

DECEMBER 2002

Condors Vaccinated for West Nile

The Los Angeles Zoo has become the first captive-breeding facility to use the newly developed West Nile Virus (WNV) vaccine to protect its population of Endangered California Condors. The DNA-based vaccine was developed at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention laboratory in Atlanta, with funding from ABC, American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, and others (*Bird Calls* vol. 6, no. 1). So far, the vaccine has only undergone preliminary testing in the laboratory on American Crows, but the danger faced by the condors from WNV infection prompted the



California Condor. So far no condors have been affected by West Nile but the disease has only recently arrived in the west. Photo: FWS.

zoo to move the vaccination schedule forward.

The zoo began by vaccinating their captive Andean Condors, a closely-related species that is not endangered. When none of those birds showed any adverse reaction to the vaccine, a test group of California Condors - one thought to be genetically less valuable as breeding stock for reintroduction - was vaccinated. After that group

was given a clean bill of health, the remaining birds were inoculated. In all, the zoo has 32 California Condors and four Andeans. San Diego Zoo will soon be doing the same with their captive stock, and plans have been made to begin vaccinating birds in the wild next year. The condors kept at the Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey will likely also be vaccinated in the spring of 2003.

WNV is known to have killed at least 110 bird species and has spread from the East Coast of the U.S. to the West in the three years since it was first discovered on the continent. In 2002, 7,612 American Crows and 6,060 other birds were recorded killed by WNV in 42 states and the District of Columbia. *Contact:* Dr. Patti Bright, ABC, <pbright@abcbirds.org>.

Groups Sue EPA over Fenthion Use

This October, ABC, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Florida Wildlife Federation filed a law suit in Federal District Court against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over the continued use of the pesticide fenthion in Florida. The suit alleges violations of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Migratory Bird Treaty Act in the continued registration of the

pesticide, sold under the name Baytex, which is used to kill mosquitoes in several counties in the state. The groups had filed a 60-day notice of intent to sue in January 2002 (*Bird Calls* vol. 6, no. 1) as a requirement for legal action under the ESA, but received no response from EPA.

The pesticide has caused the deaths of migratory birds including Dunlin, Black Skimmer, Sanderling, and an Endangered Piping Plover on Marco Island in Collier County. Yet despite the known dangers, and the existence of safer, equally effective alternatives, Collier and Lee

Counties are permitted by the EPA to continue spraying thousands of acres with fenthion year-round.

"More than thirty federally-listed species live in the Everglades region, and many others depend on this ecosystem for habitat, including millions of migratory birds that travel through the state every year," said Nancy Payton, Florida Wildlife Federation's Southwest Florida Field Representative. "This lawsuit aims to protect these species from the needless and deadly spraying of fenthion."

Dr. Patti Bright, Director of ABC's Pesticides and Birds Campaign and a veterinary

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Abbreviations

ABC: American Bird Conservancy
 FWS: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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FWS Agrees: Cerulean Warbler May Qualify for ESA Listing

On October 23, FWS published a finding that a petition to list the Cerulean Warbler as a Threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) may be warranted. This finding opens the way for a further 12-month status review that could lead to the warbler being proposed as a candidate for the U.S. Endangered List. If the warbler were to be listed, it would be the most widespread landbird yet afforded ESA protection. Although the widely-distributed Yellow-billed Cuckoo is already a candidate for listing, this candidacy applies only to its western population.

In April 2000, FWS released a comprehensive status assessment of the Cerulean Warbler which showed an annual decline of 3.7% over a 30 year period based on Breeding Bird Survey data. However, the latest FWS finding on the petition also raises questions over these data. It points out that, because the Cerulean Warbler is a bird of mature forests, it may have been lost at a greater rate in areas where BBS routes are most commonly found along roads. It also states that the species primarily declined prior to 1980 and may now be relatively stable, citing the need for more data. On October 31, 2000, the Southern Environmental Law Center and 27 other groups filed a petition requesting that the warbler be afforded protection under the ESA

(*Bird Calls* vol. 4, no. 3). The petition also requested that Critical Habitat (CH) be designated for the species. Following delays due to lack of FWS funds to process listing petitions, two notices of intent to sue were filed by the petitioners, eventually resulting in the new finding. A public comment period has now opened (until January 21, 2003), and FWS is requesting input, especially new data generated since April 2000. This December, scientists will convene for a three-day workshop in Sheperdstown, West Virginia to assess status and conservation of the species. The current U.S. Cerulean Warbler population has been estimated at 214,000 pairs. The species also has an important nesting population in Canada. See <http://midwest.fws.gov/ endangered/> for more information.

Currently, 92 bird species are listed as Threatened or Endangered in the U.S., up from the 36 species initially listed when the ESA was passed in 1966, though species have been removed as well as added over that time. The most recent bird species to be added to the list was the Oahu subspecies of Elepaio in April of 2000. Prior to that, Steller's Eider and "Cactus" Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl were both added in 1997. To date, 20 listed bird species have CH designated for them. *Contact:* Mike Parr, ABC, <mparr@abcbirds.org>.

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Condor Ups and Downs

The California Condor Recovery Program took two important steps this year, both with mixed results. A small group of birds was released in Mexico, the first time condors have flown free there in almost 70 years. However, problems, including one bird's territorial battle with an eagle, forced a re-capture of the three juveniles. Biologists plan to re-release the birds, along with two other juveniles, at the end of this year, but first, the team must equip itself for inclement winter weather at the 8,000 foot-high release site at Sierra San Pedro de

Martir National Park in the mountains of Baja California, Mexico.

Meanwhile, in the U.S., the ground-breaking news that released condors in California had raised young in the wild for the first time since the reintroduction program began in 1987, was marred when all three chicks subsequently died close to fledging (at between five and six months old). One bird was found to have ingested large amounts of trash, including bottle caps, plastic, and glass, leading to a rupturing of its intestines. The second bird also had trash in its intestines, though this was not the cause of death, which remains undetermined. The cause of death of the third chick also remains uncertain. Although the third chick had not ingested any

foreign objects, a bottle cap was found in the nest. Biologists are uncertain why trash is turning up in the young birds, but plan to increase observations next season and will attempt to get closer to the often inaccessible nests. Also in California, male condor "AC9," the last wild bird to be caught was released back in to the wild after 15 years in captivity. His former partner "AC8," the first condor to be re-released in 2000 was caught again and found to have high levels of lead in her blood. Lead has been a continuing problem for the recovery program resulting from the birds feeding on carcasses containing lead shot (see article p. 11). *Contact:* Bronwyn Davey, FWS, (805) 644-5185.

Last of the Curlews?

This August 27, while birding on Martha's Vineyard, former Massachusetts Audubon tour leader John Nelson and his son Andrew observed a bird which they identified as an Eskimo Curlew - a species that has been considered likely to be extinct by many biologists. They watched the bird for approximately an hour, and at times were as close as 40 feet from it. They did not have a camera and the bird was not seen again after it flew off.

