

# BIRD CALLS

*The Newsletter of the Policy Council  
of American Bird Conservancy*



**MARCH 1998**

## **AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY** *Conserving Wild Birds and their Habitats throughout the Americas*

**Bird Calls, Vol. 2, No. 1.**

**A Message from Bruce M. Beehler**, Chair, Policy Council of American Bird Conservancy:

As the newly-elected chair of the Policy Council of ABC, I would like to introduce myself to you and convey to you the importance of supporting ABC's strong leadership in American bird conservation. I am an ornithologist and conservation biologist, currently serving as Director for Environmental Conservation at the Counterpart Foundation. In the past I have worked at the National Museum of Natural History, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and Conservation International. I have been affiliated with ABC (and earlier the International Council for Bird Preservation) for more than a decade, and I have seen the organization mature and adapt to the changing needs of bird conservation. I think ABC serves a critically important function in the United States, but I believe it can achieve more--with your help. What can you do? Here are some suggestions. 1) Become an active participant in our periodic Policy Council meetings. They really are the key venue for keeping up to date on the cutting edge issues in bird conservation -- and these meetings offer a perfect opportunity for you to tell us about critical new issues arising. Please make every effort to join us for the next Policy Council meeting on April 6th in St. Louis! This will be a special meeting with a splendid array of presenters that you should not miss. 2) Read and share *Bird Calls* with your colleagues. 3) Consider submitting articles to *Bird Calls*--they are always welcome. 4) And take some time out from your busy schedules to write letters, send e-mails or faxes, or act in other ways to influence the outcome of the ongoing debates over the future of our bird life. If we all pitch in we can make a difference- - as made clear by the success stories reported right here in *Bird Calls*. I look forward to working with you all in these initiatives. Finally, I want to especially thank all of our contributors to *Bird Calls* who bring the latest in bird conservation news to all of us.

Bruce M. Beehler

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I. SUCCESS STORIES</b>		<b>TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE</b>	<b>14</b>
CABO ROJO HABITAT ACQUIRED	2	ESA ITSELF ENDANGERED	15
ALASKA'S HOMER SPIT SAVED	3	SNOW GOOSE PLAN ADVANCES	15
<b>II. NEW ISSUES</b>		<b>IV. ABC'S WORKS IN PROGRESS</b>	
NEW NONGAME BIRD INITIATIVE	3	CATS INDOORS! CAMPAIGN	16
LONGSPURS KILLED IN COLLISION	4	IBA PROGRAM PROGRESS	17
PYGMY-OWL CLAWING FOR HABITAT	5	PARROT CONSERVATION	17
ROAD THREATENS IZEMBEK BIRDS	5	MONTSERRAT ORIOLE PLAN	18
ALASKAN BIRD SURVEY THREATENED	6	<b>V. THE BIRD IS THE WORD</b>	
SAN PEDRO STUDY CONCLUDING	7	PIF GOES HEMISPHERIC	19
THREAT TO BLACK-FACED SPOONBILL	8	PIF WATCH LIST UPDATE	19
CITES CONVENTION REVIEW	8	NEW YORK IBA PROGRAM	20
<b>III. UPDATES</b>		BIRD SOURCE ON LINE	20
CRABS AND SHOREBIRDS PROTECTED	9	ORNITHOLOGY CHAIRS	20
CONFERENCE TO AID DICKCISSELS	10	BIRD-FRIENDLY COFFEE	21
ALBATROSS KILLING CONTINUES	10	'TEAMING' SPONSORS	21
NEW SWAINSON'S HAWK DIE-OFF	12	ICE STORMS HELP BIRDS?	22
ORDER ALLOWS CORMORANT KILLS	12		
CORMORANT CONFERENCE PLANNED	13		
SHRIKE NEARLY EXTINCT	14		

## I. SUCCESS STORIES

### FWS TO ACQUIRE CABO ROJO AND OTHER CRITICAL BIRD HABITAT

American Bird Conservancy and many of its partners on the Policy Council have been pushing for the acquisition by the Department of Interior of several critical areas for birds as additions to existing National Wildlife Refuges. As mentioned in the last edition of *Bird Calls*, the Cabo Rojo salt flats were a high priority acquisition for bird conservation. We are pleased to report that in February, the President and Secretary of Interior proposed the acquisition of Cabo Rojo and other critical sites with monies approved in the FY 1998 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). These acquisitions face only one final hurdle: Approval by the House and Senate Appropriations Interior Subcommittees. The money is already there for these acquisitions, but the list of purchases needs to be approved by the Subcommittees. Here is a list of some of these critical sites submitted by Interior: 1) Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. The acquisition of 1,000 acres of salt flats at Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico was made a high priority because of its serving as stopover habitat for a significant number of shorebirds. Over 128 species of birds frequent the salt flats including Western Sandpipers, Black-necked Stilts, Yellow-shouldered Blackbirds, Mangrove Cuckoos, and Piping

Plovers. This site is under encroaching development pressure but did not rate high on the FWS LAPS system. The President has included the \$3.1 million necessary to acquire the 1,000 acres now under a purchase option to the Trust for Public Lands. This project now has strong support--including from Senators Ted Stevens and Murkowski. A 500 acre tract still remains to be acquired, but our advocacy had been for this 1,000 acre purchase this year. 2) Lower Rio Grande NWR, Texas. Interior has requested approval of \$4.6 million for the acquisition of 3,811 acres for lands in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and a connecting corridor to the Laguna Atascosa NWR. This is an immensely important bird area with over 465 species found in this area. They include such tropical species as Red-crowned Parrot, Hook-billed Kite, Inca Dove and Great Kiskadee as well as other migratory species including Chachalaca, Green Kingfisher, Elf Owl, and Aplomado Falcon. The FY 1999 Budget just submitted by the President contains another \$2.8 million to acquire 2,000 additional acres. The plan for this NWR calls for the acquisition of 65,000 more acres to complete the 133,000 acres for the Refuge. 3) Balcones Canyonlands NWR, Texas. Three high priority tracts totaling 515 acres would be purchased for \$4.3 million. These acquisitions would protect more critical habitat for the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo. This area, NW of Austin, is under significant development pressure. 28,243 acres still remain to be purchased for this NWR and the FY 99 Budget includes another \$3 million for the purchase of 2,000 acres.

4) Laguna Atascosa NWR, Texas. An additional 3,500 acres would be purchased for \$3.5 million. These lands provide critical habitat for the endangered Piping Plover and for Peregrine Falcons and wintering Redhead Ducks as well as 387 other species of birds. In addition to these sites, there are 20 other NWR acquisitions, for a total of \$71.3 in this LWCF submittal. Other lands to be acquired include National Park, BLM, and Forest Service acquisitions throughout the U.S. that total \$627 million. To assure approval of the Cabo Rojo, Lower Rio Grande, Balcones, and Laguna Atascosa lands, please write noting your support of the specific projects to Reps. Ralph Regula, Chairman of the House Subcommittee and to the ranking Democrat, Rep. Sidney Yates. In the Senate, write to Subcommittee

assuring approval of these Texas acquisitions is gaining the support of the Congressmen and two Senators representing the Texas projects. For the Texas projects, please contact the U.S. Senators: Phil Gramm and Kay Bailey Hutchison-E-mail: <senator@hutchison.senate.gov>. The address in the House: U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515; in the Senate: U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510. Request their support for the FWS part of Interior's proposals for the specific Refuges mentioned above under the Title V, Priority Land Acquisitions funding under the Interior and Related Agencies Act of 1998. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is the major Federal dedicated fund for land acquisitions. The LWCF is authorized for \$900 million a year but the Congress has never funded it at levels anywhere close to this. ABC is promoting a land acquisition initiative based on bird conservation needs and has met with FWS officials and other Interior officials to discuss this. The PIF priority ranking system for acquisition would be used to seek funding for critical bird habitat *Contact: Gerald Winegrad at ABC, 202-778-9666 or <gww@abcbirds.org>.*

