

BIRD CONSERVATION

The Magazine of American Bird Conservancy

Winter 2011-2012



Turning Birders into Conservationists



Wood Thrush: Greg Lavaty

As a birder of modest skills, I am delighted that over the years I have shared my interest with a handful of others who have then become birders themselves. These birders comprise one of my favorite “life lists”. However, as a conservationist, I take even greater pride in having influenced a few birders to become conservationists. My birding converts appreciate all that birding provides, but my conservation converts are changing the world for the better.

Rather than speculate which actions or behaviors of mine influenced others to conserve nature, it may be more illuminating to recount how this conversion happened to me. I came to conservation consciousness very early in life. Raised on a small farm north of Baltimore, I became sensitized to habitat loss by creeping sprawl; new housing that eliminated many of the secret woodland haunts of my childhood. So, an early love of nature and loss of home territories are certainly conservationist drivers.

More than anything, though, I was influenced by individuals I admired and their varied, often crafty ways of teaching a reverence for all life. On summer evenings, my father, who could not get around well, would point out bird songs and ask me to go find them in the woods nearby. It was years later before I figured out that he knew those songs and was simply training me to pay attention. I particularly remember going in search of a Wood Thrush, and having to gingerly penetrate the honeysuckle and poison ivy wood edge. On the inside, I could see how the understory thinned for lack of sunlight—an easy lesson. And I remember finding an old, disintegrating fence within; evidence that this place had not always been forest—an early lesson about time and natural renewal.

The gentle direction of many others followed through the years — mentors, whether they realized it or not: those who taught me how to catch and band birds, become a more well-rounded naturalist, and think about conservation problems and solutions; those who showed me I could even be paid to conserve birds; and those who first employed me to do so. You can see that I was just plain lucky, and future conservationists will need the same luck in finding guides such as I had.

Among the many, one person stands out to me, though she surely never knew she so affected my conservation ethic and motivation. Beth Hartline was already elderly by the time I met her and I guess she was an entirely self-taught naturalist. At no one's instigation and in no one's pay, Beth took it upon herself to see that the best natural areas in Maryland would be protected. Time after time, she unassumingly visited state Department of Natural Resources leaders, state legislators, and even the Governor to softly request that they consider natural area conservation. And in the face of her respectful determination, they rarely said no. A good part of the Maryland Natural Areas system can be credited to Beth's actions. I worked for the Maryland Natural Heritage Program at that time, and Beth, naturalist Dan Boone, and I would plot about what places we hoped to protect. But I knew that it was Beth who did the heavy lifting.

Beth lived the oft-written Margaret Mead maxim: *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.* In this issue of *Bird Conservation*, we focus on such committed people; each article contrasts ABC conservation work with an ABC member who is taking on comparable bird conservation challenges on a more individual level.

One last critical thought about turning into a conservationist: At some point, we just have to decide that it is time, that you are needed, and that you need to go do it. Isn't it your time now?

George H. Fenwick
President, ABC





Bird Conservation is the magazine of American Bird Conservancy (ABC), and is published three times yearly.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is the only 501(c)(3) organization that works solely to conserve native wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. A copy of the current financial statement and registration filed by the organization may be obtained by contacting: ABC, P.O. Box 249, The Plains, VA 20198. Tel: (540) 253-5780, or by contacting the following state agencies:

Florida: Division of Consumer Services, toll-free number within the State: 800-435-7352.

Maryland: For the cost of copies and postage: Office of the Secretary of State, Statehouse, Annapolis, MD 21401.

New Jersey: Attorney General, State of New Jersey: 201-504-6259.

New York: Office of the Attorney General, Department of Law, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.

Pennsylvania: Department of State, toll-free number within the state: 800-732-0999.

Virginia: State Division of Consumer Affairs, Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23209.

West Virginia: Secretary of State, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305.

Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by any state.

American Bird Conservancy is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts or photographs. Approval is required for reproduction of any photographs or artwork.

Editors:

Jack Morrison, Merrie Morrison,
Michael J. Parr, David Pashley,
Gemma Radko, Gavin Shire,
George E. Wallace

ABC's *Bird Conservation* magazine brings you the best in bird conservation news and features. For more information contact:

American Bird Conservancy
4249 Loudoun Avenue
P.O. Box 249
The Plains, VA 20198
540-253-5780
Web: www.abcbirds.org
Email: info@abcbirds.org

COVER PHOTO: Snowy Owl: David Hemmings,
www.naturesphotoadventures.com



BIRD Conservation

WINTER 2011-2012

Turning Birders Into Conservationists

- 8 Domestic Habitat Conservation
- 11 International Programs
- 14 Preventing Bird Collisions
- 17 Pesticides and Birds
- 20 Bird-Smart Wind Campaign
- 23 The Bird Conservation Alliance
- 26 Reserve Profile: Abra Patricia, Peru
- 28 Fundraising for ABC
- 30 ABC's Top Ten Tips for Bird-Friendly Living
- 31 Leave A Legacy for Birds!

DEPARTMENTS

- 3 Bird's Eye View
- 4 On The Wire
- 32 Species Profile
Helmeted Curassow



Scan to check out ABC's
new mobile website!



Helmeted Curassow: Dennis DeMello,
Wildlife Conservation Society

ON THE WIRE

ABC Acts Fast to Save Endangered Birds at Wind Farms in Hawai'i

ABC has helped the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the State of Hawai'i to improve conditions for three endangered bird species at two wind farm sites on the island of Maui.

ABC learned that FWS was going to issue an Incidental Take Permit under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that would have authorized the deaths of three threatened bird species – the Hawaiian Petrel, Newell's Shearwater, and Hawaiian Goose – in order

to expand the Kaheawa wind project. Upon further investigation, ABC discovered that the existing project had not adhered to its current permit conditions. ABC successfully argued that new permits should not be issued until existing conditions had been improved.

"ABC jumped in fast when we heard about the Maui wind farms. They were the first in the United States to ask for permission to kill birds listed as Endangered under the ESA, and we knew that if the situation was not handled carefully, it could be disastrous," said Kelly Fuller, American Bird Conservancy's Wind Campaign Coordinator.

As a result of ABC's actions, FWS and the state were able to work with the wind developer First Wind to make improvements such as hiring a special consultant to carry out project mitigation, using dogs to search the difficult terrain for birds killed by the wind turbines to improve monitoring studies, and moving a release site for Hawaiian Geese (Nēnē) bred in captivity away from the facility's turbines.



Nēnē (Hawaiian Goose): Owen Deutsch

Given that Hawai'i is already the bird extinction capital of the world, it is critical that wind farms in Hawai'i be bird-smart. There are currently plans to build at least 300 wind turbines on the islands, many of them on Lana'i, Moloka'i, and Maui. That number is expected to grow as Hawai'i races to comply with a state mandate that 40% of their electricity come from renewable energy by 2030.

Thanks to the support of the Leon Levy Foundation, ABC will maintain its involvement in Hawai'i to assure that future wind projects are made as safe as possible for endangered birds. While virtually any potential wind farm site on the islands has the capacity to kill birds, some sites will be better than others.



Turbines at the Kaheawa wind development site: Flickr.com

Hawaiian Petrel (Ua'u): Jim Denny, kauaibirds.com



LEED Credit Now Available for Bird-Friendly Building Design

ABC, in cooperation with the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and Bird-safe Glass Foundation, has paved the way for designers, planners, and owners seeking LEED certification for buildings to gain credit for the use of bird-friendly design. The credit, currently operating as a pilot program, fosters building design that minimizes bird collisions with glass and encourages development of new, bird-friendly materials by showing manufacturers of glass and other materials that a market for these materials exists. The credit was officially published on October 14, and is available at www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=2104.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) was initiated by the USGBC in 1994 to provide building owners, architects, and operators with a framework for identifying and employing green building design, construction, operations, and maintenance solutions. The primary focus of the program has been on reducing consumption of energy, water, and other resources. Credits can also be earned for minimizing impact on a building site and its surroundings, but until now, the system has not specifically addressed the impacts of a structure on wildlife, especially the threat that glass poses to birds.

In recent decades, advances in glass manufacturing technology have allowed dramatic increases in the amount of glass used in buildings, leading in turn to huge increases in the numbers of bird collision deaths. ABC's Collisions program has, from its beginning, sought ways to make glass less dangerous to birds, and to reward construction of bird-friendly buildings.

To earn a LEED credit, an index or score is calculated for a building based on the amount and threat levels of materials on the building façade. Plain glass has a threat of 100; opaque glass has a score of zero, as does an outside façade of screens or

shutters. The overall score for the building must be less than 15 to qualify for the credit, and the building must also adopt internal and external lighting schemes that minimize light pollution, a known factor in bird collisions.