The last irrefutable record of the species was a specimen shot in Barbados in 1963. Two birds were also photographed (the only known



Eskimo Curlew. One of a series of pictures taken in Texas in 1962. The only known photographs of the species. Could the Curlew survive in 2002? Photo: Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology and Don Bleitz.

photographs of the species - shown) on Galveston Island, Texas in 1962. Since then, the species has been reported on several occasions in various states, with several reports from Texas, including a flock of 23 in 1981. Although the Eskimo Curlew has some distinctive field characteristics, it is sufficiently

similar to the Whimbrel (and to Asia's Little Curlew, which has been recorded as a vagrant in the U.S.) that the possibility of confusion exists for inexperienced observers or if only poor views are obtained. Historically, Eskimo Curlews are known to have been site-faithful during migration, and there is a possible 1972 sight record from Martha's Vineyard. Should a subsequent sighting of the Curlew on Martha's Vineyard be confirmed, there would be real hope for the continued survival of this species, which was immortalized in Fred Bodworth's book "Last of the Curlews." ABC is interested in hearing from individuals who would be willing to conduct field surveys on Martha's Vineyard next summer in an attempt to locate and photograph this bird. *Contact:* Mike Parr, ABC, <mparr@abcbirds.org>.

FCC Sued to Halt Bird Kills at Towers

This December, ABC and two partner organizations filed a lawsuit in Federal Court in Washington, D.C. against the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). ABC, the Forest Conservation Council, and Friends of the Earth are seeking to enjoin the FCC from issuing licenses for new communication towers in the Gulf Coast region (defined as a 100 mile-wide belt along the southern Gulf Coast, from Port Isabel, Texas, to Tampa Bay, Florida), a critical stopover area for Neotropical migratory birds. The suit documents 5,800 towers that were authorized in the region illegally using a loophole in environmental regulations called a "categorical exclusion." This has allowed companies to build towers harmful to migratory birds with little or no environmental review or public

oversight. The most vulnerable species are Neotropical songbirds that pass through the region in the millions before and after crossing the Gulf during spring and fall migration. Attracted to the tower lights, birds die, sometimes by the thousands, in collisions with the towers, their guy wires and related structures.

The three organizations had filed a petition with FCC in August (*Bird Calls* vol. 6, no. 2), detailing the full scope of the threat to birds, requesting that FCC mandate retroactive environmental reviews on the towers, prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and change their licensing procedures. However, FCC failed to respond and has since registered some 300 additional towers. ABC and its partners are now seeking legal means to block any new towers until an EIS is prepared and mitigation measures are required on both new and existing towers. In November 1999, the Director of FWS urged just such an EIS in a letter to the FCC Chairman, but the

FCC refused. The EIS would analyze the extent of bird mortality at communication towers, assess the causes, and then examine mitigation measures to prevent the deaths of up to 50 million birds a year throughout the U.S.

Since 1998, ABC and its partners have been seeking a remedy to their concerns over migratory bird deaths through administrative avenues including participating in the FWS Communication Tower Working Group, by meeting repeatedly with FCC and industry representatives, formally challenging individual towers and regional tower programs harmful to migratory birds, and supporting local efforts to oppose bird threatening towers. The FCC and industry have refused to fund research proposals that could lead to solutions and have steadfastly blocked reforms at the FCC in its registration of towers, disregarding the threat to migratory birds. Contact: Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

Groups Press for \$20 Million+ for Neotrop Fund

On September 24, 2002, ABC's Policy Council adopted a resolution calling for the authorized cap on the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) to be increased from \$5 million to at least \$20 million in new conservation dollars. The resolution also called for the NMBCA match requirement to be reduced from 3:1 to 1:1 to make it easier for smaller, particularly Latin American and

Caribbean (LAC)-based groups to take advantage of the funding opportunity presented by the Act. The resolution also asks for an



Golden-cheeked Warbler. With funding from NMBCA, ABC and Defensores de la Naturaleza are working in Guatemala, to protect wintering habitat for the species. Photo: FWS.

increase in funding for FWS to manage the program, that Canadian projects be included, and that at least 50% of the increased budget be spent in LAC (now 75%). In 2002, more than 230 proposals went unfunded for lack of money when \$3 million was appropriated (*Bird Calls* vol. 6, no. 2). ABC and the Policy Council are also pressing for full funding at \$5 million in 2003. The Act is currently due to expire in 2005, but is up for re-authorization next year. Contact: Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

Congress Grants DOD Exemption From MBTA

In November, despite strong opposition from the conservation community, Congress approved an amendment to the DOD Appropriations Bill that would exempt DOD activities from the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918. While defeating other exemptions sought by the DOD to basic environmental laws, such as the Endangered Species Act, the MBTA exemption was agreed upon as the last issue facing House and Senate conferees on the massive funding bill, that was then signed by the President.

The specific change to the MBTA, which currently allows federal agencies to obtain permits to remove migratory birds for operational, economic, or safety reasons, creates a one-year interim period where rules on incidental takings of migratory birds would not apply to military readiness activities. During the interim period, the Department of Interior is to begin drafting regulations that

exempt the armed forces from the incidental taking of migratory birds. DOD must agree to the regulations before they take effect. Senator James Jeffords, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, called the blanket exemptions unnecessary, stating that the MBTA already grants the military special flexibility to meet training needs. But, Raymond F. DuBois, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Installations and Environment, said the exemption was made necessary last April after a federal judge halted bombing exercises on Farallon de Medinilla, a western Pacific island where migratory birds were being killed. While sensitive to the needs of the military, ABC and many of its conservation partners oppose this



Prothonotary Warbler. This species is included on the Partners in Flight Watch List. It breeds at Eglin Air Force base in Florida, a globally Important Bird Area; 18 DOD-managed sites have been declared IBAs. Photo: FWS.

MBTA exemption, and have noted that the President already has the power to grant DOD exemptions when national security is at risk.

DOD has more than 25 million acres of land under its jurisdiction and has successfully managed endangered and declining avian species without impeding military training or readiness. Examples include: Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, which manages populations of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Bachman's Sparrow and Prothonotary Warbler; Fort Riley, Kansas, which helps protect Henslow's and Grasshopper sparrows; and Fort Hood, Texas, which manages Endangered Golden-cheeked Warblers and Black-capped Vireos, as well as populations of Dickcissel and Painted Bunting. The Congressional exemption could impede the incentive for strong non-endangered migratory bird cooperative efforts and represents unilateral U.S. action on an international treaty. Prior modifications to the MBTA have only occurred after years of negotiations with Canada, Mexico, Russia, and Japan. Contact: Gerald Winegrad at ABC <gww@abcbirds.org>.

Tern for the Better?

Efforts to protect the largest Caspian Tern colony in the world continue. The 2002 Caspian Tern Status Report from tern researchers working on the colony is available at: www.columbiabirdresearch.org. All Caspian Tern nesting in the

Columbia River estuary has now been concentrated on East Sand Island. The colony of 19,800 nesting birds is up slightly from 2001. Under a court settlement, approximately 6.5 acres of suitable bare sand habitat was prepared on East Sand Island, up from 4 acres, and 10,715 fledglings were produced. Total nesting success was down from 2001. In 2002, Caspian Terns also consumed 48%

less salmon smolt than they did in 1998, when they also nested on Rice Island.

Conservationists continue to raise concerns over the increasing concentration of terns on this one island, as suitable alternate habitat has not yet been established. FWS has published a draft Site Feasibility Study, reviewing 76 potential alternative Caspian Tern nesting sites in the Pacific Northwest.

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Acid Rain Linked to Wood Thrush Decline

Scientists at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology have become the first to show a definitive link between acid rain and a decline in a U.S. songbird population. The species studied was the Wood Thrush. The likely cause: leaching of calcium from the soil after prolonged exposure to acid rain. The depletion of soil calcium leads directly to a decrease in calcium-rich foods such as snails which are required by breeding thrushes and their young. The research, conducted by postdoctoral associate Ralph S. Hames and his colleagues, used data collected by thousands of volunteer citizen-scientists in the *Birds in Forested Landscapes* project (a joint initiative of Cornell

and the USDA Forest Service) and is published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (vol. 99, no. 16).

