



**North American Bird Conservation Initiative- US Committee  
5-6 February 2020**

US Fish and Wildlife Service, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA



**5 February 2020**

**NABCI Coordinator Overview-** *Judith Scarl, NABCI*

[See presentation for details.](#)

The US NABCI Committee has three new representatives: Todd Bishop from Iowa DNR, representing AFWA's Resident Game Bird Working Group; David Brakhage, representing Ducks Unlimited, and Scott Sillett, representing the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. NABCI's Executive Council meets monthly to provide strategic direction between meetings and consists of Jerome Ford (USFWS, *ex officio*), Gordon Myers (North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, representing AFWA, *ex officio*), Greg Butcher (USFS, representing federal partners), Tammy VerCauteren (Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, representing NGOs), and Geoff Geupel (Point Blue Conservation Science, representing Bird Plan Partnerships). The state seat is currently vacant. We are looking for a Chair for our Communications Subcommittee, and a Co-Chair for our Legislative and Policy Subcommittee.

This meeting has five major topic themes:

- 1) **Overcoming Barriers to Priority Actions:** Much of NABCI's recent work has focused on the [National Bird Conservation Priorities](#), and four teams will present proposals on how to identify potential paths forward for specific Priority Actions.
- 2) **Expanding our Focus on Relevancy:** Over the last four years, NABCI has expanded its focus on relevancy; this meeting will focus on tools we are developing to resonate with the public, connect with new partners, and better incorporate relevancy into the 3 Billion Birds Campaign.
- 3) **Furthering Major Bird Conservation Opportunities:** including rallying around solutions for the 3 Billion Birds Declines, continuing to leverage the State of the Birds reports, and advancing the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.
- 4) **Subcommittee Successes:** including a revitalized International Subcommittee, and a new Co-Chair for the Communications Subcommittee (Scott Anderson, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission)

## 5) Broadening Connections for USGS and Waterbirds

Throughout the meeting, we will consider how to continue to leverage existing resources, such as the [State of the Birds report](#), [Relevancy Toolkit](#), [National Bird Conservation Priorities](#), and [Human Dimensions one-pager](#). We are encouraged to continue to seek and embrace new perspectives- through our relevancy work, through our Human Dimensions Subcommittee, and throughout all of our initiatives.

### **National Bird Conservation Priorities**

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 1, Subgoal 1:** *Support, develop, integrate, and promote priorities of regional, national, and international bird conservation partnerships.*

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 3, Subgoal 1:** *Facilitate coordinated communication with government leadership about highest priority programs, initiatives, and needs of bird conservation.*

### **Individual Priority Action Evaluation and Follow Up**

Background: In August 2019, the Committee discussed the results of an informal gap analysis survey to help identify where more focus was needed to implement Priority Actions and to identify barriers to Priority Action implementation. The Committee assigned teams to develop proposals to identify NABCI's role in reducing barriers to implementation of a few Priority Actions, or to identify NABCI's role in implementing a Priority Action.

### **Priority Action: Leverage government dollars with private dollars to multiply conservation impacts through partnerships including Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and new programs**

*Discussion led by Judith Scarl; team membership included Judith Scarl (lead- NABCI/AFWA), Jessica Barnes (NABCI/Virginia Tech), Nicole Michel (National Audubon Society), Tom Moorman (Ducks Unlimited), Brian Smith (US Fish and Wildlife Service), Karen Waldrop (KY Department of Fish and Game/AFWA), Geoff Walsh (Bureau of Land Management)*

This Priority Action was most commonly selected by Committee members in response to the question, which of the Priority Actions needs the most additional focus across the conservation community to achieve optimal outcomes? In August 2019, the Committee identified five primary barriers to implementation of this Priority Action: Lack of relationships/partnerships; Lack of capacity or expertise to build relationships/partnerships; Competition for limited funding; Communication; "Political" restrictions. The team focused on overcoming barriers related to lack of capacity or expertise to build relationships or partnerships. The team proposes that NABCI develop two tools to help bird conservation professionals diversify their relationships and better connect with new partners ([read the proposal here](#)). The "Field Guide to Partnership Development" will be a guidance document that provides tools or best practices for identifying potential private partners with overlapping interests, initiating conversations, and developing successful partnerships to leverage public and private dollars. Proposed sections include an overview of the types of private funding/organizations available, a discussion of how to identify common goals, guidance for communicating with potential partners, a deeper exploration of developing relationships and trust building, lessons learned, and success stories. Subsequently, the team recommends developing a training workshop that follows up on one or more elements of the partnership-building process.

### **Discussion**

The Committee discussed potential audiences for the Field Guide and the training workshop; the audience for the field guide is bird conservation professionals looking to develop broader partnerships (e.g. the Joint Ventures). The audience for the workshop will be determined based

on need and response to the Field Guide. Committee members offered these suggestions for consideration: 1) in the Field Guide, consider documenting different strategies for different types of private partners and/or different strategies for different audiences; 2) Be mindful of discussing how to leverage both cash and in-kind contributions; 3) Engage a consultant to help with the process and get outside feedback; 4) Consider doing a trust-building workshop (or other workshop) soon and using that to inform the document; 5) Consider having a facilitated session to talk about different techniques before developing a document.