"Building collision is among the leading causes of bird mortality in the United States, so it is exciting to see the foundation being laid to reduce the threats that buildings pose to avian populations. I am pleased that, with the addition of this credit, architects across the country will now have the chance to be recognized for making buildings truly green," said ABC Bird Collisions Program Director Dr. Christine Sheppard.



The Wexford Science and Technology Building in Philadelphia, designed by Zimmer, Gunsul, Frasca, uses opaque glass to provide light without glare, making it safer for birds. Photo courtesy of Walker Glass



BIRD-FRIENDLY BUILDING GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE!

This 58-page publication focuses on both the causes of bird-glass collisions and potential solutions, with comprehensive information on the biological science behind the issue, legislative approaches to reducing collisions, new construction ideas, options for retrofitting of old buildings, and landscaping and lighting considerations.

To download a PDF version visit: <http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/BirdFriendlyBuildingDesign.pdf>

Peruvian Postage Stamps Feature Endangered Birds

Thanks to the efforts of Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos (ECOAN – ABC’s partner in Peru) and the Natural History Museum of San Marcos, the Peruvian Postal Service has issued two new stamps featuring two of the world’s most endangered birds.

The postage stamps depict the endangered Marvelous Spatuletail and the critically endangered White-bellied Cinclodes, both endemic to Peru. The photographs used for the stamps were provided to Peru’s Natural History Museum by ECOAN and ABC. Each stamp will cost ten nuevo soles, equivalent to about \$3.70, and will raise awareness among Peruvians of their threatened endemic birds.



ABC Conservation Biologist Daniel Lebbin, who photographed the White-bellied Cinclodes used on the stamp, commented: “It is thrilling to see Peru’s threatened birds

receiving this public attention. We hope these stamps inspire Peruvians to visit places where they can see and appreciate their natural heritage, and in doing so, support the protection of these unique places through tourism.”

Peru is a premier birding destination; birders interested in seeing the Marvelous Spatuletail, White-bellied Cinclodes, plus other endemic species, should consider visiting the Huembo and Abra Patricia reserves in northern Peru (see page 28). These reserves were established by ECOAN and ABC; visiting contributes directly to their support. Go to www.conservationbirding.org to see how you can plan your trip.

Newly-translocated Millerbirds Getting Busy on Laysan

A small population of endangered Millerbirds was recently moved from Nihoa to Laysan in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands to establish a new population that will provide a buffer against the species’ extinction. Encouragingly, the birds have already begun pairing up, building nests, and in some cases, laying eggs. This represents the first breeding attempts of millerbirds on Laysan since the species went extinct there approximately 90 years ago.

As of October 24th, researchers Robby Kohley and Cameron Rutt, who comprise the Millerbird Monitoring Team on Laysan, had found six nests, including one with two eggs. Although that nest subsequently failed, it provides a very encouraging sign for the future.

“The speed with which the Millerbirds have established territories and begun nesting is truly amazing and has exceeded all of our expectations,” said George Wallace, ABC’s Vice President for Oceans and Islands. “The breeding success of the translocated birds and their over-winter survivorship will inform our decision about whether to move more birds to Laysan or not. We are all rooting for them!”



A translocated Millerbird checks out its new territory on Laysan Island. Each released bird was color-banded so that individuals can be closely tracked. Photo: Robby Kohley, September, 2011

The Millerbird Translocation Project is a partnership of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and American Bird Conservancy within the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

Read the latest Millerbird project news from the field on ABC’s blog at <http://abcbirds.wordpress.com>. Listen to a recent BirdNote program on the Millerbird project at: www.birdnote.org/birdnote.cfm?id=2139

HELP ABC CREATE BIRD CONSERVATION FIXES!

Have you ever wondered why someone doesn't just fix so many of the bird conservation problems out there? We hear you! So many of them can be resolved with a combination of common sense and funding.

Together, you and ABC can FIX IT!

With your extra, year-end contribution of \$50, \$100, or more, we can:

- ✓ Help restore nesting islands for pelicans and other birds affected by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf last year.
- ✓ Plant 100,000 native trees before December 31 to provide future habitats for threatened bird species in the United States and Latin America.
- ✓ Help stop the decline of the Golden-winged Warbler, Long-billed Curlew, and dozens of other migratory birds by creating and managing thousands of acres of habitat on their breeding and wintering grounds.
- ✓ Prevent the drowning of endangered Waved Albatrosses and other sea-birds in South and Central American fisheries by providing simple fishing gear modifications.
- ✓ Help prevent lead from getting into the environment through an education campaign that shows hunters and fishermen affordable and less harmful alternatives to lead ammunition and fishing tackle.
- ✓ Build a predator-proof fence to protect the critical nesting habitat of endangered, native Hawaiian birds on the Big Island and Kaua'i.
- ✓ Drastically reduce bird collisions with windows to help save songbirds such as the Wood Thrush.



Photos from top: Lear's Macaws: Ciro Ginez Albano; Golden-winged Warbler: Laura Erickson; Brown Pelican: Tom Grey

Can we do all of this? Absolutely. We can complete some of the fixes quickly – before the end of the year – while others will take more time, but they are all within our reach.

Dollar for dollar, ABC members produce more bird conservation results than any other membership in the Americas. Together, you and ABC make one of the best teams in conservation and ensure that native bird species and their habitats are protected. Your help will make all the difference. Let's fix it!

Federal employees can make donations to American Bird Conservancy through a payroll deduction plan or as an annual gift. ABC is listed as #12048 on the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) form.

Domestic Habitat Conservation

ABC AT WORK: Delivering Conservation in the Central Hardwoods Region

As I left the conference room in Nashville, Tennessee where I had been attending a workshop on habitat programs related to the Farm Bill, I could not help smiling. We had just heard a report that a long-term bird monitoring effort in the Midwest showed a significant increase in the number of grassland birds. The group of wildlife biologists and land managers still in the room were busily discussing how to incorporate more natural habitat management into plans for several state management areas, and making plans to expand on the thousands of acres of improved habitat they had already completed in the past few years.

As ABC's Conservation Delivery Coordinator for the Central Hardwoods

Joint Venture (CHJV) – a multi-stakeholder, public-private partnership – one of the biggest parts of my job is to plan and create landscape-level changes that will benefit birds. My region, which spans nine states, including Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky, consists of most of the forest lands in the Midwest, including glades, savannas, and open oak woodlands, which are among the fastest declining habitats in the country.

Many bird species of special concern inhabit the CHJV, such as Bachman's Sparrow, and Prairie and Blue-winged Warblers. Breeding Bird Survey data show that populations of these birds have been on a steady decline since the 1960s, and are quickly disappearing from areas where they were once common. To stop this trend and stabilize or restore these species, we

have recommended that over one million acres of native grassland-shrub or open oak woodlands will need to be restored.

I work to achieve bird conservation in two different ways. The first is at the "big picture" level, where I partner with land planners and government agency leaders to develop landscape-scale conservation plans to increase targeted bird populations. This involves use of population models and other conservation planning tools to identify bird conservation opportunities, particularly on private property, which constitutes over 90% of the area in this region, as well as on public lands.

Recently, I assisted state biologists from the Kentucky Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Resources to



Blue-winged Warbler. Greg Lavaty



The CHJV has succeeded in focusing funding and staff on critical early-successional forest habitat to benefit priority bird species such as the Cerulean Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker, and American Woodcock.

better use existing USDA Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program funding to improve priority bird habitats. By using existing bird conservation plans and the ecological habitat mapping completed by the CHJV, we succeeded in focusing funding and staff on critical early-successional forest habitat to benefit priority bird species

such as the Cerulean Warbler, Red-Headed Woodpecker, and American Woodcock.

The second level at which I work is directly with land managers, biologists, and foresters responsible for actual land management on the ground. At a recent workshop on Woodland

and Savanna Management, funded by the CHJV, we provided training to 65 land managers from 13 different agencies. The workshops included staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, Tennessee and Kentucky Forestry Divisions, Tennessee and Kentucky Wildlife Agencies, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Using information from the presentations, and with “hands-on” field training, these attendees learned to identify and properly manage the critical natural communities that are so important to grassland-shrub birds such as Bachman’s Sparrows and Prairie Warblers in the middle Tennessee and Kentucky regions.

This two-pronged approach ensures that birds of conservation concern continue to be a priority for federal and state agencies and that land managers have the tools and information to improve habitat to benefit these birds.

After hearing about the progress made at the recent Farm Bill meeting, my mind raced with the possibilities. Who should I contact next? Should I put together additional workshops to engage more landowners and managers? What other agencies or organizations can assist in the effort? What if we could better target the available incentive programs that will help more private landowners to create or restore habitat? Keep reading *Bird Conservation* magazine for more news of conservation in the CHJV – there’s sure to be plenty happening in coming months and years.

