

**2011 Southern Wings Project Recommendations
for approval by the MAFWA
June 2011**

The Southern Wings Task Force working under the direction of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (AFWA) Bird Conservation Committee was charged "to create a funding mechanism that provides an easy and flexible avenue for states willing to participate in conservation in Latin America and the Caribbean by contributing funds annually through a US-based third party that will handle the funds and coordinate the distribution of funds." The Objective was to provide a mechanism to support and facilitate State Fish and Wildlife Agency participation in conservation projects in Latin America and the Caribbean that support their goals of conserving priority species.

This round of projects, 2010-2011, is the second year of the program. To conform to the Southern Wings process, the Southern Wings Technical Committee developed/reviewed proposals and is providing the following recommendations on what proposals to fund based on the amount of money, match, and the biological relevance to the States participating in the program. The Technical Committee has a member from each state that is participating in the program in that given year (Brad Jacobs (MO); David Goad (AR), Bruce Ehresmen (IA), Craig Thompson (WI), Eileen Dowdstukel (SD), Mark Howery (OK), Tom O'Shea (NEAFWA), Scott Somershoe (TN), Doug Gross (PA) Joel Jorgensen (NE) and Edwin Juarez (AZ). Nebraska is in the process of participating for the first time. The states of Iowa, Missouri, South Dakota Nebraska, and Wisconsin have chosen to participate in the following projects. They request your approval of their choices at your June 2011 Directors meeting for approval.

Project 1 – Yucatan Migratory Bird Habitat, Mexico

State agency contributions - \$15,000 (Missouri Department of Conservation)

Matching funds – Matching funds will come from the NAWCA and NMBCA grants, at a greater than 1:1 match.

Specific Activities supported – Land acquisition

Reporting schedule - An interim report will be due on December 31, 2011.

The Yucatan is one of the most important areas for migrating birds in all of the Neotropics. It is however, very seriously threatened by development, especially near the expanding tourist areas radiating out from Cancun. The Yucatan Peninsula Alliance for Birds (Alianza para las Aves de la Península Yucatán; AAPY) was recently formed by six key conservation institutions (Reserva Ecológica del Edén, Niños y Crías, Pronatura Peninsula de Yucatan, The Nature Conservancy, the National Commission for Protected Areas – CONANP, and Amigos de Sian Ka'an), with the objectives to: 1) Develop a stable long-term regional infrastructure for bird and habitat conservation; 2) Provide immediate protection of key bird landscapes; 3) Develop science-based bird conservation strategies; 4) Coordinate national and international bird conservation efforts across migratory ranges; and 5) Create community support for bird conservation.

Some of the important species of Neotropical migrants that winter in the northern Yucatan Peninsula area include WatchList 2007 species such as Wood Thrush, Blue-winged Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, and Kentucky Warbler. Non-WatchList species include Yellow-throated Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, and Hooded Warbler. As well, enormous numbers of migrants pass through the area in spring and fall, including WatchList species such as Canada Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, along with many other species (a more complete list can be seen in Appendix A.). The northeastern Yucatan Peninsula contains two Important Bird Areas, SE 41 and SE 42, Dzilam - Ría Lagartos -Yum Balam.

Project 2: Saltillo Grasslands, Mexico

State agency contributions - \$5,000.00 (South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks) and \$5,000 by (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission) (This project is also supported by Oklahoma). Matching funds will be provided by an NMBCA grant to Pronatura Noreste in a ratio of at least 1:1.

Specific Activities supported: The funds will go toward the development of the management plans and the implementation of management activities such as planting of native species, restoration of water features, etc.

Reporting schedule – The final report will be completed in December 2011.

