

Abstracts of Presented Papers

Conservation Planning Boundaries, the Geography of Bird Conservation Planning Initiatives in the Southeastern United States

William C. Hunter, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 420, Atlanta, GA 30345*

Abstract: The first continental bird conservation initiative for North America started under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) during the mid-1980s. About five years later Partners in Flight (PIF; focused on landbird species) came into being followed by the U.S. and Canada Shorebird Conservation Plans (USSCP and CSCP), the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (NAWCP), and the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI). Soon after the establishment of NAWMP, priority areas for waterfowl conservation were identified for delivering conservation programs, now referred to as Joint Ventures. Soon after PIF was initiated, all of the United States and Canada was divided into Physiographic Areas, loosely based on areas defined by the Breeding Bird Survey. USSCP and NAWCP identified larger planning regions, which were essentially aggregations of previously identified planning units established under PIF. To better facilitate all-bird conservation and communication, these four initiatives linked together to form the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). Under NABCI, the initiatives agreed to a new way to establish boundaries now referred to as Bird Conservation Regions (BCR's), which were quickly adopted by the most recently formed initiative, NBCI. Presently, the challenge is to match up existing Joint Venture conservation delivery structures addressing all birds with BCR planning units. In the Southeastern United States, we are close to having full coverage for all birds, with the exceptions of East Gulf Coastal Plain sub-BCR of the Southeastern Coastal Plain (BCR 27), where action is pending, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, which is not officially included under the Atlantic Joint Venture at this time while the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is included. Future actions to link conservation delivery between the United States (e.g., Texas in the Southeast) and Mexico for borderland BCR's is presently under discussion.

Key words: North American Bird Conservation Initiative, NABCI, bird, conservation

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The South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative— Delivering Conservation of “All Birds Across All Habitats”

Craig Watson, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, 176 Croghan Spur Rd., Suite 200, Charleston, SC 29407*

Chuck Hayes, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, North Mississippi Refuges Complex, P.O. Box 1070, Grenada, MS 38901*

Joseph McCauley, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex, P.O. Box 1030, Warsaw, VA, 22572*

Katherine M. Malloy, *The Nature Conservancy, 960 Morrison Dr., Suite 100, Charleston, SC 29403*

Andrew Milliken, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, 300 Westgate Center Dr., Hadley, MA 01035*

Abstract: In 1999, the Management Board of the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV) embraced the vision and framework of the then newly emerging North American Bird Conservation Initiative. As a result, the ACJV expanded its objective of conserving waterfowl and wetlands habitat to all native birds and their associated habitats throughout the Atlantic Flyway. To meet this objective, the ACJV launched the South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative (SAMBI) in the Southeastern Coastal Plain Bird Conservation Region. Biologists, land managers, and planners, representing non-governmental organizations, state and federal agencies, and private interests, assembled to begin the process of developing a regionally-based biological plan that integrated the objectives of five major bird conservation initiatives: the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, United States Shorebird Conservation Plan, Waterbird Conservation for the Americas, Partners In Flight, and the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. Primary objectives were to develop population and habitat goals for priority species for the SAMBI area and each state in the SAMBI area, delineate “all bird” focus areas, develop a long-term framework for bird conservation in the Southeastern Coastal Plain, and develop and seek funding for “all bird” projects. This effort has been tremendously successful, receiving nearly 25 million dollars for seventy projects within the ACJV for “all bird” conservation over the period from March 2000 to July 2005. These projects have benefited a wide variety of other bird species, affected a variety of land owners, and stimulated additional conservation partnerships throughout the South Atlantic Region. The SAMBI Implementation Plan was recently approved by the ACJV Management Board. Because of the success of SAMBI, it serves as a model for other “all bird” conservation planning efforts in North America. State Working Groups are key to the success of SAMBI, and efforts now are to continue implementation, and integrate State Comprehensive Wildlife Comprehensive Plan (Wildlife Action Plans) goals into the framework of this regional bird conservation plan.