According to the Breeding Bird Survey, the Wood Thrush population has been declining at a rate of nearly two percent per year since 1966. This rate reaches five percent regionally at higher elevations such as in the Adirondacks, Appalachians, Great Smoky Mountains, and the Allegheny Plateau - where the



Wood Thrush. The Breeding Bird Survey shows that the species has been declining at a rate of two percent per year since 1966. Could acid rain be a significant cause? Photo: Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

amount of acid deposited in precipitation can be higher.

Using computer models, the researchers were able to predict where acid rain's effects might be most severe for a bird whose life and reproductive success depend on food it finds on the forest floor. After statistically adjusting for several other factors (soil, vegetation, topography, thrush abundance), the probability of a Wood Thrush breeding at a highly acidified site was found to be considerably reduced. The negative effects of acid rain might also be heightened by such factors as high elevation and habitat fragmentation.

In the U.S., about two-thirds of all sulfur dioxide and one-fourth of all nitrogen oxide, the primary causes of acid rain, come from electric-power plants burning fossil fuels. The study backs up findings by European scientists that have linked declining bird populations to acid-rain-induced depletion of soil calcium. Contact: Roger Segelken, Cornell, <hrs2@cornell.edu>.

ABC and eNature Launch Online IBA Field Guides

ABC and the wildlife website eNature.com have collaborated to produce online bird field guides for Globally Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the continental U.S. identified by ABC scientists. Visitors to the IBA field guides located at: www.abcbirds.org/iba/ibalist.htm, can view photographs, read descriptions and species data, and listen to recordings of birds

found in the region in which each IBA is located. The field guides are easily accessed by clicking the "view bird guide" link next to each IBA listing. ABC and eNature are consulting with local biologists at the IBAs to further refine the field guides with the ultimate goal of creating customized photographic guides for birds regularly found at each IBA. To date, field guides for National Park IBAs have been completed. eNature also enables visitors to create online life lists, discover which endangered species occur in their state, learn about seasonal birding events, and much

more. eNature is owned by the National Wildlife Federation, a long-time ABC partner. Find out more about ABC's IBA Conservation and Education program, including the new IBA online field guides and the IBA map produced in collaboration with National Geographic at: www.abcbirds.org. Contact: Mike Parr, ABC, <mparr@abcbirds.org>.

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Avian Mortality at Wind Turbines

Recognizing that power generated from fossil fuels leads to pollution and global warming (see article p. 6), wind power seems a good choice for producing more of our nation's electricity. However, concerns have surfaced over the potential threat to migratory birds from wind farms as they spread throughout the U.S. Siting wind turbines on high ridges could present a particular hazard to migratory birds especially raptors, whereas turbines sited along sea coasts could threaten larger seabirds. A pending project offshore of Cape Cod raises these concerns, as do a number of proposed projects on ridges in western Maryland and West Virginia.

A study by the National Wind Coordinating Committee (NWCC) estimates that 33,000 birds died at the 15,000 wind turbines operating in the U.S. in 2001. Reported kills included 488 raptors, 468 of which died in California, mostly at Altamont Pass. The Altamont Pass site, where more than 2,000 turbines operate, is the largest, and one of the earliest, wind projects in the U.S., and the site with the highest bird mortality. The NWCC also produced the 1999 document "Studying Wind Energy/Bird Interactions: A Guidance Document," which details siting guidelines to avoid avian mortality. To obtain these reports, call 202-965-6398 or visit: www.nationalwind.org.



Wind farms are largely seen as beneficial to the environment, but there is a cost in bird mortality. Raptors are especially vulnerable. Photo: Ian Britton, Freefoto.com.

Washington State Audubon has issued a wind turbine policy statement for the siting, development, operation, and monitoring of wind power generation facilities in the state, recognizing that wind power is a desirable source of renewable energy, provided that it is developed in a responsible manner. Along with siting criteria, the statement calls for a statewide Environmental Impact Statement on wind turbines, designation of priority sites for wind generation, and assurances of public participation in siting decisions.

Experience gained while studying communication towers has led some scientists to predict that aviation safety lighting (required on structures over 199') will be a high priority concern in preventing bird mortality at turbines. However, the clustering of turbines at wind farms may mean that only a few structures at each project need to be individually lit, possibly limiting bird collisions. Communication tower studies also indicate that white strobe lighting with a

Caspian Tern, from Page 5.

Which sites are chosen will be decided after public comments are received (comments to: nanette_seto@r1.fws.gov by January 2, 2003). The National Marine Fisheries Service Predation Report (for Caspian Terns on salmon) is also complete, but fails to provide scientific justification concerning the link between tern predation and a reduction in adult salmon returns. The Army Corps of Engineers is drafting an Environmental Assessment for Caspian Tern Management for 2003-2004. The public may comment on this This document will detail the Caspian Tern management strategy for the next two breeding seasons, while a full Environmental Impact Statement process is completed, as agreed upon in a court settlement following legal action by ABC, Defenders of Wildlife, Seattle Audubon, and National Audubon. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, gww@abcbirds.org.

maximum of twenty pulses per minute may minimize bird mortality. FWS has produced guidelines for the siting and lighting of communication towers (available from ABC's web site at: www.abcbirds.org) and is now working on similar guidelines for wind-powered generators. Some local measures are already being enforced. For example, the power company at Cape Cod is being required to erect a test structure to measure avian mortality before more turbines are built. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, gww@abcbirds.org.

Election Shifts Senate Leadership

After their victory in the fall 2002 elections, the incoming Senate Republican leadership elected new chairs for all Senate committees and subcommittees. The new chairs are considered much less favorable to environmental causes than their predecessors. Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) takes over leadership of the critical Environment and Public Works Committee, which reviews most major legislation concerning conservation, wildlife, and environmental enforcement. He replaces Senator Jim Jeffords, who is widely respected by conservation groups. The non-partisan League of Conservation Voters (LCV) rated Senator Inhofe a 0% on his lifetime environmental voting record, whereas Senator Jeffords scored 81% in the 106th Congress and 76% in the 107th. Senator Pete Domenici

(R-NM) takes over the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. This Committee has jurisdiction over energy resources and development, public lands, and water resources. Senator Domenici, with a LCV record of 0% in the 106th Congress and 8% in the 107th replaces Senator Jeff Bingaman with a 64% record in the 107th. Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) will chair the Agriculture Committee, taking over from Iowa Democrat Tom Harkin. The new Chairman's LCV voting record was 8% in the 107th Congress and 0% in the 106th, contrasted with Senator Harkin's 84% for the 107th, 94% for the 106th. The Senate Appropriations committee, which controls the budget for every federal agency, will be chaired by Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) with an LCV rating of 8% in the 107th Congress. He replaces Senator Robert Byrd at 56%. On November 22, the 107th Congress adjourned without taking final action on the remaining 11 appropriation bills for FY 2003. Therefore funding for Interior, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration (including the National Marine Fisheries Service), and many other agencies for the fiscal year beginning on October 1, 2002 is stymied until the new Congress convenes in January 2003. This leaves the agencies operating in budget limbo, as a continuing resolution keeps them functioning at last fiscal year's levels. Many conservationists believe that these election changes, along with the retention of most of the current House leadership, do not bode well for the conservation cause. Time Magazine notes, "It's a dark time for the greens." The elections have re-invigorated the stalled administration energy bill, and it is expected that efforts to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling (*Bird Calls* vol. 6, no. 1) will be vigorously pursued once again. Some conservationists believe that there will be more reliance on the states to protect natural resources and public health, as pro-environment Governors present a better set of opportunities. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

Woman Charged in Fish Farm Bird Slaughter

A six-month investigation by federal and state officials in Florida into the shooting deaths of birds and other animals at an aquaculture facility in Desoto County has led to the arrest of the hatchery manager, Vicky Davidson. Ms. Davidson allegedly provided her farm workers



Two Endangered Wood Storks were among 4,000 birds shot on a Florida fish farm. Photo: Linda Winter, ABC.

with two boxes of shotgun shells every day with instructions to shoot birds. Over an 11 month period, she

is alleged to have been the principal in the deaths of more than 4,000 birds. It is the biggest case of its kind in Florida history and one of the largest recorded shooting violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act by an individual. The majority of birds killed were Great Blue Herons and Cattle Egrets, but also included Black-necked Stilts, Eastern Meadowlarks, and two Wood Storks, a federally-listed species. Davidson was charged by the state attorney's office with a third-degree felony in the killing of

Continued on next page.