— Larry Heggemann, Central Hardwoods Joint Venture Delivery Coordinator

PROFILE: Denise Gibbs — Small-scale Successes

Unlike some of the large-scale landowners and managers that Larry Heggemann works with in the CHJV, Denise Gibbs oversees just one acre. But this ABC member and park naturalist with the Montgomery County, Maryland Department of Parks also makes a difference for birds, albeit on a smaller scale.

“We established and maintain a meadow on our land for birds and butterflies,” explains Denise. “We selected native grasses that would produce seed for birds and act as hosts for the caterpillars of several butterfly species. The meadow contains native herbaceous perennials that are also good butterfly nectar and host plants, as well as bird seed sources. We mow the meadow in late February/early March each year and

re-seed the native grasses periodically. We have also provided bird feeders in both the front and back yard. These contain Nyjer seed (thistle), black oil sunflower, millet, peanuts, and suet. Our water sources include a small pond and several bird baths.”

Denise gives talks to garden clubs, bird clubs, native plant clubs, and other organized groups to spread the word about the benefits of native landscaping. “I trained volunteers to grow native plants in the [county park’s] greenhouse, and now they have an annual native plant sale for the public,” she said. “We have recorded over 100 species of butterflies on our property as well as numerous birds—one of our most memorable bird sightings was a Red-shouldered Hawk who took a long soak in our heated birdbath one cold winter day,” she recalls.

Denise’s personal philosophy on maintaining wildlife habitat echoes the landscape-level restoration and preservation goals of ABC and its partners. “My conscience will not allow me to purchase and plant any species that is not beneficial to wildlife,” she says. “I often seek out native plants that have the dual role of providing for both birds and butterflies. We are also gradually ridding our yard of non-natives and replacing with natives that produce fruits and berries for birds.”



Eastern Bluebird:
Greg Lavaty

(BELOW) Denise Gibbs cultivates a wide variety of native plants to provide habitat and food for birds and butterflies. Her meadow includes native plants such as Canada goldenrod, New England aster, sweet black-eyed Susan, tickseed sunflower, New York ironweed, Joe-Pye weed, wild bergamot, and pokeweed. Photos: Denise Gibbs



International Programs

ABC AT WORK: Helping Our Partners Help Birds

ABC plays a number of key roles in bird conservation efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean; we bring together local, national, and international groups, facilitate access to the most up-to-date information, and provide specialized biological and planning expertise. One recent example of ABC's pivotal engagement in the region is the conservation of the endangered Yellow-billed Cotinga.

The loss of mangrove and forest habitats in Central America to development, agriculture and logging has spelled disaster for this species, which now likely numbers fewer than 1,000 individuals. It hangs on at a

few remaining sites, in particular the Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica, where ABC has been working with Osa Conservation and other partners to further efforts on behalf of this poorly-known species as well as other threatened birds including the Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager and Mangrove Hummingbird.

Earlier this year, as part of a project funded by ABC and the Mohammed Bin Zayed Foundation, biologists with Osa Conservation trapped a small number of cotingas, and for the first time ever, fitted them with satellite radio transmitters. These small, lightweight devices will help fill in key gaps in our understanding of the bird's distribution, and its breeding and foraging behavior.

This exciting development is just the latest step along a long road towards saving the species from extinction. In December 2007, I visited the Osa to help design and plan studies to locate populations of the cotinga. I joined Liz Jones and Abraham Gallo, owners of the Bosque del Rio Tigre Lodge, to conduct initial surveys along the Sierpe River, one of the largest mangrove estuaries in Central America.

We picked this area because satellite imagery showed that it contained several areas where mangroves and forests grew side by side (important because the cotingas nest in mangroves and feed on forest tree fruits, so land where both habitats are adjacent is where we are most likely to find them). Combined with Jones' and



Yellow-billed Cotinga: Glenn Bartley



Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula is home to a rich variety of bird and animal species. Photo: R. Stanley



Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager (above) and Mangrove Hummingbird (below) are both "specialty" bird species of the Osa Peninsula. Photos: Michael and Patricia Fogden



Gallo's excellent general knowledge of the area and its avian biodiversity, we were able to plan systematic bird surveys across the peninsula that were most likely to reveal populations.

Not only did we locate good numbers of cotingas along the Sierpe during this trip – including several in a single fruiting tree – but surveys by Jones and Gallo over the next two years provided significant distribution data, including a completely new site for the cotinga along the Esquinas River.

We had trained Jones and Gallo on the use of various data recording methods, including ebird (www.ebird.org), a Web database system used by birders and scientists to record bird sightings. With this training, they were able to make information on the new cotinga site available to the entire conservation community.

Already, data from the new satellite transmitters is beginning to reap benefits. We are learning that the cotingas use riparian corridors that

connect mangrove and forest habitat to move between the two. This will be a key piece of information as we work with our partners to develop a Yellow-billed Cotinga conservation plan. The plan will determine the best habitat on which to focus our conservation efforts in the Sierpe estuary, and will help guide Osa Conservation in their management of Santa Cecilia property, a key tract of land in the Esquinas River watershed.

— *Daniel J. Lebbin,*
Conservation Biologist, ABC

PROFILE: Jordan Rutter — A Lifelong Passion for Birds

Jordan Rutter, an ABC member and biology major at Oberlin College, has always had a passion for birds. "I am especially interested in connecting people who are not from a science background with nature and the environment," she states. "Birds are the way that I help others connect with nature."

Her interest in birds began early. "I've been birding since I was two years old, when my parents would bring me along on bird walks in a backpack!" Jordan laughs. "I grew up knowing about ABC—it's one of a core group of conservation organizations that I've always been aware of."

Jordan volunteered in the Osa Peninsula for a month in January 2009 during her winter term of college. ABC's partner in Costa Rica, Osa Conservation, was able to refer Jordan for a volunteer position at their Osa

Biodiversity Center. With the help of her longtime friend, ABC's Daniel Lebbin, Jordan designed a project to gather data in an area of the peninsula recently purchased by Osa Conservation. The study's focus was on neotropical migrants; birds they recorded included the WatchListed Olive-sided Flycatcher and Blue-winged Warbler,

as well as the endangered Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager.

"I hope to eventually have a job that allows me to help educate the public about birds," says Jordan. "Specifically, I hope to work relaying ornithological research to non-scientists in a way that makes it more available and accessible. I

currently work in my college's science library, and I see all this incredible research that, for the most part, goes unnoticed by people outside of that field. I know this is a herculean task, but right now I feel it's extremely important to at least attempt this."

Jordan's love for birds also makes her a regular participant in bird counts, birdathons, and other birding activities. "I started participating in the World Series of Birding in Cape May when I was 13," Jordan says. "I joined up with their youth team, and participated with them every year until I was 17. I raised about \$1,000 each year in pledges and donated the money to different conservation organization over the years. I have raised about \$10,000 cumulatively through all the events I've done!"

In 2009, Jordan started her own World Series team to raise money for ABC, recruiting her father and Daniel Lebbin and ABC's Mike Parr. The team, dubbed the Beltway Kingfishers, was profiled in a *Washington Post* magazine article in 2010, and ended up raising several thousand dollars for Cerulean Warbler conservation.

"When the 2009 World Series came up, I had raised money for local and regional conservation groups and I just felt that I wanted to try and help a national organization. I chose ABC because of its great work."



The 2009 World Series of Birding Team, the Beltway Kingfishers. Clockwise from bottom: Jordan Rutter, Keith Rutter, Mike Parr, Daniel Lebbin. Photo: Ann Henion/The Washington Post Magazine, 2009

Preventing Bird Collisions

ABC AT WORK: Tunnel Vision at Powdermill

This October, I drove down the Pennsylvania Turnpike from New York to the Carnegie Museum's Powdermill Banding Station outside of Pittsburgh where ABC has set up a special field laboratory to find out how we can make glass safe for birds. It's a long drive, made easier with a talking book on the MP3 player. This time it was Johnny Depp reading Keith Richard's autobiography – pretty cushy compared to most field expeditions.

Windows can be essentially invisible to birds, can resemble a dark tunnel or passageway, or can reflect surrounding habitat. These properties result in hundreds of millions of bird deaths each year. At Powdermill, ABC is testing different materials in search of the holy grail of window construction: glass that is highly visible to birds while at the same time being almost invisible to humans.

We work at Powdermill because they net and band thousands of birds each year, providing us with a rich resource of test subjects. Testing is done in a specially designed,

30-foot-long tunnel, the original of which was constructed in Austria by ornithologist Martin Rössler. Rössler began his project to investigate the relative danger different materials posed to birds after the installation of transparent noise barriers along highways caused multiple bird deaths.