Keywords: migratory birds, waterfowl, wildlife management

Developing Florida's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

Thomas H. Eason, *Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Bryant Building, 620 S. Meridian Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600*

Katherin Haley, *Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Bryant Building, 620 S. Meridian Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600*

Christine Small, *Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Bryant Building, 620 S. Meridian Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600*

Abstract: The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (Strategy) is one component of Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative (Initiative), which is a program designed to create a strategic vision for conserving all of Florida's wildlife. The other two main components of the Initiative are partnership development and Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program. The state of Florida has an unprecedented opportunity to shape the future of fish and wildlife conservation efforts. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (Commission) is developing a long-range strategy for managing all wildlife in Florida, including birds, with the aim of averting future declines and keeping common species common. The Strategy will build a foundation for future wildlife conservation that will be solidified by opportunities for funding. The Strategy will address conservation issues, management needs and priorities, and will be a stimulus to engage conservation partners to think about their individual and coordinated roles. Florida's Initiative is committed to building partnerships across the state of Florida to promote wildlife conservation. The Commission is working with other agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals with an interest in conserving wildlife. Cooperation will help focus efforts on high priority conservation needs and will lead to ecologically sensible and financially responsible actions to prevent wildlife declines. The Commission is utilizing Strategy development as a unique opportunity for partnership building. Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program will support Strategy development and implementation by providing a financial stimulus through a matching grants program. This program provides support for projects that address conservation needs identified in Florida's Strategy. Addressing these conservation needs will benefit the full array of Florida's wildlife and their habitats and will lead to an integrated and holistic approach to wildlife conservation across the state. Florida's Strategy identifies 104 avian species of greatest conservation need (SGCN). These species have been associated within the appropriate array of the 45 habitat categories based upon their ecology and life history needs. Conservation strategies target these habitat categories, thus benefiting all avian and other species within them. Monitoring efforts focus on assessing the status of all SGCN, including birds, within each habitat category and calculating the total area of each habitat category.

Key words: avian, CWCS, bird, Florida, strategy, wildlife conservation

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Managing for Wetland-dependent Species in Modified Landscapes

Leigh H. Fredrickson, *retired, Gaylord Memorial Laboratory,
School of Natural Resources, University of Missouri-Columbia,
Puxico, MO 63960*

Abstract: Contemporary wetland managers assigned to modified landscapes are faced with increasing complexity to maintain wetland functions and values and to meet the needs of many taxons. Historically, wetland management was driven by the drought of the 1930s when waterfowl populations were in serious decline. These conditions set the stage for a management dogma rooted in the storage rather than the manipulation of water and a focus on waterfowl. Although the first National Wildlife Refuge was for the protection of waterbirds in Florida, there was a strong focus on protecting and managing waterfowl habitats on breeding areas following the drought. Not only was the emphasis on the breeding grounds and waterfowl, but the focus was often on a single species, a selected life cycle event, or a specified time period. Thus, management often had the goal of maintaining high waterfowl populations continuously. This approach emphasized manipulations to produce foods or habitat structure required by a single species, but there was poor recognition of processes to maintain wetland productivity. Initially this approach matched limited early knowledge about wetland processes and life history needs of wetland-dependent species. As knowledge expanded about waterfowl and wetlands, it became clear that life history needs were complex and that this complexity resulted from the adaptations of wetland-dependent species to wetland variability on a spatial and temporal scale. An understanding of the historic and contemporary geomorphic and hydrologic setting, climatic variability, chronology of life history events, as well as requirements needed for survival and reproduction of plants and animals was needed for success. A few managers incorporated this new information into their thinking and initiated management actions to maintain wetland processes that enhanced wetland productivity. Because wetland productivity accommodates life history needs of a wide suite of wetland-dependent species, population size varied over time depending upon how well species needs were met because of annual and long-term variability. Thus, contemporary wetland managers are most successful when they recognize spatial and temporal scales and initiate manipulations that maintain processes to provide multiple benefits to many species.

