancient mariner is not a crab at all and is related to scorpions and spiders and has been on earth for 360 million years, pre-dating the dinosaurs. The Horseshoe crab's blood is used to produce lysate, which is the global standard for testing the purity of injectable drugs. This medical use is non-consumptive as the crabs are returned live to the water. Since the Horseshoe crab does not reproduce until age nine, pro-active management is all the more important. Increasing harvests may result in a collapse in the population, the fishery, and in the bird populations that are dependent on the Horseshoe crab eggs. You can join ABC, National Audubon and the many other conservation groups calling for a closure or significant restrictions in the fishery to protect the Horseshoe crab and the shorebirds. Write: Governors of Maryland and Delaware to restrict take as the Governor of NJ has done. Contact: Gerald Winegrad at ABC: 202-778-9666 or <gww@abc.birds.org> or Kathleen Rogers at National Audubon: 202-861-2242 or <krogers@audubon.org>.

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ACQUISITION OF CABO ROJO SALT FLATS, PUERTO RICO

Bird conservation leaders are writing to urge Secretary Babbitt to support the use of \$3 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund from the FY 98 Interior Appropriations Bill for the acquisition of 1,000 acres of the Cabo Rojo Salt Flats in Puerto Rico. The land would be added to the Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge. The Salt Flats, together with the Boqueron State Forest and protected properties of the Conservation Trust, will form one of the largest remaining undisturbed areas for migrating shorebirds in the Caribbean. Over 118 species of birds are known to frequent the Salt Flats. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has documented this area as the most important site in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands for migratory shorebirds. The property is comprised of saltwater lagoons, subtropical dry forest, mangroves and sandy beaches. Each year the Cabo Rojo Salt Flats are used as important feeding and nesting habitat by more than 40,000 shorebirds migrating between North and South America. Endangered or threatened avian species depend on the salt flats including the Piping plover, Peregrine falcon, Yellow-shouldered blackbird, and Brown pelican. The property is known as one of the best bird watching sites on the island and is also used for ecological study by students from a number of Puerto Rican and U.S. universities. In addition, the extensive seagrass meadows in the adjacent coastal waters provide feeding habitat for the endangered West Indian manatee, the threatened green sea turtle, and both the endangered hawksbill and leatherback sea turtles, which also use the beaches for nesting. A FWS biologist familiar with the site has stated that "Cabo Rojo for shorebirds has to be the highest priority acquisition need in the Caribbean. But it is critical for maintaining mangrove ecosystems elsewhere on the southwest corner of Puerto Rico, which harbor endangered Yellow-shouldered blackbird, and many neotropical migrants, as well as nesting/roosting colonial waterbirds, etc. So even though these areas/habitats are not part of the Cabo Rojo area proper, long-term protection of Cabo Rojo will have large-scale beneficial effects." The Trust for Public Lands holds an option to purchase 1,500 acres that expires on December 31, 1997. If funds to purchase the property are not found this year, the Salt Flats probably will be sold for private development which will forever limit the public's use of the property and destroy important habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, including endangered species. Requests for acquisition have been sent by Governor Pedro Rossello of Puerto Rico and a joint letter urging funding was sent to Representative Ralph Regula (Chairman of the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee) by

Senator Murkowski and Congressmen George Miller, Luis Gutierrez, Nydia Velazquez, and Jose Serrano. ABC, the Ornithological Council, RARE, and other conservation groups have also written. Write: Secretary Bruce Babbitt to support this acquisition. Contact: Gerald Winegrad at ABC: 202-778-9666 or <gww@abc.birds.org>.