New Watch Lists Released

Partners in Flight (PIF) has released the new version of its Watch List for U.S. landbirds. This list is designed to be the focal point of PIF's Continental Plan for the Landbirds of North America (due to be published in coming months), and was produced using an improved process of assessment and prioritization from the previously published list. It is restricted to landbirds (i.e., no waterfowl, shorebirds, or colonial waterbirds) meaning that species such as Brant, Dunlin, and Great Egret were automatically excluded. In all, 94 bird species have been included on the List, which can be viewed on ABC's website (www.abcbirds.org) as part of the all-encompassing *United States Bird Conservation Watch List*. This is a compilation of lists drawn up by Partners in Flight, the Resident Game Bird Working Group, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, the North American Waterbird Conservation



Red-cockaded Woodpecker. This Endangered species is also ranked under species of "Highest Concern" on the Watch List. It is restricted to long-leaf pine forests of the southeast. Photo: FWS.

Plan, and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. A startling revelation of this list is that the 168 species of conservation concern represent approximately one fifth of all U.S. bird species. Populations of some of these birds are declining, with continued threats perceived. Others may currently be stable, but their small population sizes and/or ranges indicate the need to keep a close eye on their status. The National Audubon Society has also recently released its new

"WatchList 2002". See: www.audubon.org for more information.

The *United States Bird Conservation Watch List* does not incorporate the FWS Species of Management Concern List. A federal law requires FWS to revise this list every five years, but, although the last version was produced in 1995, the new list has not been forthcoming. The delay was prompted by President Clinton's January 2001 Executive Order. This requires all federal agencies to consider migratory birds in their proceedings, necessitating memoranda of understanding to be drawn up with every federal agency that could have an impact on migratory birds. This caused a reassessment of the list and a major re-structuring according to Bird Conservation Regions, with a focus on populations as opposed to individual species. FWS representative John Trapp has said the list should be published by the end of this year. *Contact:* David Pashley, ABC, <dpashley@abcbirds.org>.

Continued from previous page.

the Wood Storks, which carries a maximum penalty of five years in jail and a \$5,000 fine, and three second-degree misdemeanors in the deaths of the migratory birds, each of which carries a maximum sentence of six months in jail and a \$500 fine. She was also charged with attempted evidence tampering, a first-degree misdemeanor, and witness tampering, a third-degree felony. Officials with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission stressed that, although

the investigation revealed the deaths of up to 4,000 birds, this was only during an 11 month period. Davidson has managed the facility for approximately ten years and investigators suspect that this practice had been going on for some time prior. However, due to the alleged poor working conditions at the farm, staff rarely stayed more than a few months, and so details are lacking prior to 2001. Although one farm-hand was arrested at the start of the investigation, no charges are planned against any other

employees who shot the birds, because of their essential role in bringing the charges against Davidson. Charges are not yet pending against the hatchery owner, David Kitchens, or the parent company Terra Aquatics, and officials do not expect the case to be heard until well into 2003. Meanwhile Ms. Davidson is released on bail. *Contact:* Gary Morse, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, (836) 648-3206.

Murrelet Protected by Oil Spill Fund

An agreement was signed in August that will provide funding to protect old growth forest in the interior of Washington's Makah Indian Reservation, valuable nesting habitat for the federally-Threatened Marbled Murrelet. The agreement between the Makah Indian Tribe and the Tenyo Maru Natural Resource Trustees, protects portions of the Waatch Valley and is part of a plan to restore natural resources damaged by the 1991 Tenyo Maru oil spill off the northern coast of Washington. The spill resulted in damages of approximately \$5.2 million being awarded to federal, state, and tribal authorities, of which \$1.4 million will be used to protect



Marbled Murrelet (summer plumage). In the southern portion of the species' range, the birds nest high in old-growth forest, up to 70km inland. Due to their dependence on this declining habitat and their vulnerability to oil spills, the species is federally-listed as Threatened. Photo: FWS.

Marbled Murrelets. Approximately 135 acres of old growth forest will be protected from timber harvest and development for the next 200 years, and a further 150 acres of successional forest will be set aside for recruitment and buffer habitat.

The agreement between the Makah Tribe and the Trustees is the second of a number of Marbled Murrelet habitat restoration actions

to be completed under the Tenyo Maru Restoration Plan. The first was the purchase of the 338 acre Teal Slough which has been incorporated into Willapa National Wildlife Refuge in southwest Washington. Other habitat projects will help restore seabirds and kelp stands injured by the oil spill. These include efforts to protect and restore additional Marbled Murrelet habitat, restore Common Murre colonies in the Copalis National Wildlife Refuge, educate the public to reduce the disturbance of seabird nesting colonies, and potentially provide partial funding for an oiled wildlife rehabilitation center. Partial funding of an emergency rescue tug stationed at the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca to protect against devastating winter oil spills is also forthcoming under the Tenyo Maru Restoration Plan. *Contact:* Cindy Schexnider, FWS, 360-753-4324.

Resolution to Protect Seabirds

Two hundred attendees representing 28 nations and 18 U.S. states convened in Honolulu in November to discuss resolutions to the problem of seabird and turtle bycatch in longline fisheries. Present at the conference, hosted by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, were longline fishers, fishery managers, seabird specialists, and conservation NGOs, marking a high point in

collaboration between the groups. The meeting produced useful exchanges, including the most up-to-date information on bycatch avoidance techniques, together with increased fishers efforts to solve the bycatch problem. The meeting resulted in new commitments such as the development of a new web-based information exchange system, production of more education and outreach materials and the confirmed goal to eliminate seabird and turtle bycatch.

Although many key longline nations failed to send representatives to the meeting, progress that has already been made around the globe in certain

fisheries was evident. Participants acknowledged that methods are available to eliminate or greatly reduce seabird mortality, many of which are currently in use. Proven methods showing the greatest reductions include paired streamer lines, weighted lines, and underwater setting tubes. Particularly troublesome, however, are the deeper diving birds, such as Short-tailed and Flesh-footed Shearwaters, which seem to outwit otherwise proven technology such as paired streamer lines. Research also revealed that some of the smaller albatrosses can dive six meters after prey. These and other obstacles to solving seabird bycatch

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Fisheries Forum, from Page 10.

were thoroughly discussed resulting in solid progress towards focusing and achieving success.

