

## **2023 U.S. NABCI Summer Meeting (16 – 17 August 2023)**

### **Overview**

*Day 1 (8/16)*

10:30 am – 4:30 pm EST

*Day 2 (8/17)*

10:30 am – 2:00 pm

### **Theme**

*Refocusing on the Strategic Plan for Effective Bird Conservation Partnerships*

### **Attendees**

- Steve Albert (Institute for Bird Populations)
- Scott Anderson (North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission)
- Judy Camuso (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife)
- Annie Chester (American Bird Conservancy)
- Jerome Ford (US Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Justyn Foth (US Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Meaghan Gade (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies)
- David Gordon (US Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Jeff Hostetler (US Geological Survey)
- Mark Humpert (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies)
- Scott Johnston (US Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Eric Kershner (US Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Russ Lawrence (Department of Defense)
- David Lind (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies)
- Noah Matson (US Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Elroy Masters (Bureau of Land Management)
- Nicole Michel (National Audubon Society)
- Shaun Oldenburger (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department)
- Juan Oteyza (American Bird Conservancy)
- Sean Saville (Alliance for America's Fish and Wildlife)
- Paul Schmidt (Road to Recovery)
- Susan Stine (US Forest Service)
- Dave Treviño (National Park Service)
- Jesse Walls (National Audubon Society)
- Bradley Wilkinson (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies)

### **Notes**

*Wednesday (8/16)*

10:30 am – Welcome and Chair Introductions

*Judy Camuso, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife*

- Welcome all; excited to be meeting in-person

- NABCI has an opportunity to start doing and creating products
  - This effort demands working more cohesively among our partnership
- NABCI has a great energy; now is the time to capitalize

10:45 am – Coordinator Overview

*Bradley Wilkinson, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*

Purpose: Provide a broad overview regarding the status of US NABCI, including recent accomplishments, new directions, meeting themes, and proposed goals

Proposed Outcomes: Clearly define the goal of the meeting, bring together participants in a unified understanding of the status of US NABCI, refocus on the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan

11:00 am – Bird Conservation Legislative Update

*Jesse Walls, National Audubon Society*

Purpose: Briefly communicate current legislative activities and opportunities for engagement related to bird conservation, especially those related to advancing the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan

Proposed Outcomes: Coordinate legislative priorities for US NABCI moving forward, raise awareness of participatory challenges related to the Subcommittee

- Overview to focus on issues other than the large, perennial legislative pieces (e.g., NAWCA)
- Items in need of greater attention include:
  - Federal Bird Safe Building Act
    - Still working to push this forward
    - Some movement in architecture, and continuing to push on the federal level in an economical way
  - Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Enhancements Act
- Appropriation process will likely be challenging this year across the board
- Audubon has a focus on the Farm Bill, and connecting dollars from the Inflation Reduction Act, which has been positively received
- Emerging legislative concerns aside from appropriations are highlighted by possible removal of depredation permit requirements for taking of vultures and caracaras, being advanced largely by cattle producers/industry
  - Tensions with vultures and caracaras may be exacerbated by recent range expansions, lack of educational information or outreach
  - Currently take is not fulfilling the quota for black vulture
  - Misperceptions may surround what mechanisms are already in place, and work has been done to make permitting easier
- Monitoring the recent proposed rule changes to the Endangered Species Act (e.g., the blanket 4(d) rule)
- Can state or local Audubon efforts be leveraged by the national office to reach the federal level?

- **ACTION ITEM:** A helpful product to develop would be a peer-reviewed study examining the economic costs of conserving a migratory bird species on the breeding grounds versus the economic costs of conserving a migratory bird species on the non-breeding grounds (i.e., does a dollar spent on habitat conservation on the non-breeding grounds go further or have a bigger population impact than a dollar spent on the breeding grounds? By how much?)
  - A corollary effort would be to send conservationists from those areas on the non-breeding grounds to the Hill to speak to those successful impacts
  - Depending on data availability, showcasing suites of birds would be better
  - If possible, do not limit to only breeding or non-breeding areas but try to include stopover locations as well
  - Could leverage additional benefits to non-bird species as well

11:10 am – Recovering America’s Wildlife Act Status Report

*Sean Saville, Alliance for America’s Fish and Wildlife*

Purpose: Communicate to US NABCI the current status of the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act, educate participants about the goals and effects of the proposed legislation

