

Continentially Important Proposal for the Yucatan Peninsula



*Advancing
Integrated Bird Conservation
in North America*

**NORTH AMERICAN BIRD
CONSERVATION INITIATIVE**

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Wood Thrush/ Steve Maslowski



The diverse upland and wetland habitats of the Yucatan Peninsula support over 540 bird species, including 200 that are Neotropical migrants. An estimated one billion migratory birds that breed in the U.S. and Canada pass through or winter in Chiapas and the Yucatan. After non-stop flights across difficult barriers, such as the Gulf of Mexico, these migrants immediately need fresh water, shelter from predators, and nourishment. The Yucatan Peninsula, in particular its northeastern coastal and inland forests, provides this critical stop-over habitat.

The Yucatan is extraordinarily important for the conservation of both terrestrial and aquatic species. Its habitats are remarkably diverse, consisting of savannas, palm forests, a wide variety of deciduous and semi-evergreen tropical forests, fresh and coastal wetlands, caverns, and sink holes. The northeastern portion of the Yucatan is a high priority region for Jaguar conservation in Mexico. The region's coastal mangroves and freshwater wetlands are the prime reproductive habitat for the endangered American Crocodile and the Morelet's Crocodile.

Unfortunately, the last five years have seen massive investments in tourism projects, such as golf courses, marinas, and resorts, particularly in Quintana Roo.

Billions of dollars in development projects mean increased urbanization, agriculture, pollution, and serious water availability and quality issues. To respond to these enormous threats, local conservation interests joined together to create and carry out a long-term, regional conservation plan for migratory and resident bird species. The partnership, called the Yucatan Peninsula Alliance for Birds, has created the most comprehensive series of conservation projects ever proposed for the Yucatan.

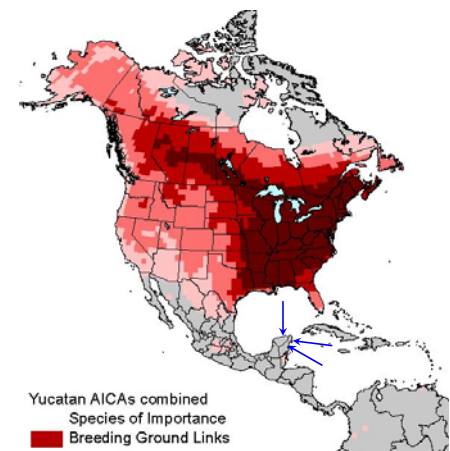
The proposal involves collaboration with the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture in the United States to bi-nationally conserve shared migratory species, such as Wood Thrush and Kentucky Warbler. The Central Hardwoods Bird Conservation Region (BCR) is an ecological transition zone where historically extensive tallgrass prairie and oak savanna to the north and west graded into pine woodlands to the south and mixed forests to the east. The Joint Venture has identified three sites to carry out habitat projects that counter increasing development pressures, mitigate negative pressures from recreation, and introduce prescribed fire to ecosystems where fire and other disturbances once helped maintain diversity at landscape scales.

To achieve habitat goals in the Yucatan, partners are proposing over US\$52 million worth of conservation activities. The Central Hardwoods portion of the proposal lays out a plan to spend a total of over US\$6 million in the three locations. The main project outcomes will be:

- The protection of an estimated 45,000 hectares of bird habitat in the northeastern Yucatan Peninsula.
- The first land conservation trust established in southern Mexico and a land stewardship endowment.
- A regional bird monitoring network and database for the Yucatan Peninsula.
- A regional fire management plan, regional cattle plan and best management practices, and Sustainable Cattle Ranchers Association.
- Participation in a Pride Educational Campaign by 28,000 people in the States of Yucatan and Quintana Roo.
- The consolidation of the Yucatan Peninsula Alliance for Birds and coordination with the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture.



Kentucky Warbler/ Steve Maslowski



Breeding ground links for priority birds of the Yucatan