**Decisions and Actions: Tammy VerCauteren moves to accept the proposal and EJ Williams seconds; the motion carries. The Committee recommends contacting Margaret Gorman from the Wildlife Habitat Council to help with this. Dave Trevino will check with NPS to see who might volunteer, and Scott Johnson will volunteer someone from his team.**

The second part of the team's assignment was to develop recommendations for how NABCI should elevate this Priority Action to audiences that can facilitate Action implementation. The team recommends breaking the Action down into three parts:

The importance of leveraging Public/Private Dollars: Federal resource/land management agencies with conservation in their mission (including USFWS, BLM, USFS, USGS, NPS, NRCS, DoD, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs) and private organizations are two key audiences for this element of the Priority Action.

For private organizations, conservation partners can communicate the importance and value of dollar matching, messaging that resonates with individual and corporate donors. These messages are best communicated through the one-on-one relationships created by bird conservation professionals.

Gordon mentions that state agencies should also be a focus of this communication.

The importance of existing partnerships: Bird conservation professionals may not understand the function and importance of RCPPs; NABCI can highlight a few RCPP partnerships through our Relevancy Success Stories. As the Association of Joint Venture Management Boards reinvigorates, NABCI can develop stronger connections between AJVMB and NABCI to work together to promote the importance of JVs.

Leveraging public/private dollars through new programs: The Recovering America's Wildlife Act could be a major source of bird conservation funding, and it comes with a substantial match requirement. If and when RAWA passes and is funded, NABCI should play a role in communicating about the importance of leveraging dollars through match as part of this program.

***Priority Action: Increase coordination and cooperation across federal agencies, and among federal and state agencies, to implement conservation policies and actions at broad scales.***

*Presented by Tammy Vercauteren. Team members include: Judith Scarl, lead (AFWA/NABCI), Tammy VerCauteren (Bird Conservancy of the Rockies), Geoff Geupel (Point Blue Conservation Science), Kendrick Weeks (North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission), and Bob Ford (USFWS).*

Most of NABCI's work serves to increase coordination and cooperation across the bird conservation community, but the team evaluated NABCI's 2019-2020 Work Plan to identify specific actions and tasks that increase coordination and cooperation across government agencies. The team recommends three major actions from NABCI's work plan that we encourage this partnership to pursue to increase coordination and cooperation across government agencies to implement conservation policies and actions at broad scales. ([See the full proposal here.](#))

- 1) Continue to use the 2019 State of the Birds report to promote the importance of state agencies, and the opportunities to address bird conservation declines through the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.
- 2) Provide clear direction to NABCI's Monitoring Subcommittee on its charge and future directions (by August 2020), and oversee a Subcommittee that is able to take a unified and impartial approach to advancing key projects. Also by August 2020, identify a mechanism by which our Committee can liaise with the Unified Science Team, to ensure we are supporting broad community science needs.
- 3) Over the next six months, promote and support a reconvening of the Waterbird Council and that NABCI partners send representatives to this meeting, if appropriate. Subsequently, we support the implementation of recommendations coming from this meeting.

#### **Discussion:**

Suggestions from Committee members included: 1) Develop a product that would be a unification or identification of priorities that Federal agencies would look to; 2) Look to the [Executive Order Council 13186](#); many of these agencies have non-binding MOUs to mitigate bird impacts, and the Council staff is looking for guidance. Next Council Staff meeting is in March, and Council Director's meeting is April-June timeframe; 3) Continue to use the State of the Birds report focused on public land and the current report on state agency conservation as guidance for priorities; let those two reports work together for federal-state cross-pollination; 4) Look to Canada for support with monitoring and waterbird/seabird work

#### **Suggestions to Follow Up On:**

- Eric Kershner will take the lead on directing more information about NABCI to the Executive Order Council of federal partners
- NABCI to ask for outcomes from the spring 2020 Executive Order Council meeting and put this for discussion on next NABCI meeting agenda
- Eric K and Jude to coordinate on getting information about Waterbird and monitoring collaboration on Trilateral agenda, as appropriate
- Better formulate next steps for Government Collaboration team (and Dave Trevino wants to be on this team)

***Priority Action: Develop and implement a native grassland policy equivalent to the current "no net loss" policy for wetlands that would preclude federal agencies from providing public subsidies for practices harmful to native grassland habitats.***

*Presented by Todd Fearer. Team members include: Jennifer Cipolletti, lead (ABC), Andrew Schmidt (DU), Judith Scarl (NABCI/AFWA), Aimee Roberson (JV/ABC), Greg Pilchak (AFWA), Steve Holmer (ABC), Erik Schneider (Audubon), Arvind Panjabi (Bird Conservancy of the Rockies)*

The team presents ([see the full proposal here](#)) the idea of developing a multifaceted package that includes policy, tools, and incentives to promote no net loss of grasslands. The team promotes not just a mitigation policy, but a true no net loss policy that also includes enhancing degraded land. The team proposes that a broader group continue to explore the goals, needs, and logistics of updating grassland conservation policy. Next steps include identifying a broader, inclusive group that should be involved in the conversation (including industry experts and economists), identifying threat factors, defining grasslands and no net loss, and further defining the elements that would go into such a policy.

Discussion: This proposal/issue can form the basis of some of the Grassland Summit questions/discussions. Suggestions for other perspectives to include in these conversations: botanical community, Canada, Mexico, land trusts, World Wildlife Fund, the 8 JV Grassland

partnership, NRCS, FSA, and Conoco-Phillips. Grasslands have been a priority of the Migratory Bird Table at the Trilateral for several years, and this year there is a push to get an LOI to the Executive Table.