Proposed Outcomes: Ensure US NABCI is aware of all relevant legislative activities surrounding the Act

- Recovering America’s Wildlife Act would be the legislative ‘big ticket’ item
- Long-lasting effort spread over many years
- Great example of bipartisan wildlife legislation
- Incremental progress is being made, highlighted by the close passage last year
- Currently Congress is under summer recess
- Bill has been introduced to the Senate with bipartisan cosponsors
  - Near-term goal is 10 Republican and 10 Democrat co-sponsors
- Not yet introduced into the House
  - Westerman version of bill will likely look different from the Senate version
  - Changes in the House bill have the potential to upset bipartisan support and alter the logistics of passage
- NABCI informational and educational products valuable tool
- Alliance partners are engaged across sectors and striving to form vibrant partnerships
- Current messaging includes holding the line against adding discretionary components
- Concept map presented highlighting approximate state-by-state allocations along with the number of avian Species of Greatest Conservation Need per state
  - Working on how best to include Tribal allocations
  - Companion piece could showcase birds as economic creators (i.e., as recreational dollars)
  - Cost of federal listing versus preventative measures also a possibility
  - Could it be possible to overlap SGCN component with other taxa? Not just birds?
  - Could multiple maps be created for varying initiatives? For example, including Tipping Point species for a more public-friendly version?

- Think critically about which species to include as images
- Selected species should be imperiled yet recognizable, able to be seen yet with conservation need
- Would it be possible to downscale map to the district level?

11:30 am – Update on Proposed Changes to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

*Eric Kershner, US Fish and Wildlife Service*

Purpose: Provide an overview of any and all upcoming changes to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act recently or soon-to-be proposed by the USFWS

Proposed Outcomes: Ensure that US NABCI is fully educated concerning all recently or soon-to-be proposed changes to the MBTA. Provide an opportunity to discuss how new changes may relate to bird conservation in an educational forum

- Birds are in decline; we in the room are all aware of this issue
- Human activities and infrastructure account for most bird mortality
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act is not meant to solve the problem, but to be a piece
- MBTA currently protects over 1100 species
  - Scope and scale is therefore vast
- Changes to be proposed focus on conservation need
- Past efforts lacked some consistently in application
- It is hoped that changes will put more conservation action on the ground
- MBTA must scale away from individual projects towards nationwide efforts
  - Framework takes a risk management approach
  - Will not get take to zero; impossible goal
  - Must be a legal path for everyone, with the possibility for compliance across the board
  - Still allows for large, catastrophic events to not be legal
- Individual take will now be covered under a regulatory authorization, so long as they are generally in compliance with all relevant and practicable avoidance and minimization measures
- For projects and industry, there will exist a three-tiered system (i.e., buckets)
  - Regulatory authorization (low contact, low risk)
    - Individuals
    - Habitat-related projects (e.g., farmers, timber harvesters, land management activities)
    - Federal agencies via NEPA reviews
  - General permit (moderate, predictable risk)
    - Meant to be 'no touch' permitting for industries which already have best management practices (e.g., commercial fisheries, oiled and produced waters, power lines, solar energy, telecommunication towers, transportation, onshore and offshore wind energy)
  - Specific permit (high or uncertain risk)

- Traditional permitting process only for specific projects which would substantively benefit from consultation with USFWS
- Compensatory mitigation will be categorized by general versus specific permitting
  - Increased standardization for general permitting, purchasing credits from service-approved mitigation provider (no-touch)
  - Traditional hierarchy for specific permitting, applicant developed compensatory plan
- Monitoring approach to be streamlined and programmatic
  - Permittees to report discovered bird remains
  - Specific permits may require project-level monitoring
  - Service will conduct targeted effectiveness monitoring, funded by permit fees, to validate assumptions and improve regulations
  - Push to harness new technology for better monitoring
- Application fees will contribute to an auditing effort (i.e., threat-based to enforce compliance) of small percentage of projects annually
- Proposals currently with federal agencies for last reviews
  - Aim to release in the Federal Registrar in September
- Will MBTA changes help federal bird building collision efforts?
- Will there be mitigation/compensatory resources applied at the Flyway scale instead of the state level?
- Planned 5-year revision strategy