Also discussed at the forum were new technology to assess seabird mortality and the effectiveness of measures that can be used without having to deploy costly observers in all fisheries. Computer-operated cameras, able to automatically observe lines at setting and retrieval, have recently been tried on Canadian and Alaskan Pacific halibut longliners and on Alaskan trawlers. The results appear promising and are being examined.

The participants approved a resolution to be presented in February 2003 to the next session of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization Committee of Fisheries urging them and other organizations to collaborate in implementing the International Plan of Action to reduce incidental catches of seabirds in longline fisheries. Some fishers in South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand have already greatly reduced their bird bycatch, and legal fishers in the Southern oceans around Antarctica

have reduced seabird mortality from nearly 8,000 in 1997 to only 27 in 2002. Unfortunately, illegal vessels catching Patagonian toothfish in the southern oceans (*Bird Calls* vol. 5, no. 3) in the still kill more than 60,000 birds a year, many of them globally threatened albatrosses and petrels. Alaskan and Hawaiian longliner bycatch also appears to have been reduced and up-to-date data are being developed to document these reductions. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

Policy Council Passes Lead Resolution

At its September meeting in New Orleans, the ABC Policy Council adopted a resolution "to encourage programs aimed at reducing the threat of lead poisoning in birds." The resolution, passed unanimously by the Council, also supports manufacturers' efforts to develop non-toxic alternatives to lead shot and lead fishing weights. The lethal nature of lead to birds, particularly waterfowl such as Trumpeter Swans, and other species including loons, eagles, and condors (see article p. 3), has been known for decades. Yet even with viable alternatives available, lead remains the primary material used in hunting shot and fishing weights. In 1991, FWS imposed a ban on the use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting



Golden Eagles are especially vulnerable to lead poisoning from shot found in mammals such as prairie dogs, a popular hunting quarry in the west. Photo: FWS.

(*Bird Calls* vol. 4, no. 3), and laws have been passed in Maine, New Hampshire, and New York that ban the sale and/or use of certain sizes of lead fishing sinkers, but the U.S. still lags behind other countries such as Britain, parts of continental Europe, and Japan, that have banned lead ammunition and fishing tackle outright.

By enacting the resolution, the Policy Council hopes to encourage outreach programs that both educate hunters, shooters, and anglers about

the dangers of lead to wildlife, and promote the use of suitable, non-toxic alternatives. The resolution cites the U.S. Department of Defense, the largest single user of ammunition in the U.S., as a model for the work it has undergone to develop lead-free alternatives through its "Green Bullet Program."

The resolution was proposed by Policy Council member Hawkwatch International, which recently launched its Wildlife Lead Poisoning Reduction Program to minimize the threat to Golden Eagles and other raptors (*Bird Calls* vol. 6, no.1). One example of the danger facing Golden Eagles occurred in Wyoming in the summer of 2000, when a wildlife rehabilitator near Thunder Basin National Grasslands was brought almost 100 eagles suffering from lead contamination. *Contact:* Dr. Wendy Sanborn, Hawkwatch International, <wsanborn@hawkwatch.org>.

Penguin Crisis Looms

In 1994, five of the world's seventeen penguin species were considered threatened with extinction. By 2000, this had increased to ten species. Now, alarming new data indicate that even some abundant penguin species could be facing dramatic declines. Both over-fishing and global climate change are significant ongoing threats, as are oil spills, which have already contributed to numerous penguin deaths. For example, estimates indicate that up to 1% of the adult population of Magellanic Penguins may now be dying each year as a result of oiling off the coasts of Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil.

In total, eight penguin species occur regularly in the Americas, principally along the coasts of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and



Adelie Penguins have declined by more than 50% in parts of the Western Antarctic Peninsula. This decline has been attributed to a reduction in sea ice. Photo: NOAA.

southern Brazil. One species, the Galapagos Penguin, is endemic to the Galapagos Islands, and several species nest in the Falkland Islands. Researchers in the Falklands discovered a 90% population crash among Rockhopper Penguins between 1984 and 1996. This decline was linked to over-fishing that had reduced the birds' food supply. Meanwhile, Adelie Penguins appear to have undergone a steep decline along the Western Antarctic Peninsula (WAP) with a

recorded drop of 56% at Palmer Station since 1974. Scientists from the Polar Oceans Research Group have linked these declines to climate change and a decline in sea ice on which the Adelies are highly dependent. Part of this reliance stems from an algae that the sea-ice harbors. The algae provides food for krill, which themselves are a staple diet of the WAP Adelie population. Since 1989, Adelie Penguins have also declined by 40 percent on King George Island, with similar declines in Chinstrap Penguins. In other areas, however, Chinstraps have actually increased as they prefer to hunt in more open water than Adelies, and thus benefit from reduced sea ice. The mean temperature on the Antarctic Peninsula has increased by about two degrees since 1950. A cold year with abundant sea ice is badly needed to avert a disaster for the Adelie Penguin. *Contact:* Mike Parr, ABC, <mparr@abcbirds.org>.

Workshop Brings Stake- holders Together on Horseshoe Crabs

The FWS recently convened the first meeting of its kind on horseshoe crabs and shorebirds, bringing together leading scientists, federal and state regulators and researchers, fishermen, and conservationists to forge common

goals to build on the conservation of horseshoe crabs and shorebirds. At the two-day workshop, New Jersey state regulators reiterated the need to further restrict crab harvest from Delaware Bay, the epicenter of crab spawning and shorebird concentrations, and urged the group to reach consensus on proposed actions to protect the resource. Attendees reached agreement on the need to pursue further harvest restrictions, to conduct additional research and monitoring, to protect key spawning beach habitats in New Jersey and Delaware, to seek alternative/artificial bait substitutes for catching conchs, and to promote

the use of bait bags that can reduce use of crabs for bait by 50% or more. The possibility of an Endangered Species Act listing petition for the Red Knot was also raised. Through the efforts of researchers at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and conservationists, the U.S. Senate has appropriated \$700,000 for horseshoe crab research, and the House is expected to provide at least \$450,000 in the National Marine Fisheries Service budget, but the appropriation bills are on hold in Congress until January. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

Shrimp Farms Threaten Shorebirds in Brazil

Concern is mounting over a new resolution passed by Brazil's National Environmental Council (Conselho Nacional do Meio Ambiente - CONAMA) that opens up previously protected areas of coastal Brazil to shrimp farming. Brazil's 5,000 miles of coastline includes extensive estuaries, mangroves, salt flats, sandy beaches, lagoons, and coral reefs, and is a major staging area for migratory shorebirds. Two regions in particular are crucial to shorebirds: the large intertidal flats along the north-central coast, which provide plentiful feeding and roosting habitats, and, to the south,

the coast of Rio Grande do Sul, with some of the longest uninterrupted beaches in the world, and their associated coastal lagoons. Brazil's coast has five times the population density of the country's interior, leading to ongoing threats from urban development and pollution, but until now, the threat from shrimp farming was restricted to a few farms operating illegally. The new law, combined with the collapse of the industry in Asia and Ecuador, could change that.

Conservationists are worried that, without proper environmental oversight, the pattern of coastal wetland destruction, pollution, erosion, siltation, flooding, and introduction of invasive alien species seen in Asia and Ecuador may be repeated here. The CONAMA resolution provides for pond/facility development in up to 80% of a given area, leaving only

20% as a "preservation" zone. The lack of knowledge about the ecology of these areas and their sensitivity (three sites along the coast are listed as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention) could be devastating to migratory shorebirds if shrimp aquaculture takes off. Several countries have recently had to shut down many of their farms due to disease outbreaks, a constant factor in shrimp aquaculture. The chemicals and antibiotics often over-used in an attempt to control disease lead to more pollution and promote drug-resistant bacteria, further threatening wildlife. The U.S. consumes 360,000 tons of processed shrimp each year, making it the world's largest consumer. At least half of this originates from shrimp farms in Asia and Latin America. *Contact:* Brad Andres, FWS, <Brad_Andres@fws.gov>.