Question: should this proposal move forward under NABCI, or under another group? Alicia Hardin mentions the [AFWA Grassland Bird Work Group](#), and Gordon recommends having seamless integration between the No Net Loss efforts and the AFWA efforts; this will also enable us to elevate issues to the Executive Committee of AFWA. Danielle Flynn mentions that this is a multi-faceted effort, so federal partners can participate in certain pieces; she will participate by providing information on programs, etc.

Tammy VerCauteren moves to adopt the No Net Loss of Grasslands proposal, and Alicia Hardin seconds. The motion carries.

**Action: Move forward with “No Net Loss” Grassland proposal**  
**Judith Scarl to bring this item to Trilateral Migratory Bird Table on behalf of NABCI**

**To Consider: Make sure the NABCI meeting is not the same dates as the Grassland Summit. At next NABCI meeting, consider having presentation from MS Flyway Grassland Summit also. Tammy VerCauteren and Alicia Hardin would like to be part of Grasslands No Net Loss group.**

***Priority Action: Work with private agricultural landowners to implement grazing strategies that meet the economic bottom line for agriculture while promoting healthy bird and other wildlife populations.***

*Presented by Todd Fearer; team is the Private and Working Lands Subcommittee.*

The team evaluated three barriers to implementation of this Priority Action and detailed NABCI’s current and potential future actions to address these barriers. [See proposal for details.](#)  
**Barrier 1- Delivery Capacity:** This can be improved by increasing training opportunities for private lands staff, including NABCI’s upcoming Private Lands Staff Forums. Non-federal NABCI partners can continue to develop relationships with members of Congress to advocate for annual Farm Bill funding.

**Barrier 2-Outreach and Education to Private Landowners:** Related to capacity issues, this focuses on limitations in providing information to private landowners about conservation programs, benefits, enrollment, etc. Through the Private and Working Lands Subcommittee, NABCI can increase engagement of organizations that specialize in ag-related education and outreach, like the National Association of Conservation Districts.

**Barrier 3- Evaluating the Efficacy of Habitat Delivery on Private Lands:** NABCI can develop a webpage to serve as a clearinghouse to highlight decision tools developed by partners used in Farm Bill conservation program delivery; provide successful examples of monitoring efforts that show value added benefits to multiple species from species specific programs and/or evaluate the effectiveness of practices on the ground; identify opportunities for collaboration to enhance monitoring on private lands, especially for citizen science opportunities.

**Using the Priorities: Committee Updates and Insights-** *Tammy VerCauteren, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies*

[See presentation for details.](#)

Two upcoming summits are in process that address conservation on one of NABCI’s identified Habitats in Crisis: Grasslands. The [2020 Central Grasslands Roadmap Summit](#) will be held in Fort Collins, CO from 4-6 August 2020, and the Mississippi Flyway Grasslands Summit will be in St.

Louis, MO, from September 1-3, 2020 ([Jane Fitzgerald](#), [Jim Giocomo](#), and [Bill White](#) are contacts for MS Flyway Summit). The Summits will build off of a grasslands project gap analysis conducted through AFWA's Bird Conservation Committee Grassland Work Group and the Central Roadmap Summit will be organized around the five Themes of the National Bird Conservation Priorities. The purpose of the Central summit will be to identify the tri-national objectives needed to sustain grasslands for generations to come, and the anticipated product is a draft roadmap highlighting priority needs across all five themes. The meetings will involve decision-makers and experts in grasslands across three countries. This presentation focused on the Central Flyway effort, but a complementary effort is occurring for the MS Flyway.

Discussion: There was some discussion as to whether NABCI could hold its summer meeting in conjunction with the Central Roadmap summit in Colorado, and NPS and USGS both tentatively offered space. Committee advised to ensure the NABCI meeting does not coincide with the Summit and requested a report from this Summit's efforts, as well as the MS Summit progress, at our next meeting. We discussed the Summit as a potential model for other underrepresented habitats.

**Bringing Back 3 Billion Birds: Future Directions for NABCI Partners-** *Ken Rosenberg, Cornell Lab of Ornithology/American Bird Conservancy; Pete Marra, Georgetown University*

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 1, Subgoal 1:** *Support, develop, integrate, and promote priorities of regional, national, and international bird conservation partnerships;*

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 3, Subgoal 1:** *Facilitate coordinated communication with government leadership about highest priority programs, initiatives, and needs of bird conservation.*

[See presentation for details.](#)

While we've known that birds have been declining for quite some time, the recent [publication in Science](#) that North America has lost nearly 30% of its bird abundance since 1970 has galvanized widespread attention and a call to action among the public and conservation NGOs. These results show a net loss across almost all habitats, including generalists, with the largest loss in grassland birds. Half of the total net loss is made up of 10 abundant species. While the Science paper did not address causes of these declines, we know that habitat loss and degradation are the primary drivers of bird declines. An intensification of agriculture, with its more intensive use of more toxic pesticides, may contribute to these declines, along with urban sprawl, loss of tropical forests, and human-caused bird mortality. Multiple, interacting threats are exacerbated by climate change. We do have reasons for hope, however- the Bald Eagle and other birds of prey increased with DDT removal, and waterfowl populations have increased as a result of a dedicated policy (NAWCA) and funding stream to protect/restore wetlands. The phenomenal response to the paper's publication is also cause for hope, with hundreds of articles reach more than 1700 media outlets and 3.8 billion people!

