



Steppingstones

NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
PARTNERS IN FLIGHT PROGRAM



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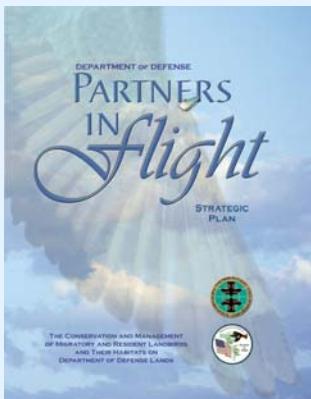
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Conserving birds and their habitats on Department of Defense lands.



The Strategic Plan can be found at www.dodpif.org. For a hard copy, contact the DoD PIF Program (contact info on last page).

DoD Bird Conservation Database Now Available

Many migratory bird populations depend on military lands for feeding and resting during their migrations, and for nesting and breeding during the summer months. Because birds do not recognize geopolitical boundaries, it is up to land managers to work cooperatively to stem declines in bird populations. Through participation in Partners in Flight, DoD actively manages its natural resources to support mission needs and flight safety goals, while pursuing a sound conservation ethic that strives to benefit bird species throughout the Americas. This partnership concept promotes implementation of local and regional conservation objectives, while facilitating communication and coordination across geographical and organizational boundaries to ensure continent-wide success of bird conservation efforts involving both resident and migratory bird species.

The Department of Defense has one of the most active bird conservation programs among federal agencies. An established network of biologists and land managers represent DoD in the various regional and technical working groups and committees of Partners in Flight. In addition, military lands frequently serve as study sites for researchers from state and federal agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations. Since public access, and therefore development pressures, have been excluded from many portions of these lands, military lands often represent better habitat for birds and other wildlife than wildlife refuges.

There is a vast body of conservation work accomplished on military lands, but much of this work has been relatively unavailable to others in the conservation community. The DoD Bird Conservation Database was developed to document, consolidate, and disseminate bird conservation efforts on or involving military lands and civil works projects and make that information available as a resource for planners, land managers and other professionals involved in bird conservation. The Database brings together information on bird conservation that would

otherwise be unknown, unused or forgotten. The task of populating the database is now at hand. It is imperative that this valuable body of conservation work be identified and made accessible for the benefit of birds and wildlife conservation. By entering information into the Database, the value of this information will be magnified many fold. **We ask that each installation or researcher with bird research or conservation data to enter that data into the DoD Bird Conservation Database.**

To enter data, a login is required. Anyone can create a login. Default values set during your login creation will streamline the data entry process. Once your login is created, you may enter as many projects as you have available. The more information entered into the database, the more effective a tool it will become.

Search functions (no login required) allow keyword searches on a number of items, such as installation, state, Bird Conservation Region, species, and habitat. This will allow researchers to query the database prior to initiating a new study, reducing duplication and providing access to studies that may have similar species or project goals. It is important to note that project funding amount is used *only* for determining annual support for bird conservation on DoD lands. Project funding amounts will *not* be accessible in the search function.

DoD Bird Conservation Database:
<http://www.dodpif.org/projects/>



Common Nighthawk, Fort McCoy WI (Chris Eberly)

Integrating Bird Conservation into INRMPs

The DoD Partners in Flight program hosted a technical paper session titled "Integrating Bird Conservation into INRMPs" at the 2005 **National Military Fish and Wildlife Association** training workshop (14-17 March 2005, Arlington VA).

Migratory birds have become more prominent in natural resources management planning, due to the Migratory Bird Rule, the Memorandum of Understanding with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) required by Executive Order 13186, and the USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern 2002 list. This session provided information on how to integrate new migratory bird information into your INRMP, and describe DoD's bird monitoring strategy that will both preserve the military mission and protect priority bird species.

Speakers for the session included:

- Tom Egeland/ASN(I&E) - "Migratory bird legislation"
- Chris Eberly/DoD PIF - "Bird species of concern and INRMPs"
- Jeff Keating/Ft Riley (KS) INRMP Case Study
- Debbie Hahn/IAFWA - "State Wildlife Plans and INRMPs"
- Phil Nott/IBP - "Demographic monitoring / MAPS"
- Jon Bart/USGS - "Coordinated bird monitoring on military lands"

In addition, a follow-up **DoD Partners in Flight session** provided opportunity for conference attendees to ask questions about the session presentations or about general Partners in Flight and bird conservation. Contact Chris Eberly (see back page) for more details.