APHIS Plans Vulture Kill

In October 2002, ABC submitted detailed comments on plans by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)/Wildlife Services (WS) to escalate the killing of Black and Turkey vultures in Virginia to combat alleged vulture damage. ABC, alerted by members of the Policy Council including the Virginia Society of Ornithology, questioned the scientific merit and benefit of the favored plan described in WS's Environmental Assessment. The proposal would escalate the lethal take of Black

Vultures to 2,500 per year and raise the number of Turkey Vultures killed to 1,500 per year. These numbers are in addition to the rapidly escalating take by individuals and other government agencies recommended by WS under their Vulture Damage Management Program. Pursuant to WS recommendations, the number of FWS-issued permits for lethal vulture take in Virginia more than doubled from 1999 to 2001. This take escalated even further in 2002 with the killing by WS of approximately 400 vultures at a boat ramp in Chesterfield County. Subsequent to this killing, more than 50 vultures have returned to the site. ABC advocated an



Black Vulture. Vultures are spectacular aerialists and play an important role in the ecosystem. They are also regularly persecuted because they are considered nuisances in congregations. *Photo: Darrell Gulin.*

Environmental Impact Statement be completed on the program, and its cost/benefits, and its potential effects on vulture populations. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

New Study Confirms Crab Importance to Shorebirds

A new study has further documented the importance of horseshoe crabs to shorebirds. The results of the study by U.S. Geological Survey scientists were presented at a two-day FWS workshop held in Philadelphia and will be published shortly. It has long been known that the high nutritional content of the crabs' eggs makes them invaluable to migrating shorebirds, but the new data show just how reliant the birds are on this resource. The East Coast subspecies of Red Knot numbers approximately 77,000 birds, of

which perhaps 80% stop off at Delaware Bay to fuel up on horseshoe crab eggs during their migration to the high Arctic. Researchers found that Red Knots arriving at the Bay early in the migration period and given an unlimited supply of horseshoe crab eggs in an enclosure gained 6.8 grams in body weight each day for 12-14 consecutive days, nearly doubling their arrival weight. Later arriving birds were able to gain the same total weight over a shorter period, gaining 11 grams per day by eating more eggs more rapidly. This study supports other researchers' claims that in order to complete their migration and successfully breed, Red Knots need to gain a minimum of 6.5 grams per day for 12-14 days. This equates to approximately 18,000 crab eggs per bird per day, or some 13 billion eggs to support

the currently depressed numbers of Red Knot using Delaware Bay, requiring nearly 1.5 million female crabs to sustain the population. More than 500,000 crabs were harvested from Delaware Bay's shores in 2001, and scientists believe that over-harvesting is leading to substantial declines in Red Knot, and possibly threatening other species such as Dunlin and Ruddy Turnstone. Despite substantial reductions in total East Coast harvest from nearly three million horseshoe crabs in 1997 to less than one million last year, a lack of adequate data on crab stocks and recruitment have so far prevented scientist from determining a sustainable yield that will allow for a sufficient supply of crab eggs for shorebirds. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

North American Waterbird Conservation Plan

The culmination of four years of collaborative effort among numerous government agencies, environmental organizations, and dedicated individuals has resulted in *Waterbird Conservation for the Americas: North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, Version I*, which is now available in print. The document, produced with help from ABC, provides an overarching continental framework and guide for conserving waterbird species from the Canadian Arctic to Panama, and from Bermuda to the U.S. Pacific islands. The plan

covers seabirds, herons and egrets, rails and crakes, storks, loons, grebes, and other related species groups. Fully 80% of the species covered by the plan nest colonially, and, of these, one third are considered at risk of serious population loss. Eleven species of pelagic seabirds are considered highly imperilled (such as the Black-footed Albatross - due to longline mortality), and 36 pelagic and coastal seabirds and seven wading birds are of high conservation concern. The plan identifies threats, such as fishery interactions, wetland development, pollution and disturbance, and advocates solutions working in collaboration with other national initiatives to deliver conservation locally. It also identifies the need for more data and monitoring,



Black-crowned Night-Heron; one of our most familiar and widespread colonial nesting waterbirds. Photo: FWS.

especially for non-colonial nesting species. The plan sets forth goals and priorities for waterbirds in nesting, wintering, and migration habitats; advocates continent-wide monitoring; provides an impetus for regional conservation planning; proposes national, state, provincial, and local conservation planning and actions; and offers a larger context for local habitat protection. Taken together, it is hoped that these actions will assure healthy

Continued opposite.

Pesticide Coalition Draws Closer

ABC hosted a day-long meeting in November to discuss development of a National Pesticide Coalition. The Coalition will be comprised of non-profit organizations working together on pesticide-related issues with the goal of increasing the influence of non-industry groups in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) pesticide registration process. Thirty people from 15 organizations with interests in human, environmental, and wildlife health participated.

The meeting was particularly timely because a number of pesticides are coming up for EPA re-registration review in the near future. These include brodifacoum, carbofuran, and diazinon

(agricultural uses), all known to be very harmful to birds. In addition to their impacts on wildlife and the environment, these pesticides, are also of concern to public health. The groups agreed to work together on these pesticides and to advocate for earlier and increased participation in the EPA decision-making process by non-industry groups.

One of the biggest challenges facing ABC and other environmental groups is that the EPA pesticide registration process is heavily weighted toward industry. Almost all of the stakeholders and experts involved in the process are tied to pesticide users and producers. "The pesticide manufacturers realize that there is strength in numbers and they make a real effort to identify and engage different special interest groups.

This is something that the environmentalists should be doing as well," said Dr. Patti Bright, Director of ABC's Pesticides and Birds Campaign. "The Coalition will work to counter-balance the influence of industry and will allow environmental groups to leverage their resources when addressing pesticide issues."

Members of the coalition will collaborate by sharing resources and expertise, and by using tools such as an email alert systems, pesticide incident databases, legal and press expertise, and political contacts. The Coalition will also work to develop a list of non-industry stakeholders and experts for use by EPA. Groups interested in getting involved in the coalition should contact ABC. *Contact:* Dr. Patti Bright, ABC, (540) 253-5780, <pbright@abcbirds.org>.

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populations and habitats for the waterbirds of the Americas.

Version I of the plan concentrates on the northern regions of the plan's geographic scope. *Version II*, due out in 2004, will include a greater emphasis on the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America, and will provide more detail on solitary breeders. To obtain a free copy of the plan, visit: www.waterbirdconservation.org, or e-mail: <waterbirds@fws.gov>. You can also find out about becoming involved in the ongoing work of the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas Initiative, including regional planning and the formation of a Waterbird Conservation Council to oversee the plan's implementation. *Contact:* Jennifer Wheeler, FWS, <Jennifer_A_Wheeler@fws.gov>.

Bahamas Doubles Parks

In April, then Bahamian Prime Minister, Hubert Ingram, announced at the annual general meeting of the Bahamas National Trust that the country will designate ten new National Parks, effectively doubling the size of the current park system. Protected areas for species such as the rare Cuban Parrot, Greater Flamingo, the endemic Bahama Yellowthroat and Bahama Woodstar, and the federally-listed Kirtland's Warbler will increase from 320,000 acres to more than 650,000 acres. Newly designated parks include the Primeval Forest at New Providence, the island of Little Inagua, and Moriah Harbour Cay and its marine environs at Great



Greater Flamingo. A colony of approximately 60,000 of these spectacular birds occurs at Lake Rosa on the island of Great Inagua in the Bahamas. Photo: Microsoft.