How can we work to reverse these declines? We can take advantage of this transformational moment in bird conservation. A coalition of bird conservation organizations launched a Bird Crisis campaign to promote action, with shared resources available at [www.3billionbirds.org](http://www.3billionbirds.org). This site promotes 7 Simple Actions to help birds. These focus on individual actions, but we need broad-scale changes in how we protect and manage habitats, and in policy. For example, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act could be a game-changing policy. Pete and Ken present five potential game-changer opportunities:

1. Unprecedented Collaboration- can build on the partnerships formed through the development and release of the Science paper
2. "Smoking Guns" and New Science- new technologies, including tracking devices that allow us to understand full life cycles. We need to better understand threats and where exactly to invest money.

3. Conservation Investment Strategies can serve as a roadmap for bringing birds back
4. New Legislative/ Policy Opportunities, like the Recovering America's Wildlife Act
5. Communication Plan 3.0 to build on the Bird Crisis Campaign.

**Discussion:**

Committee discussed the value of the communication strategy. NGOs and Science had a great media reach, and this information seemed to resonate, but we don't know how this information has changed behavior. How do we convert this interest into action?

Some elements introduced include:

- We need to address threats more quickly, but there is value in everyone being on the same page. Consider a combination of slow and quick action.
- We have a new world paradigm, with more people on the planet. Challenges included feeding people, climate change. Bird conservation bills may not cut it to make change- our relevancy work is so important, because we have to work with everyone else trying to save the planet. We need to work with sustainable development partners.
- Possible opportunities to work with UN conventions, such as CBD, RAMSAR, etc. Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative is translating bird priorities into human values, and it's important to engage beyond bird conservation and put our messaging in different terms.
- We need to engage the public beyond birdwatchers.
- Consider AFWA's relevancy roadmap- use birds as a focal point to help states figure out how to implement the roadmap.
- Resolution was passed through AFWA, a commitment for state agencies to work to reverse the bird declines.
- Some discussion about personality characteristics of people who have leverage- "Be Nasty for Birds?" Find people who are willing to insert themselves into processes?
- Note about human dimensions- we have new science on whether people care about birds and what messaging resonates. Apocalypse messaging doesn't work, we need to pair that messaging with "we can fix this."

Suggestions on Next Steps

- Consider "7 Steps for NABCI"
- Connect actions to National Bird Conservation Priorities, Relevancy initiative- focus on set of steps as a community
- Develop these between now and August

**Task:** Put together a team to discuss NABCI's next steps/involvement in reversing the 3 Billion Birds decline. Team members will include: Tammy VerCauteren, Dave Trevino, Nicole Michel, Ken Rosenberg, John Alexander, Steve Albert, Scott Sillett, Todd Fearer, Geoff Geupel, EJ Williams, Pete Marra., Jeff Gordon 2 spots reserved for additional names (Jerome will provide- one is Bill Uihlein). Team will develop a recommendation BEFORE next NABCI meeting; proposed deadline 1-3 months. 3 month deadline.

Need to identify a team leader- UPDATE 2/20- Todd Fearer will lead the team

Consider having interim conference call/Zoom meeting

Consider what to report to AFWA Bird Conservation Committee (Have some discussion at BCC focused on addressing resolution)

Subcommittee Chairs to think about the relative prioritization of work plans in relation to this item

**The Relevance of Bird Conservation:** Linking Bird Crisis with Why Birds Matter (Judith Scarl/Steve Albert); Relevancy Success Stories (Jessica Barnes); Future Directions and Considerations (Judith Scarl)

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 3, Subgoal 2b:** *Demonstrate bird conservation's strong ties to healthy land, water, and people in order to communicate relevance beyond birds; Subgoal 2b2:* *Develop initial talking points supporting bird conservation relevancy for meetings with agency leadership, funding organizations, and non-traditional partners*

**Associated Materials:** Public-facing Relevancy One-Pager ("Why Birds Matter")- Note that the final document will be circulated widely once the next draft is approved by NABCI Committee

At our last NABCI meeting, we decided that the highest priority next steps in the Relevancy initiative would be to help the 3 Billion Birds campaign be more effective. 3 Billion Bird Decline Initiative focused on 2 legs of a triangle- The Problem (Bird Declines), and The Solution (7 Simple Actions). But the third leg of that triangle is- Why should we care? Why might people want to participate in solutions? So we focused on that leg of the triangle- the why birds matter, or why we should care. We incorporated examples from the Relevancy Toolkit into the partner talking points that Cornell and other partners provided.

### **One-Pager**

Judith presented a draft one-pager and accompanying set of memes, meant as a hook for the general public through the media- eye-catching examples that highlight things that are important to people and show their connections to birds, including birds and local economies, birds and property values, birds and clean water (which as we know from studies resonates with the public) and birds and your beverages. Materials should feature people as much as birds- so that people could see themselves in the document. Diane Tessaglia Hymes did the graphic design work through Cornell and created the drawings.