Oriente Warbler, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba
Photo: Chris Eberly

Birds of Conservation Concern

The US Fish & Wildlife Service released "Bird of Conservation Concern 2002" (BCC 2002) as an update to the 1995 "Migratory Nongame Birds of Management Concern in the United States." The 105-page BCC 2002 report can be downloaded from:

<http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/reports/BCC02/BCC2002.pdf>

The overall goal of *BCC 2002* is to accurately identify the migratory and non-migratory bird species (beyond those already designated as Federally threatened or endangered) that represent the highest conservation priorities and draw attention to species in need of conservation action. The geographic scope of this endeavor is the United States in its entirety, including island "territories" in the Pacific and Caribbean. It is more comprehensive than previous versions. *BCC 2002* encompasses

three distinct geographic scales—North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs), USFWS Regions, and National—and is primarily derived from assessment scores from three major bird conservation plans: Partners in Flight, the United States Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan. Bird species considered for inclusion on lists in this report include nongame birds, gamebirds without hunting seasons, subsistence-hunted nongame birds in Alaska; and Endangered Species Act candidate, proposed endangered or threatened, and recently delisted species. Assessment scores



Henslow's Sparrow, a Watch List species, thrives on U.S. military installations. Photo: Teresa Vanosdol

from all three bird conservation plans are based on several factors, including population trends, threats, distribution, abundance, and area importance. These assessment scores serve as the foundation on which USFWS built the *BCC 2002* lists. Although the different bird conservation plans use somewhat different methods for determining the highest priority species, the scores from each represent true conservation priorities for each of the three species groups (landbirds, shorebirds, and waterbirds). The conservation priorities within each plan are therefore considered approximately equivalent. After creating BCR lists, USFWS developed specific criteria for including species on USFWS Region and National lists. BCR lists include 8 to 48 species, USFWS Region lists include 28 to 88 species, and the National list contains 131 species. In virtually all cases, priority species make up 9 to 12 percent of all bird species in any given geographic unit. While all of the 276 bird species included in *BCC 2002* are priorities for conservation action, this list makes no finding with regard to whether they warrant consideration for ESA listing. The goal is to prevent or remove the need for additional ESA bird listings by implementing proactive management and conservation actions. These lists should be consulted in accordance with Executive Order 13186, "Responsibilities of Federal Agencies To Protect Migratory Birds." This report should also be used to develop research, monitoring, and management initiatives. *BCC 2002* is intended to stimulate coordinated and collaborative proactive conservation actions among Federal, State, and private partners. It is hoped that, by focusing attention on these highest priority species, this report will promote greater study and protection of the habitats and ecological communities upon which these species depend, thereby ensuring the future of healthy avian populations and communities.

To see BCC and other **Species of Concern** for your installation, go to <http://www.dodpif.org>.

DoD Partners in Flight Strategic Plan

http://www.dodpif.org/strategic_plan/index.htm

The Partners in Flight blueprint for bird conservation planning, the *Flight Plan*, consists of four key elements:

- Setting realistic biological priorities
- Establishing population and habitat objectives
- Implementing objectives through conservation action
- Evaluation these actions and adjusting objectives

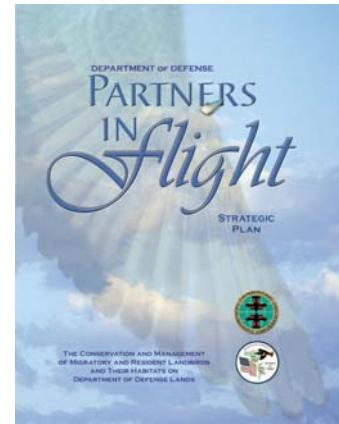
Department of Defense Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans employ many of these same conservation principles. The **DoD Partners in Flight Strategic Plan** offers a coordinated framework for incorporating bird habitat management efforts into installation Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans.



Golden-winged Warbler, a Watch List species of Continental Importance
Photo © Roger Ericksson,
Courtesy Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Through its participation in the Partners in Flight initiative, DoD actively manages its natural resources to support mission needs and flight safety goals, while pursuing a sound conservation ethic that strives to benefit bird species throughout the Americas. DoD's strategy focuses on inventory, on-the-ground management, education, and long-term monitoring to determine changes in migrant bird populations on DoD installations.

The vision of the DoD Partners in Flight program is to support the military's training and testing mission while being a vital and supportive partner in regional, national, and international bird conservation initiatives. Wherever possible, we strive to implement cooperative projects and programs on DoD lands to benefit the health and well-being of birds and their habitats. We work hard to ensure that all Services have access to the land, sea, and air resources necessary to ensure national security, recognizing that sustainable use of these resources aids the military mission and also enhances the natural environment.



Cover design by Tamika den Hartog

Partners in Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan

<http://www.partnersinflight.org/cplan.htm>

With its publication in January 2004, the **Partners in Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan**, set a new standard for broad-scale, multi-species conservation. Nearly two years in the making, this Plan provides a Partners in Flight assessment of the status of 448 species of landbirds in the continental United States and Canada, exciting innovations in analysis, and a detailed vision for the future.

