

International Migratory Bird Day The Power of Partnerships in Bird Conservation

Each year, some 350 bird species migrate between summer and winter habitats. Their flights span state and national boundaries and have inspired unique partnerships dedicated to bird conservation. Federal and state agencies, conservation organizations, and individuals have discovered innovative solutions to safeguard the future of these often vulnerable bird populations.

IMBD celebrates successful collaborations. The power and effectiveness of teamwork comes to life in these vibrant pages through the remarkable preservation stories of 20 bird species.

Our swiftly-changing world poses countless threats to the survival of migratory birds, but we can all make a difference. Join the party on International Migratory Bird Day and every day by becoming a partner in bird conservation.

AMERICAN REDSTART *Setophaga ruticilla*



Perhaps one of the largest conservation partnerships, Partners in Flight (PIF) was created by numerous organizations, agencies and individuals to address declines in landbird populations. Launched in 1992, PIF is represented by the American Redstart.

Partners in Flight
www.partnersinflight.org
Celebrating 20 Years



International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD)
is organized by Environment for the Americas
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WHOOPING CRANE

Grus americana



Never abundant, Whooping Crane numbers fell from the thousands to just 15 by the 1940's as a result of over-hunting and habitat loss. Today, thanks to protection under the Endangered Species Act and to reintroduction programs, the population has slowly recovered. But with fewer than 400 birds, the species is still at risk.

FIELD NOTES:

Tallest bird in North America — 5 feet (150 cm)
Wingspan: 7-8 feet (210-240 cm)
Weight: 14-17 pounds (6-7.7 kg)

PARTNERSHIPS:

Under the auspices of the International (American/Canadian) Whooping Crane Recovery Team, the nine-partner coalition of government and non-profit organizations in the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership are working to safeguard the species from extinction by reintroducing a new population into Eastern North America. Founding partner Operation Migration imprints captive-hatched and reared cranes on their ultralight aircraft and annually leads a generation south to teach them a migration route prior to their release into the wild.



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Operation Migration
www.operationmigration.org



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'TIWI

Vestiaria coccinea



The ruby of Hawaii's moist and wet forests, the Tiwi (pronounced ee-ee-vee) was once found on all the Main Islands. The Hawaiian nobility valued the brilliant red feathers and used them to decorate capes and helmets. Today, predation by introduced mammals, loss of habitat, and disease have reduced the Tiwi's populations primarily to the islands of Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai.

FIELD NOTES:

Uses curved bill to sip nectar from flowers.
Pollinates plants by taking pollen to the next flower.
Length: 6 inches (15 cm)
Weight: 0.67 ounces (19 g)

PARTNERSHIPS:

Avian malaria, a disease passed from bird to bird by mosquitoes, is especially lethal to Hawaii's honeycreepers, including the Tiwi. As a result, the Tiwi is now found at higher elevations, where temperatures are too cool for mosquitoes. Increasing temperatures caused by climate change could allow mosquitoes to move higher, threatening the Tiwi and other birds. Scientists are working together to find new ways of preventing the spread of mosquitoes.



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PEREGRINE FALCON

Falco peregrinus



Most people expected the Peregrine Falcon to become extinct. While almost 4,000 lived in the wild in North America before 1950, by 1975 fewer than 40 U.S. pairs could be found. DDT, a chemical used to kill insects, was the culprit. This falcon eats small birds, which feed on insects. The DDT in the insects moved up the food chain and was stored in the falcons' fat. Falcons with high levels of DDT produced thin-shelled eggs that would crush before the young birds could develop and hatch.

FIELD NOTES:

Fast flyer — clocked at 242 mph (389 km/h) in its hunting dive or "stoop"
Wingspan: 39-43 inches (100-110 cm)
Weight: 2 pounds (0.90 kg)

PARTNERSHIPS:

Several actions helped save this species. DDT use was banned in the U.S., the falcon was listed as an Endangered Species, and thousands of biologists, falconers and volunteers worked to raise young falcons in captivity and then release them into the wild. By 1999, over 3,300 adult birds were living in the wild in the U.S., and the Peregrine Falcon was removed from the Endangered Species list.



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The Peregrine Fund
www.peregrinefund.org



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WOOD DUCK

Aix sponsa



A duck in a tree may seem strange, but Wood Ducks depend on tree cavities for nesting. When the ducklings are old enough to leave the nest, they may have to jump from heights up to 290 feet (89 meters) to the water below. This species was on the brink of extinction by the late 1900s because of overhunting and loss of wetland habitat.

FIELD NOTES:

Length: 18.5 inches (47 cm)
Wingspan: 26 inches (66 cm)
Weight: 16 ounces (454 g)

PARTNERSHIPS:

The Wood Duck is a conservation success story. Birdwatchers, hunters, and the general public worked together to prevent the hunting of this species until populations recovered. In addition, special boxes were created and erected to provide nest sites where suitable habitat wasn't available. Today, the Wood Duck is one of the most abundant waterfowl species in North America.