Exuma. Of the 124,000 square miles encompassed by The Bahamas, only four percent is land. Many of the new parks are designed to afford greater protection to The Bahamas' marine species, such as the green turtle, from threats such as dredging and recreational boating. *Contact:* Bahamas National Trust, <bnt@bahamas.net.bs>.

Pacific Longline Action

After two years of review, the Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted a Fishery Management Plan that prohibits pelagic longlining in the 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off the coast of California, Oregon, and Washington, except by special permit. Currently there is no longlining in this area, but the new rule will make it difficult to conduct this form of fishing in the future for such species as tuna and swordfish.

The Council also debated, but failed to close a loophole that enables longline vessels, previously based in Honolulu and Mexico, fishing beyond the EEZ, to land their catches of swordfish and tuna in California. About 20 Honolulu-

based vessels started taking advantage of this loophole after tough restrictions were enacted in 2000, essentially prohibiting swordfish fishing in key areas off Hawaii. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) had pushed for action to remedy the problem that results in albatross and other seabird mortality, and there is a glimmer of hope that NMFS will override the Council and close the loophole.

The Council did adopt other mitigation measures to protect sea turtles and seabirds, including use of thawed, blue-dyed bait, and line shooters that are used to sink lines more quickly. Meanwhile, NMFS has not yet adopted the new regulations for Alaskan longliners promised this summer, but expects to do so early in 2003. These regulations would require paired streamer lines on most vessels over



An Endangered Short-tailed Albatross chick. The species survived persecution at its breeding colonies which nearly caused its extinction, and may now be safer on the high seas because of recent action to prevent longline mortality. Photo: FWS.

55 feet in length, potentially eliminating almost all seabird mortality by these vessels. Other improved measures for all vessels over 26 feet are pending the adoption of the regulations, including use of towed deterrents and a ban on offal discharge over lines during setting. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

New Alliance Formed at Yucatán NABCI Workshop

A workshop exploring the potential for advancement of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) and trinational projects in the Yucatán peninsula was held in Merida, Yucatán, in November, 2002. The workshop was held in association with "Toh" (the Mayan name for the Turquoise-browed Motmot), the first Yucatán Birding Festival, sponsored by the Tourism Office of the state of Yucatán, ABC, Kalamazoo Audubon Society, the National Fish

and Wildlife Foundation and others. The Workshop was attended by 30 Mexicans, including researchers and representatives of various government agencies and 15 non-governmental organizations, as well as ten partners from Canada and the U.S., including representation from ABC. The northern attendees came from Bird Conservation Regions that are breeding grounds for migrant birds that winter in the Yucatán. These species can serve as symbolic linkages to better foster truly continental perspectives on bird conservation.

The workshop produced some immediate, tangible results, such as detailed work plans for a recently awarded grant through the Neotropical Migratory Bird

Conservation Act linking birds and habitats in Tennessee and Sian Ka'an. The most significant new development however, was a commitment from attendees to establish an alliance for bird conservation, modeled after successful Joint Ventures in the U.S. and Canada. Although the Sonoran Joint Venture is achieving significant successes in northwest Mexico, its genesis and funding originated in the U.S. The Yucatán alliance, therefore, will be the first of its kind to be entirely Mexican in origin and leadership, and the sense of significance and excitement of such an advance was tangible among participants. A core group, including Amigos de Sian Ka'an, Pronatura Yucatán, and others will

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Xantus's Murrelet Protection, Restoration

In April 2002, the Pacific Seabird Group submitted a petition to list the Xantus's Murrelet as an Endangered species under California and federal law. The California Fish and Game Commission accepted the petition in October and has one year to evaluate its merits and determine if action is warranted. During this candidacy period, the species is treated as though it has been listed as Threatened, and any take could be criminally prosecuted. The Commission quickly adopted emergency regulations for the incidental take of Xantus's Murrelet during the candidacy period. The regulations authorize incidental take of birds from nighttime operations in the Channel Islands, but only if

fishing vessels comply with certain conditions. These include not engaging in fishing or diving activities within one nautical mile of Santa Barbara and Anacapa Islands. In addition, researchers studying the murrelets must submit project progress reports to the Commission.

News of the Xantus's state listing comes as the Island Conservation and Ecology Group completed their rat eradication program on the last two islets of Anacapa. ABC supported this eradication when the Fund for Animals tried in court to have it stopped (*Bird Calls* vol. 6, no. 1). Introduced rats were destroying many of the Xantus's Murrelet's eggs and chicks, and even some of the adults. There have already been signs of new nest building on the first of three islets to be rid of rats. Seabird biologists believe that the Xantus's Murrelet

population will likely grow to ten times its current level on Anacapa (currently 200-400 nesting pairs) now that the rats are eradicated. This small seabird's global population is between 5,000 and 11,500 breeding birds, with fewer than 3,000 breeding birds in the U.S. Its distribution is limited to just 12 breeding islands from California to Mexico. It is internationally listed as Vulnerable to Extinction, and is on the FWS Species of Management Concern List. ABC is hopeful that the Anacapa success will lead to a comprehensive program to eliminate introduced species from other bird breeding islands under U.S. jurisdiction. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

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NABCI, from Page 16.

advance the shared vision emerging from the workshop: a Terms of Reference and Operational Plan and a budget to hire a Coordinator by the end of January 2003. This commitment to partnership represents a recognition of the synergy that can come through cooperation and the urgent need to apply significant resources to the region to maintain the health of its truly continental avifauna. *Contact:* David Pashley, ABC, <dpashley@abcbirds.org>.

Fenthion, from Page 1.

epidemiologist, has brought the attention of the EPA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the instances of resistance to fenthion that are already occurring in Florida mosquitoes. This reduces its efficacy, while continuing to put birds and other animals at risk. ABC's position is that fenthion should be used only in emergency human health situations, and the suit will fight for this restriction in court. *Contact:* Dr. Patti Bright, ABC, <pbright@abcbirds.org>.

Satellite Transmitter Grants Announced

North Star Science and Technology has teamed with ABC to initiate a grant program that will award a total of six small satellite transmitters to one or two recipients. The transmitters are powerful, cutting edge tools for the study of bird migration that greatly extend the range over which individual birds can be tracked. Studies using these transmitters can contribute invaluable data for bird conservation. Please see: www.abcbirds.org for more information and proposal guidelines. Information will be posted by the end of December, 2002, with proposals due February 15, 2003.

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Saving Mexican Island Endemics

Collaborative efforts by U.S. and Mexican-based conservation groups, government agencies, and island residents have resulted in the successful removal of several introduced mammals from 23 islands off the coast of northwest Mexico over a six year period. This work has protected habitat for 27 species and subspecies of seabirds, including six endemics, and 49 endemic terrestrial vertebrate species.

The Island Conservation & Ecology Group, the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, Center for Biological Investigations, and National Protected Areas Department collaborated with island residents

and other non-governmental organizations in this effort. Once islands were identified for eradication, local environmental education programs were implemented to gain community support. These included on-island presentations, school field trips to encourage appreciation of native biodiversity, education materials such as bumper stickers, videos, and books, and actively involving island residents in the projects.