Perhaps the most important innovation in the Plan is the presentation of population size estimates for all 448 landbird species, from the most abundant (American Robin; 320,000,000), to species with much smaller populations, such as Golden-winged Warbler (210,000) and Louisiana Waterthrush (260,000). Another innovation is the creation of digital range maps for all landbirds. We can now portray and analyze a wealth of information about the distribution of birds at the continental level.



The Louisiana Waterthrush is a Stewardship Species in the Eastern Avifaunal Biome, which supports 94% of its breeding population.
Photo © Gary Rosenberg

The baselines in the Plan recognize that the expansive losses and modifications of habitat since the European settlement of North America are historical realities that are not likely to be reversed to a significant extent at the continental level. It also recognizes that prior to 1966 and the start of the Breeding Bird Survey, there were no consistent data for most landbird species on which to base measurable population objectives.

Partners in Flight continues to evolve, adapt, and produce both ideas and tools useful for bird conservation. The great challenges ahead include refining population estimates, coordinating population objectives among various geographic scales, incorporating these ideas into the plans and actions of PIF partners, and ultimately expanding into Mexico, the West Indies, and beyond. In the meantime, we have more and better information for on-the-ground conservation to happen.

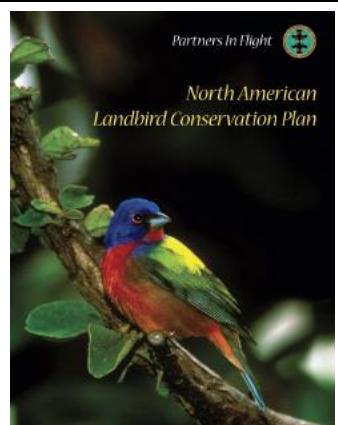
To receive a hard copy of either the
DoD Partners in Flight Strategic Plan
or the

**Partners in Flight North American
Landbird Conservation Plan,**

contact Chris Eberly at:

cieberly@dodpif.org

or 540-349-9662



© Tom Vezo, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Important Bird Areas Update

Some Department of Defense (DoD) lands, including military installations and Army Corps of Engineers projects, have been identified as Important Bird Areas (IBA). In general, an IBA should exist as an actual or potential protected area, or should have the potential to be managed in some way for birds and general nature conservation.



Burrowing Owl, NWS Seal Beach CA
Photo: Chris Eberly

Military installations, through their Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMP) and Sikes Act compliance, manage their lands in ways that benefit native bird populations. Many Corps project sites also implement comprehensive management plans that enhance bird habitat.

While IBAs have no minimum or maximum size, they should be large enough to supply all or most of the requirements of the bird(s) during the season for which they are important. DoD lands identified as IBAs also satisfy this need. To that end, the DoD PIF program supports IBAs on military and Corps of Engineers lands, where appropriate.

Ultimately, by identifying high quality habitats and recognizing them as being important for birds, the IBA Program seeks to mobilize the resources needed to protect these areas by raising public awareness of their significance. With over 71 million Americans who watch and/or feed birds, the public is a powerful constituency for bird conservation. An important distinction should also be made that an IBA is not necessarily an important *birding* area. An IBA exists for birds, not for bird watchers. IBAs can include Watchable Wildlife opportunities, but only if such opportunities do not compromise the military mission or continued conservation actions. On military lands, IBAs can be an effective tool to engage adjoining landowners in landscape level conservation planning.

Sometimes, it is the training mission itself that creates and sustains quality habitat. IBA recognition is thus an important tool to educate the public that while DoD lands are managed to support the military's training mission, they also provide significant habitat for the conservation of natural resources, including birds. When a conservation plan is desired for a network of IBAs, INRMPs and Corps comprehensive management plans already provide the necessary information; no additional management planning is required.

Identification of DoD lands as Important Bird Areas is recognition from an outside organization (American Bird Conservancy, National Audubon Society, or both) of the excellent stewardship that benefits resident and migratory birds

and their habitats. Identification and/or recognition as an IBA entails no legal or management requirements. In addition, public access is not linked in any way to IBA status. Public bird watching opportunities exist independently; some IBAs will not be open for public access, and many sites with public birding will not qualify as IBAs. Regardless of public access, IBA status is public recognition of which to be proud.



Western Snowy Plovers breed and winter on military lands in coastal Calif. Navy Photo by Tim Burr

4th Audubon IBA conference, Sierra Vista AZ, August 2004

The 4th Audubon IBA conference featured a presentation session focusing on IBA partnerships on federal lands. Chris Eberly, DoD Partners in Flight Program Manager, facilitated the presentation involving five federal agencies (DoD, US Fish & Wildlife Service Refuge System, National Park Service, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management). Concerns within federal agencies are similar to those of private landowners, which may include unwanted public scrutiny, unauthorized access to lands, and trying to tell the landowner how to manage their land. By forming partnerships at the initial stages of the IBA nomination phase, these and other potential roadblocks can be removed. Two discussion sessions at the conference provided an opportunity for state IBA coordinators, non-profit groups, and others a chance to discuss details of various potential situations involving IBAs on federal lands. A guidance document is being produced that will summarize the presentation and discussion points. The document will focus on the aspect of IBA Partnerships, and will provide information on how to find the right contact at a potential IBA on federal lands in order to initiate the dialogue, and volunteer opportunities on federal lands. A good IBA partnership will make IBA status become a profitable partnership for everyone involved.