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NORTHERN BOBWHITE

Colinus virginianus



Northern Bobwhite is a favored game species, and quail hunting is tradition in rural communities in the southeastern U.S. But this once-common bird has disappeared from much of its range because of pine-plantation forestry, large-scale agriculture, and development, all of which alter the grassland habitat it prefers.

FIELD NOTES:

Weight: 6 ounces (170 g)
Length: 9 inches (23 cm)
Named for its distinctive courtship call, "Bob-white!"

PARTNERSHIPS:

Answer the Call is an exciting partnership that brings together federal and state agencies and conservation groups that are working to increase the food, cover, and water that result in healthy quail populations. For Northern Bobwhite, this includes restoring pine forests and allowing grasses, shrubs, and other plants to grow, providing the cover they need.



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AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER

Haematopus palliatus



The large, orange-red bill of the American Oystercatcher serves an important purpose. After using it to probe in the sand for oysters, clams, or other shellfish, the oystercatcher uses its bill to pry open the shell to access the food inside. American Oystercatchers are only found on coasts in the U.S. and Caribbean and as far south as Argentina. Beach activity, including humans, dogs, and boats, easily disturb this bird, causing it to leave eggs or chicks unprotected and vulnerable to predators.

FIELD NOTES:

Length: 18 inches (44 cm)
Weight: 21 ounces (590 g)
Wingspan: 35 inches (89 cm)

PARTNERSHIPS:

Conservationists are working to make people aware of the American Oystercatcher. When enjoying coastal areas, you may help oystercatchers by keeping dogs leashed and your activities away from nest areas.



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Environment for the Americas, Home of
International Migratory Bird Day, Presents:

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS IN BIRD CONSERVATION

A Field Guide



YELLOW-BELLIED
SAPSUCKER

GOLDEN-WINGED
WARBLER



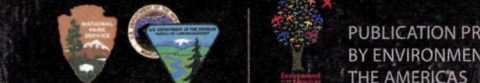
CERULEAN
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CHESTNUT-COLLARED
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THE AMERICAS

WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON

Columba leucocephala



White-crowned Pigeons are found throughout the Caribbean. They roost in large flocks and nest in breeding colonies in coastal woodlands, mangroves, and offshore cays. White-crowned Pigeons feed mainly on fruit. They are powerful flyers and travel long distances between feeding, nesting, and roosting areas. The species is threatened by overhunting, poaching, and rapid clearing of habitat for development.

FIELD NOTES:

Length: 13.5 inches (34.3 cm)

Weight: 10 ounces (290 g)

Wingspan: 24 inches (61 cm)

PARTNERSHIPS:

The Bahamas National Trust, partnering with National Audubon Society, USFWS and local hunters, has conducted research, introduced bag limits, and shifted the hunting season of this popular game bird so that it does not coincide with breeding. The Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds has an active White-crowned Pigeon Working Group that promotes coordinated conservation efforts in the region.



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Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds
www.scsob.org



RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD

Selasphorus rufus



Rufous Hummingbirds travel farther north than any other hummingbird. From wintering grounds in Mexico to breeding sites as distant as Alaska, they depend on the nectar of flowering plants to fuel their survival. Like other pollinators, Rufous Hummingbird numbers are declining, likely due to loss of habitats, changes in the distribution and abundance of their nectar plants (which are affected by changing climate), the spread of invasive plants, and pesticide use.

FIELD NOTES:

Length: 2.87 inches (7.3 cm)

Weight: 0.12 ounces (3.4 g)

PARTNERSHIPS:

Despite hummingbird diversity (about 340 species in the New World) and their popularity with humans, hummingbird conservation has received little attention.

New networks of volunteers and scientists are helping to increase our knowledge of the plant species used by hummingbirds, the location of important breeding, migrating, and over-wintering sites, the influence of bird feeders on hummingbird distribution, and more. The efforts of these partnerships will help guide the future of hummingbird conservation.



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Hummingbird Monitoring Network
www.hummonnet.org



BURROWING OWL

Athene cucularia

FIELD NOTES:

Wingspan: 21.7 inches (55 cm)

Weight: 5.3 ounces (150 g)

Length: 7.5 inches (19 cm)



LONG-BILLED CURLEW

Numenius americanus

FIELD NOTES:

Wingspan: 35 inches (89 cm)

Weight: 1.3 pounds (590 g)

Length: 20 inches (50 cm)

PRAIRIE BIRDS:

A long-legged owl and a long-billed sandpiper seem unlikely prairie birds, but both depend on grasslands. Grassland birds are declining more than any other group of North American birds. Scientists don't know all of the causes of these declines, but pesticide use, urban development, and loss of grasslands for croplands all play a role from Canada to Mexico.

PARTNERSHIPS:

Most grassland habitat is in private hands, so landowners are critical to bird conservation. Today, they are involved in learning about birds and how important their land is to wildlife. Scheduling haying and plowing so it is compatible with nesting seasons, conserving native plants, and grazing cattle so grassland habitat remains are all steps that provide food, cover, and shelter for birds.