At one end of the tunnel, two pieces of glass (or plastic or other material) are mounted side-by-side. One is plain and so invisible to birds; the other has a pattern or other design characteristic to be tested. The object is to see whether that characteristic makes the glass more visible to birds. Daylight shines through the back of the glass or is reflected on to the front surface by mirrors to simulate the way birds usually encounter windows. The entire tunnel pivots, so the sun is always directly behind it. A net is stretched across the tunnel in front of the glass to prevent the birds hitting either piece. At the opposite end from the glass, birds are put into the tunnel through an entry port and immediately fly towards the light. A video camera records the outcome. We score whether the birds fly towards the side with the pattern, or towards the plain glass. We test at least 80 birds per pattern.

In good weather, the banding team starts catching birds that can be used for tunnel testing shortly after dawn. In an ideal test, a bird flies almost immediately towards the lighted end of the tunnel and into the net in front of one of the pieces of glass. The door at the side of the tunnel is then opened and the bird flies away. But the process is not always so straightforward. Many birds need to be shooed out the exit door. Some birds won't fly, especially on overcast mornings when the far end of the tunnel is not well lit. Some species, for instance chickadees and kinglets, fly to the wall and just cling there (we've stopped testing those species). Then, there are catbirds, which appear to believe that dark spaces are safe hiding places, and tend to retreat back into the tunnel. Convincing them to fly out sometimes requires a dozen trips around the tunnel, even crawling down it on hands and knees, so there is a lot more exercise involved in the project than you might think.

The advantage of tunnel testing is that you can use the results to create a score: the percentage of birds that fly to the plain glass, away from the test material. This allows us to compare scores of different patterns



ABC's Chris Sheppard testing a bird in the tunnel at the Carnegie Museum's Powdermill Banding Station in southwestern Pennsylvania. Photo: Susan Elbin, 2011



The tunnel – an apparatus for safely testing effectiveness of different materials and designs for deterring bird collisions. Photo: Christine Sheppard, ABC



A bird's-eye view of glass in the tunnel. Photo: Christine Sheppard, ABC

and products. Every decision about building windows involves many factors – cost, appearance, ease of installation and upkeep – and these scores will make it easier to include birds in the decisions.

Armed with this information, we can test real-world solutions to the problem of bird collisions with glass. There are already some promising prototypes available, with more ideas – such as glass embedded with varying UV properties that birds can see but people can't – now being tested. Some building owners have begun putting practical measures into place. For example, Morgan Mail in Manhattan has installed frosted film on their glass; others have placed netting in front of particularly hazardous windows.

We have a long way to go to end this hazard to birds, but the Powdermill bird tunnel gets us one step closer.

— *Christine Sheppard, Bird Collisions Campaign Manager, ABC*

PROFILE: Daniel Lebbin — Pre-dawn Bird Patrols

Well before sunrise, steam rises from metal grates in the sidewalk along Charles Street in downtown Baltimore, which is largely empty of cars. The throngs of people who frequent Baltimore's harbor are still asleep. During spring and fall, members of the Baltimore Bird Club take advantage of this pre-dawn moment of quiet and calm to look for birds that may have collided with glass windows as part of the Lights Out Baltimore program.

The goals of the program are to document bird mortality in the city, work with local building administrators and government



Collision monitoring in Baltimore; shown are Wendy Olsson (with camera), Joan Cwi, and Kevin Graf. Photo: Daniel J. Lebbin, ABC, October 2, 2008



This Ovenbird was recovered alive after striking a window in downtown Baltimore. Photo: Daniel J. Lebbin, ABC

officials to reduce this hazard by turning lights off at night during migration, and to promote bird-friendly design for new buildings. Led by Wendy Olsson, Lights Out Baltimore volunteers search sidewalks around downtown buildings,

particularly those with glassed-in, lit lobbies (such as the convention center and aquarium) to count numbers of migrant birds killed in collisions with glass windows.

Armed with clipboards, data sheets, and plastic and paper bags, volunteers record dead birds and collect them (with proper federal salvage permits) for eventual deposit in the Smithsonian Natural History Museum. Not all birds are found dead, however. Some sit quietly at the base of a glass window, stunned or hopping around, “trapped” within a lighted glass corner. For injured birds, volunteers have the phone number of a wildlife rehabilitator handy. Otherwise, the volunteers may try to rescue the bird by placing it in a paper bag or shoe box and relocating it to a nearby forested park where it can take cover from predators, rest, refuel, and more safely restart its migration the next evening.

Preventing Bird Collisions

In 2008 and 2009, my wife and I lived in Baltimore and participated in the program. Rising early before work or on a weekend, we would drive downtown, park, and either meet another member of the bird club or walk the harbor beat ourselves. Although we usually found more birds dead than alive, the hope of rescuing a surviving bird was a key motivator. During our patrols, we were able to capture and release an Ovenbird, a Common Yellowthroat, and a Swainson's Thrush. We also found many Gray Catbirds, White-throated Sparrows, and others that were not so lucky. Sometimes, rare birds not usually seen in Baltimore are found as collision victims, such as a Lincoln's Sparrow we found along a glass-walled, elevated walkway, and a Clapper Rail found by another group.

Our freezer also became a temporary repository for victims collected during patrols until I was able to bring them in an ice cooler to the Smithsonian in downtown Washington, D.C. The security guards at the Smithsonian



A window-killed Lincoln's Sparrow (above) and a Northern Flicker (below), only a few of the bird species found by the Lights Out Baltimore team. Photos: Daniel J. Lebbin, ABC



usually guard against visitors leaving with specimens, and were surprised to learn I was bringing birds in!

Lights Out Baltimore and other bird monitoring programs can be very useful at local levels to document collision mortality and influence building policies. Since the fall of 2008, Lights Out Baltimore has recorded more than 1,000 dead, injured, and compromised birds along the monitoring route. One two-story building made almost entirely of clear glass except for one brick side is alone responsible for 300 fatalities. Armed with this sort of information, we can target specific buildings to turn their lights out and push city officials for beneficial regulations.

Lights Out and other monitoring programs exist in many cities across the country and always need volunteers. If one does not exist where you live, try getting together with friends or bird club members to start one.

Distribution of Lights Out Programs in North America



Pesticides and Birds

ABC AT WORK: Our Greatest Pesticide Battle

For a while, there was a running joke here at ABC – carbofuran was cancelled again this year! Every time we reported that this deadly pesticide had reached the end of the road, we learned of another plot twist that would drag the saga out for six more months or a year.

Carbofuran is one of the most deadly pesticides to birds ever marketed in the United States – even more directly toxic than DDT – yet until recently, it was available for use by farmers on a variety of crops, including potatoes, soybeans, and corn. The story of how carbofuran use finally came to an end is closely intertwined with the development of ABC's Pesticides and Birds Program.

We began the program in 1996 to address the dramatic impact pesticides

were having on birds, particularly species already in decline due to other threats. Yet there was no bird group dedicating full program-level resources to the issue. ABC set out to change that. We began by picking five chemicals that were having the biggest impact on birds – dubbed the Fatal Five – and determined to end their use. Among the five was carbofuran.

The granular application of this pesticide was particularly dangerous. Millions of birds died every year, each after consuming as few as one or two granules that they mistook for seeds. Granular carbofuran was banned in 1994, yet in 2002, some Louisiana rice growers applied for a special exemption to the ban. EPA was about to grant them their request when we got wind of the pending decision. We mobilized some of our closest program allies – groups such as Defenders of Wildlife, The Rachel Carson

Council, the Sierra Club, and the Natural Resources Defense Council – and went en masse to EPA's offices in Washington to register our objections.

EPA took note and immediately reversed their exemption decision. We were so encouraged by this success that we quickly turned this ad hoc collaboration into a new network: the National Pesticide Reform Coalition. Now EPA had a central body to turn to on issues relating to pesticide-wildlife impacts, and the Coalition had the muscle to better influence EPA regulatory decisions. With ABC at the helm, the Coalition has since helped cancel or restrict more than 15 pesticides that are hazardous to birds and other wildlife.

Although granular carbofuran was gone, the liquid formulation was still being used. ABC had been developing the Avian Incident Monitoring System, a central database to keep track of wildlife poisoning incidents since 2001. Using data from this system, ABC was able to demonstrate that, even when used according to label instructions, liquid carbofuran was also deadly to birds. We also marshaled thousands of our grassroots activists to send emails to EPA in support of a ban. The message was persuasive, and in 2007, EPA proposed the cancellation of all remaining carbofuran uses.

At this point, everyone expected the manufacturer, FMC Corporation, to accept the cancellation decision and voluntarily withdraw their product, as every other manufacturer had done with every other chemical in every other similar decision in the 30-plus years since the EPA had begun its pesticide registration process. Instead, FMC vowed to fight the decision, meaning a potentially decades-long fight.



Bobolink: Ed Post

ABC sent a letter to the EPA with an alternative suggestion. In addition to pursuing the cancellation decision, EPA should ban from sale any food containing trace amounts of carbofuran residues to safeguard human health. Without an established food tolerance, farmers would not be able to use the pesticide. EPA agreed, prompting a lawsuit from FMC that went all the way to the highest court in the land. The Supreme Court refused to hear the case, giving FMC no more ammunition with which to fight. We had finally won.