### **HOMER SPIT ACQUISITION ASSURED**

With the active support of ABC and its many partners, on October 3, 1997, the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council agreed to provide \$996,100 of restoration funds for the purchase of 68.7 acres of tidelands at the base of the Homer (Alaska) Spit and 38 acres of wetlands at nearby Beluga Slough. The areas to be purchased include shorebird habitats within the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site as designated within Kachemak Bay. However, in December, a committee of the Alaska State Legislature declined to support purchase of the properties, thus freezing the acquisition process in spite of tremendous local, state and national support for the protection of these areas. The situation came to a head early this year when the first of several purchase options skillfully negotiated by The Trust for Public Lands began to expire, thus threatening to jeopardize the entire deal. Thanks to the efforts of local public officials, the Alaska Audubon Society, and others, there was again a tremendous outpouring of support for the acquisitions. On January 28, literally at the last minute, Alaska Governor Tony Knowles stepped in and invoked a little-known and rarely used administrative authority to ratify the purchases. The acquisition process is now proceeding. *Contact: John Schoen at National Audubon Society, 907-276-7034 or <jschoen@audubon.org>.*

## **II. NEW ISSUES**

### **NEW MIGRATORY BIRD INITIATIVE PROPOSED**

In January, representatives from ABC, the Ornithological Council, National Audubon Society and Defenders of Wildlife met with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) Director Jamie Rappaport Clark to discuss the need for a major initiative by FWS on non-game migratory birds. Director Clark expressed her excitement at being a federal spokesperson for the migratory bird movement. She discussed the possibility of a Migratory Bird Initiative in the fiscal year 2000 budget. She encouraged us to develop a coalition for migratory birds that would work with the government to raise the profile of the importance of conserving all birds. All groups represented are working with the Migratory Bird Management Office

providing specific recommendations for how to move forward. These same groups met in February with officials of the MBMO and the seven FWS Regional nongame bird personnel to discuss the needs of non-game migratory birds. Over \$49 million in initiatives were identified and the MBMO is proposing a \$11 million FY 2000 initiative for migratory birds. This initiative would help assure the implementation of Partners In Flight bird conservation plans around the U.S. We will be looking toward the members of the ABC Policy Council to help us make the case for additional funding for federal non-game bird programs.

*Contact:* David Blockstein at The Ornithological Council, 202-530-5810 or <oc@cnie.org> or Gerald Winegrad at ABC, 202-778-9666 or <gww@abcbirds.org>.

### **BIRD COLLISIONS WITH KANSAS TOWER KILL UP TO 10,000 BIRDS IN ONE NIGHT**

An estimated 5,000 to 10,000 birds, mostly Lapland Longspurs, were killed on the night of January 22, 1998 at a 420 foot tall communications tower in western Kansas. Apparently a heavy snowstorm sent the birds up looking for bare ground. Dense fog caused the tower's aviation-safety lights (required on structures over 200') to reflect off water in the air and form an illuminated space, causing the birds to switch to their diurnal (visual) mode of navigation. The flock circled the lighted tower and collided with its guy wires. Some birds were impaled by wheat stubble, suggesting they were so disoriented that they couldn't tell which way was up and flew into the ground at full force. The tower had three white strobes. This is interesting because it has been suggested that flashing lights cause less mortality than steadily illuminated lights. Evidence suggests that continent-wide, communications towers kill 2 to 4 million songbirds every year. Though it is generally agreed that towers less than 500' tall pose less threat to migrating birds, the January 22 incident shows that massive kills can occur at smaller towers. This is alarming because these shorter towers are rapidly proliferating. It is difficult to assess their accrued impact, since there seem to be no long-term studies on this size class; however, numerous studies indicate significant annual kills at lighthouses in the 200'-300' range. Even more alarming is the likelihood that within the next ten years, 1,000 towers in the 1,000'+ range will be built across the continent to broadcast the new digital TV (DTV) medium. Based on the evidence that exists today, these towers will likely add another million songbirds to the annual tower kill toll. To help speed the construction of the DTV towers, last August the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a proposed rule, MM Docket No. 97-182, which would have pre-empted state and local zoning and land-use ordinances. ABC and National Audubon submitted formal comments in opposition to this proposal. Also, Vermont Senators Leahy and Jeffords introduced a bill (S. 1350) to prohibit the FCC from adopting such rules and to permit state and local governments to regulate the placement, construction and modification of certain telecommunications facilities. The FCC backed down but this issue still needs watching. Bill Evans of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is putting together a study to determine a tower-lighting pattern that would reduce mortality, such as a slower rate of blinking during bad weather. This pattern could be triggered when acoustic sensors on towers detect circling birds. The FWS Office of Migratory Bird Management has expressed interest in this mitigation plan. Bill Evan's and officials from FWS will be addressing this issue at the Policy Council meeting on April 6. Meanwhile, in New York City, Rebekah Creshkoff reports

On 144 mornings last year, she found 117 injured birds and 296 dead ones at the bases of ten skyscrapers—an average of 41.3 casualties per building. An additional 36 birds were found at other glass surfaces around the city. Altogether, she documented 449 collisions involving 58 species; five (White-throated Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Ovenbird, Dark-eyed Junco and American Woodcock) accounted for 55 percent of the total. While the heaviest concentration of dead bird collisions in spring followed bad overnight weather, this was not true during fall migration, when the weather is generally more stable. Perhaps this discrepancy is simply because more birds were aloft on clear fall nights. *Contact:* Bill Evans at Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 607-254-2459 or <bill@ornith.cornell.edu> or Rebekah Creshkoff at the Linnaean Society of New York, 212-493-3525 or <rcreshkoff@mindspring.com>.

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### **CACTUS FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWL MENACED BY URBAN SPRAWL**

In and around Tucson, Arizona, the Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum cactorum*) has become a lightning rod for controversy surrounding urban sprawl, changes in land-use and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This subspecies was listed as endangered in April 1997 after surveys identified fewer than 20 individuals in all of Arizona. The population continues south into Mexico; those birds may be disappearing, as well. In central and southern Arizona, the owl's historical habitat is low-elevation (below 1,200 feet) riparian cottonwood groves, mesquite bosques and Sonoran desert scrub. The few remaining Pygmy-Owls are primarily restricted to Sonoran desert scrub, since riparian habitat has nearly been eliminated; across the Southwest, 85-90 percent of low-elevation riparian habitat has been modified or lost. Today, urban sprawl is the greatest threat: the owl resides northwest of Tucson, one of the fastest-growing regions in the State. Since the ESA listing, Defenders of Wildlife and local environmental organizations have served as watchdogs for remaining habitat and begun working with local officials on burgeoning conservation efforts. However, a school district in Tucson wanted to build a new school in essential habitat, despite the availability of less-expensive alternatives. The threat of legal action has forced the school district to reconsider, but it has not yet backed down from the proposed site. Environmental groups have also sued the Army Corps of Engineers for cumulative loss of Pygmy-Owl habitat through Clean Water Act permits they have issued allowing developers to build on wetlands. Meanwhile, Pima County has declared that developers must survey property for owls before re-zoning it for development. The county has also committed to surveying the entire county for Pygmy Owls and to developing a regional conservation plan in the next two years. *Contact:* Laura Hood at Defenders of Wildlife, 202-682-9400 or <lhood@defenders.org>.

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### **ROAD THREATENS ALASKA'S IZEMBEK NWR**

Legislation currently before Congress threatens an internationally important wetland that supports the federally threatened Steller's Eider, as well as the world's entire population of Emperor Geese and Pacific Black Brant. Izembek National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) also provides essential habitat for Tundra Swans and numerous other birds, brown bears, caribou, wolves and other wildlife. These and other species would be disturbed during critical phases of their life cycle if a proposed road is built. S. 1092 and H.R. 2259 have both passed Committee and are awaiting floor votes. The bills mandate construction of a 30-

seven miles of designated wilderness. All laws, including the Endangered Species Act, MBTA and the Wilderness Act (prohibiting permanent roads in wilderness areas) would be waived. Construction would be adjacent to the first wetland of international importance designated in the U.S. under the Ramsar Convention. Proponents argue a road is necessary for the health and safety of King Cove residents. However, a road is not the only or even the best solution. Among the alternatives are ferry or helicopter service, as well as better medical facilities in King Cove. This legislation violates the spirit as well as the letter of the NWR System Administration Act of 1966, as well as amendments to it passed last fall. It sets a dangerous precedent. American Bird Conservancy has sent an Action Alert to its Policy Council members and has joined many of these members in sending individual letters as well as co-signing a joint letter from over 18 national and regional groups in opposition. *Please write* your Senators and Representative urging them to vote against S. 1092 in the Senate or HR 2259 in the House. For more information, *contact*: Jim Waltman at The Wilderness Society at 202-429-2674 or <jim\_waltman@tw.s.org>.