Vandenberg Air Force Base provides undisturbed beaches for nesting, wintering, and migrating shorebirds and waterbirds.
Photo: Chris Eberly



Birds of North America Online Access

In two centuries of American ornithology, The Birds of North America (BNA) is only the fourth comprehensive reference covering the life histories of North American birds. Following in the footsteps of Wilson, Audubon, and Bent, BNA makes a quantum leap in information beyond what these historic figures were able to provide. Edited by Drs. Alan Poole and Frank Gill, this series provides detailed scientific information (18 volumes, 18,000 pages in total) for each of the 716 species of birds nesting in the USA and Canada. The print version of BNA was completed in 2002, a joint 10 year project of the American Ornithologists' Union, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and the Academy of Natural Sciences.

Now as an online project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, BNA is poised to become a living resource. Account contents will be updated frequently, with online-coordinated contributions from researchers, citizen scientists, and designated reviewers and

editors. In addition, BNA Online will build image and video galleries showing behaviors, habitat, nests, eggs and nestlings, and more. And each online species account will contain recordings of that bird's songs and calls, selected from the extensive collection in Cornell's Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds.



Each BNA species account, written by one or more of 700 leading ornithologists, is fully searchable by topic and key word. BNA accounts provide an up-to-date, comprehensive list of references for each species. Most accounts include at least 100 references, many 200-300 or more. Now that BNA is online, these reference lists can be searched quickly and easily. In addition, each reference in an account is highlighted and linked to the bibliography, allowing readers to shift easily between the body of an account and the literature cited.

With funding support from the Legacy Resource Management Program, the DoD Partners in Flight Program negotiated an institutional group contract for a one-year trial access to BNA Online. Access is authorized only for DoD natural resources personnel or designated contract personnel serving in that function. If you are interested in having access to BNA Online for your installation, have the natural resources manager or resource chief contact the appropriate Service contact (see back page for phone / email info): **Navy/Marines-Tim Burr; Army-Jay Rubinoff; Air Force-Carol Finley.**

Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative

<http://www.qu.org/seqsg/nbci/nbci.cfm>

The overall Northern Bobwhite quail population has endured a decline of more than 65% over the last 20 years throughout its range. The projected continuation of this decline necessitated a call for immediate and dramatic action. In response, the directors of the state wildlife agencies from the member states of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies requested preparation of a plan for recovery of the Northern Bobwhite.

Biologists, managers and researchers of the Southeast Quail Study Group Technical Committee prepared the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI). It is designed to meet conservation and management needs of the Northern Bobwhite and facilitate integration and collaboration with other species management plans, such as Partners in Flight and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Some quail habitat management practices benefit a suite of other birds that have experienced population declines such as Bell's Vireo, Orchard Oriole, Painted Bunting, Loggerhead Shrike, Sedge wren, Grasshopper Sparrow, Dickcissel and Henslow's Sparrow.



Northern Bobwhite young
Photo: Tom Egelund

The goal of NBCI is to restore Northern Bobwhite populations range wide to an average density equivalent to that which existed on improvable acres in 1980. This will necessitate impacting habitat on about 7 per cent of 81.1 million acres of farm, forest, and rangeland so as to increase the current quail population by 2.7 million coveys. These habitat objectives will be addressed on agricultural lands, forests, and grasslands.

For more information about the NBCI, contact:
Don McKenzie, 501-941-7994, mailto:wmidm@ipa.net

Searchable Ornithological Research Archive

The SORA project (<http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora>) is an open access electronic journal archive and is the product of collaboration between the American Ornithologists' Union, the Cooper Ornithological Society, the Association of Field Ornithologists, the Wilson Ornithological Society and the University of New Mexico libraries and IT department. This archive access to an extensive ornithological literature of international scope, and detailed material documenting the history of ornithology in North America over the last 120 years. The content of this site includes the following titles: The Auk (1884-1999), The Condor (1899-2000), The Journal of Field Ornithology (1930-1999), The Wilson Bulletin (1889-1999), Pacific Coast Avifauna (1900-1974) and Studies in Avian Biology (1978-1999). The North American Bird Bander will also be available in the near future.

The content is available in searchable and browseable formats and documents can be downloaded as pdf or djvu files. Djvu files rely on an "acrobat" type browser plug-in (www.lizardtech.com) for viewing and are approximately ¼ the size of pdf files for faster downloads. Web browsers must have the ability to read java script (make sure it is turned on). The site is still under development and additional features and journals (JFO browse feature and NABB for example) will be added as the materials become available and the programming is completed. For more information, contact the SORA Coordinator, Blair Wolf, through the site link.