The Saltillo Grasslands, located south of Saltillo, in northern Mexico, are fairly high (6,000 to 7,000 feet elevation) grasslands important to numerous wintering birds as well as threatened resident species and a threatened mammal, the Mexican prairiedog. The project is directed to the protection, management, and restoration of grasslands on a protected area near El Cercado village, about 25 miles south of Saltillo. Here more than 250 bird species are found and the highest concentrations of grassland wintering birds occur, including significant numbers of Long-billed Curlews (seen in flocks to 20 to 50 in the area of the reserve, and as many as 1,500 have been seen in a single flock at nearby lagoons). Mountain Plovers also winter in the area, and it is the part of the wintering range for some important grassland birds such as Loggerhead Shrike, Baird's Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Ferruginous Hawk. Passage migrants include the Upland Sandpiper and Swainson's Hawk. A partial list can be seen in Appendix A. Resident birds of significance include the Burrowing Owl and Worthen's Sparrow, an IUCN Endangered (EN) species.

A significant threat to all of the species in the area is overgrazing of these naturally arid lands. Long over-usage by grazing goats, sheep, and cattle has caused serious erosion of already-thin soils, and of course loss of vegetation cover, not only of grasses but also of the shrubs upon which many of the native species depend. Erosion sediments have filled in small impoundments, which are very attractive to shorebirds for drinking and bathing, even species that normally forage on dry uplands, such as Long-billed Curlews. There has also been increasing conversion of the land to agriculture in areas with irrigation from wells, especially for potatoes but also for other crops such as sorghum and even apples.

Project 3: Bird Habitat on the Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica

State agency contributions - \$25,000 – Wisconsin DNR (\$48,400.00 in partner funds raised) and \$5,000 – Iowa DNR Matching funds will come from NMBCA grants and other sources at greater than 1:1 match.

Specific Activities supported – Funds for acquisition, management, and infrastructure of a 1,600 acre property. The property which is in the buffer zone of Piedras Blancas National Park provides wintering habitat for dozens of migratory song birds

Reporting schedule – The final report will be due December 2011.

The Osa Peninsula of Costa Rica supports the largest remaining rainforest and mangrove forest on the Pacific coast of Central America. Those habitats are used by many neotropical migrant landbirds and shorebirds, as well as several threatened resident species. Neotropical migrants on the U.S. WatchList recorded on the Osa include the Black Swift, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Blue-winged Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Canada Warbler. Broad-winged Hawk, Whimbrel, Chuck-will's-widow, Great Crested Flycatcher, Tennessee Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Baltimore Oriole are among the many other non-WatchListed migrants here. The Osa Peninsula is also the stronghold for four IUCN-threatened species: Mangrove Hummingbird (EN), Yellow-billed Cotinga (EN), Turquoise Cotinga (VU), and Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager (EN). The Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) identified the Osa Peninsula as an AZE site triggered by the Black-cheeked Ant-Tanager. It has also been designated a Costa Rican Important Bird Area. A more complete list of migratory species in the area can be seen in Appendix E.

This ongoing project has included field surveys across the peninsula to better understand the distribution of migrants and residents (data uploaded to the Avian Knowledge Network via eBird), field surveys of more detailed point-counts near the Osa Biodiversity Center to measure use of different forest types by migrants, education and outreach, land acquisition at Cerro Osa, and habitat restoration on degraded forest lands. Although a large national park and national wetlands protect much of the Peninsula, key areas important to native wildlife and wintering migratory birds are not represented within the existing protected area system. Further land protection could greatly increase connectivity between these established reserves and protect areas where mangroves and forest meet (important for both migrants, like the Prothonotary Warbler and Northern Waterthrush, and endangered residents, like the Yellow-billed Cotinga).

Project 4: Land Acquisition in Sierra Caral, Guatemala

State agency contributions - \$15,000 – Missouri Department of Conservation, Private funds will be used to match state dollars at a 1:1 match.

Specific Activities supported – Secure the protection of core migratory bird habitat through direct land purchase (5682 acres) and defining areas as national protected areas in the Izabal Region of Guatemala.

Reporting schedule – The final report will be due December 2011.