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#### **ALASKA BIRDS AERIAL SURVEY TEAM THREATENED BY LACK OF FUNDING**

Long-term records of the status of bird populations are critical for future management decisions. For more than 40 years, an Alaskan aerial survey team has amassed data on scores of bird species. However, budget problems threaten to limit this work. Currently, ABAST has ten biologists (six of whom are pilots) and two computer specialists; all are expert aerial bird observers, a skill that improves with training and constant practice. Using four small specially modified float planes, they have accumulated data that is easily retrievable as maps, tables or charts useful to developers, land managers, scientists and others with specific information requirements. ABAST contributions include:

- Four decades of consistent data on Alaskan breeding duck populations.
- A census of Trumpeter Swans conducted every five years since 1967 showing an increase from approximately 3,000 to 16,000 birds.
- Duck survey data from this program was used to justify establishing seven national wildlife refuges with more than 23 million acres of waterfowl production habitat under the Alaska National Interest Lands Claims Act of 1980.
- A pioneering system of ship borne seabird transects, used in study of Alaska continental shelf waters subject to oil leases.
- Four decades of consistent Lesser Sandhill Crane nesting data showing a slight increase for this hunted species, the world's only abundant crane.
- Fifteen years of data on Alaska's four nesting species of loons, providing the best view of loon distribution for any major region in the world.
- The first aerial bird surveys in Siberia conducted by an American team, which is beginning to unravel the distribution mysteries of America's four eider species, two of which are threatened.

Although extremely competent, the ABAST team is plagued by insufficient operating funds. The immediate threat is cancellation of the 7th Alaska Trumpeter Swan census slated for 2000, which will cost

up to \$250,000. Adding \$250,000 to the program every year would be sufficient to ensure maximum productivity and long-term continuity. To make informed management decisions, it is vital that we continue to have the benefit of ABAST's work. *Please write:* Secretary Bruce Babbitt,

*Bird Calls*

MARCH 1998

*Bird Calls*

The Newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy Policy Council

U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240 and Director Jamie Clark, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. For more information, *contact:* Jim King at the Trumpeter Swan Society, 907-789-7540 or <brantaking@juno.com>.

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### **UPPER SAN PEDRO RIVER STUDY DOCUMENT UNDER PREPARATION**

The Upper San Pedro River Study has been initiated by the Secretariat of the Commission on Environmental Cooperation (CEC) under the North American Free Trade Agreement. Originating in Sonora, Mexico, the San Pedro River runs north into Arizona where the river, and the aquifer that helps supply it, nourish a diverse and growing community of ranchers, farmers, urban dwellers and military base residents. Besides providing sustenance for a broad range of economic and human activities, this water is essential to sustaining many of the ecological functions that in turn support a healthy economy and environment. The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area was the first Globally Important Bird Area recognized in the Western Hemisphere. It was designated for its importance to migrating songbirds, its importance as one of the best remaining examples of desert riparian habitat, and its importance in providing breeding habitat for up to 25% of the world's population of Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Over 400 species of birds are found there. On 26 May 1997, the Secretariat of the CEC informed the Council of its intention to prepare a report on the Upper San Pedro River. Given the breadth and complexity of ongoing initiatives to protect and enhance the San Pedro Riparian Conservation Area, the Secretariat focused its efforts on establishing a small, interdisciplinary team of experts to assist it in examining relevant issues concerning the River. These include the ecological, hydrological, social, legal and economic features of the Upper San Pedro watershed and the identification of legal and institutional opportunities for enhanced water conservation strategies including describing potentially efficacious conservation and sustainable development initiatives, including bi-national cooperation. Ultimately, the study is intended to promote cooperative efforts to recognize and protect habitats of special continental importance, to catalyze and call attention to existing efforts to protect such resources and to educate the public about the importance of the sustainable management of valued transboundary resources. The Study has proceeded in two phases. First, a team of six experts is developing a status report and evaluation concerning the matters listed above. Phase two, involves the Secretariat in convening a panel to consider the expert report and develop policy recommendations. The Secretariat will then assemble a final report for the Council, which shall make the report public within 60 days. Public participation is essential to the successful outcome of this initiative and the Secretariat welcomes any comments, questions or other relevant input to the study. By the time of American Bird Conservancy's April Policy Council meeting, the technical status report should be available for public comment. The problems affecting birds on the San Pedro will be discussed thoroughly at that Policy Council meeting by David Krueper of BLM. For more information on the San Pedro and its designation as an IBA, *contact:* Jeff Price at 303-530-7239 or <jprice@mho.net>. For information on the CEC study, *contact:* Rachel Vincent at 514-350-4300 or <rvincent@ccemtl.org> or visit their web site at <http://www.cec.org>.

### **BLACK-FACED SPOONBILLS THREATENED IN TAIWAN**

There are only 550 Black-faced Spoonbills (*Platalea minor*) in the world. Approximately 50 to 60 percent of them winter in the Tseng-wen Estuary and related wetlands in Tainan, a city in southwestern Taiwan. One of the richest ecological areas in Taiwan, these wetlands are threatened by the projected development of a petrochemical complex. The plans for Petrochemical Complex Number 7 (also known as the Bin-nan Project) call for an oil refinery, a naphtha-cracker (used in processing petrochemicals) plant, a steel mill and a port to be used exclusively for the transport of materials and products. More than 2,000 hectares of nearly contiguous wetlands would be filled.

Loss of habitat could threaten the spoonbill's survival and would render the area useless to the more than 150 other bird species recorded there. Before the project can proceed, the Taiwanese government must approve of the developers' environmental impact assessment (EIA). A final decision will be made in March. American Bird Conservancy sent an Action Alert to Policy Council members and others generating over 25 endorsements of a letter of opposition to the Bin-nan complex development. This letter, with over 80 organizations signed on, has just been submitted to the Taiwanese government during a personal visit by Malcolm Coulter and others to Taiwan. *Contact:* Malcolm Coulter, co-chair of the IUCN specialist group on Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills, at: 603-323-9342 or <coultermc@aol.com>.

### **TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITES SOUGHT**

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) seeks suggestions and information from the public, including those dedicated to the conservation of avian species, for species amendments and resolutions for consideration at the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to be held in Indonesia in November or December 1999. CITES is an international treaty designed to control and regulate international trade in certain animal and plant species that are currently or may become threatened with extinction as a result of trade. Live specimens, parts or products of species protected under CITES are required to be accompanied by proper CITES documentation whenever imported or exported. Currently, 143 countries are CITES Parties, including the U.S. Parties to CITES hold biennial meetings to consider amendments to the list of species in Appendices I and II, and make recommendations for the improved effectiveness of CITES. As part of its effort to involve the general public in the development of proposals that may be submitted by the U.S. at the upcoming Conference of the Parties, the FWS is soliciting relevant information to help identify species that are candidates for addition, removal or reclassification in the appendices, or to identify issues warranting attention from the CITES technical committees. Interested individuals may provide relevant information or submit well-documented proposals concerning wild animal or plant species occurring anywhere in the world. For more information, including a list of currently-listed species and a copy of the CITES species listing criteria, *contact:* Susan S. Lieberman at U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 703-358-1708 or <susan\_lieberman@fws.gov>.