BirdLife's State of the World's Birds 2004: Indicators for our Changing World

BirdLife Internationals' State of the World's Birds 2004 can be downloaded from the PDF index section of this web site, <http://www.birdlife.org.uk/action/science/sowb/index.html> or can be purchased in book form online from <http://www.nhbs.com/xbscripts/bkfsrch?search=146296>



State of the World's Birds 2004 examines what birds can tell us about the state of biodiversity, the pressures upon it and the solutions that are being, or should be, put in place. *State of the world's birds* is a synthesis of our knowledge in 2004 and provides a benchmark against which we can assess

our efforts to conserve biodiversity in the future. It draws heavily on the knowledge of the BirdLife Partnership, the world's largest partnership of conservation organizations, represented in more than 100 countries. It shows how birds – the best-known major group of organisms – can help us understand the threats confronting global biodiversity. This report is based on data provided by the many, many people – experts and enthusiasts alike – who study and observe birds across the world. Some of the analyses and case studies provide 'snapshots' of where we are in 2004; others will be updated regularly with new data (and made available on this web site) so that trends can be tracked. *State of the world's birds* is divided into three main sections:

- STATE: What birds tell us about condition and change
- PRESSURE: What birds tell us about problems
- RESPONSE: What birds tell us about solutions

Some key messages from State of the Worlds Birds:

- One in eight of the world's birds — 1,213 species in total — face extinction
- The farmland bird index for Europe has declined by 34% since 1966
- Over 7,500 sites in nearly 170 countries have been identified as Important Bird Areas
- Agricultural expansion and intensification threaten 50% of Important Bird Areas in Africa. Important Bird Areas (IBAs) form a global network of sites that effectively pinpoints other terrestrial biodiversity. IBAs are excellent starting points for identifying a full set of key biodiversity areas, especially where information for other taxa is scarce or patchy.
- 64% of Globally Threatened Birds, most of them in the tropics, are threatened by unsustainable forestry
- Alien invasive species impact 67% of Globally Threatened Birds on oceanic islands
- Scaled conservation investment is over 20 times higher in developed than developing countries
- 43% of Africa's Important Bird Areas have no legal recognition or protection
- Conservation actions are underway for 67% of Globally Threatened Birds

The companion publications to this document, *Working Together for Birds and People* and *A Strategy for Birds and People*, respectively set out the current actions of the BirdLife Partnership, and BirdLife's strategy until 2015. Birds help to

create positive change, through a public that understands and values biodiversity conservation. They thus play a vital part in bringing about the social and political solutions that we need for a more sustainable world. Their fascinating diversity and behavior have great public appeal. Birdwatching connects people with the natural world around them, and provides a window on the environment. Birds are just one component of biodiversity – and far from the most significant in species numbers or biomass – but they have a substantial role in many economies. In the United States, for example, birdwatching generated an estimated \$85 billion in overall economic output in 2001. The economic contribution that birds make through ecological services such as pest control, pollination, seed dispersal and carrion consumption has never been quantified, but must, in many cases, be enormous.

Audubon's State of the Birds

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/stateofthebirds>

The National Audubon Society released the first national "The State of the Birds" report documenting the health and abundance of North America's birds. Appearing in the October 2004 issue of Audubon Magazine, "The State of the Birds" paints a disturbing picture. Almost 30 percent of North America's bird species are in "significant decline." The overall state of the birds shows:

- 70 % of grassland species are in statistically significant declines
- 36 % of shrubland bird species are declining significantly
- 25 % of forest bird species are declining significantly
- 13 % of wetland bird species are declining significantly
- 23 % of bird species in urban areas are declining significantly

According to the "State of the Birds," these declines are abnormal. Not part of the natural cyclical rise and fall in bird populations, "statistically significant declines" are due to outside factors such as loss of native grasslands, overgrazing of grassland and shrubland, development of wetlands, bad forest management, invasive species, pollution, and poor land use decisions. Compiled by Audubon Scientist Greg Butcher, the "State of the Birds" analysis makes the case for private and public action, especially in strengthening, not weakening, existing environmental protections and more rigorously supervising their enforcement.

Birds not only serve as reliable indicators of environmental conditions, they also contribute greatly to the U.S. economy. Keeping birds – and their home habitats – in good condition is not only a good conservation policy, it is also good business. According to the U.S. Forest Service, 69 million Americans – one-third of all adults in this country - call themselves birdwatchers. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service notes that they contribute at least \$32 billion in retail sales, \$85 billion in overall economic output, and \$13 billion in state and federal taxes, creating 863,406 jobs. An analysis of expenditures is available on a state-by-state breakdown. Birds also contribute to the bottom line in more subtle ways, providing free pest and weed control, distributing seeds, and pollinating flowers and crops. Audubon's "State of the Birds" summarizes the status of nearly 700 bird species native to the continental United States, focusing on the condition of species in each of five habitat types: grasslands, shrublands, forests, wetlands, and urban areas (the fastest growing habitat type in the U.S.). Further analysis is available on the Audubon website.

