

NABCI's Role in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice
Draft Proposal
Draft 7 December 2020

At the August 2020 NABCI meeting, partners emphasized the importance of unprecedented partnerships to achieve bird conservation, discussed how diversity is necessary to advance and achieve bird conservation goals, shared how their organizations were approaching racial justice issues, and brainstormed about NABCI's niche in helping the bird conservation community better address racial justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion. NABCI Committee members voted unanimously to explore further how NABCI can address racial justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

NABCI formed a team to evaluate the feedback about NABCI's niche in diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) work and develop a proposal for how NABCI can move forward with this work. Team members include John Alexander (Klamath Bird Observatory/Avian Knowledge Network), Scott Anderson (North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission), Sue Bonfield (Environment for the Americas), Jennifer Cipolletti (American Bird Conservancy), Mark Defley (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Jill Deppe (National Audubon Society), Jennie Duberstein (Sonoran Joint Venture), Todd Fearer (Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture), Elsa Haubold (US Fish and Wildlife Service), Sherrie Ivanov (Farm Production and Conservation), Viviana Ruiz Gutierrez (Cornell Lab of Ornithology), Judith Scarl (North American Bird Conservation Initiative/Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies), Dave Treviño (National Park Service), Tammy VerCauteren (Bird Conservancy of the Rockies), and EJ Williams (American Bird Conservancy).

NABCI is a partnership body that is meant to represent the full bird conservation community. The NABCI Committee has representatives from its 30 member organizations, usually drawn from leadership and decision-makers within these organizations, while its Subcommittees, ad hoc work groups, and meetings are open to all. As a body, NABCI can expand participation and inclusion in its own projects and discussions through recruitment into Subcommittees, increasing meeting accessibility so that all interested individuals are able to participate, and recruiting new organizations to join the Committee that provide a diversity of perspectives that better enable NABCI to achieve its goals. However, since member organizations nominate individuals to serve on the NABCI Committee, Committee composition reflects leadership composition of our member agencies. Thoroughly and sincerely expanding NABCI's own diversity will rely on partner organizations themselves being more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just. One of NABCI's strengths is its ability to provide a forum for conservation organizations to share information and learn from each other, and we have a tremendous opportunity to help partners meet their own DEIJ goals through this forum, which will in turn help to expand diversity on the NABCI Committee itself. Similar to NABCI's strategy to engage partners in the National Bird Conservation Priorities, NABCI can request that its partners commit to specific elements of DEIJ work, as appropriate, and provide a space for information sharing and accountability for partners engaging in this work. This will help to build momentum for DEIJ efforts within the bird conservation community.

We recommend that NABCI adopt a two-pronged approach to addressing DEIJ issues, with a focus both on: 1) developing a community of practice to promote learning opportunities and provide a voluntary system of accountability to help our partners address DEIJ issues within their own organizations; and 2) increasing NABCI's own accessibility and participation. Many of our partner organizations are working on DEIJ, and the outcomes of NABCI's work will be to provide partners with tools and learning opportunities to guide them towards lasting and sincere diversity, equity, and inclusion within their organizations and partnerships. **The purpose of this work will be to advance equity and inclusion to**

engage a diverse constituency, to help us establish the relevancy of conservation and achieve NABCI's goals. We will incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice as core values of NABCI to achieve representation.

Objective 1: Provide a consistent forum for organizations to learn from each other, develop creative new strategies, and promote accountability between partners.

The systemic nature of barriers to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in conservation requires a novel and open-minded approach to break out of traditional ways of doing business. NABCI can provide opportunities for self-reflection within the bird conservation community to evaluate past and future approaches to increasing DEIJ within bird conservation. In particular, organizations can share what they are doing to recruit and retain more diversity and share successes and failures as learning opportunities. In addition, organizations can share how they are participating in environmental justice activities, engaging people who are impacted by conservation decisions and empowering them in decision-making processes. A successful forum will create a "Brave Space" with clear rules of engagement that allows differing opinions to support and challenge each other. Organizations can choose to empower this forum to create a community of accountability, where organizations can commit to specific actions focused on DEIJ work, and report back on how they have advanced those commitments.