### III. UPDATES

#### **EFFORTS CONTINUE TO PROTECT THE HORSESHOE CRAB AND SHOREBIRDS**

American Bird Conservancy, National Audubon Society, and New Jersey Audubon are leading the way with other Policy Council partners to protect the Horseshoe Crab and shorebirds. These partners include Defenders of Wildlife, World Wildlife Fund and Delaware Audubon. These efforts are aimed at assuring the continued spring phenomenon on Delaware Bay beaches in New Jersey and Delaware where hundreds of thousands of shorebirds feed frantically on the protein rich eggs of spawning Horseshoe Crabs. Here is an update of efforts to restrict the harvest of horseshoe crabs. NEW JERSEY: Reacting to the advocacy of bird conservationists led by New Jersey Audubon, New Jersey enacted very strong conservation measures. The ocean trawl fishery, that accounts for two-thirds of New Jersey's harvest, has been closed since 1997. Hand harvest has been greatly limited as well. Under an agreement reached to settle litigation pursued by the crabbers, New Jersey is now in negotiations to reach compromise regulations. NJ Audubon and National Audubon are actively participating in these negotiations. DELAWARE: Responding to the conservation community's call for action, Delaware published proposed regulations on January 1, 1998 to greatly reduce the take of Horseshoe Crabs. The reduction would be over 50% of current harvests and the regulations would end the massive harvests for shipment out of state on tractor trailers. On January 26, 1998, ABC and National Audubon testified at the Public Hearing on these regulations in co-ordination with Delaware groups. The attendance of ABC and National Audubon highlighted the national priority attached to this issue. The regulations would close all federal and state beaches to any take of crabs except at Port Mahon, close all of the waters of Delaware Bay to any harvest from May 1 to June 30, permit harvest on private beaches from May 1 to June 30 only on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, limit shipment to 300 cubic feet for the movement of Crabs (this is the provision that will stop mass harvest as 300 cu. ft. is the size of the bed of a large pick-up truck w/sideboards. No tractor trailers could meet this limitation.), and limit the entry for commercial harvest hand permits to about 55 people. Final regulations will be submitted to the Secretary for promulgation, hopefully by April 1. MARYLAND: ABC and its partners, especially National Audubon, have convinced Maryland officials to act. Regulations are now nearing completion that would greatly reduce the take of the Crabs in Maryland, probably by some 60%. The regulations that have been negotiated are as follows: 1) The Maryland ocean fishery (where over 90% of the crabs are taken in Maryland) will be limited to no more than six trawlers; 2) There will be a total closure for all take of Horseshoe Crabs from December 1 to April 1; 3) There will be a closure for all take of Crabs in the Chesapeake Bay and within one mile of Maryland's coast from April 1 to June 30; 4) From April 1 to June 30 there shall be a limit of no more than 100 crabs taken per vessel outside of the Bay; 5) From July 1 to November 30 of each year, the six trawlers in the coastal fishery shall have limits from 300 crabs per day to 1,000; 6) A maximum of 750,000 pounds for the entire fishery will be established; and 7) Crabs may not be taken on weekends during the entire year. These regulations are expected to be in effect before May. ASMFC: The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has agreed to draft a Fishery Management Plan for the entire Atlantic Coast by December 1998 to regulate the take of Horseshoe Crabs. The States of NJ, DE, and MD and the FWS have funded a comprehensive population assessment of the Crab and dedicated

staff to write the plan and do the technical work. For further information contact: Gerald Winegrad at ABC.

*Bird Calls*

MARCH 1998

*Bird Calls*

The Newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy Policy Council

### **DICKCISSEL STAKEHOLDERS MEETING PLANNED IN VENEZUELA**

The Dickcissel population has plummeted by 40% since 1966. Researchers Gian Basili and Stan Temple (both ABC Policy Council members) found the cause rooted in lethal controls employed by rice and sorghum farmers in Venezuela, where nearly the entire population spends its non-breeding season. Known as the rice bird in Venezuela, the Dickcissel is considered an agricultural pest and some farmers use pesticides to kill hundreds of thousands of birds. Organophosphates such as parathion and azodrin are used to intentionally kill the birds at feeding and drinking areas and by spraying roost sites that may contain three million birds. These lethal control methods are continuing leaving the Dickcissel exposed to potentially catastrophic mortality. Responding to this problem, ABC's Policy Council has stimulated a game plan to resolve this issue under the leadership of Gian Basili of Florida Audubon. Funding has been obtained to conduct an international stakeholder's workshop in the farming region of Venezuela. This workshop is being organized and will be conducted in a collaborative fashion with Gian at Florida Audubon, ABC, and ABC's Bird Life partner in Venezuela--the Audubon Conservation Society. Attending the four day meeting this summer will be representatives of the Venezuelan farmers association, U.S. and Venezuelan agriculture and wildlife governmental agencies, conservationists from NGO's in both nations, and experts in non-lethal control of birds in agriculture. The workshop will develop management options to protect the birds and to prevent major economic losses to farmers from the birds. Partnerships will be developed that will lead to the implementation of the agreed upon management plan. ABC and its Policy Council partners will be integrally involved in this workshop and eventual implementation of the plans to restore the population of Dickcissels. For further information, *contact* Gian Basili: 407-539-5700 or <[gbasili@audubon.org](mailto:gbasili@audubon.org)>.

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### **REDUCING SEABIRD MORTALITY IN LONGLINE FISHERIES--U.S. AND GLOBALLY**

Albatrosses and other seabirds are being unnecessarily killed in longline fisheries around the globe. Cost-effective avoidance techniques can be implemented to eliminate seabird deaths. ABC and a number of its Policy Council members including the Pacific Seabird Group, National Audubon Society, and Defenders of Wildlife have developed a comprehensive strategy to significantly reduce, if not eliminate, this increasing mortality of seabirds from expanding longline fisheries. Since ocean drift net fishing was banned by the UN in 1992, longline fisheries have increased significantly around the globe. These longliners carry thousands of baited hooks that may extend for 80 miles. While the lines are being set, seabirds dive on the bait and become impaled on the hooks. The Wandering Albatross has declined by 41% over the last 30 years and some of the remaining 700 to 800 Short-tailed Albatrosses are being taken by longlines in Alaskan waters and elsewhere. Black-footed and Laysan Albatrosses are being killed in U.S. waters in Alaska and in greater numbers in Hawaii. The killing of so many Black-footed Albatrosses is of grave concern as their global population is only 63,000 breeding pairs. Thousands of petrels, shearwaters, kittiwakes, and fulmars also are killed on longlines. Here's what being done: 1) ALASKA. NMFS and FWS are being pressed for better collection of data from the avoidance techniques that have been required by regulation since April 1997 and for use of better techniques to avoid killing seabirds. To date, neither

collection and analysis of such data is over two months behind schedule. Comments were also submitted on the recently promulgated Halibut fishery seabird avoidance regulations that exempted all small vessels. These regulations parallel the existing Alaskan regulations for other longline fisheries. 2) HAWAII. NMFS agreed in August 1997 to begin consulting with the FWS under the Endangered Species Act over the potential take of the globally endangered Short-tailed Albatross, which could lead to mandatory avoidance measures. However, a promised Biological Assessment is now over two months behind schedule and the formal consultation has not begun. The latest data for 1997 indicates that the number of Black-footed Albatrosses killed is up to record levels and observer coverage is down. NMFS is commissioning studies on avoidance techniques for the 1998 fishing season and a population assessment on Albatrosses through a symposium in October 1998. Conservationists have repeatedly advocated requiring avoidance techniques in Hawaiian waters and better monitoring with little success despite meetings with the Director of NMFS and his Director of Protected Resources. Hawaiian longliners still fish without any requirements for avoidance measures. 3) GLOBALLY. In March 1997, pursuant to the 22nd Session of the Committee on Fisheries(COFI) of the FAO of the United Nations, agreement was reached that the FAO organize, in collaboration with Japan and the United States, an expert consultation on this issue. A Seabird Technical Working Group (STWG) has been appointed to develop a Plan of Action and seabird avoidance guidelines to apply globally and to be adopted by the FAO/UN. This STWG will be meeting in Tokyo, Japan from 25-27 March 1998. Representatives from the U.S., Japan, and the FAO serve on the group. ABC and its partners have been working with U.S. representatives on the STWG to assure that the U.S. adopts a strong position to provide for the maximum protection of seabirds in longline fisheries around the world. A panel of experts will be brought to Japan to consult and background papers have been drafted to be discussed in this technical consultation. Three papers have been written for review, one on the status of longline fisheries globally (written by Norway), one on seabird impact in longline fisheries (written by John Cooper, the Coordinator of the BirdLife International Seabird Global Conservation Project in Capetown, South Africa) and one on avoidance techniques (written by Nigel Brothers, a biologist with the Australian Fish and Wildlife Agency in Hobart, Tasmania). After reviewing the papers, the participants at the STWG meeting are to develop a plan of action and recommend guidelines to avoid seabird bycatch in longline fisheries. These will be brought to a November 1998 FAO consultation in Rome. Decisions taken at this November meeting will be brought before the full meeting of the FAO/COFI in 1999 and, if adopted, then should be implemented by all fishing nations. You can *contact* the chief negotiator for the U. S., Kent Wohl of the FWS-Alaska at: 907-786-3503 or <Kent\_Wohl@mail.fws.gov> to express your support for a strong U.S. stance. For further information, contact Gerald Winegrad at ABC.