11:50 am – BREAK

12:00 pm – Discussion of Linking DEIJ CoP and the Strategic Plan

*Nicole Michel, National Audubon Society*

Purpose: Provide a brief overview of recent activities undertaken by the DEIJ Community of Practice. Communicate the importance of the DEIJ CoP to advancing the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. Solicit feedback from US NABCI about topics of interest and methods for increasing participation, especially among leadership

Proposed Outcomes: Identify future discussions and educational topics for US NABCI hosted by the DEIJ CoP, reaffirm the importance of the DEIJ CoP to implementing the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, develop plans for intentional participation in the DEIJ CoP by US NABCI leadership

- Susana Mateos to step into the role of Chair of the DEIJ CoP effective immediately
- CoP exists to provide a forum for learning, and to create spaces for conversation
- Safe spaces versus brave spaces for different levels of people
- Events focused on both webinars (top-down) and happy hours (bottom-up) approaches
- Have seen good interest, high turnout, excellent participation
- Plans for an October webinar to focus on colonialism in conservation
- As a reminder, DEIJ CoP is fundamental to the Strategic Plan
  - Goal 1

- Some barriers for CoP include an increased demand for time and attention from those involved
  - Fatigue may be especially acute for BIPOC participants continually invited to speak
- Continuation of a honorariums for speakers essential
- Must balance novice learners with those eager for action and change
- Big question, is how to integrate the DEI CoP into all Subcommittees effectively
- Are webinars translated? Could be accomplish?
  - Would increase the pool of people who could share
- **ACTION ITEM:** Build capacity within each Subcommittee to self-check their own products instead of having same DEI CoP members review. Perhaps each Subcommittee would have a DEI CoP designee, to attend all events and report back information (not the Chair or Co-Chair)
- Need a pool of connected people to shine a light on our blind spots
- What are we doing more locally in DC or our partners' locations (i.e., backyard outreach)?
- **ACTION ITEM:** Establish grant system for covering costs of professional translation for publications intended for peer-review from scientists in non-EPL countries focused on migratory birds
  - Corollary efforts could include trainings or mentorship for publishing
  - Applicability to Neotrop Act
  - Reach out to international conferences, Partners in Flight, species working groups, and the Trilateral to spread the word
  - Coordinate and connect Spanish-language efforts
- How do federal agencies receive information back, build in the 'other part' on the front end

1:15 pm – LUNCH (on your own)

2:30 pm – Identifying Overlap Between Road to Recovery, NABCI, and the Strategic Plan

*Paul Schmidt, Georgetown University*

Purpose: Provide a brief update to US NABCI on the recent activities related to Road to Recovery. Identify areas of common effort and discuss how US NABCI can better partner with Road to Recovery. Examine how the goals of Road to Recovery align with the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan  
Proposed Outcomes: Develop a roadmap for increased communication and partnership between US NABCI and Road to Recovery, ensuring efforts are not duplicative but additive

- Background on the fundamentals of Road to Recovery
  - Outgrowth of 3 Billion Birds reports
  - Paper gave the bird conservation community a 'bad report card', and a need to do something differently
  - Independently-funded enterprise since 2020
- Focus on integrating social science with biology

- Tipping Point framework (104 species with levels of urgency ratings)
- Ratings not meant to prioritize Tipping Point species but to recognize that all need help
- Focus on merging landscape-level needs with species-level needs
- Goal is to develop targeted approach
- Co-develop plans with social science
- Partners include PIF, NABCI, others
- Conservation action demands key science, knowing the limiting factors of each species
- Human dimensions are critical
- 12-month plan
  - Identify Tipping Point species currently without an existing working group
  - Historically, working groups have developed more organically which creates needs to fill the gaps
  - Help build out working groups that currently do not fill the gaps
  - Find capacity to lead working groups with paid positions
  - Develop quantitative and qualitative measures of success
  - Promote the effective use of new data and technologies
  - Build up the overall capacity for social science by increasing the number of social scientists
  - Think creatively about generating new funding streams
    - Example from breeding bird atlases of ‘naming birds’
- Currently experiencing some staffing limitations
  - New International Fellow just brought on board
  - Active leadership team
  - Variety of existing subcommittees
- Recently held 3 workshops virtually with hundreds of participants
- Created guidance document and new website because of those workshops
- Held numerous virtual engagement sessions
- Currently developing a ‘recovery progress tool’ to document progress of different working groups, share information between them
- First in-person workshop to be held at NCTC this January
- September will have a planned engagement session with the Joint Ventures to better integrate species working groups
- Action items broadly are to grow and help species working groups however possible
- NABCI could act to help communicate goals
- General takeaway message is one of mutual support
- Road to Recovery may act more in a bottom-up approach to bird conservation (i.e., individual species working groups) while NABCI tends to focus on top-down approaches (national-level or landscape-level bird conservation)
- Balancing resources for addressing direct, lethal threats with cumulative, non-lethal stressors
- Big question of how to marry habitat goals over land management with single-species needs