Dept. of Navy Feral Cat Policy

Department of the Navy
Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
2000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350-2000

In Reply Refer To: 5090, Ser N456M/1U595820, 10 Jan 2002

From: Chief of Naval Operations
Subj: [Policy letter preventing feral cat and dog populations on Navy property](#)

Ref: (a) SECNAVINST 6410-1A, of 16 Aug 1994, Veterinary Health Services
(b) AFPMB TIM #37, Guidelines for Reducing Feral/Stray Cat Populations on Military Installations in the U.S.
(c) OPNAVINST 6250.4B, of 27 Aug 1998, Pest Management Programs
(d) Executive Order 13112, of 3 Feb 1999, Invasive Species

1. This letter clarifies the application of reference (a) regarding the prevention of free roaming (also called wild, feral or stray) cat and dog populations on Navy installations. The objective is to prevent injury or disease to Navy personnel, and eliminate adverse impacts on native wildlife. It requires Navy commands to institute pro-active pet management procedures in order to prevent establishment of free roaming cat and dog populations. Free roaming cats and dogs pose a potential public health threat to personnel on Navy installations, and they pose a threat to wildlife including endangered species and migratory birds.

2. Existing policy at paragraph 4-2c(4) of reference (a) states Dogs, cats, and other privately-owned or stray animals will not be permitted to run at large on military reservations. Consistent with this policy, Navy commands must ensure the humane capture and removal of free roaming cats and dogs. Consistent with this requirement, Trap/Neuter/Release (TNR) programs will no longer be established on Navy land. All existing TNR programs on Navy land must be terminated no later than 1 January 2003.

3. Responsible pet ownership is a key factor in eliminating free roaming cat and dog populations. In consultation with supporting Army Veterinary Office, installations shall implement appropriate pet management measures to preclude establishment of feral cat/dog populations, including, but not limited to the following:

Require installation residents to keep and feed pet animals indoors or under close supervision when outdoors (such as on leash and collar or other physical control device - cage, fenced yard etc.).

Encourage neutering or spaying of cats and dogs before they reach reproductive age (exceptions to this policy can be made on a case by case basis as determined by the Installation Commander).

Require routine vaccinations of cats and dogs for rabies and other diseases as required by federal, state and local laws and ordinances. A current vaccination record is required at time of registration of pets.

Require microchipping registration (or other system of pet identification approved by supporting veterinary office) of all pet cats and dogs brought onto installations. Installation

residents must register cats and dogs and have pets wear registration or identification tags at all times.

Prohibit the feeding of feral animals on the installation.

Provide educational materials to pet owners regarding installation regulations and general pet management.

Enforce prohibition of abandonment of animals on installations.

Comply with all humane and animal control regulations at the federal, state and local level (and their equivalents in host nation countries).

Navy installations in Europe that do not have a supporting veterinary office contact 100th Medical Detachment (VA HQ) (011) 49-622-177-2968; for all other locations that do not have a supporting veterinary office the POC is the VETCOM HQ, Commander (210) 221-6522.

4. Effective prevention, management and elimination of feral cat and dog populations requires close coordination and cooperation between natural resources, pest management, security, veterinary, and housing personnel to develop and implement an effective and humane program. Reference (b) provides information for preventing free roaming cat populations on military installations General pest management guidelines are detailed in reference (c). Every effort should be made to work with other federal, state and local agencies to support reference (a) and reference (d) by eliminating free roaming cat and dog populations on Navy land. Navy commands should work with local animal control agencies to determine the best approach for the ultimate disposition of the captured animals. Every effort should be made, if practical, to find homes for adoptable feral cats and dogs.

5. My point of contact on this issue is Mr. Joe Cook, CNO N456M, at (703) 602-5335, or DSN 332-5335.

WILLIAM G. MATTHEIS
Deputy Director, Environmental Protection, Safety and Occupational Health Division

Don't Let Your Cat Go AWOL

<https://www.denix.osd.mil/denix/Public/ES-Programs/Conservation/Legacy/SafeCats/safecats.html>

Military bases often struggle with how to manage domestic cat populations. Frequent transfers of personnel often means cats are left behind, abandoned to fend for themselves. Lucky cats find a new human, but most are not so fortunate. Base commanders must deal with how to humanely and cost-effectively resolve the issue of too many free-roaming cats. **As a cat owner, you are an important part of the solution.**



Site Profile: NAS Corpus Christi, NAS Kingsville, NALF Orange Grove, McMullen Range, TX

Acronyms used:

NAS - Naval Air Station; NALF - Naval Auxiliary Landing Field;
ac - acres; ha - hectares; mi - miles; km - kilometers

♦ NAS Corpus Christi

Location: within the corporate city limits of Corpus Christi, Nueces County, along the southern edge of Corpus Christi Bay.