**SWAINSON'S HAWK/ARGENTINA: MONOCROTOPHOS GLOBAL WITHDRAWAL**

After the deliberate killing of over 62,000 birds (mostly doves) with monocrotophos on one 60 hectare farm in Argentina last summer, there have been nine incidents reported of over 500 dead Swainson's Hawks in Cordoba province, outside the core area of ABC's agreement with Novartis. These kills are being investigated. ABC has been working with Novartis on the Swainson's Hawk and the problems with monocrotophos and other bird killing chemicals. ABC has long advocated that monocrotophos be removed from the market globally because of its acute toxicity to birds. Novartis, the world's largest pesticide manufacturer, announced last month that they were phasing out all manufacture and sales of monocrotophos globally. Monocrotophos accounts for 8% of all insecticide sales of Novartis but many other companies manufacture it. Actions must be pursued to have it withdrawn globally. Novartis also announced the phase out of five other organophosphate insecticides--phosphamidon, formothion, dichlorvos, disulfoton, and isazofos. Phosphamidon and disulfoton have been documented as bird killers in the U.S. among 40 pesticides that kill birds in routine use. ABC is emphasizing the need to eliminate the use of monocrotophos in Argentina and globally and to address the use of these acutely toxic pesticides. ~~Gerald Winegrad continues to work with Novartis to promote safer use of pesticides and has been~~ involved in meetings last month at the State Department on the Prior Informed Consent Convention. Negotiations are ongoing to strengthen this international agreement to restrict trade in problem chemicals. For more information on the pesticide issue, *Contact*: Gerald Winegrad at ABC.

**DEPREDAATION ORDER ISSUED FOR KILLING CORMORANTS IN AQUACULTURE**

On March 4, 1998, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a depredation order allowing catfish farmers and other commercial aquaculturalists in 13 states to kill Double-crested Cormorants without a special permit and without numerical restrictions if the cormorants are preying on their fish stocks. Nonlethal means to protect their fish will have to be employed first and will have to be shown not to work. Shooting is limited to day light and aquaculturalists are required to maintain a monthly log of the number of birds taken. Data from these logs will be gathered by phone and mail surveys conducted by the FWS. Several other sources of data will also be reviewed annually to monitor the effects of the order on cormorant populations. ABC joined with its Policy Council partners including National Audubon, EDF, WWF, and Defenders of Wildlife in submitting comments in a joint letter to provide for better protection of the cormorants and other fish-eating birds. FWS did modify the depredation order to meet a number of the concerns of bird conservationists. Under current law, individual aquaculture depredation permits are issued on a case by case basis and an estimated 10,900 Cormorants were killed in the 13 states under these permits in 1997. Individual aquaculture depredation permits will still be available on a case-by-case basis for dealing with damages caused by cormorants and other fish-eating birds at commercial aquaculture facilities in states not covered by the depredation order. Cormorants comprise roughly 60% of the bird species killed under permits for eating aquaculture stocks in these

states. Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and Black-crowned Night Herons are the other significant aquaculture opportunists. Aquaculturalists may shoot Double-crested Cormorants only at facilities with an established nonlethal harassment program as certified by officials of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services. The order is not intended to control the cormorant population, estimated to be between 1 to 2 million and increasing annually at a rate of 6 or 7 percent. In the order, FWS stated that "The Service believes that the aquaculture industry shares responsibility for alleviating bird depredation problems and that the industry should aggressively promote: (1) The design of new facilities (and the retrofitting of old ones where economically feasible) that exclude or repel cormorants; and (2) the use of nonlethal deterrents. The Service also encourages Wildlife Services to continue an aggressive research effort to develop effective nonlethal means of alleviating bird depredation problems in aquaculture." Between 1989 and 1996, the number of permits issued to take Double-crested Cormorants in the southeastern United States more than quadrupled, from 50 to 215. The number of catfish farms has grown by 44% from 1982 to 1990 and nearly 160,000 acres of catfish ponds are in use. According to FWS, the current reported take of cormorants has had no noticeable effect on the size of the regional wintering population; the depredation order is expected to result in a moderate increase in the number of Double-crested Cormorants taken at aquaculture facilities. The impact is expected to be localized such as possible reductions in the size of wintering populations in the immediate vicinity of catfish farms. The order applies to the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Unfortunately, widespread lethal control of the Double-crested Cormorant, including actions on the breeding grounds, was advocated by aquaculturists and the USDA's Wildlife Services to reduce the size of the North American population. There were also written comments submitted urging the killing of other fish-eating birds under the depredation order both in aquaculture and sport fisheries. FWS rejected these overtures but the bird conservation community will have to remain vigilant. Efforts to reduce populations of cormorants and some of the other 45 species of birds which eat fresh water fish are intensifying. For a copy of the Depredation Order, see the March 4, 1998 Federal Register at pages 10550-10561. For further information, contact, Gerald Winegrad at ABC.

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### **CORMORANT CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR SPRING**

With finalization of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's depredation order mentioned above, efforts continue on various fronts to address the concerns raised by an increasing cormorant population. The Ornithological Council has issued a *Bird Issue Brief* summarizing the scientific information on the scope of the problem, and continues to seek ongoing research on the topic. As information becomes available, the *Brief* will be updated. The Ornithological Council is planning a conference to address the aquaculture aspects of the cormorant problem. The conference, planned for the late spring, will bring together representatives of the aquaculture industry, biologists from the USDA's Wildlife Services, the FWS, state

fisheries personnel, and academic researchers who study the species. This group will: assess the existing research and determine future research needs; form a

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*Bird Calls*

MARCH 1998

*Bird Calls*

The Newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy Policy Council

partnership among participating groups that will work to seek public and private funding to implement the research agenda through a peer-reviewed mechanism; re-convene periodically to evaluate research progress and future needs; and form a committee to oversee implementation of research results and provide continuing communication between aquaculturists and ornithologists.

Although this meeting will address only the aquaculture aspect of the cormorant issue, it is hoped that some results will be applicable to the sport and commercial fisheries situation as well. By beginning a dialogue amongst the various stakeholders as was done at the last ABC Policy Council meeting, it is hoped that the pressure to kill more fish-eating birds will be resolved. *Contact:* Ellen Paul at The Ornithological Council, 301-986-8568 or <epaul@dclink.com>.