Feedback includes:

- In general, Committee thinks document is excellent and just needs minor tweaks to finalize
- We're on the right track trying to emphasize people, rather than birds, in the images, and we need to do this even more. The birds really pop out in this version, but it's the people that should pop out. The coffee/wine drawing was a good example of this. There seemed to be general consensus about this feedback. One person suggested having someone drinking a glass of water to accompany the clean water drawing, since they felt that making this connection (streams and drinking water) wouldn't necessarily happen intuitively.
- There was some confusion about the people in the clean water drawing ("Is that person sunbathing?" "What are the people doing?")
- There was a lot of interest in translating the final documents into French and Spanish
- Make sure Sue Bonfield has this, and it is looped into PIF 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary messaging- we can use this to engage birder advocates. Wild Birds Unlimited can also use this (Geoff Geupel will share).
- Relevancy Toolkit was hugely appreciated by NRCS, it was critical to have those references

Other feedback (for which there was not necessarily consensus)

- Put the "Helping Birds Helps You" at the top (instead of the bottom)
- Consider adding Birds and Beer if we have an example of beer and bird conservation
- Put the health piece at the top
- Put the water piece at the top
- Rearrange so that there is a hierarchy from community to individual, so the order should be: Economy, clean water, beverages (helping farmers), health.

**Task:** Small team, led by Judith Scarl, will consider proposed revisions to "Why Birds Matter" document and circulate document to Committee members for approval by email.

Jeff Gordon can help with French/Spanish translation of document

Tammy VerCauteren can help with Spanish translation



**Task: Send more sourced relevancy examples to Steve Albert, as you come across them.**

#### Additional Relevancy Projects

To guide our relevancy work, need to figure out more specifically what our partners that are looking to build creative partnerships need. In January, Judith presented relevancy webinar to JV Coordinators, who gave feedback about what are the barriers they face when trying to build new partnerships (e.g. struggle to pursue partnerships with non-traditional industries; accessing the right people within a potential partner organization; a better understanding of how to approach businesses). Jude, Todd, and others will assess feedback we received and think about additional next steps we can take to help JVs better build partnerships with new partners with different perspectives.

John Alexander notes [Partners in Flight Guidelines for Partnership Engagement](#).

**Recovering America's Wildlife Act- Sean Saville, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**  
**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 2, Subgoal 1d1:** *Produce State of the Birds reports that synthesize science and align with key policy programs or initiatives to provide an effective communication tool to encourage science-based conservation policy*  
**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 3, Subgoal 1b:** *NABCI non-federal partners will develop or compile messaging that communicates how emerging legislation or funding could impact bird conservation.*

[See presentation for details.](#)

On December 5, 2019, [HR3742](#) was passed through the House Natural Resources Committee- this is the farthest this bill has gotten so far. As of 5 February, bill had 173 House Co-Sponsors, and the goal is to have 200+ co-sponsors by the time it gets to the floor.

Current bill has some changes from last one (see slide 4 of presentation for additional details), including:

- -formula for states changed to 50% proportion of land and water in a state, 25% proportion of human population, and 25% proportion of T/E vertebrates and invertebrates in the state.
- At least 15% to recover state and federally listed species (an average over 5 yrs)
- Changed the amount apportioned to the US territories from ¼% each to 1/3% each, except Puerto Rico which would be no less than 1%.

The Western Governor's Association signed a letter in support of this bill.

The 2019 State of the Birds report shows the importance of linking a crisis with a solution. SOTB report was launched at an Audubon-hosted reception at the AFWA meeting in September 2019 which included state directors and CEOs, etc. Thousands of media hits for the 3 Billion Birds campaign were used to benefit RAWA campaign. Hill staff were aware of articles linking 3 Billion Birds to RAWA. On October 7, 2019, partners hosted a Hill Briefing, which included some co-authors of the Science publication, and the SOTB report. This resulted in an uptick in the number of co-sponsors on the bill, which led to getting the bill in for a hearing (Oct 17). The SOTB report was referenced multiple times by Members of Congress in that hearing and in several others on Capitol hill on related topics/legislation shortly thereafter. All of this contributed to momentum that ultimately led to passage of the legislation through the House Committee on Natural Resources on December 5, 2019.

#### Next Steps:

- Get bill to the floor for vote in full House
- Introduce in Senate; get hearing in Environment and Public Works Committee
- Continue to develop strategic partnerships to advocate
- Fly-ins, targeted briefings, and letters of support
- Opportunistic media placement of Op-eds, LTEs, social media campaign

## Questions/Discussion

- What is the funding source for RAWA? Previously oil/gas exploration, but now general funds.
- What opportunities exist for continuing to leverage SOTB report/bird declines information? Highlight this at the JV fly-in this spring; John Fitzpatrick to author another op-ed. Audubon hosting a reception at the North American focused on 3 billion birds campaign with linkage to RAWA and SOTB report will again be highlighted.

**Task: Sean will share link to individual handouts for 41 states before the JV Fly-In. [SEE STATE FACT SHEETS HERE.](#)**

## **State of the Birds Report: Continued Communication-** *Ken Rosenberg, Cornell Lab of Ornithology/American Bird Conservancy*

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 2, Subgoal 1d1:** *Produce State of the Birds reports that synthesize science and align with key policy programs or initiatives to provide an effective communication tool to encourage science-based conservation policy*

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 3, Subgoal 1b:** *NABCI non-federal partners will develop or compile messaging that communicates how emerging legislation or funding could impact bird conservation.*

### Additional Opportunities to Promote Report:

- JV Fly In (week of February 24)
- Keep up the buzz in social media, and promote the op-ed piece that AFWA is working on with John Fitzpatrick (Cornell)
- Sean Saville is available for one-on-one discussions to discuss specific strategies
- Opportunity to train landowners to be advocates for this, and industry partners

Gordon Myers indicates that this report was the only information he brought to his recent Hill visits, and he found both the report and the insert useful. Sean Saville also uses both the report and the insert.