Potential Actions:

- Organizations working on DEIJ initiatives that have developed some metrics for evaluation will present initiative to NABCI (at a Committee meeting, through a webinar, or via another online platform) and can:
 - share insights on successes, failures, and future directions
 - "workshop" their programs to NABCI community, with community providing feedback on the initiative
- NABCI can host a round table or panel discussion for multiple partners to share information on their approaches to DEIJ, with opportunity for questions and feedback from the broader group
- Partners can follow up at subsequent meetings by sharing what practices and strategies they have incorporated from what was recommended and learned at these forums
- Partners will regularly have the opportunity to meet and share information and feedback about DEIJ through NABCI, either at Committee meetings or through another venue, as deemed appropriate (for example, the Community of Practice may ultimately decide to hold meetings outside of biannual NABCI meetings). At least once a year, DEIJ will be a topic at NABCI Committee meetings, where partners can share practices they have incorporated as well as information on what has or has not worked.

Outcomes: Partners will explore different models of DEIJ work within conservation and will give and receive feedback on existing and future DEIJ efforts to improve initiatives within their own organization, which will support expanded and sincere inclusion and equity within partner organizations and, ultimately, within NABCI.

Objective 2: Create a space that encourages diverse participation and different voices within NABCI. Historically, NABCI's in-person meetings have been accessible to only a small fraction of bird conservation partners that have expressed interest in NABCI and its efforts, and many NABCI

Committee organizations lack a true, representative diversity among their staff and leadership. NABCI can work to become a more inclusive and equitable space that welcomes and elevates diverse perspectives. NABCI can reduce barriers to participating in Committee meetings, Subcommittees, and other NABCI initiatives, and provide a platform to hear directly from individuals that are members of, or organizations that represent, underrepresented groups in bird conservation.

Potential Actions:

- NABCI continues to offer remote participation options for Committee meetings to ensure that travel and funding are not barriers to participation;
- Using NABCI's new 2022-2027 strategic plan, evaluate what voices and perspectives are missing that would better enable NABCI to achieve its strategic goals and advance its priorities. Based on these needs:
 - evaluate Committee membership and explore ways to include relevant organizations on the NABCI Committee, including through recruitment of new organizations
 - Continue to evaluate Subcommittee goals and membership, and explore ways to recruit relevant individuals and organizations on NABCI's Subcommittees
 - Ensure that qualified individuals that represent a spectrum of relevant perspectives and backgrounds are presenting at forums accessible to NABCI partners, which could include NABCI meetings, webinars, or Subcommittee meetings.

Outcomes: A broader community participates in NABCI meetings, helping NABCI to become more representative of the broad and diverse future generation of bird conservation leaders. Engaging this broader community provides a diversity of perspectives, and guides the development of strategies, products, and initiatives that resonate with broader audiences.

Objective 3: Provide additional resources to help expand diversity/partnership opportunities

NABCI can help its partners connect with more diverse constituents by promoting best management practices for DEI work. While NABCI itself may not be ideally positioned to create resources along this theme, several NABCI partners are developing useful tools, including best management practices for states and regions, and roadmaps for conservation jobs to help direct students to experiences hiring managers look for in conservation. For example, the Diversity Joint Venture is working to help link students from diverse backgrounds with careers that match their interests and skills, and the AFWA Diversity and Inclusion Working Group is developing best management practices for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in conservation, focused on states and regions. NABCI can help to distribute, promote, or collate these resources.

Potential Actions:

- Work through the Human Dimensions Subcommittee to better understand and alleviate barriers that prevent equal and sustained participation from underrepresented groups;
 - Identify key questions about barriers to participation and encourage or disseminate research that addresses these questions; for example, NABCI's Human Dimensions Webinar series can continue to highlight social science research on different aspects of DEI, including barriers to inclusion and successful methods of recruitment and retention of diverse staff and outdoor enthusiasts

- Distributing best management practices or other related tools, such as information about opportunities to recruit a more diverse pool of candidates

Outstanding Needs and Additional Next Steps:

- NABCI needs ~2 people to oversee this initiative as it gets off the ground, to ensure continued momentum and to evaluate progress and opportunities. Ideally, one of these individuals will be a Committee member, to ensure close alignment with the goals and niche of the NABCI committee. At least one (and ideally both) of these individuals should have some experience working with DEIJ issues.
- As detailed in the “Field Guide to Developing Partnerships,” successful partnerships rely on all groups bringing something to the table, and receiving benefits from participating. As we identify new groups we want to engage, that will help us advance our strategic goals, NABCI should consider and articulate what our value is to these groups. What can we offer these groups?
- Build in an evaluation process. Identify milestones and a proposed time scale.