Land Size: 4,711 ac (1,907 ha) that consists of four separate parcels: the Main Installation, 2,844 ac (1,152 ha); NALF Waldron, 851 ac (345 ha), NALF Cabaniss, 971 ac (393 ha); and the Peary Place Transmitter Site, 44 ac (18 ha).

Mission: "maintain and operate facilities and provide services and material to support operations of aviation activities and units of the operating forces of the Navy and other activities and units as designated by the Chief of Naval Operations". In general terms, the primary objective of NAS Corpus Christi is to serve as a center for training Navy and the other Armed Services pilots.

Bird Conservation Region: Gulf Coastal Plain (BCR 37)

♦ NAS Kingsville

Location: 3 mi (5 km) southeast of Kingsville, Kleberg County.

Land Size: 3,229 ac (1,307 ha).

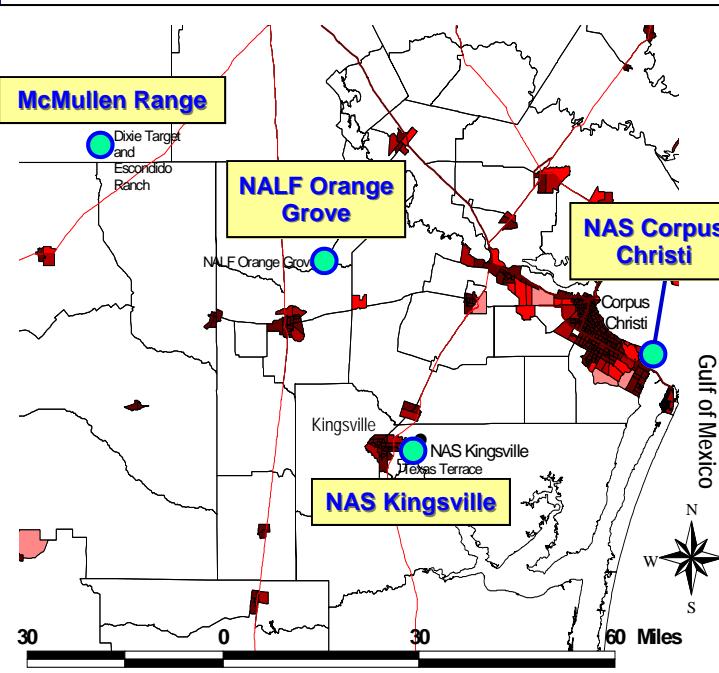
Mission: "maintain and operate facilities and provide services and materials to support operations of aviation activities and units of the operating forces of the Navy and other activities and units as designated by the Chief of Naval Operations". In general terms, the primary objective of NAS Kingsville is to serve as a center for training Navy pilots in the operation of jet aircraft.

Bird Conservation Region: Gulf Coastal Plain (BCR 37)

♦ NALF Orange Grove

Location: 35 mi northwest of Kingsville and 40 mi west of Corpus Christi, off US 281 on county road 220 between the cities of Alice and Orange Grove, in Jim Wells County.

Land Size: 1,373 ac (556 ha).



Mission: to serve as a training field for practice approaches and landings in support of the training mission of NAS Kingsville and NAS Corpus Christi. Arrested landings are practiced at NALF Orange Grove on a regularly scheduled basis, required to become qualified for landing on an aircraft carrier.

Bird Conservation Region: Tamaulipan Brushlands (BCR 36)

♦ McMullen Range Complex

Location: in McMullen County, 24 mi northwest of Freer via US 59, state route 44, and Duval County Road 401. The Range is about 90 mi northwest of Kingsville and 90 mi northeast of the US-Mexico border.

Land Size: 6,772 ac (2,741 ha).

Mission:

McMullen Range consists of adjacent parcels, the "Dixie Target Range" and Escondido Ranch. Dixie Target Range is an unmanned, air scored, aircraft bombing range. Escondido Ranch is managed as a hunting preserve for outdoor recreation and wildlife, and houses a Remote Over The Horizon Radar (ROTHR) facility.



Crested Caracara, a common raptor in the Tamaulipan Brushlands, Escondido Ranch.