Keywords: wetland, waterfowl, management

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Creating Partnerships and an Environmentally Active Constituency: The Future for Fish and Wildlife Agencies

David Urich, *Missouri Department of Conservation, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102 (573-522-4115). urichd@mdc.mo.gov.*

State fish and wildlife agencies generate public support for management programs through outreach efforts such as magazines, news releases, public events, and other informational materials. Public support also is related to quality management activities that achieve results. Most fish and wildlife agencies expend considerable resources on environmental education anticipating that an informed public will make wise decisions on how natural resources are used and renewed.

State fish and wildlife agencies need to augment environmental education efforts by teaching constituency groups how to understand environmental issues, identify common goals, use existing environmental legislation, and promote new environmental legislation that seeks to sustain fish and wildlife resources. The significant growth in environmental groups in the last three decades, such as The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, Defenders of Wildlife, National Wildlife Federation, and others suggests that people are turning to these organizations for guidance and support on serious environmental issues rather than their state fish and wildlife agencies. These organizations develop their own constituencies, absorb funding, and sometimes develop a combative rather than constructive relationship with the state agency.

State fish and wildlife agencies are competing for environmental dollars. In the late 1990s, the national budget of The Nature Conservancy was nearly U.S. \$350 million dollars. This amount is not much less than the \$377 million for the federal sport fish and wildlife restoration apportionment to all 50 states combined. Annual budgets for other non-governmental organizations such as the National Wildlife Foundation, Audubon Society, and Ducks Unlimited clearly demonstrate that there are significant funds allocated and spent on resource management each year which are not available to state agencies. In addition, federal regulations have mandated clean-up and monitoring of air and water quality. Monies associated with these endeavors also are not available for state fish and wildlife management. This financial allocation is due in part to a lack of confidence in state fish and wildlife agencies to solve environmental issues and the perception that state agencies are primarily responsible for and interested in hunting and fishing.

As part of collaborative conservation and management endeavors, state fish and wildlife agencies should partner with conservation organizations to foster cooperation, achieve common goals and demonstrate that they are conservation leaders. Historically, state fish and wildlife agencies have partnered with hunting and fishing organizations such as Quail Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Trout Unlimited and Bassmasters on various habitat management and public education projects. Agency personnel often serve on local organization boards. However, agencies should broaden their constituency groups. Conservation partnerships should be inclusive in order to build and strengthen relationships and understanding between hunting and fishing or-

ganizations and other environmental organizations. This collaboration is important for the success and long-term relevance of state fish and wildlife agencies. For example, successful implementation of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative at the state level and fulfilling the eight required elements in the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy will depend on more active partnerships between state fish and wildlife agencies and non-governmental conservation organizations.

I suggest that meaningful long-term environmental improvements will be facilitated when state fish and wildlife agencies can assume a leadership role, find common goals with non-governmental environmental organizations, and help more citizens understand and participate in the political processes that will determine the future of wildlife and fish resources.

Six action items that will build stronger partners with other organizations include:

1. Develop the state wildlife conservation strategies in cooperation with partners through a meaningful input processes that truly seeks participation and contributions from all potential partners.

2. Develop an agency strategic plan. Provide funds to conservation partners to assist strategic planning processes of their own. Cooperation among partners is facilitated with strategic plans that form a foundation for communication and action.

3. Give State Wildlife Grant money to conservation partners. Wildlife and fish management actions do not have to be the sole responsibility of the state agency.

4. Develop a state all-bird conservation initiative. Birds can serve as a focal point for a variety of conservation organizations.

5. Assign agency staff to serve as liaison with conservation organizations and apply for grants together. Staff must be given time to build partnerships with conservation organizations. Partnerships are based on trust and a desire to achieve common strategic goals.

6. Move agency staff into different jobs across disciplines through transfers, promotions, job swaps or temporary assignments. Staff that accepts new agency assignments develop a broader management perspective and can integrate conservation actions with more conservation partners.

Fish and wildlife agencies tend to be conservative and perhaps slow to recognize growth opportunities in public service and resource management. I believe a growth opportunity for fish and wildlife agencies is to assume more of a greater leadership role in broad environmental issues, partner with conservation organizations and reach out to a constituency that includes more than just hunters and anglers.

Keywords: Wildlife agency partnerships, public support, funding