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### **SAN CLEMENTE LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE STILL IMPERILLED**

Despite great efforts by ABC and Policy Council allies, the San Clemente Loggerhead Shrike remains perilously close to extinction. This subspecies is found only on San Clemente Island, an island some 60 miles off of San Diego, and controlled by the U.S. Navy for off-shore bombardment. At best, only 18 wild Shrikes remain and there are 13 birds in the captive breeding program on SCI. The birds are pairing up in the wild with three or four pairs beginning mating behavior. The San Diego Zoo soon will begin breeding three captive females. Unfortunately, the captive breeding program failed to produce any fledglings last year. We regret that due to the Navy's failure to timely renew the Endangered Species Recovery Council's contract, Bill Everett and the ESRC have withdrawn from recovery efforts. Bill and his group's expertise and experience will be sorely missed. Further, the Navy has continued to refuse to effectively deal with fox predation and has chosen not to remove foxes in the vicinity of the nests. The San Diego Zoo may decide not to release any of the captive bred birds until cats and foxes are under control. ABC's Gerald Winegrad met with Navy leaders in San Diego and toured San Clemente Island last September, but the Navy still has not adopted comprehensive efforts to control foxes and access for biologists and predator control personnel to shrike habitat remains a problem. Also, the Navy has not retained a technically proficient bird breeder or other biologist to co-ordinate the Shrike recovery. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad at ABC: 202-778-9666 or <gww@abcbirds.org>.

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### **TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE PROGRESS REPORT**

The "Teaming with Wildlife" (TWW) proposal to fund non-game wildlife conservation, education, and recreation has over 2,700 organizations and businesses supporting the effort, including ABC and most of the individual organizations on ABC's Policy Council. Teaming With Wildlife legislation would place a modest user-fee/excise tax on the manufacturers' price of outdoor products such as binoculars, bird guides, bird seed and feeders, and backpacks. This is a creative way to raise the funds to address

conservation needs for non-game and non-endangered wildlife. It is modeled after the legislation taxing hunters' purchases since the 1930s and anglers since the 1950s. For bird enthusiasts, this growth of the TWW coalition means some real possibilities to address avian conservation needs in the states. A number of states have integrated the TWW campaign

*Bird Calls*

MARCH 1998

*Bird Calls*

The Newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy Policy Council

with bird conservation activities very well. It is also a potential way to fund statewide atlassing projects, birding trails, observation platforms, and the creation of interpretive materials for birds that could enhance bird-watching as an element of recreation and education. TWW could also involve funding for research and special projects run by non-governmental organizations involved with birds. Many organizations involved in the campaign to reinvigorate the Land and Water Conservation Fund are coming to see TWW as a complementary effort: LWCF for acquisition, TWW for management, research, and promotion. Some organizations also see TWW as a major catalyst in a culture shift in the state wildlife agencies, from serving the hook-and-bullet crowd (where the lion's share of the state agencies' funds come from) to one better suited for serving the interest of all wildlife, and especially birds. It is estimated that TWW, as presently constituted, would bring in \$350 million annually to the states for wildlife needs. How much would go to birds would be determined by both individual state needs and by the degree to which we successfully articulate the necessity to spend it in our area of concern. Congress is always reluctant to pass anything that looks like a tax, but TWW is a pay-as-you-go proposal. Writing Congress now is essential if we want to see legislation introduced in this Congress. Especially helpful would be letters from constituents to any member of the House Ways and Means Committee and the House Committee on Resources. If you want to promote a bird-oriented agenda within the TWW effort, want to bring more bird-organizations and interests to the TWW campaign, or just want more information, *contact*: Paul J. Baicich at 301-839-9736 or <baicich@aba.org>.

### **ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT REAUTHORIZATION: STILL STALLED IN CONGRESS**

The Senate bill that cleared committee (S.1180) last September, which represented a consensus among Republican and Democratic senators and the Clinton Administration, has not yet gone to the floor. Apparently Senator Trent Lott (R-MS) has demanded a number of changes that would weaken the bill. Having come to agreement on these changes, Lott and the Republican senators passed them on to the Democratic senators, who have not decided which they can accept and what they want in return. Should the Democrats and Republicans reach agreement, the bill could go to the floor of the Senate in the next few weeks. If they don't, it will probably not reach the floor during this session of Congress. S. 1180 is opposed by many environmental groups which prefer HR 2351 sponsored by Rep. George Miller (D-CA) and over 95 other House members. However, the House does not intend to act on any ESA bill until S.1180 passes the Senate. It appears unlikely that HR 2351 will move in the House. For more details, *contact*: David Wilcove at Environmental Defense Fund, <david\_wilcove@edf.org>.

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### **ADDRESSING THE LESSER SNOW GOOSE-ARCTIC TUNDRA CONUNDRUM**

The Lesser Snow Goose (*Anser caerulescens caerulescens*), Greater Snow Goose (*A. c. atlantica*) and

Ross' Goose (*A. rossii*), collectively referred to as "white geese," have been increasing in numbers over the last 30 years. The population of mid-continent Lesser Snow Geese alone has

*Bird Calls*

MARCH 1998

*Bird Calls*

The Newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy Policy Council

increased from an estimated 900,000 birds in 1969 to more than four million in 1997, and continues to grow by 5 percent a year. This burgeoning population is literally devouring its nesting habitat in Canada, leaving behind an extensive saline, decertified wasteland that may never fully recover. Formerly, this habitat was used by a number of other migratory birds species, as well as the Lesser Snow Goose. At its December 1997 meeting, the ABC Policy Council unanimously passed a resolution endorsing the recommendations of the Arctic Goose Habitat Working Group calling for a 50% reduction in mid-continent Lesser Snow Goose population. The National Audubon Society had previously made the same endorsement. The Arctic Goose Stakeholder's Committee has finalized its recommendations. Proposals include a special spring/summer Snow Goose season; allowing the use of electronic calls; increasing bag limits for Snow Goose-only seasons; encouraging subsistence harvesting and egging in Canada; and reducing the productivity of Snow Geese by management of public lands. A draft Environmental Assessment on potential regulatory alternatives will be available for public review this summer. Should these strategies fail to significantly reduce the population, the FWS will consider more direct control measures. *Contact:* Paul Schmidt at FWS at <paul\_r\_schmidt@smtp2.irm.r9.fws.gov>.

#### IV. ABC'S WORKS IN PROGRESS

##### NEWS ON CAT PREDATION AND CATS INDOORS!

According to a recent article by Rod Thompson in the Honolulu Star Bulletin, rangers at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park (HVNP) are worried about the decline of the Hawaiian Dark-rumped Petrel population as a result of attacks by domestic cats. This endangered seabird that comes to land only to breed, once nested in the Hawaiian Islands from the coast to the mountains in the millions before Polynesians arrived. The petrels have no defenses. A delicacy reserved for chiefs, the birds were wiped out in the lowlands but remained numerous in the mountains until the arrival of Europeans. Biologist Darcey Hu estimates that at the current rate of low reproduction and killings by cats, petrels will be extinct in the national park in 47 years. People don't drive to the uplands of Mauna Loa to abandon cats. But abandoned cats in lower areas have kittens and they move into ever more remote areas. It doesn't take many cats to threaten the ground-nesting birds. A single cat was trapped in the area one breeding season and that ended all petrel deaths there for the rest of the season. About \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year is needed to protect the birds, but only about \$3,000 has been obtained so far in FY '98. The park uses volunteers to help with the work, but it takes unusually dedicated people to camp out almost two miles high on a nearly barren lava flow with a helicopter being the best way in and out. The problem at HVNP is a vivid illustration of how predation by domestic cats, while not the initial or primary cause of a species decline, can be the final straw that pushes a species over the brink into extirpation or extinction. Incidents like this one strengthen the case in support of *Cats Indoors! The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats*, the initiative started by ABC to address the widespread problem of cat predation. Far from being ABC's exclusive initiative, *Cats Indoors!* can be everyone's campaign. To make meaningful inroads in resolving this problem, bird

conservationists need to become involved at the local, state, and national level to educate cat owners to keep cats indoors and otherwise be responsible pet owners, advocate policies to protect birds from cat predation, and humanely remove free-roaming

*Bird Calls*

MARCH 1998

*Bird Calls*

The Newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy Policy Council

cats from the wild. *Cats Indoors!* continues to receive positive press coverage and we are brokering and continue to seek additional partnerships with the bird conservation, animal welfare, veterinary, and wildlife rehabilitation communities. *Cats Indoors!* will be featured at a poster session on April 9 at the AOU conference. ABC's education kit will be ready by the end of March. One of ABC's services through the campaign is to maintain a clearinghouse of research on cat predation and documentation of incidents like the one at HVNP. If you know of any recent or ongoing research, or would like more information, please *contact* Linda Winter at 202-778-9619 or <lwinter@abcbirds.org>.