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Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
www.rmbo.org

WOOD THRUSH

Hylocichla mustelina



Birdwatchers and scientists noted declines in Wood Thrush populations as its beautiful song became increasingly rare on breeding grounds in the eastern U.S. and Canada. Forest fragmentation threatens its survival both in North America and on non-breeding grounds in Mexico and Central America. The Wood Thrush has become an icon of bird conservation and has fostered a new awareness that migratory birds depend on conservation efforts throughout their journeys.

FIELD NOTES:

Length: 7.5 inches (19 cm)

Weight: 1.4 ounces (40 g)

May sing two songs at the same time because of its specialized voice box or syrinx

PARTNERSHIPS:

The concern raised by the possible loss of this species sparked programs that teach biologists the special skills needed to monitor bird populations. National Park Service Park Flight Migratory Bird Program interns travel from the Wood Thrush's wintering grounds in Mexico and Central America to its breeding grounds to the north, where they learn methods of studying birds and educate others about birds and their conservation.



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National Park Service
www.nps.gov

SWAINSON'S HAWK

Buteo swainsoni



The deaths of some 20,000 Swainson's Hawks in La Pampa, Argentina in 1995 and 1996 was a shrill wake-up call to the bird conservation community that pesticides and other chemicals are still a threat to birds. The hawks, feeding in agricultural fields, had consumed grasshoppers poisoned by an insecticide banned in the U.S. in 1988. The incident underscored the need to stop the export of known deadly pesticides.

FIELD NOTES:

Length: 19 inches (48 cm)

Weight: 24 ounces (699 g)

One hawk may feed on 100 grasshoppers in one day

PARTNERSHIPS:

Researchers in the U.S. and Argentina were quickly joined by the chemical industry and other groups to restrict the use of the chemical, monocrotophos, and to educate Argentinian farmers about birds and the impacts of pesticides. Since this time, Swainson's Hawk populations have stabilized. Today, organizations such as the Alliance for Grassland Conservation work with cattle ranchers to protect grasslands for wildlife.



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United States Forest Service
www.fs.fed.us

BOBOLINK

Dolichonyx oryzivorus



Bobolinks are a help to farmers and ranchers, devouring many pest insects that feed on crops. They also navigate long distances between nesting sites in Canada and the U.S. to wintering grounds as far south as Argentina's "pampas" or grasslands. Bobolink numbers have been declining, however, as grasslands on both ends of its journey are lost to development, invasive plant species, and pesticide use.

FIELD NOTES:

Weight: 1 ounce (28.4 g)

Wingspan: 10 to 12.5 inches (25.4 to 31.8 cm)

PARTNERSHIPS:

Farmers are joining efforts to protect Bobolinks by delaying their first hay cuttings or by waiting to graze cattle in fields. The delay gives the birds the time they need to nest and raise young. In some communities, residents donate the funds needed to help farmers recoup the income they lose by delaying their harvest.



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Defenders of Wildlife
www.defenders.org

TUFTED JAY

Cyanocorax dickeyi



The pine-oak forests of northwestern Mexico's rugged mountains are home to the Tufted Jay. This showy bird is one of the last bird species discovered in Mexico and is found in a narrow elevational range of about 875 yards (800 meters) on steep slopes and in canyons. Because the Tufted Jay's range is so small, it is vulnerable to logging and agriculture.

FIELD NOTES:

Weight: 6 ounces (170 g)

Small flocks in breeding season have one pair of breeding adults and several immature jays that help with nest-building and feeding chicks

PARTNERSHIPS:

Over 12,000 acres of Tufted Jay habitat lie just 75 miles from Mazatlán, Mexico in El Palmito Ejido. Ejidos are Mexico's system of collectively-owned lands that are shared by the people in a community. Timber sales have been a main source of income for El Palmito residents. Today, they diversify their income through an ecotourism project that protects habitat and gives visitors the opportunity to see Tufted Jays and other bird species.



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ATLANTIC PUFFIN

Fratercula arctica



From the 1600s to the early 1900s, early settlers hunted puffins for their meat and feathers. The feathers were also used to decorate ladies' hats and to stuff mattresses and pillows. By 1901, numbers of puffins in Canada had declined drastically, and only one pair could be found in the U.S. on Matinicus Rock off the coast of Maine.

FIELD NOTES:

Nests in burrows in the ground or in rocky crevices

Wingspan: 20-24 inches (51-61 cm)

Weight: 17.5 ounces (500 g)

PARTNERSHIPS:

In 1973, a biologist with a dream took action. Dr. Stephen Kress created Project Puffin, a program that helps puffins and other seabirds return to places where they once lived. Over 9 summers, biologists gathered nearly 1,000 Atlantic Puffin chicks from an island in Canada and moved them to Eastern Egg Rock off the Maine coast. After 36 years of hard work, the number of puffins are on the rise, and over 600 pairs now nest on five islands in Maine.



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