### General Discussion about SOTB (individual comments from participants)

- One Committee member voiced concern with our capacity to start a conversation about a new report, and recommended focusing on being as intentional as possible to get current report elevated
- Images have been very helpful for social media; can we produce new versions of these images periodically?
- Original idea of SOTB was that every ~5 years there would be a “true” State of the Birds, with other issues in between
- Idea of taking advantage of 2020 theme of “connections” (World Migratory Bird Day, PIF 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary) to highlight importance of migratory connections/international conservation. Could be used to communicate about Migratory Bird Protection Act.
- A report that breaks things down state by state would be helpful, because that’s what Congress responds to (but that is a lot of work)
- Farm Bill report was very useful/successful, and the new short report format is beneficial from an action standpoint
- Suggestion that any next SOTB report be guided by 3 Billion Birds campaign.
- State of Marine Birds report?
- If we do a report every 5 years, make sure we have metrics to report back on. We don’t need this report every year.

## **Human Dimensions Subcommittee report and discussion-** *Tammy VerCauteren, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies; Jessica Barnes, Virginia Tech/NABCI*

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 2, Subgoal 1b:** Enable bird conservation partners to integrate human dimensions science and tools into bird conservation efforts.

[See presentation for details.](#)

#### Relevancy Success Stories

NABCI is developing a series of success stories to highlight non-traditional partnerships that have been formed for the benefit of both birds and human communities, focused on three themes: productive working lands, sustainable water resources, and healthy urban communities. We put out a call for success stories this fall and had interest from ~20 people; currently we have 5 responses to an online form, and a student at Virginia Tech will help to collect the additional stories. Sample stories include: 1) Combatting cheatgrass on Wyoming's private ranchlands benefits sagebrush birds; 2) New Mexico fire department was thinning trees to reduce fire risk, and that organization collaborated with bird conservationists to both reduce fire risk and also provide reasonable bird habitat; 3) degraded wetlands near the Great Lakes are being restored using a lens of environmental justice, highlighting needs of low-income communities and communities of color.

Jessica asks for suggestions on what format would best resonate with partners for sharing. Some ideas include: StoryCorps/Podcast, using the #EarthOptimism campaign to share on social media, Fridays on the Farm (NRCS/FSA partner stories), work with the Sustainable Forestry Initiative on short videos, have the other side (the non-bird partner) tell some of these stories.

General HD Subcommittee Update (see presentation for project details)

**Project: Audience Research and Interpretive Content at the Columbus Zoo-Aquarium:** 183 million people visit zoos each year, which is more than NFL, NHL, and MLB combined- so zoos are an important way to access the public. Zoos conducted a survey of 13 zoos and aquariums to evaluate whether visitors care about migratory birds, and what actions they might take. Preliminary findings include: Fairly high interest level in birds and bird conservation, but lower self-reported knowledge. Interest level is most important factor in adopting an action. Zoo users rated not releasing helium balloons, learning about birds, and creating backyard habitat as easy actions, but the most difficult actions were keeping cats indoors, joining organizations, and doing citizen science.

**AZA North American Songbird SAFE program** (Saving Animals From Extinction) has 20 zoos/aquariums participating, and SOTB report has helped to provide background. Program is helping to elevate North American songbirds to the level of attention to cheetahs and gorillas. Also promotes actions people can take (and the CZA study can help guide this).

**Unified Science Team Theme Team 3: Integrating Social and Biological Objectives:** Team is working on a process for evaluating HD needs.

**Human Dimensions of Bird Conservation Webinar Series:** "Why values matter in the world of bird conservation" is [available on line](#). Previous webinars [available here](#).

**Survey: Relationships between Birder Attributes and their Bird Conservation Actions:** Terry Rich is conducting a study for his dissertation research to consider how to engage birders in bird conservation and identify values, interests, and skills that predict conservation actions.

**Landowners and the Conservation Reserve Program:** See [study report and fact sheet here](#).

Discussion: How do we keep promoting access to resources we've developed, such as the HD One Pager, Success Stories, and JV Guidance document?

-Ask JVs to link these documents on their websites and share with board members

**Private and Working Lands Subcommittee report and discussion**— *Todd Fearer, Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture*

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 2, Subgoal 1e:** *Promote and advance bird conservation objectives on both private and public lands.*

**Associated Materials:** Draft Subcommittee Work Plan

NABCI Private and Working Lands Subcommittee is hosting a **Private Lands Staff Training Forum** March 24-25, 2020 in Kansas City. See [forum flier](#) and [draft agenda](#). Workshop will feature presentations on: building relationships with private landowners, working with landowners to understand their needs, and understanding range of options available to landowners. Workshop will also include landowner panels and some paired staff/landowner perspectives. Target participation is 200 people, and four states and some NGOs have committed to participating. Anticipate future forums in different geographies, rotating across AFWA regions, with the idea that partners will take ownership in the future. Workshop can count towards continuing education credits, and Sherrie Ivanov and Danielle Flynn will provide information to Todd on how to get continuing education credits for participating in the partner biologist forum.

Work Plan

While several goals are carry-overs from the previous plan, one new goal in the work plan involves the Subcommittee working to instill a private lands conservation ethic. Also note some language change-moving from citizen science, to community science, which is a more inclusive term. Team has made minimal progress on Goal 4, so they prioritized the opportunities within.