3:30 pm – BREAK

3:50 pm – Social Science and the State of the Birds Report

*Katie Holland, Virginia Tech*

Purpose: Provide a brief overview of recent activities related to the Human Dimensions Subcommittee. Primarily provide for an opportunity to discuss if and how US NABCI can more fully integrate social science into the State of the Birds Report to more effectively align with the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan

Proposed Outcomes: Discuss the possibility of including social science principles in the State of the Birds Reports. Identify opportunities and strategies for aligning the State of the Birds Report with relevant social science principles if applicable

- Subcommittee activities within NABCI
  - Social science integration document
  - Includes specific steps for including social science in conservation projects, with discreet actions to take
  - Outlines how to first integrate social science, then actually put it into practice
  - Goal is for the document to be adaptive, to be a ‘living document’
  - May produce a webinar for dissemination
- Held webinar for underserved landowner participation in private lands conservation
  - Includes useful and multipurpose dataset
- From Pathways Conference, brainstorming the involvement of social science in grassland conservation
  - Intentionally focusing on inclusion with broad representation
  - Meetings at both Pathways Conference and the Grasslands Summit
  - Looking for coordinated overlap
- Nationwide survey of wildlife viewers (>4000 total surveyed)
  - Some state-specific wildlife viewers survey data available
  - Results to the Wildlife Viewing Community of Practice
    - Upcoming toolkit website to be released in 2024
- Subcommittee is focused on integrating social science as highlighted in the Strategic Plan
  - All five goals require social science
- Tracking progress is vital
- Challenges include overall social science capacity issues, coordination, achieving diverse membership
  - Conservation work must be equitable
- Linking bird conservation to other existing initiatives requires increased communication
- Must value different cultural perspectives via investing in social science
- **ACTION ITEM:** Include social science data into the State of the Birds Report alongside the biological data. This may include different combinations of the same underlying data and/or messaging depending on the intended audience (i.e., the ‘Taco Bell’ approach)



4:30 pm – End of Day 1 Sessions, Additional Flex Time

6:30 pm – Happy Hour and Networking at Wunder Garten

*Thursday (8/17)*

10:30 am – Updated International Subcommittee Work Plan

*Steve Albert, Institute for Bird Populations*

Purpose: Share with US NABCI an updated Work Plan for the Subcommittee. Highlight especially how the new Plan addresses and advances the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan

Proposed Outcomes: Ensure that US NABCI is familiar with all activities related to the Subcommittee, and how the Subcommittee contributes to implementation of the Strategic Plan

- First order of business leading the Subcommittee was to develop new Work Plan
- The International Subcommittee can have a role to play developing full annual cycle conservation messaging
- The mission of the Subcommittee is to foster cooperation and conservation in the Americas
- Key goal was to ensure compatibility of the new Work Plan with the overall Strategic Plan
- Establishing new partnerships for the future
  - Can we work with the State Department to develop new funding streams?
  - Do we collaborate enough with state agencies?
- Goals of the Subcommittee are as follows:
  - Serve as US NABCI sounding board for expertise panel on international migratory bird conservation
  - Facilitate coalition with traditional and non-traditional partners outside of US NABCI
- Upcoming book, Perspectives of Neotropical Ornithology
  - Collected essays and experiences from Latin American bird conservationists and scientists
  - Versions to be published in English, Spanish, and Portuguese
  - ACTION ITEM: NABCI can distribute the upcoming call for papers, disseminate awareness of the book following publication
- Instead of creating a list of what the Subcommittee should be doing, designed a Work Plan around the passions and interests of the members of the Subcommittee itself
- Questions for the Subcommittee to tackle:
  - How can Joint Ventures work within Conservation Investment Strategies where geographies exist?
  - How can State Wildlife Action Plans work for full annual cycle conservation?
- Answers must include holistic visions, partnerships abroad, all voices
- Recognize the need to be non-colonial and genuine