Photo: Chris Eberly

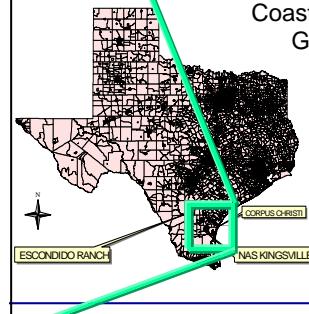
Bird Conservation Region: Tamaulipan Brushlands (BCR 36)

CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS:

Native grassland habitat in south Texas has been replaced by exotic grasses or agriculture throughout much of its historic range. Native inland and coastal prairies supported a diverse array of grassland species. The loss of these prairies has resulted in a corresponding decrease in abundance and diversity of plant and bird species. Perhaps the most notable bird species impacted by loss of coastal prairie habitat is the Attwater's race of the Greater Prairie-Chicken. Lesser known but nonetheless significant declines have occurred in other grassland and prairie bird species. Native grassland and prairie habitat has been reduced by over 90% from its historic expanse, and the Texas coastal prairie is now less than 1% of its original size. As a group, grassland birds are declining more than any other assemblage of birds, including neotropical migrants and forest nesting birds.

South Texas probably never hosted large numbers of breeding grassland bird species. However, it plays a significant role as wintering habitat. The

Navy has partnered with the Texas Gulf Coast Field Research Station of the US Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct in-depth studies of the role of Navy lands to wintering grassland birds. The studies will cover several years, and will examine grass types, wintering grassland birds, and wintering ecology of Burrowing Owls.



Site Profile (cont'd)

Acronyms used:

NAS - Naval Air Station; NALF - Naval Auxiliary Landing Field;
ac - acres; ha - hectares; mi - miles; km - kilometers

CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS (CONT'D)

Results from the 2004 surveys show that the U.S. Navy in south Texas holds excellent examples of undisturbed, native coastal and inland prairies with relatively high plant diversity. They also

include exotic grasslands that are typical of the widespread invasion of exotic grasses throughout south Texas. A total of 170 bird species were encountered, 24 of which are identified in the Partners in Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan as Species of Continental Importance. Two priority categories occur: Watch List Species, those at risk of extinction or serious decline (8 species found), and



*Green Jay, NALF Orange Grove.
Photo: Chris Eberly*

Stewardship Species, those restricted to a single avifaunal biome within North America and in some way threatened (16 species found).

Examples of Watch List Species found on Navy lands include: Scaled Quail, Swainson's Hawk, Bell's Vireo, Painted Bunting and Audubon's Oriole. Examples of Stewardship Species include: Mississippi Kite, Cactus Wren, Curve-billed Thrasher, Grasshopper Sparrow and Pyrrhuloxia. These high-priority species provide the U.S. Navy with the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to conservation of migratory birds and the rich regional avifauna of south Texas. Results of the studies support the need for continued conservation planning to sustain the native grassland habitats and monitoring of the species at most risk, in addition to the need for control of exotic grass species in support of native habitats.

The range of the Western Burrowing Owl has contracted throughout the west, but most notably along the eastern and northern limits. At current rates of decline, the Burrowing Owl will cease to breed at all in Canada within 2-3 decades. Only a few U.S. states report stable breeding populations. Historically, Burrowing Owls were breeders throughout most of Texas. Currently they only breed in the panhandle and western portions of the state. However, wintering birds are found in much of the state, including south Texas. The winter ecology of the Western



*Release of wintering Burrowing Owl at artificial burrow after being banded, NALF Orange Grove.
Photo: Mary Kay Skoruppa*

Burrowing Owls were roosting in road culverts, mostly in agricultural areas. Road culverts lead to higher vehicle related mortality, so the USGS is testing the use of artificial burrows by wintering owls. Results have shown that owls will readily use artificial burrows, and they prefer smaller diameter burrows with two openings in elevated, well-drained areas with sparse or short vegetation. The artificial burrows at NALF Orange Grove have also shown that Burrowing Owls do not present a significant bird aircraft strike hazard (BASH) risk – they hunt at night and stay low over open grasslands. In addition, they control rodents and other pests that attract large raptors during daytime operations.

Richard Riddle, Natural Resources Program Manager for Navy Region South, received National Public Lands Day (NPLD) funds to restore 20 acres of exotic grasses at NALF Orange Grove to native prairie grasses. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center in Kingsville is donating native grass seed for half of the project area, and NPLD funds will cover most of the remainder. Volunteers will create and install signage related to the restoration project, which is located just inside the main gate of the installation and along the main road to the headquarters buildings. This high visibility project will provide a benefit to wintering grassland birds as well as the wintering Burrowing Owls at the site.

U.S. Navy facilities in south Texas encompass a large portion of grasslands, native habitat that is rapidly disappearing. Due to the remoteness and compatible land use by the military, these military lands can actually function as natural resource preserves. Because of this valuable land trust and interest in the conservation of these grassland ecosystems, the U.S. Navy, through its partnership with the USGS and the Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program, is demonstrating how its military mission can coexist with conservation and restoration of native grasslands in south Texas.



Grasslands at Escondido Ranch support breeding and wintering native grassland specialist bird species. Photo: Chris Eberly

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