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### **IBA PROGRAM FLYING FORWARD**

The immediate goal of the IBA program is to identify sites qualifying as Important Bird Areas. So far, more than 975 sites have been named as potential IBAs (e.g., named at a round-table). Of the sites that American Bird Conservancy has received data for, 173 qualify as globally important, 42 as continentally important and 103 as nationally important. More than 500 people have participated in the IBA program, representing more than 75 different non-governmental organizations, eight federal agencies, 10 municipal agencies, 41 state agencies, 14 academic institutions and seven companies or private landholders. The IBA program concerns itself with identifying conservation problems facing the sites and enlisting groups to work toward ameliorating or limiting those problems. In a review of data from 120 of the sites from around the United States, the most commonly identified problem facing IBAs is introduced species (69 sites). Of the potential problems identified as possibly impacting IBAs in the future, increasing demand for recreation (34 sites) and excessive bird disturbance (30 sites) came in at the top of the list. These two problems currently affect 27 and 29 sites respectively. Conservation groups should be taking a closer look at these issues. There are still many sites that should be nominated as IBAs. A new, easier to use, two page nomination form has been developed. If you are interested in nominating a site or for more information, *contact*: Jeff Price of ABC at 303-530-7239 or <jprice@mho.net>.

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### **ABC FOCUSES ON PARROT CONSERVATION IN 1998**

American Bird Conservancy will focus attention on the conservation needs of parrots in 1998. Plans include the following initiatives: 1) ABC's Projects Council (formerly the Pan-American Section of ICBP) has more than twenty-years of experience in supporting Latin American bird conservation and ornithology. In 1998, the Council is considering emphasizing grants to individuals and organizations in Latin America who are concerned with the study and protection of parrots. The next deadline for grant submissions is September 27th for the December grant round. Successful applicants will receive funding in early 1999. Proposals for up to \$5,000 will be considered. Guidelines in English and Spanish can be obtained from ABC's Washington office (202-778-9666). 2) ABC continues its partnership with the Bolivian-based Fundación Armonía which is working to save the Endangered Blue-throated Macaw from extinction. A

\$4,000 ABC Projects Council grant in combination with a \$10,000 donation from the USFWS, has helped Armonía develop a project which recently culminated in the signing of an historic agreement with the Federation of the Cattle

*Bird Calls*

MARCH 1998

*Bird Calls*

The Newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy Policy Council

Ranchers of the Beni to protect the Macaws against poaching and disturbance. Armonía is also pressing for better controls to help prevent the illegal export of Macaws and other threatened wildlife. 3) Thanks to a donation from the World Parks Endowment, ABC is developing a major project to conserve the old-growth forests of north-west Mexico. A recent ABC grant of \$10,000 to Pronatura will help to protect the forests of Las Bufas, home to breeding Thick-billed Parrots and endemic Tufted Jays. ABC is also supporting a project to protect El Carricito, Mexico's first Important Bird Area and an important wintering site for Thick-billed Parrots. The work is being conducted by Mexico's BirdLife representative, Consejo Internacional para la Preservación de las Aves (CIPAMEX), in partnership with the local Huichol community. 4) On April 10, a major new book on parrots is to be published by Yale University Press in association with ABC. 'Parrots', by Mike Parr, ABC's Director of International Development, and Tony Juniper, Campaigns Director for Friends of the Earth, is the most up to date review of the world's 350 parrot species. The book shows that more than a third of the parrots are either at risk of extinction (90 species) or will soon become so (40 species) if the decline in their numbers is not halted. The main threats to parrots are the destruction of tropical forests and trapping for the live bird trade. The information and images in 'Parrots' will assist in efforts to further research and conserve these birds, and will be of interest to conservation biologists, wildlife trade enforcement professionals, and to the millions of people worldwide who keep parrots in captivity. The book also will assist customs officers with the identification of parrots in trade in an effort to support improved controls on parrot imports and exports worldwide. Copies will be distributed by ABC to customs officers who are most directly involved in combating the illegal trade in parrots. *Parrots: A Guide to the Parrots of the World* by Tony Juniper and Mike Parr, illustrated by Kim Franklin, Robin Restall, Dan Powell, David Johnstone and Carl D'Silva. ISBN 1-873403-40-2. 580 pp. Available from book stores, price \$55, or from YUP Customer Service (1-800 987 7323). For review copies for magazines, fax Julie Webster at 203-432-2394. For further information, *contact*: Mike Parr of ABC at 202-778-9705 or <mparr@abcbirds.org>.

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### **MONTSERRAT ORIOLE PLAN**

In response to an emergency call last Autumn, ABC has raised \$40,000 for the Montserrat Oriole. This species is threatened with extinction from the volcanic eruption and pyroclastic flows on the Island of Montserrat. Of the three main habitats, one has been buried under the flows, a second has burned, and only an estimated 50-100 pairs remain in the Central Hills. Evaluation, monitoring, and if necessary, rescue work is being carried out by the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust and RSPB. *Contact*: George Fenwick 540-253-5780 or <gfenwick@abcbirds.org>.

## V. THE BIRD IS THE WORD

### PARTNERS IN FLIGHT GOES HEMISPHERIC

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative represents a collaborative approach by Partners in Flight to coordinate its activities across international boundaries and among various bird conservation efforts. The goal of the Initiative is to achieve the conservation of all native birds of North America by enhancing coordination and increasing the effectiveness of existing and new initiatives, and by fostering greater cooperation among the nations and peoples of the continent. The North American Bird Conservation Initiative is a statement of principals and approaches shared by individuals, organizations, and programs working for the conservation of birds in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. It is intended to help these individuals, organizations, and programs become more effective without reducing their independence and identity. It will be the basis upon which these groups can interact with one another across international, taxonomic, and jurisdictional boundaries. It grows out of the spirit of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and Partners in Flight, but is not intended to supplant or redirect those or any other cooperative effort. It arose out of a directive of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, but will be no more the property of that Commission than of any other signatory or participant. It is an arrangement among three nations, but is not a formal treaty nor will it replace in actuality or spirit any existing agreement. The shared principals and approaches outlined in this document constitute a strategy that will serve as a starting point for more extensive dialogue and action leading to achievement of the above goal. Agreement on this strategy will be swiftly followed by consultation on actions. The goals will not be achieved without development of a body of individuals with responsibilities to accomplish them. The constitution of that body will be an immediate chore as this strategy is converted to an action plan. The Commission for Environmental Cooperation is prepared to facilitate this process, but will not dictate its results. The strategy and action plan that make up this Initiative are the property of all those who contribute to it, and the ultimate value of the Initiative will depend on their commitment. Those who have worked on this to date firmly believe that this is an opportunity for significant improvement in the conservation of the birds of North America. The United States representatives to the development of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative are David Pashley (American Bird Conservancy, representing non-governmental organizations), Gary Myers (Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, representing states), and Paul Schmidt (US Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Migratory Bird Management, representing the federal government). Canadians in the group are Michael Bradstreet and Steve Wendt, and the Mexicans are Humberto Berlanga, Hesiquio Benitez, and Fernando Villasenor. For further information, *contact*: David Pashley at 540-253-5780 or <dpashley@abcbirds.org>.

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### PARTNERS IN FLIGHT WATCH LIST

A second version of the Partners in Flight Watch List has recently been developed, and will soon be published. The PIF Watch List includes those birds of highest conservation concern in the continental

United States and Canada that are not listed under the ESA. The basis for inclusion on the list is ranking in the PIF Species Prioritization Process. The list changes as the Process evolves.