Tammy VerCauteren moves to approve the work plan, Greg Butcher seconds, and the work plan is approved.

**International Subcommittee Report and Discussion-** *Greg Butcher, US Forest Service*

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 1, Subgoal 1a.** *Work collaboratively across countries to support partnership development that will advance full annual cycle conservation of migratory birds and their habitats.*

[See presentation for details.](#)

The International Subcommittee- and the international conservation community- is focused on relevancy. Neotropical Fund, the USFS International Program, the National Park Service- all want to be more effective and more connected with the sustainable development world.

The Subcommittee selected two countries to focus on first:

- 1) Ecuador- Active in the Convention for Migratory Species and other initiatives, and are open to working with USAID, although have not been currently. Subcommittee is seeking contacts in that country to help extend their reach.
- 2) Mexico- Many existing partnerships with them, and they are starting with outreach to Fondo Mexicano para la Conservacion de la Naturaleza to discuss common interests.

Subcommittee is also working to create and maintain a list of key Latin American contacts for Convention for Migratory Species, the Americas Flyways Framework, and the Global Environmental Fund, and to work with ecoAgriculture Partners and others to host a workshop in DC on bird conservation, sustainable development, and integrated landscape management.

Partners are proposing two international symposia for NAOC, including one on relevancy.

Note [Southern Wings](#) and [Shorebird partnership](#) handouts.

Ruth Bennett mentions a Bird Friendly Agriculture and Development Roundtable proposed for NAOC, which emerged from ideas at last NABCI meeting. Idea is to invite partners that use the term "bird-

friendly” to sell products, or differentiate an initiative, to kick-start a bird friendly coalition and to standardize the term “bird-friendly”. [Send Ruth ideas of groups or individuals that should be invited.](#)

#### Thoughts on Bird-Friendly

- Brazil and Argentina are selling labeled beef, and Bird Life International is in cattle fields looking for grass-dependent birds, and helping to certify ranches.
- Consider different purposes for the idea of bird-friendly, like certification and marketing.
- Consider engaging Green Building Council, which looks at where materials are sourced?
- Note Benefit Corporation Certification. Add bird-friendly certifications companies can use?
- Consistency is good, but consider a continuum for producers who can't go all the way

#### **Legislative and Policy Partner Update: Fact Sheets and Policy Issues – Steve Holmer, American Bird Conservancy**

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal III: Inform and support effective policy to advance bird conservation**

[See the ABC FY 2021 Funding Request to the Interior Appropriations Committee.](#)

As of February 5, 2020: The Neotropical Migratory Bird Fund has a \$1m increase in the Interior Appropriations portion of the final FY 2020 Spending Agreement. Match may be an issue for this, so one consideration is to change the formula for 2022 to lower the match requirement. The Joint Ventures have a \$1.5m increase in the final 2020 spending agreement, and the House voted for a \$3m increase. Some JVs still fall below the minimum funding level to be fully stood up; this would require another \$1.5m increase.

Both State Wildlife Grants (SWG) and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) both saw increases last year.

Steve says that the biggest need right now is for more champions for the Joint Ventures. Note that there will be a JV Fly-In on March 24-25, including a Senate briefing to review programs and a Birders Ball at the National Botanic Gardens.

The Migratory Bird Protection Act was recently introduced in House and passed through the House Natural Resources Committee. Need to find Senate Republican to lead through senate. This could be part of a transportation or infrastructure bill.

City of NY just passed legislation about window collisions with birds and incorporating bird-safe design features to all NYC buildings. This is the most far-reaching bird collision law that has been drafted thus far.

Agreement for the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels- there are efforts to make US part of international agreement.

EJ suggests that we need to pay attention to the list of 200 organizations that sign on to ABC's appropriations letter- these may be people we want to talk to, to build more advocates for bird conservation.

#### ***Additional Partner Announcements***

Jerome- [MBTA Rule is out for public comment](#). 45 day comment period that started on 3 February.

## 6 February 2020

**Communications Subcommittee-** *EJ Williams, American Bird Conservancy/Scott Anderson, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission*

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 1, Subgoal 2:** *Strengthen communication within the bird conservation community.*

**Associated Materials:** Communications Subcommittee proposed work plan

This Subcommittee primarily supports other Subcommittees. Monthly calls every 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 2pm Eastern time; other Subcommittees are invited to these calls to bring their information and requests. EJ Williams is stepping down as Chair; Scott Anderson (NC WRC) is the new Co-Chair, and Committee members are encouraged to consider whether they might serve as Chair. Scott is also webmaster; please contact him with NABCI web requests.

Blog: Goal is one per month at this point, focused on the National Bird Conservation Priority Actions. We want blogs from all NABCI Committee member organizations. Rebecca Heisman from AOS is our new blogmaster. We will send around guidelines for writing blog posts.

Key Messages: NABCI's public-facing Key Messages fact sheet will be completed by Deb Reynolds by the end of March.

Sherrie Ivanov moves to approve the Subcommittee's work plan, and Tammy VerCauteren seconds.

Discussion:

- There is a big communications plan around the Science publication, with some overlap between Communications Subcommittee membership and 3 Billion Birds communication membership. If NABCI will be part of the next phase of the strategy, we can work to align these efforts. Consider formalizing this in the Communications Plan, and make sure Miyoko Chu from Cornell is looped into the Subcommittee.

-Note that already in the Work Plan under 4e, there is a statement about 3 Billion Birds. Consider elevating this.