The Caribbean coastal region in Guatemala known as Izabal, lies between Belize and Honduras and includes a number of unique and isolated massifs rising from sea level up to 1,200 meters, low-land rainforest, large mangrove and natural beach systems and two Ramsar Wetlands. The region is exposed to moisture-laden Caribbean trade winds which create both wet rainforest and drier pine oak forests on south-facing rain-shadow slopes. The unique combination of topographical and climatic conditions creates important stop over and wintering habitat for at least 153 species of neotropical migrants. FUNDAECO is looking to ensure the conservation of these unique sites by purchasing core habitat in areas that are designated as Protected Area by the Guatemalan government or are being proposed at national Protected Areas.

At least 153 neotropical migrants have been identified in the region. This includes Wood Thrush, Kentucky Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler and Painted Bunting which are present here in winter in large numbers within the forested massifs of Sierra Caral, Cerro San Gil, and Sierra Santa Cruz. The region also includes site specific habitat for priority conservation species such as Golden-cheeked Warbler, and stop over sites for Cerulean Warbler and Canada Warbler. The coastline of Punta de Manabique is used by Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Sanderling, Stilt Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Red Knot and Wilson's Plover during the winter migration. Other migrants include Swainson's Hawk, Tennessee and Magnolia Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Baltimore Oriole and Indigo Bunting.



Southern Wings Program – June 2011 Update

Goal: Conserve State Fish and Wildlife Agencies priority species throughout their lifecycle.

Objective: Provide a mechanism to support and facilitate State Fish and Wildlife Agency participation in conservation projects that support their goals of conserving priority species.



2010 - 2011 (Year 2) States that Participated

Arizona, Iowa
Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska,
Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South
Dakota, Tennessee, Wisconsin,
NEAFWA

2010 - 2011 State Monetary Contributions

~~\$128,500~~
\$158,500 (with partner
contributions \$206,900)





2011 - 2012 (Year 3) State Commitments to date

Arizona, Arkansas, Iowa,
Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma,
Pennsylvania, South Dakota,
Tennessee, Wisconsin





In the inaugural year of the program (2009-2010) 7 States contributed over \$75,000 to conservation of State agency priority in Latin America and the Caribbean through the Southern Wings Program. In 2010-2011, the second year of the program, there are 10 states plus NEAFWA contributing \$158,500 to date and an additional \$48,400.00 from partners. Five states have already committed for 2011-2012.

Sample projects for states

-  Migratory bird conservation in the Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica
-  Habitat conservation in Yucatan, Mexico
-  Grasslands conservation in the Saltillo and Chihuahuan Grasslands of Mexico
-  Golden-winged Warbler Habitat Conservation in Nicaragua

Why Conservation through the Southern Wings Program?

-  States are putting resources into these species in the US. Money towards conservation in focused areas south of the border supports this investment.
-  It targets and benefits priority states agency species and habitats

- There are strong biological links with shared species
- There are on the ground activities ready to be implemented
- There are strong partners on the ground

If my State wants to participate:

1. Contact Mike Senn or Deb Hahn (contact info below)
2. Discuss internally how much you can contribute
3. Develop a Cooperative Agreement with your Regional Association if needed
4. Assign a staff member to the Technical Team

Background: The Southern Wings Task Force working under the direction of AFWA's Bird Conservation Committee was charged *"to create a funding mechanism that provides an easy and flexible avenue for states willing to participate in conservation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) by contributing funds annually through a US-based third party that will handle the funds and coordinate the distribution of funds."* Our efforts are founded in the same principles that have proven successful in the conservation of waterfowl by the States working across the border in Canada apply equally for birds produced in the states and wintering to the south into the LAC.

Timeline:

- March 2010 – March 2011 - State wildlife agencies voluntarily contribute resources to the second year of the program.
- December – March 2011 – Technical Committee determines projects.
- May – July 2011 – Regional Associations provide formal approval.
- July 2011 – Project implementation begins after Association Approval
- March 2011 – December 2011 – Program accepts voluntary contributions of funds from state wildlife agencies for the third year of the program.

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