

## Ranchers, Farmers, and Birds: A Natural Partnership

People, birds, and agricultural production have overlapping needs, such as clean water and a healthy environment. For many crops or commodities, birds also provide key pest reduction or pollination services. Conserving birds can help farmers, ranchers, forest managers, and other producers meet their economic goals, while ensuring our natural resources thrive for generations to come.

### **Birds mitigate damage to trees and crops.**

Throughout the country, birds aid the agricultural industry by controlling pests, protecting dozens of crops worth billions of dollars per year.

### **Birds protect valuable timber and reduce the need for insecticides.**

More than half of the world's 10,000 bird species consume invertebrates and can play a valuable role in crop and forest protection. For example, in Washington State, where spruce budworm is a serious pest to many types of conifer, natural bird control is worth at least \$570 per square mile per year to the timber industry.

**Birds provide free seed dispersal services.** Whitebark pine, a native tree in many western mountain ranges, is a keystone species because of the large number of plants and wildlife that depend on it, and the protection it provides to fragile, high elevation sites. Birds can play a major role in protecting and spreading whitebark pine, naturally. One study has estimated that the Clark's Nutcracker provides seed dispersal value of about \$1,000 per acre, or about \$13.9 billion across the west.



*Eastern bluebirds play a valuable role for agricultural producers by consuming tons of insects and protecting crops worth billions of dollars every year.*  
Evangelio Gonzalez



*Certified grasslands can produce both high quality beef and great bird habitat.* Rachel Gardner

**Certification programs can aid farmers and ranchers and protect birds.** Grasslands and the birds that use them are threatened by conversion to crops such as corn and soybeans. Certifying grass-fed beef can improve incomes by increasing the value of rangeland products and access to markets, allowing ranchers to resist pressures to convert their rangelands.

**The USDA Sodsaver Program is a money saver, too.** When more prairie is left uncultivated for wildlife and grazing, taxpayers save about \$140 million annually in federal crop insurance payouts.

## Building Partnerships for People and Birds

Agricultural professionals, working landowners and conservationists can achieve their goals by working together to leave a strong legacy of productive farms, healthy forests and grasslands, and flourishing bird populations.

## USDA Leadership Can Help Birds on Working Lands!

Here are three things that the NRCS Leadership can do to help birds on working lands:

- Ensure that Conservation Programs like RCPP remain a focus of the Farm Bill and are well funded.
- Promote access to Conservation Programs at every level of USDA.
- Work within USDA and with other Federal Agencies to leverage funds that target conservation of priority bird and wildlife species such as Working Lands for Wildlife and the Two Chiefs Program.



*Biologists work with farmers to discuss conservation projects that help protect migratory birds. Larry Kruckenberg*



*Rice production can go hand-in-hand with the protection of wildlife habitat for waterfowl. USFWS*

The U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) Committee is a partnership of state and federal government agencies and private organizations in the United States working to ensure the long-term health of North America's native bird populations and the habitats that support them. The vision of the committee is that healthy and abundant populations of North American birds are valued by future generations and sustained by habitats that benefit birds and people.

Through NABCI, public, private, and non-profit organizations work to address shared conservation challenges and priorities. NABCI also collaborates with its counterparts in Canada and Mexico to ensure that this hemispheric shared resource is fully protected.

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For More Information  
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