-Consider reaching out to Bob Ford. Communications is a focus of the Partners in Flight 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but their communications capacity is low; can they use some of NABCI's capacity?

Motion to approve work plan carries.

**USGS Briefing:** *"Where we've been, where we are now, and where we hope to go."* - *Melanie Steinkamp, US Geological Survey/Mark Wimer, USGS*

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 1, Subgoal 2b:** *Develop and maintain strong communication channels between the NABCI Committee members and the broader NABCI partnership.*

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 3, Subgoal 2:** *Support partners in the creation and implementation of science-based policies that support bird conservation.*

[See presentation for details.](#)

USGS has 7 Mission Areas, and Ecosystems is one of them; this includes the Cooperative Research Units. USGS funding comes through appropriations to their mission areas, with line items to their programs- the focus of this presentation is the Ecosystems Mission Area. Note Slide 4 and Slide 5, under Status and Trends subactivity; this funds Breeding Bird Survey and the Bird Banding Lab.

Executive Leadership is working on reorganizing structure and funding, to be more transparent.

Considering 3 new program areas (see slide 6)- new program areas would be Species Management Research, Land Management Research, and Biological Threats Research.

Species Management Research for trust species (slide 7) is a big focus, as well as a focus on priority landscapes (slide 8). Slide 9 shows Cooperative Research units (yellow) and Science Centers (red) that are funded through Ecosystems appropriations, with blue triangles representing locations substantially supported by the Environmental Health Mission Area that are proposed for realignment under the Ecosystems mission.

USGS Ecosystems funding goes to scientists in the field; this includes supporting well-known science programs that are bird-focused; such as the Bird Banding Lab, which has managed the manufacture and permitting of bands for 100 years in support of a broad array of avian research and monitoring; and the Breeding Bird Survey, which tracks trends for landbirds across the US and Canada. Specific areas of research or partner needs are supported by USGS capacity, such as Human Dimensions and the Economic Analysis Branch at the Fort Collins Science Center. When DOI needs for information or coordination are high, USGS will hire program specialists like Mona Khalil (energy and wildlife). The majority of the science at all of these levels is conducted in response to direct stated needs of partners in state and federal agencies. The USGS is eager to work with federal partners, states, and NGOs such as those on the NABCI committee to help identify where science needs can be further supported.

#### Discussion/Questions/Feedback from Partners following USGS presentation

- Putting the BBS/BBL projects under Species Management Research makes funding these programs more transparent and helps to tell a better story, allowing USGS to draw broad connections between species, why they matter, and their status/trends.
- NGO partners can help to communicate the value of these programs, including BBS/BBL, and highlight how these programs are foundational to many of the publications, decisions, and communications of the bird conservation community
- Opportunity to better link BBS data with the Bird Declines information and movement
- NGO partners can help raise awareness and understanding of the value of the work that the Ecosystem Mission area does, and the importance of continuing long-term studies and monitoring. Partners can voice support for USGS science they value through communications.
- Communications can be effective if they show the value of data/information to the broader public, including who is asking for these data and how are they used in making decisions.
- Committee discusses the value of putting together a plan for BBS and BBL that agencies using the services and science can present; this plan would include what success looks like. Another idea is to develop a record to track uses of data over time.

Team consisting of Greg Butcher, Alicia Hardin, John Alexander, Steve Albert, Arvind Panjabi, and Sara Schweitzer will work on plan development.

#### **Waterbird Partnership Discussion- Dave Gordon, USFWS**

**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 1, Subgoal 1:** *Support, develop, integrate, and promote priorities of regional, national, and international bird conservation partnerships.*

Sara Schweitzer and Dave Gordon have been recruiting participants to revisit Waterbird Council membership. As of 6 February, ~10 organizations will participate, including: USGS, Mass Audubon, Canadian Wildlife Service, The Waterbird Society, Audubon, Manomet, Point Blue, Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds, a group from Paraguay, etc.

EJ Williams, Tom Moorman, Iain Stenhouse, Melanie Steinkamp, Sara Schweitzer, Dave Gordon, and Scott Johnston compose the ad hoc group from NABCI addressing the need for a Waterbird Coordinator, an active Waterbird Council, and an updated Waterbirds of the Americas Plan.

Greg Butcher comments that information on what we know about status and trends, as well as what additional information we need, would be helpful.

Dave Gordon comments that the first step will be to get the Waterbird Council back together, after which the Council can review and update the Terms of Reference for the Council, begin the revision of the Waterbirds of the Americas Conservation Plan, and determine the need for additional resources (e.g. filling the Coordinator position).

**Partners in Flight 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary-** *Geoff Geupel, Partners in Flight/Point Blue Conservation Science*  
**NABCI 2017-2021 Strategic Plan Goal 1, Subgoal 1:** *Support, develop, integrate, and promote priorities of regional, national, and international bird conservation partnerships.*

[See Geoff's presentation](#)

Geoff mentions PIF's new 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo. Partners in Flight has multiple coordinators- one each in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada, as well as for the Western and Eastern Working Groups of PIF. There is a newly formed Eastern PIF WG, with an initial focus of developing a bird conservation business plan that will be completed by 2022. The State of the Birds report is fundamental for PIF and fits into PIF's mission of Keeping Common Birds Common.

The goal for PIF's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary is to triple the number of people and organizations involved with PIF over the next 3 years (see slide for additional goals).