Today, ABC remains the only group with a program dedicated entirely to protecting birds from the harmful effects of pesticides. We are now engaged in a final push to rid the environment of the last of the Fatal Five – the rat poison brodifacoum, which kills owls, birds of prey, and other animals that feed on poisoned rodents.

The EPA has announced that it intends to prevent residential consumers from purchasing bait products containing brodifacoum and three other so-called “second generation anticoagulants” in order to reduce wildlife exposures and ecological risks. But like FMC with carbofuran, a handful of manufacturers – led by Reckitt-Benckiser, makers of d-Con – are refusing to pull their products from the shelves, meaning that we are in for another protracted fight.

The complexity of the problems with carbofuran and brodifacoum have prompted ABC to look at the registration system itself, and how it can be modified to prevent new hazardous chemicals from making it on to the market to begin with. A change of this magnitude will be a heavy lift, but worth the fight for the sake of



The Red-tailed Hawk called Lola, mate to the famous Pale Male, soaring over her New York City territory in 2010. Photo: Lincoln Karim

future generations of birds and those of us who are committed to their protection.

ABC is grateful to the Wallace Genetic Foundation, the Turner Foundation, and New York Community Trust for their longstanding support of our birds and pesticides programs.

— *Gavin Shire, Vice-President of Communications, ABC*

PROFILE: Julie Cooper — Birds and Urban Gardening

In a tree overlooking New York City's Central Park sits one of America's most famous birds – Pale Male. This Red-tailed Hawk captured the imagination of both the city and the nation when he began nesting on a Fifth Avenue building ledge several years ago. He has since gained a steady and devoted following of birders and enthusiasts who track every twist and turn of his now long and productive life. In this city of more than eight million people squeezed into 300

square miles dominated by concrete, it is remarkable just how much wildlife can be found here – including owls, woodpeckers, kingfishers, falcons, bats, raccoons, and foxes – and just how many people are in tune with it and whose lives are enriched by it. ABC member Juli Cooper is one of them—a 26-year resident of Manhattan and a regular visitor to the city's parks and wildlife haunts.

“Living in the city, it's hard to see sometimes how we can do our bit to help conserve nature. We can support groups like ABC, but I think we can do more in the daily choices we make,” she says.

Cooper cycles from her mid-town apartment to Riverbank State Park where she tends to her small plot in a communal garden. In spring and summer, she often stops on the way at Riverside Park where one of Pale Male's offspring and his mate now nest. She watches this young pair from a small hill that enables her to see right across to the nest just a few yards away.

Riverbank is the only state park in Manhattan, and in typical New York City fashion, is built on top of an operating sewage treatment plant. The garden has a strict policy prohibiting the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, but even without this restriction, Cooper has no intention of using these chemicals.

“I don’t want them leaching into the food I grow, and I don’t want them harming the garden’s wildlife. We get tons of bees, butterflies, and dragonflies, and of course, lots of birds. This is one area where the choices I make can have a real impact,” she says.

Without artificial chemicals, Cooper has had to learn to handle a number of pests in more traditional ways. She gets plenty of helpful advice from other gardeners in the community, some of whom have been gardening here for 15 years or more.

“This year I had an outbreak of aphids and treated it with a soap and water spray that worked really

well,” she says. “We get some pretty big bugs in here, and I’ve definitely become braver and better at dealing with them naturally.”

The variety of crops grown in the garden ensures that no one pest can run rampant, and also acts as a real draw to birds. Cooper varies her plot each year, growing everything from broccoli and sugar snap peas to mint, basil, and lemon verbena to zinnias.

“There is a huge variety among the 60 garden plots—we have gardeners from all over the world planting herbs, flowers, and every vegetable you can imagine. Many gardeners plant specifically to attract different insects and birds, like the giant sunflowers that really draw in the goldfinches,” she says.

Across town, Cooper’s friend Ellen Reznick rents one of 25 plots at Laguardia Corner Gardens between Houston and Bleaker. A keen birder, Reznick rattles off a list of birds that are regularly seen in the garden

during spring and fall migrations, including Black and White, Connecticut, and Yellow Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrushes, and Ovenbirds.

“Our garden does not have an organic-only policy, but there is increasingly a common awareness about trying not to use pesticides. Most seldom if ever use them,” she says. “When I first started my garden almost 15 years ago, I sprayed anything and everything to get rid of pests – now I’m much more aware.

“Birding and gardening have always gone hand in hand for me. I started doing both at about the same time and can’t imagine one without the other.”



(Top) American Goldfinch: Greg Lavaty

(Left) Julie Cooper with some of her home-grown produce and flowers. Julie Cooper, July 2011.



Bird-Smart Wind Campaign

ABC AT WORK: Advocating for Mandatory Wind Power Standards

On a damp, foggy night on West Virginia's Mount Storm this fall, a wind turbine blade spun its rhythmic, lazy-looking circle. Around it, other turbines stretching out along the ridge top described their similar, synchronous arcs, but this turbine was different. It was illuminated by lights carelessly left on inside the turbine motor housing. Together, the spinning blades and the luminous glow formed a deadly cocktail for 59 birds that were migrating through the area that night. Fooled by their genetic code into following that light as though it were a star by which to navigate, the birds were drawn in ever closer to the whirling blades to be killed.

The deaths of these birds would have passed largely unreported had it not been for ABC and local groups that protect the Allegheny Mountains. When ABC got wind (no pun intended) of the mortality that night, we were able to work with local conservationists to alert local, regional, and national media outlets to raise the profile of this and two other incidents at nearby wind development projects.

One of my objectives as Wind Campaign Coordinator for ABC is to increase awareness of the problems wind farms can pose to birds if they are improperly sited or operated. It's a challenging job: many Americans have already made up their minds about wind farms. Some believe that wind power will never be the answer to our dependence on fossil fuels, while others believe that wind power is the panacea for all our energy-related ills.



Blackpoll Warbler:
Greg Lavaty

Done right, wind power could be a green, renewable source of energy that provides needed jobs without unduly harming birds.

In recent months, the concept of bird-smart wind power has gained traction. Done right, wind power could be a green, renewable source of energy that provides needed jobs without unduly harming birds; done wrong, it can do more harm than good, killing birds that collide with the turbines, destroying key bird habitat, and causing some birds to abandon breeding territories.

To do it right, we need wind producers to adhere to bird-smart principles that cover siting, operation, and mitigation of their developments. Sadly, the industry has failed to get on board with reliable voluntary measures, and so we are pushing hard for mandatory standards. Sixty-three organizations,

including the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the American Birding Association, have endorsed ABC's bird-smart wind principles, which insist that the government regulates how wind power companies operate in order to prevent negative impacts to birds.

To achieve this, we are helping to provide solutions to the problem. ABC has submitted detailed comments on proposed U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) wind power guidelines, pointing out where they can be strengthened. One particular problem is in data gathering. FWS estimates that 440,000 birds are currently killed each year at wind farms across the country, but no one can be sure of the true number. We believe it is probably higher. Currently, wind energy companies are not obligated to allow scientists access to their developments to study bird mortality, and some government agencies will not share wind farm mortality data with the public. This paradigm needs to change. With better data, we can better show not only the full extent of the hazard, but also correlate mortality with siting and operational factors.

We are also producing a map that shows areas where wind power may pose an elevated risk to birds. The map, due out in coming weeks, highlights ABC-designated Globally Important Bird Areas and other focal sites of concentrated bird use by WatchList species, plus several migration corridors, all overlain with current and planned wind facilities.

The political landscape is ever changing, so we cannot predict how other factors related to wind power production in the United States – such as government subsidies – will impact

the industry coming years. But the avian landscape is well understood. We know wind energy, if it's not done right, can be harmful to birds, and we have the ability to change the industry now for the better. We intend to do just that.

ABC's bird-smart wind power campaign is made possible through the generous support of the Leon Levy Foundation.

— *Kelly Fuller, Wind Campaign Coordinator, ABC*

PROFILE: Judy Rodd — A Local Spin on the Wind Power Issue

“You can actually spot the wind farms in West Virginia on Google Earth,” says Judy Rodd, who directs the Friends of Blackwater Canyon

(www.saveblackwater.org), a citizen's group that, among other things, works to protect the mountains and wildlife of the Appalachians from badly sited industrial wind turbines.

“West Virginia has built the most wind turbines in the Appalachian corridor, and unfortunately it also has the fewest state laws to regulate their siting, construction, and operation,” she notes. Given the lack of federal regulations for wind power development, this is a significant problem in the state.

Like ABC, Friends of Blackwater Canyon supports the concept of mandatory federal wind standards. The group has helped ABC understand how the lack of strong national standards affects what happens “on the ground” along the Allegheny Front.