One of the alien mammals needing removal was the feral cat. Fishermen commonly brought cats onto the islands as a way to control rodents in their houses. Unfortunately, when it became clear that the cats were ineffective at controlling rodent populations, the cats were abandoned. Burrow-nesting shearwaters and other seabirds then became easy prey for the cats.

Through collaborative efforts,

feral cats have now been removed from 15 northwest Mexican Islands. On Isla Natividad, domestic cat predation was the main threat to the Black-vented Shearwater. Natividad is the breeding ground for the majority of this species' global population, and shearwaters were estimated to comprise 90 percent of the diet of feral cats on the island. After 25 feral cats were removed from Natividad, mortality of Black-vented Shearwaters decreased dramatically, from 1,012 dead birds per month to only 88 dead birds per month. ABC is also working with the Island Conservation and Ecology Group in support of an initiative to create a Biosphere Reserve encompassing the coastal islands off Baja California such efforts have come too late for the Gaudalaupe Storm-Petrel now extinct. *Contact:* Bernie Tershy, Island Conservation, <tershy@islandconservation.org>.

APHIS Refuses to Hand Over Bird Kill Data

The U.S. Department of Agriculture -Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service/Wildlife Services (WS) has failed to respond, as required by law, to a Seattle Audubon Society Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request filed in June, for data on the killing of thousands of waterbirds at dam and hatchery sites in Washington State. WS has been escalating migratory waterbird take under a FWS permit aimed at limiting salmon depredation. Caspian Tern

take went from zero in 1996 and 1997 to 938 in 2001. WS also killed at least 312 Double-crested Cormorants, over 6,000 gulls, and 168 Great Blue Herons, as well as Belted Kingfishers, mergansers, grebes, Coots, Buffleheads, and Mallards. Data from the WS website indicates that from 1996-2000, WS killed 73,891 birds in Washington, and destroyed 13,216 bird eggs. Most takings were of fish-eating birds at dams and hatcheries. While some birds may also have been taken at airports, WS has refused to provide data as to where these birds and eggs were taken. In April 2002, ABC joined with Seattle Audubon, National Audubon, and Defenders of

Wildlife in a letter urging an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before WS continued its practice of taking these birds. WS has since stopped the take of Caspian Terns, but continues to kill other birds under the 2001 FWS permit, which has not been revoked. Seattle Audubon and ABC had informally requested the data from various WS officials but were refused, and thus Seattle Audubon filed the FOIA. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

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Birds in Brief

Biosphere Reserves Created, Extended: The Mata Atlantica Biosphere Reserve has been extended and now covers all the remnants of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest. The Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo Biosphere Reserve has become the Dominican Republic's first Biosphere Reserve, covering almost 500,000 hectares in the southwest of the country. See: www.unesco.org/bpi/eng/unescopress/2002/02_90e.shtml.

Po'o-uli Efforts Continue: An attempt to pair one of two female Po'o-uli's with the sole remaining male on the island of Maui, Hawaii, failed after the female returned to her previous territory. Biologists with FWS, the State of Hawaii, San Diego Zoo, and the Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project now plan to trap the birds to see if they can be encouraged to breed in captivity. This is likely now the world's rarest bird with only three individuals remaining. See: www.hawaii.gov/dlnr/dofaw/pubs/poouli.pdf.

Reprieve for Canadian Spotted Owls: After a report was released by environmental groups, the logging company, Interfor, has ceased cutting timber in parts of southwest British Columbia, where Canada's remaining Spotted Owls are threatened with extinction. Threats to the population remain however. See: www.wildernesscommittee.org.

Nightjars Found: A potentially important new population of the Endangered White-winged Nightjar has been located in Paraguay at Laguna Blanca, by researchers working for Guyra Paraguay. See: www.guyra.org.py.

Thick-billed Parrot Breeding Success: Despite significant range contraction due to habitat loss and modification, the two main breeding colonies of Thick-billed Parrot in Mexico continue to thrive at Cebadillas and Madera. Though the site at Cebadillas is protected, both Madera and a third site, Mesa las Guacamayas, are in need of increased protection. See: www.cooper.org.

Brazilian Merganser Hopes Rise: Brazilian Mergansers (listed as Critically Endangered) have been located at ten new localities around Serra de Canastra National Park, Minas Gerais, and at one new location along the Rio do Sono, Tocantins. See: www.birdlife.org/news.

White-winged Guan Reintroduction: twelve of sixteen White-winged Guans (listed as Critically Endangered) released from a captive-breeding facility in the Lambayeque region of north-central Peru have survived their first year in the wild. See: www.peruecologico.com.pe/fauna_aves_pava.htm.

Paraguay IBA Declared: Wetlands at Laguna Salada and Campo Maria, Paraguay, have been declared a global IBA by Guyra Paraguay. The IBA holds more than 1% of the global population of migratory Wilson's Phalaropes and White-rumped Sandpipers, and resident Chilean Flamingos. See: www.guyra.org.py.

Parrot Trade Restrictions: The Yellow-crowned Amazon and Blue-headed Macaw have been added to Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). This prevents international commercial trade in these species. See: www.cites.org. Note: CITES regards both the Yellow-headed and Yellow-naped Amazons as subspecies of Yellow-crowned. See: www.cites.org.

Whooping Crane Success: 16 Endangered Whooping Cranes have arrived at Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, Florida following a 1,204 mile ultralight-guided migration from Wisconsin. See: www.bringbackthecranes.org.

Critical Habitat Proposed for Pygmy-Owl: FWS has proposed the designation of 1.2 million acres of Critical Habitat for the federally-listed "Cactus" Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl in keeping with an agreement negotiated with the Center for Biological Diversity and Defenders of Wildlife. See: www.biologicaldiversity.org.

Trinational Oak Habitat Conservation Funded

The North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) recently awarded funds to ABC and several other partners for a trinational project between Mexico, Canada, and the U.S. This is one of three projects being funded by the CEC to serve as international demonstrations for the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). The project, *Quercus and Aves II: A Trinational Alliance for the Conservation of Oak Habitats and Associated Bird Species*, will coalesce a group of approximately 20 partners to conduct conservation activities across multiple sites to benefit oak habitats and shared migratory bird species. The project will complement two other projects: *Pacific Oak Woodland Conservation*, a binational U.S. and

Canadian effort; and *Quercus and Aves: An International Project for the Conservation of Oak Habitats and Associated Birds*, supported by Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act funding.

Oak habitats are among the most threatened ecosystems along the Pacific Coasts of North and Middle America. In Mexico, they are being lost to firewood consumption, slash and burn for agriculture, and reforestation programs that emphasize pines due to their more rapid growth rates and profitability. In the U.S. and Canada, oak habitats are disappearing at an alarming rate to make way for agricultural, urban, and residential development. Those that remain are degraded by fire suppression and encroachment by conifers and invasive, exotic species.

Principal partners in the project include ABC, Pronatura Chiapas and The Nature Conservancy. El Triunfo Biosphere Reserve, an Important Bird Area, will be the principal focus of the project. Shared conservation activities that



Western Tanager. A neotropical migrant that occurs in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada: the focus countries for the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. Photo: FWS.

will be emphasized to link the sites include habitat management and restoration, bird monitoring, and outreach and education activities.

Representative high-priority bird species to benefit include Western Tanager (a shared migrant), Band-tailed Pigeon (a shared resident), and Golden-cheeked Warbler, a federally-listed Endangered species that winters in oak habitats in Chiapas and elsewhere in Central America. *Contact:* Bob Altman, ABC, <baltman@abcbirds.org>.

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