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*Bird Calls*

MARCH 1998

*Bird Calls*

The Newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy Policy Council

as our understanding of the status and biology improves, and as actual habitat and population conditions change. The newest version of the PIF Watch List includes 105 species. Some of these birds are in serious condition and warrant immediate conservation action, whereas others need only to be carefully “watched”, as the title of the list implies. Generalized statements that all of these birds are in dire trouble wherever they occur are alarmist and misleading. Better indications of what actions for each species of Watch List birds are required are emerging from PIF physiographic area or state Bird Conservation Plans. The first version of the PIF Watch List appeared in Audubon Field Notes last year. The second version will be published in the next edition of *Bird Conservation* magazine. Watch for it! *Contact:* Mike Carter, Colorado Bird Observatory at 303-659-4348 or <cobirdobs@aol.com> or David Pashley at 540-253-5780 or <dpashley@abcbirds.org>.

#### **NEW YORK IBA UPDATE**

In New York State, National Audubon Society and its partners have identified 130 sites as meeting state-level or higher criteria as Important Bird Areas. To encourage local advocacy for IBAs as acquisition priorities under the state's 1997-98 Open Space Plan, more than 100 birders and activists statewide received a report describing the IBAs in the plan prior to regional public hearings. Other IBA activity in the Empire State included the development of a conservation action plan for the Niagara River Corridor IBA. The Canadian Wildlife Service will publish a booklet about the importance of the Niagara River to gulls and other waterbirds and the Buffalo Institute of Urban Ecology has established a fund to finance related conservation, education and outreach activities. Finally, in September, 1997 Governor George Pataki signed into law the NY Bird Conservation Bill that puts IBA criteria into state law for state lands. A report describing all of New York state's IBAs will be published later this spring. *Contact:* Jeff Wells at National Audubon Society, 607-254-2441 or <jw32@cornell.edu>.

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#### **BIRDERS URGED TO SHARE LISTS ON-LINE**

Bird enthusiasts everywhere are invited to report their lists to *BirdSource*, an interactive web site developed by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. BirdSource <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu>> consists of on-line citizen-science projects that everyone interested in birds can participate in. Through revolutionary Internet technology, *BirdSource* scientists can quickly and easily access participants' data and findings are presented on-line in the form of maps, graphs, and charts. *BirdSource will help document the changing numbers and distributions of birds throughout the 21st century, uniting ornithologists, conservationists and citizen bird watchers for the purpose of understanding and protecting birds and their habitats throughout North America.* *Contact:* Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology at 1-800-843-2473 (outside the U.S.: 607-254-2440) or <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu>>.

## ACADEMIC CHAIRS IN ORNITHOLOGY FROM EXXON OIL SPILL MONEY

In the wake of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill into the biologically rich waters of coastal Alaska nine years ago, Exxon settled legal claims with the U.S. and Alaskan governments for \$900 million to be

*Bird Calls*

MARCH 1998

*Bird Calls*

The Newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy Policy Council

paid over 10 years. While most of the monies have been committed, the 12 percent dedicated to “restoration reserve” remains unallocated. There have been repeated suggestions that a portion of this reserve be used to endow academic chairs in marine ornithology at the University of Alaska, thus ensuring a flow of good science and trained scientists in perpetuity. The American Ornithologists Union, The Wildlife Society, Pacific Seabird Group and American Bald Eagle Foundation, as well as the Juneau ~~Assembly, the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce and a number of individuals all support such chairs.~~ This will be more of a political than scientific decision, so those who wish to comment should contact the EVOS Restoration Office, 645 G Street, Anchorage, AK 99508; fax: 907-276-7178 or <kerih@oilspill.state.ak.us>, Alaska Governor Tony Knowles, Box 11001, Juneau, AK 99811 and Secretary Bruce Babbitt, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. *Contact:* Craig Harrison of the Pacific Seabird Group at <charrison@hunton.com>.

### BIRD-FRIENDLY COFFEE NOW AVAILABLE

Bird-friendly coffee can now be had, both by mail-order and locally. In terms of avian diversity, shade coffee plantations are second only to untouched rainforest. Drink bird-friendly java and help preserve habitat for neotropical migrants. Here are some outlets:

Alterra Coffee Co., 414-384-2736; Eco-Organic Coffee Co. (Café Audubon), 888-ECO-COFE;

Equal Exchange, 617-830-0303; European Roasterie, 888-588-5282;

Java Love, 847-266-0728; Montana Coffee Traders, 800 345 5282;

Steaming Bean Coffee, 800-230-BEAN; Thanksgiving Coffee Co. (ABA’s Songbird Coffee), 800-648-6491; and Vashon Island Foundation, 206-463-5050.

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### SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE

TWW is supported by 2,700 groups nationwide, including American Bird Conservancy and more than 600 businesses—many of which broke ranks with their industries to endorse this initiative. Vote with your dollars and help make this vital conservation measure a reality by supporting businesses that support TWW. Call and thank the following manufacturers and retailers by calling their locations or distributors nearest you; some offer mail-order catalogs. For a full list of businesses that support TWW in your state, check out the TWW web site at [www.teaming.com](http://www.teaming.com). *Contact:* Naomi Edelson at International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 202-624-7890 or <iafish@aol.com>. Here are some of the businesses endorsing this initiative:

1) Backyard wildlife products: *Retailers:* Ol’ Sam Peabody Co., 616-471-4031; Orscheln Farm and Home LCC, 816-263-4335; PETCO, 619-453-7845. *Manufacturers:* Wildwood Farms, Inc., 815-589-3366; All-Cedar Birdfeeders, 405-872-5212; American Agco (Nature’s Seasons Birdfood), 800-737-2426; Avian Aquatics (bird baths and systems), 800-788-6478; Arundale Products (Mandarin

Birdfeeder), 314-367-8030; Wildlife Sciences, 612-470-5050; Little Mountain Feed, Inc. (also a retailer), 612-271-3330; Our Own Hardware Store (also camping products), 612-882-4224.

2) Optics. ABA Sales, 800-634-7736; Carl Zeiss Optical, Inc., 800-338-2984; Kowa Optimed, Inc., 310-327-1913; National Camera Exchange & Video, 800-624-8107; Swarovski Optik North America, Ltd., 401-942-3380; Swift Instruments, Inc., 617-436-2960; Wandering Tattler, 209-466-3337.

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MARCH 1998

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### **NORTHEAST ICE STORMS GOOD FOR BIRDS?**

At least one good thing may come out of the severe ice storms that devastated much of the Northeast in January. Managed, even-aged forests tend to have minimal understory. With the canopy now opened up in places, more sunlight should reach the forest floor, yielding mixed forest with shrubby understory. These habitat changes should benefit many of northern New England's high-priority forest birds, such as the Canada Warbler, Wood Thrush, Veery, Eastern Wood-Pewee and Olive-sided Flycatcher. However, this is pure speculation; only with the arrival of summer will observers be able to determine the extent of "damage" to the forest and its impact on birds. Ken Rosenberg of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology will consolidate data gathered by observers this summer. *Contact:* Ken Rosenberg at 607-254-2412 or <kvr2@cornell.edu>.

## **NOTICES**

1) THE NEXT POLICY COUNCIL MEETING IS ON MONDAY, APRIL 6, 1998 FROM 1 PM TO 6 PM AT THE REGAL RIVERFRONT HOTEL, ST. LOUIS, MO.

2) POLICY COUNCIL MEETING FOR TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1998 IS IN WASHINGTON, DC AT ABC HEADQUARTERS.

3) FOR INFORMATION ON HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN JOIN THE POLICY COUNCIL OF AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY OR HOW YOU AS AN INDIVIDUAL CAN JOIN ABC, CONTACT GERALD WINEGRAD, 202-778-9666 OR <GWW@ABCBIRDS.ORG>.

4) FOR COMMENTS ON THIS EDITION OF *BIRD CALLS* OR TO CONTRIBUTE OR SUGGEST ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF *BIRD CALLS*, CONTACT REBEKAH CRESHKOFF, 212-493-3525 OR <RCRESHKOFF@MINDSPRING.COM>.

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Environmental Defense Fund

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Colonial Waterbird Society  
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Columbus (OH) Audubon Society  
The Conservation Fund  
Conservation International  
Cooper Ornithological Society  
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology  
Defenders of Wildlife  
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Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association  
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York Audubon Society