“To get sensible regulation of wind energy that protects wildlife across the entire country, it's going to take more than just national groups like ABC advocating for it. Judy Rodd and Friends of Blackwater Canyon understand the need, and it's great that they've been willing to work for it,” said Kelly Fuller, ABC's Wind Campaign Coordinator.

The mountains in this part of West Virginia are part of the larger Allegheny Front, the eastern-facing escarpment of the Appalachian Mountains that stretches from south-central Pennsylvania through western Maryland and the eastern mountains of West Virginia. This is one of the windiest spots east of the Mississippi, which has led to the recent boom of wind farm development in the area.

Part of the 132-turbine NedPower Mount Storm wind facility in Grant County, West Virginia. Photo: Bruce Halgren





“These are some of the most sensitive and pristine ridgelines in the state, and many have been under federal protection since the 1920s,” says Rodd. “Now West Virginia has four industrial turbine sites sitting atop its highest mountains. They are all on private property, but are very close to Monongahela National Forest and other sensitive natural areas.”

The Allegheny Front is an important flyway for migratory birds traveling from their northern breeding grounds to their southern wintering sites, particularly warblers and raptors. Because of the presence of suitable caves, many bat species, including the endangered Indiana bat, also occur in this region.

Mount Storm in the northwestern part of the state has proven to be an important travel corridor for both migration and local bird movements, as well as a key wintering area for the eastern population of Golden Eagles and other raptors. Studies by the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania have radio-tracked individual Golden Eagles between this area and their breeding grounds in Canada. Through these studies, they hope to develop region-wide maps that describe the risk to Golden Eagles

from wind development in different areas along their migration routes, and mitigate the impact on eagles and other raptors.

The nearby Mountaineer facility, which was the first wind farm built in West Virginia (in 2002), put 45 turbines close to Blackwater Canyon itself. The original plan by the Florida

Power and Light (FPL) energy company was to install 90 turbines, but the Friends group and other concerned citizens were able to negotiate a reduction in the number and placement of turbines, as well as an agreement to conduct avian mortality studies.

Although required by the state’s Public Service Commission to monitor mortality rates at the site, FPL (which also owns and operates wind facilities in Pennsylvania) banned researchers from the property after the first two years of monitoring at the turbines tallied high numbers of dead birds and bats. The company conducts its own mortality surveys, but usually only once a week. Scavenging animals likely take the majority of dead birds long before surveyors arrive, so mortalities are almost certainly being under-recorded.

Because wind power companies or their hired consultants almost always conduct avian mortality studies at wind farms, rather than independent third parties, the public has to take their word for it that the studies are being conducted according to plan. The lack of mandatory national standards creates an uneven playing field,

where scrupulous operators may be competitively disadvantaged compared to those who are less responsible.

Rodd tells ABC that another wind farm proposed on Jack Mountain, near the West Virginia/Virginia state line, has been placed on hold by the state’s Public Service Commission following U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service objections over the potential threat to the significant numbers of bat hibernation sites in the area.

When endangered species are likely to be present at a wind facility, legal action becomes an option for private individuals and groups under the Endangered Species Act. Friends of Blackwater Canyon have already helped organize a number of lawsuits against hastily-constructed and poorly sited wind farms. However, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which cover the majority of birds impacted by wind power development, do not allow citizens to file lawsuits; the government is responsible for enforcing them.

Still, there are a number of other tools that local groups and volunteers can use to ground-truth what is happening at wind farms around the country, including Internet research, phone calls to government agencies, and Freedom of Information Act or state record requests.

Wind power development is advancing rapidly without sufficient environmental checks. But with groups such as Friends of Blackwater and people like Judy Rodd to bolster ABC’s national campaign with local efforts, there is some hope that in coming years, birds will have more of a voice in the renewable energy debate.

The Bird Conservation Alliance

ABC AT WORK: Forging an Alliance, One Partner at a Time

I know from personal experience that keeping cats indoors is a superb idea. Growing up, my family's cats were all allowed to roam outside, and all died relatively young. The cats I have owned as an adult have all been indoor-only cats and have lead happy lives well into old age. Above all, they have not had the opportunity to kill birds. Despite the palpable benefits of keeping cats inside, ABC's *Cats Indoors* Campaign has generated the most controversial response from opposing groups of any issue that ABC has dealt with in its 17-year history.

Lack of public understanding about the damage free-roaming cats can cause to bird populations is a significant hurdle, as is the willingness of some to close their eyes and ears to the science and pretend that it is perfectly natural for an alien predator and household pet to roam unfettered. The fervent support of some groups in favor of managed cat colonies (also known as Trap, Neuter, Release or TNR colonies), despite their avian impacts and the cruelty they impose on the cats themselves, is a particular problem.

When ABC began the *Cats Indoors* Campaign in 1995, it was the only major conservation organization openly highlighting the problem caused by outdoor and feral cats. Since then many other groups have joined the fray; the Bird Conservation Alliance has provided an effective means of rallying and coordinating those groups.

The BCA (www.birdconservation-alliance.org) is a network of over two hundred conservation groups led by ABC working together to be an effective voice for change. With the BCA's help we have built a forceful *Cats Indoors* partnership with con-

The issue of free-roaming cats is just one of many that the BCA addresses.



Greater Sage-Grouse: Alan Wilson

servation, humane, animal groups, veterinarians, and pet owners.

This year began with an opportunity to support a proposed predator management plan for the National Wildlife Refuges in the Florida Keys that included feral cat control. Anne Morkill and others at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had worked with local humane groups and conservationists to craft a plan to protect the endangered species living on the Keys, as well as the hundreds of other species that use this important stopover habitat for migratory birds.

ABC staff had discussed the proposed plan, and agreed that we would draft comments in support of it. The previous fall, BCA member The Wildlife Society (www.wildlife.org) had also begun a partnership to advance science-based management of feral cats, and they too agreed that this was an important issue to weigh in on. Another BCA member, the Urban Wildlands Group, (www.urbanwildlands.org), was very helpful in crafting the best language for the comment letter and ensuring the science references were the most current. The comments were endorsed by national environmental groups including the Center for Biological Diversity and National Wildlife Federation. A decision is still pending on the predator management plan in the Keys.

The issue of free-roaming cats is just one of many that the BCA addresses. Others include sage brush conservation in the West for sage-grouse and other bird species, communication tower collisions, and of course, bird conservation funding. 2011 is ending as it began – with a federal government budget crisis that some in Congress are using as an excuse to target environmental programs, which contribute little to the country's current deficits.

ABC and our partners in the BCA continue to work to spread the message that support for wildlife programs is a good investment for the economy because of all the benefits that birds provide and all the jobs birdwatchers create in spending money on their pursuits. As part of the effort, ABC President George Fenwick met with Senator Ben Cardin of Maryland who champions the

The Bird Conservation Alliance

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act and other wildlife programs in the Senate, and I and Darin Schroeder, our Vice President for Conservation Advocacy, met with the staff of other congressional leaders.

This partnership continues with follow-up events, including a November BCA briefing where we alerted congressional staff to the need to preserve bird conservation programs, and to the job creation potential of habitat restoration programs. Next spring, ABC will again be working with these and other partners to organize our second annual lobby day.

For more information on how the conservation organizations you work with can become a member of the Bird Conservation Alliance, please see www.birdconservationalliance.org or give me a call at 202 234 7181.

— *Steve Holmer, Director of the Bird Conservation Alliance, ABC*

PROFILE: Michael Hutchins — Taking on TNR

The Wildlife Society is a BCA member made up of nearly 10,500 wildlife professionals. Since 2010, they have become a major ABC partner in the fight to prevent the spread of TNR cat colonies.

For the organization to take a position on a conservation issue there needs to be agreement among its membership, so it is fair to say that their position statement in opposition to TNR reflects a broad consensus of wildlife professionals in the U.S. and Canada.

Developing science-based information to educate key decision-makers is a major priority of The Wildlife Society. To that end the Society developed

an outstanding package of articles on the impact of feral cats on wildlife and human health in its member magazine, *The Wildlife Professional*, and made the articles available on their web site. A series of factsheets detailing the impacts of feral cats on

birds and other wildlife, as well as the very serious human health issues related to the spread of diseases such as rabies and toxoplasmosis, were also developed. TWS and ABC also convened a policy meeting at the offices of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife



stock.xcimg



stock.xchng

Service Migratory Birds in 2010, out of which was created a feral cat policy group that continues working together to advance the issue. One of its products included a letter to Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar asking the Department of the Interior to take the feral cat issue seriously. The letter was signed by nearly 60 professional and scientific societies and major conservation organizations.