SEABIRD BYCATCH

ABC and a number of its Policy Council members, including the Pacific Seabird Group, National Audubon Society, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Environmental Defense Fund, continue to work to prevent seabird mortality from longline fisheries. Meetings were held with the Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service to explore actions that can be taken to expedite the adoption of avoidance measures in U.S. waters that curtail the killing of seabirds and benefit fishermen. Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses are being killed during interactions with longline gear from fishing vessels out of Hawaii at rates comparable to or exceeding hooking rates for seabirds in the southern ocean. The killing of so many Black-footed Albatrosses in Hawaiian waters is a serious problem as their global population is only 58,500 breeding pairs. For the first time, a Short-tailed albatross was identified following a NMFS research fishing vessel. NMFS has agreed to begin consulting with the FWS under the Endangered Species Act over the potential take of this globally endangered bird, which could lead to mandatory avoidance measures. Conservationists are advocating these avoidance techniques in Hawaiian waters and better monitoring of the Alaskan situation. Globally, many new large longline fishing vessels are being produced by nations such as China. In March 1997, pursuant to the 22nd Session of the Committee on Fisheries(COFI) of the FAO of the United Nations, agreement was reached that the FAO organize, in collaboration with Japan and the United States, an expert consultation on this issue. A working group has been organized to produce a Plan of Action for implementing mitigation guidelines to reduce incidental catches of seabirds in longline fisheries globally. A formal meeting on the FAO Plan of Action will be held in November 1998 with a goal of adoption by the full COFI in 1999. In preparation of the FAO Consultation, a group of experts from FAO, Japan, the United States and other major regions which have problems with incidental catch of seabirds has been established. This group is known as the Seabird Technical Working Group (STWG). The members of the STWG will be involved in preparation or review of three background papers on: (1) a description of pelagic and demersal longline fisheries (areas, catches, technology and fishing effort); (2) review of the incidental catch of seabird in specific longline fisheries; and (3) a review of seabird bycatch mitigation measures and their effect on other marine species. Prior to a meeting in Japan in March 1998, two draft documents will be compiled and reviewed on: (1) guidelines for measures to reduce seabird bycatch; and (2) a Plan of Action for implementation of the proposed guidelines. These

documents will be available for comment. FAO will be responsible for completing the final Guidelines and Plan of Action. ABC and its Policy Council members working on this issue have met with and been consulted regularly by U.S. officials. Contact: Kent Wohl at: <Kent_Wohl@mail.fws.gov> or Gerald Winegrad at ABC.

CAT PREDATION CAMPAIGN

ABC's Cats Indoors! The Campaign For Safer Birds And Cats was officially launched at a press conference at the National Press Club on September 24. ABC released its report, Cat Predation of Birds and Other Wildlife, which includes information on the extent of cat predation on native wildlife, and results of an independent national poll on attitudes and behavior regarding cats. The report also offers recommendations for saving birds and other wildlife, improving cats' welfare, and protecting human health. This report is available to Policy Council members, as is a resolution on free-roaming cats recently passed by ABC's board. The cat campaign's education kit will be available soon. ABC encourages Policy Council members to join as partners in the campaign. ABC hopes member organizations will publicize, help distribute educational materials to their members and chapters, and pass resolutions about free-roaming cats similar to ABC's. Action steps at the local level include: getting involved with humane societies and local bird groups to address the problem of free-roaming cats in ways that will protect both birds and cats; working for local ordinances requiring cats to be licensed and spayed/neutered and under the owner's control at all times; supporting adequate funding to enforce and implement these laws; and securing coverage of the issue in local media, including op-eds for newspapers. As a personal first step, we can keep our own cats indoors and encourage friends and neighbors to do the same. Contact: Linda Winter, ABC, 202-778-9619 or <lwinter@abcbirds.org>.

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS PROGRAM (IBA)

Recently developed databases are facilitating the task of tracking for the IBA program. To date, 710 sites have been named as potential IBA's. ABC staff have received documentation for 232 sites, of which 109 are of global importance, 27 are important at the continental level, and 60 at the national level. As the review process continues, these numbers change almost daily. Roundtables were recently held in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Nevada to identify and document IBA sites. To submit a site for consideration as an Important Bird Area or for further information on the list of designated and proposed sites: Contact: Jeff Price, Director, U.S. Important Bird Areas Program, 303-530-7239 or <jprice@mho.net>.