- **ACTION ITEM:** Put effort into reinvigorating NABCI Canada and NABCI Mexico, especially with possibility of Canadian State of the Birds Report incoming

10:50 am – Understanding Conservation Investment Strategies

*Scott Johnston, US Fish and Wildlife Service*

Purpose: Provide a basic overview of how Conservation Investment Strategies function, with relevant examples. Discuss if and how CIS may align with the US NABCI 2022-2027 Strategic Plan

Proposed Outcomes: Ensure that US NABCI is aware of CIS, and how they function. Develop opportunities for future discussions about incorporating CIS mechanisms into US NABCI if desired

- Conservation Investment Strategy and Business Plan are synonymous terms
- Origins with NFWF and sea turtle conservation focused on a targeted funding source
  - What would attract the board?
  - Where can we direct their energy and resources?
  - Business was used an intentional terms to convey an ecological ‘Return on Investment’
  - Success has occurred when conservation problems are targeted and achievable
- A good example in avian conservation is the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative
  - Having a funding source approach them was a big driver
  - Key is engaging with those funders early
  - Introduced framework of local conservation efforts spread across a Flyway scale
  - Open standards are critical as are frequent evaluations
  - Tough nut to crack is assessing how CIS complement existing efforts
  - Always work to identify new finance opportunities and attract new money
- ‘If you build it, they will come’ approach (e.g., USAID)
- Implementation is the biggest deal, breaking up the work critical, as is communication
- Align with the national plans in countries of work to be received well and successful
- Track accomplishments for funders, and to maintain enthusiasm
- **ACTION ITEM:** Create a web-based clearinghouse for existing and developing CIS plans, with the aim of connecting funders looking to be directed with plans in need of funding (i.e., ‘if you build it, they will come’)
  - Could funding asks be partitioned into phases (i.e., not everything all at once)?
  - Balance that with the need to know how deep the pockets could potentially go as well

11:10 am – Discussion of the NABCI 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Communication Strategies

*Scott Anderson, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission*

Purpose: Provide for a discussion concerning communications opportunities related to the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of US NABCI

Proposed Outcomes: Identify communication priorities and unify messaging related to the upcoming US NABCI anniversary, especially those which advance the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan

- Communications Subcommittee acts as support for all other Subcommittees
- Co-Chair current needed
- Late 2022, this Subcommittee assisted with the rollout of the State of the Birds Report
- More day-to-day tasks include updating the website and assisting with email updates
- Two sets of goals:
  - Technical goals include to support the needs of the various Subcommittees, maintain development of a contact list, explore translation services, and support the website and newsletter
  - 'Thorny' goals include building a map of bird conservation connections (i.e., augmenting the napkin') and supporting Road to Recovery messaging
- What is our communications approach for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of NABCI?
  - There should be some reflection of our accomplishments, but it should focus on the future and looking forward
  - Be honest about what we have and the challenges we face (i.e., no rhetoric)
  - Take the opportunity to be clearly defined about what we are as an organization
  - Acknowledge that NABCI has faltered the past few years, but use this as a springboard to build our future
  - This is also an opportunity to make an ask
    - Is that ask reengagement? Or something else?
  - Use the threats outlined in the State of the Birds as an appeal for why are needed
  - Retrospective needs to acknowledge that bird conservation itself has changed dramatically since 1999 in tandem with the decline of birds themselves
  - **ACTION ITEM:** Be intentional about Coordinator travel
    - Does this include going to recreational birdwatching festivals? Scientific conferences? Who are we not reaching?
    - Travel should start to include getting booths, producing handouts, delivering presentations, etc., spreading the word of NABCI and the Anniversary
  - **ACTION ITEM:** Brainstorm specific documents relating the Anniversary that can be produced (i.e., not necessarily the content but the physical form we want them take)
    - Whatever we produce should be relatively evergreen, to be referenced more than just the one year of the Anniversary

12:00 pm – Concluding Remarks, End of Public Sessions

12:10pm – Convene the Business Session

12:15 pm – Restructuring the Private And Working Lands Subcommittee

1:15 pm – Restructuring the Government Affairs and Partner Engagement Subcommittee

2:00 pm – End of Business Session, Additional Flex Time