Michael Hutchins, The Wildlife Society's Executive Director, is passionate about wildlife, and when you



Greg Homei, Natural Elements Productions

"I would sure not want my family living in close proximity to a large feral cat colony, especially given the risks of disease transmission associated with them. In fact, it will be interesting to see if the managers of such colonies are sued when someone does contract a serious disease, such as rabies or toxoplasmosis. I hope they are well insured. One also has to wonder if the municipalities that gave the permits for the feral cat colonies, erroneously thinking they would reduce cat numbers, will also be liable."

Michael Hutchins, Executive Director
The Wildlife Society

stack up the various threats to bird populations, cats are unfortunately very high on the list, so they get his attention. "Our society has to address this problem," said Hutchins. "We are just not seeing the cat colonies blip-out under TNR management as its advocates promise. Instead, the problem is growing"

Hutchins occasionally writes blogs about the feral cats issue that reveal the depth of his concerns; in one of his postings he declared:

"I would sure not want my family living in close proximity to a large feral cat colony, especially given the risks of disease transmission associated with them. In fact, it will be interesting to see if the managers of such colonies are sued when someone does contract a serious disease, such as rabies or toxoplasmosis. I hope they are well insured. One also has to wonder if the municipalities that gave the permits for the feral cat colonies, erroneously thinking they would reduce cat numbers, will also be liable."

The Wildlife Society's effort to educate policy makers and public health officials continues, and the partnership developed between TWS and ABC to address the feral cat problem grows stronger. Despite the monumental challenge from extremely well-funded cat advocacy groups, Hutchins remains hopeful saying, "We are making some inroads; more authors are writing about the significant problems associated with growing numbers of feral cats, state and federal agencies are being educated, and I believe that when people realize TNR doesn't work, another approach, one based on responsible pet-ownership, animal welfare, and sound science will ultimately prevail."



RESERVE PROFILE

Abra Patricia, Peru

From the valley below the veranda of the Owllet Lodge at Abra Patricia in the Peruvian Andes, mist rises with the warming morning. Gradually, a vast wilderness of undulating hills and steep mountain peaks emerges into view. The sun pokes through just as a Swordbill Hummingbird breaks by to feed on flowers in the garden, joined by a cacophony of chirps and wings as Chestnut-breasted Coronets and other hummingbirds fight over the nectar feeders. Soon, the raspy calls pierce the air, signaling the approach of a group of White-capped Tanagers. The view is all the more satisfying because so much of it is now protected from the rampant deforestation occurring nearby, just outside the reserve.

The Owllet Lodge is at the heart of a private reserve and 40-year conservation concession, owned and operated by ABC's Peruvian partner Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos (ECOAN), and which protects over 24,000 acres of high-quality montane cloud forest.

The reserve and concession are adjacent to the 450,000-acre Alto Mayo Protection Forest in one of the most significant centers for bird endemism in South America.

Here, and at other project sites in the Andes, ECOAN has engaged hundreds of local families to restore bird habitat and reforest degraded areas with shade trees for pastures, coffee, and other agro-forestry systems. This effort has resulted in the planting of approximately 800,000 trees in recent years in this area alone, benefiting resident and migratory birds, as well as the local people.

Abra Patricia is designated as an Alliance for Zero Extinction site for the presence of the Long-whiskered Owllet and Ochre-fronted Antpitta (both endangered and restricted to just one site), and it also contains many other threatened or range-restricted birds such as the Bar-winged Wood-Wren, Royal Sunangel, and Johnson's Tody-Tyrant. The site is also important for mammals,

including the critically endangered yellow-tailed woolly monkey. The spectacled bear occurs here as well, and a tayra (a type of large, black weasel) regularly visits the lodge's feeding station.

Time permitting, visitors can include Abra Patricia as part of a northern Peru birding route that includes specialties of the Tumbezian region, Marañón Valley, and Amazon basin. On a recent ABC-organized trip, birders saw about 400 bird species in a week's worth of travel across this transect and in Lima.

Abra Patricia is within a short drive of Huembo Reserve to the west, where birders can see the Marvelous Spatuletail – one of the most spectacular birds on Earth – as well as Gocta Falls – the world's third tallest waterfall. To the east, birders can also include Quebrada Mishkiyacu's hummingbird gardens and forest trails to pick up specialized birds of outlying ridges and white-sand forests. Combining the hummingbird



The Undulated Antpitta, usually an extremely secretive species, is now regularly coming into view at a feeding station established at Abra Patricia. This is the first time antpittas have been habituated this way at a Peruvian reserve. Photo: Greg Homel, Natural Elements Productions



The Bar-winged Wood-Wren is a range-restricted species that can be found at Abra Patricia. Photo: Jean Paul Perret

feeders of Abra Patricia, Huembo, and Mishkiyacu over three days could easily yield 30 or more hummingbird species.

Between the diversity of hummingbirds and endemics during the day, and the owls, nightjars and potoos to find at night, Abra Patricia is the heart of what must be one of the best birding routes in the world for birders of all levels.

To plan your trip to Abra Patricia and other top birding spots in northern Peru, visit: www.conservationbirding.org.



Long-whiskered Owllet: Ramiro Yabar

QUICK FACTS

Date established: 2005

Location: Northern Peru (5°S, 77°W)

Elevation: 5,700-8,200 feet

Habitat: Mid-montane cloud forest

Partner/owner: ECOAN

Abra Patricia-Alto Nieva Private Conservation Area = 7,660 acres

Abra Patricia-Alto Nieva Conservation Concession = 16,557 acres

Bird list: over 200 species

Threatened: 23 bird species listed as threatened by IUCN, including Long-whiskered Owllet (EN), Ochre-fronted Antpitta (EN), Royal Sunangel (EN), Johnson's Tody-Tyrant (VU)

Visitor facilities: Lodge, research center, trail system, canopy tower

Best time to visit: May to October



Royal Sunangel: Roger Ahlman

RAISING THE BAR

ABC Supporters

This October, we were contacted by **Global Nomad**, the organizers behind the InkaTrail Ultramarathon, an 84km competitive race in the mountains of Peru that is due to take place in Peru in June 2012. No, that's not a typo, these endurance athletes really do run more than 50 miles at a time, and at altitudes of up to 14,000 feet! The organizers had heard of the great work ABC's Peruvian partner ECOAN does in the Andes and wanted to support them by donating a portion of the race registration fees.

We were delighted by this idea, and it got us thinking about other innovative ways people have raised money for ABC over the years that has helped us get the job of bird conservation done.

Earlier this year, the **Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society** (<http://emasnc.org>) in Asheville, North Carolina held a birdathon – a sponsored competition to see as many bird species as possible in a certain time period – to raise money for the Cerulean Warbler Reserve in Colombia, owned and operated by ABC's partner Fundación ProAves. They chose the Cerulean Warbler, one of ABC's flagship species, because Asheville is the only city in the state with Ceruleans in its backyard—up to 24 males hold territories on the Blue Ridge Parkway each year.

“Yes, we did see Cerulean Warblers on our Birdathon this year, along with 23 other species of warblers. We had three species of owls, Whip-poor-will, and Common Night-hawk during the nighttime hours,” says Simon Thompson,

Fundraising efforts by ABC members are benefitting threatened bird species such as the Cerulean Warbler.

Photo: David Speiser, www.lilibirds.com



FOR RAISING FUNDS

a birding tour company operator and EMAS member. “Veery, Hermit, and Wood Thrushes sang their ethereal songs from deep in the woodlands, and one part of our team found a migratory Swainson’s Thrush in the wooded thickets of Jackson Park in Hendersonville.”

The more than \$10,000 EMAS raised was followed by a \$15,000 gift from the **Amos Butler Audubon Society** in central Indiana (www.amosbutleraudubon.org), also raised through a birdathon. Since 2001, Amos Butler has raised a terrific \$147,000 for ABC projects, including support for the El Chorogo Reserve in Panama and funding for efforts to identify key wintering areas in Latin America for the Golden-winged Warbler.

Thirteen-year-old **Galen Sloss** raised money for ABC in the wake of the Gulf Coast oil spill last year by doing something he loves, baking cookies to sell to friends and neighbors. “I started out trying to raise \$275, but I got a great response, and after my first week, I had already raised over \$500. So, I decided to try to raise \$1,000, which seemed like an unreachable goal, but I thought I would go for it,” he said. Galen ended up raising more than \$1,600!

Kutubu Kpolie, a student at New Jersey’s Rowan University, was motivated to help Hawai’i’s native birds while researching a class project. “My geography teacher, who assigned the project, is a birder, so that piqued my interest in birds in particular,” he says. “I love what ABC stands for and your progress so far in the struggle to save these endangered birds. I also noticed that you guys take donations. So, as a class project, I have decided to spread awareness of Hawai’i’s birds in my area by selling silicone wrist bands that say **Help Save Hawai’i’s Birds.**”

Kutubu hopes to sell the bands for \$3 each to friends, neighbors, and fellow students. “People have been really supportive so far. I’m excited to be helping a good cause,” he says.