PARTNERS IN FLIGHT

The PIF bird-conservation planning process continues. The U.S. has been divided into 52 physiographic areas for purposes of developing comprehensive bird conservation plans. So far, advanced plans have been drafted for 12 physiographic areas or states; the goal is to have advanced drafts of all 52 plans by the end of 1998. Originally targeted to all land birds excluding game species, PIF plans may eventually include shorebirds, thanks to a recently signed agreement with the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). The relationship between PIF and the emerging National Shorebird Plan will evolve over the next year. Meanwhile, the North American Wetlands & Waterfowl Office is assisting with wetland issues in the Northeast. Work in such areas as the Mississippi alluvial valley indicates that a functional Geographic Information System (GIS) is key to transforming bird-conservation plans from recommendations into site-specific actions. Thanks to funding from The Nature Conservancy and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, PIF will soon have this technology in all physiographic areas nationwide. Work will be done at the Center for Advanced Spatial Technology at the University of Arkansas, and will initially compile and interpret results of GAP and other digitized mapping efforts around the country. Contact: David Pashley of ABC, PIF National Coordinator, 540-347-0525 or <dpashley@abcbirds.org>.

JOB OPENING: The Point Reyes Bird Observatory, a conservation and research organization since 1965, seeks a Conservation Biologist/Landscape Ecologist to develop a conservation oriented applied research program on birds and their habitats. The successful applicant will be expected to: 1) develop and supervise applied research projects related to habitat issues and ecosystem management on a landscape scale; 2) play a scientific leadership role in PRBO's riparian and wetland habitat conservation efforts; 3) collaborate with PRBO's existing terrestrial, marine and coastal programs and staff; 4) work with private and government agencies to develop and promote management recommendations that apply PRBO research results; 5) develop sources of extra-mural funding; and 6) publish in peer reviewed journals. Specific qualifications and skills should include: Ph.D. in ecology, conservation biology, or a related field with experience in conservation issues at a landscape scale; application of GIS to ecological studies; experience with population studies and conservation of birds; strong communication and project management skills; and strong statistical and data base management skills. Applicants should submit a letter of interest, a curriculum vitae, copies of recent publications, and a list of references to Dr. Daniel Evans, Director, PRBO, 4990 Shoreline Hwy., Stinson Beach, CA 94970 by Jan. 7, 1998.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the ABC Policy Council will be held on Tuesday, December 9 in Washington, D.C. Time: 11:00 AM to 4:50 PM. Place:

ABC, 1250 24th Street, NW, Conference Room 5A/B, Washington, DC. Mike Dombeck, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, will be the luncheon speaker and will address the conservation of birds in the national forests. He will be available to answer your questions and discuss forest management policies with you. There is an action-packed agenda that will be sent to all Policy Council members. Please plan on attending.

POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE: Membership continues to grow on ABC's Policy Council but we are always looking for more members to help in focusing collaborative efforts in bird conservation. If you have any ideas about organizations that should be represented on the ABC Policy Council, please contact Stephen Eccles, Membership Chairman at 703-978-5791 or <seccles@worldbank.org>.

American Bird Conservancy, 1250 24th Street NW, Suite 400, Washington DC 20037.
Tel: (202-778-9666); Fax: (202-778-9778); E-mail: <abc@abcbirds.org>.

AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY IS THE U.S. PARTNER OF BIRDLIFE
INTERNATIONAL

BIRD CALLS IS THE NEWLETTER OF THE POLICY COUNCIL OF AMERICAN BIRD
CONSERVANCY

Gerald W. Winegrad
Director of Government Relations

Please Note New Address and Phone Number:
American Bird Conservancy
1250 24th St., NW Suite 400
Washington, DC 20037
Phone: 202-778-9666
FAX: 202-778-9778