George Jett has been a loyal ABC member for eight years, and has found a novel way to combine his passion for birds and photography into support for his favorite bird conservation organization. In 2008, he embarked on a “Photo Big Year” with the goal of photographing as many bird species in his home state of Maryland as possible. By the time the year ended, George had snapped 307 species (some, such as Allen’s Hummingbird, were first state



Santa Marta Warbler: George Jett

records), and raised over \$10,000 in sponsorship for the El Paujil Reserve in Colombia. You can see his beautiful photographs at www.georgejett.net.

George has also visited Colombia several times; in 2007, he travelled to several Fundación ProAves reserves on an ABC trip, where he took photos of many endemic and AZE species. When he returned to the States, George organized his photos into a presentation which he has shared with chapters of the Maryland Ornithological Society, helping spread ABC’s conservation message.

These dedicated ABC supporters demonstrate that, whether it’s a race up the Andes, a race to see as many birds as possible in a day or photograph as many birds as possible in a year, or a race to alert people to the threats faced by Hawai’i’s birds before they go extinct, the ability to cross the finish line and raise much-needed funds for bird conservation is limited only by the power of our imaginations.

ABC's Top Ten Tips for Bird-Friendly Living



Tree Swallow: Owen Deutsch

The simple things you do every day, from the cup of coffee you drink to the lights you turn on, have an impact on birds. As we expand our presence on Earth, our lives intersect more and more with the wildlife around us. If we want to safeguard the future for birds, we must live our lives with a consciousness of how our actions affect the world around us.

Here are some steps that we can all take to live cleaner, greener, and more bird-friendly.

10 Plan your yard for diversity. Instead of a “green desert” of lawn, plant a mixture of native grasses, flowers, and shrubs. Your state or local Native Plant Society can help you choose species that are best adapted to the area where you live. When your wildlife garden is complete, you can have your yard certified by the National Wildlife Federation (www.nwf.org). You can also encourage your children to have their schoolyard certified!

9 Provide birds with fresh food and clean water. Clean your feeders regularly to prevent mold and disease. Scrub them with a solution of ¼ cup bleach to two gallons of water, and rinse well. Birds love water, and a bird bath can often attract species that wouldn't visit your feeder. Again, cleanliness is key; change the water every other day to keep it fresh and prevent mosquitoes from breeding. Visit www.backyardbirdcare.org for more details.

8 Prevent window strikes. Hundreds of millions of birds die each year as a result of hitting windows on every type of building. To reduce night lighting that interferes with migration, ask your building manager to turn off lights during spring and fall migration. At home, move indoor plants away from windows. Break up the reflections of habitat in your windows by applying ABC BirdTape (www.abcbirdtape.org) or covering the outsides with mesh screens. See ABC's flyer *You Can Save Birds from Flying into Windows* at www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/collisions/pdf/collisions_flyer.pdf for more information.

7 Donate your old birding gear. Got any old birding equipment just lying around, never being used? You can help our long-distance migrants and rare Latin American endemics by donating your old gear to biologists across the hemisphere through the Birders Exchange program. See the American Birding Association's Website: www.aba.org/bex.

6 Take action for birds on ABC's website. As well as being the best place to learn all about bird conservation, ABC's Website is also the place to go to get directly involved in helping conserve birds. ABC action campaigns enable you to play a role in getting key bills passed in Congress, ensuring that the most harmful pesticides to birds and other wildlife are banned, and a

host of other top issues. Visit www.abcbirds.org/action to see how you can take action today and make a difference for birds.

5 Drink shade-grown coffee. Coffee produced from shade-loving varieties means wintering habitat can be preserved for key migrant species such as the Cerulean Warbler. Look for the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's certification seal and check out their searchable database to find online sellers and retailers near you at <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/coffee/search.cfm>.

4 Reduce your carbon footprint. Do your part to help reduce our reliance on fossil fuels that cause global warming. Use an electric lawnmower; carpool, bicycle, or use public transport when possible; turn off lights when not in use; use low energy bulbs and Energy Star-rated appliances; help ABC buy valuable habitat for birds that also lowers atmospheric CO² levels.

3 Reduce your use of pesticides. Not only can they be toxic to birds, but they kill insects that birds eat. Weed instead of spraying! If you must use pesticides, look for biopesticide alternatives. Visit ABC's Pesticides and Birds pages at: www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/toxins.

2 Keep your cat indoors. Even well-fed, cats kill birds. Keep them inside, and not only will the birds be safer, your cat will be healthier and safer, too. For information on how to make your cat a happy indoor cat, local cat laws, and resources, visit www.abcbirds.org/cats.

1 Donate to ABC! As individuals, there is only so much we can do for birds. But as a part of an organization with the expertise, reach, and partnerships of ABC, you can make a difference for wild birds and their habitats at many levels. Join ABC today at www.abcbirds.org/membership. If you are already a member, consider an end-of-year donation to support your favorite programs.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Greg Lavaty



LEAVE A LEGACY FOR BIRDS!

You've read in this issue of *Bird Conservation* how individual ABC members have become more involved in bird conservation, complementing our work to protect birds and save species. You can also help bird conservation by joining an important group of our members in ABC's Legacy Circle — those generous individuals who have taken the step of remembering ABC in their will or estate plans.

Whether expanding the Latin American Reserve Network, conserving habitat for priority species here at home, or working to eliminate threats to all birds, legacy gifts enable ABC to build upon and expand our current programs, as well as tackle new bird conservation issues when they arise. It is a very special way to ensure that we will be a champion for the birds of the Americas for future generations.

I believe that ABC achieves more results for birds in the Americas than any other organization. Your estate gift can support the hallmarks of our conservation work — vision, long-term commitment, science-based planning, working with partners, securing resources, and success for birds — for years to come.

If you are interested in receiving more information, or if you have already remembered ABC in your will, I invite you to contact ABC's Planned Giving Director, Jack Morrison, at jmorrison@abcbirds.org or 540-253-5780, or online at www.abcbirds.org/membership/planned_giving.html. Thank you for your support.

George H. Fenwick
President, ABC

SPECIES PROFILE – Helmeted Curassow

Flagship Species for an Endangered Ecosystem

The endangered Helmeted Curassow is a large, black bird with a conspicuous, fig-shaped, bluish growth, called a casque (helmet) springing from the top of its head. The casque is probably related to sexual recognition and the maintenance of a pair-bond between mated birds; it may also be used in courtship displays. Both sexes sport a casque, which suggests that courtship displays are mutual, as is typical in other monogamous bird species such as grebes and cranes.

Helmeted Curassows weigh seven to eight pounds – about the size of a Wild Turkey. The male's call, a prolonged, low-pitched grunting, has been compared by some to the groan of old trees in the wind.

This species is found in western Venezuela and north Colombia in cool, subtropical cloud forests between 3,200 to 4,700 feet. It favors humid gorges with dense undergrowth, avoiding open spaces and forest edges. Pairs or family parties forage, mainly on the ground, for fallen fruit, seeds, leaves, grasses, and buds. Helmeted Curassows are equally comfortable in trees, often roosting high in the canopy.

Like other turkey-sized birds, this curassow is especially threatened by overhunting. Habitat loss and degradation due to timber harvesting, agriculture, and other human development has also led to population declines. As a result of these combined threats, the curassow is now mostly restricted to national parks and other protected areas that conserve intact forest. The Helmeted Curassow's declining habitat is also important to wintering Cerulean Warblers and other neotropical migrants, as well as



Dennis Dalelio, Wildlife Conservation Society

The unusual-looking Helmeted Curassow (above) has a reserve named for it in Colombia, the only place on earth where this turkey-sized bird occurs. Other rare and endangered birds, such as the Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird (below left) and White-mantled Barbet (below right) can also be found at the Pauxi Pauxi reserve.



Fundación ProAves, www.proaves.org



Fundación ProAves, www.proaves.org

other endangered endemics such as the Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird and White-mantled Barbet.

ABC and Colombian partner Fundación ProAves established the Pauxi Pauxi Reserve (named for the Latin name of the curassow) in 2007, and in 2010, expanded it to its current size of 3,800 acres. The reserve also comprises the northern end of the 25-mile Cerulean Warbler Corridor, a swath of contiguous habitat that connects two other ProAves reserves (the Cerulean Warbler and Niceforo's Wren Reserves). Reforestation efforts

at Pauxi Pauxi have included planting 21,000 trees across more than 800 acres, which has helped convert agricultural land to shade coffee farms and forest that is valuable to both the curassow and the migrants.

Basic accommodations are available at Pauxi Pauxi for tourists; visitors who are interested in seeing this reserve, and perhaps catching a glimpse of the unique Helmeted Curassow and other rare endemic bird species, should contact Ecoturs at www.ecoturs.org. All profits from Ecoturs are re-invested into Fundación ProAves to sustain reserves in Colombia.