XXI Congress of the Mesoamerican Society for Biology and Conservation and VI International Partners in Flight Conference, San José, Costa Rica,   
October 30- November 3, 2017

**PARTNERS IN FLIGHT MESOAMERICA (PIF MESO) MEETING**

Location: Crowne Plaza San José Corobici, San José, Costa Rica  
Date: November 2, 2017  
Time: 5:30-7:30 pm  
Facilitators: Edwin Juárez and Vicky Galán  
Note-taker: Fabiola Rodríguez

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

* To Pablo Elizondo and Greg Butcher for securing a meeting room
* To Arturo May for the translation
* To Edwin Juárez for facilitating
* To Vicky Galán for facilitating
* To Fabiola Rodríguez for taking notes
* To Sheylda Diaz-Méndez for shepherding the attendance sheet

INTRODUCTIONS:

* Carol Beidleman, USA, *Environment for the Americas*
* Vicky Galán, El Salvador, *SalvaNATURA*
* Edwin Juárez, USA, *Arizona Game and Fish Department* (originally from El Salvador)
* Fabiola Rodríguez, Honduras, *Indiana University of Pennsylvania*
* Participants:
* Guido Berguido, Panamá, *ADOPTA*
* Chelina Batista, Panamá, *ADOPTA*
* Andrea Cuéllar, México, *Pronatura Noroeste A.C.*
* Humberto Berlanga, México, *CONABIO/NABCI*
* Francisco Abarca, USA, Arizona Game and Fish Department
* Vicente Rodríguez, México, *CONABIO/NABCI*
* John van Dort, Honduras, EAP *Zamorano University/ Asociación Hondureña de Ornitología*
* Caz Taylor, USA, *Tulane University*
* Steve Albert, USA, *Institute for Bird Populations*
* Judith Scarl, USA, *North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI)*
* Randy Dettmers, USA, *U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service*
* Claudia Macias, México, *Pronatura Sur, A.C.*
* Greg Butcher, USA, *U. S. Forest Service*
* Bridget Stutchbury, Canada, *York University*
* Lauren Helton, USA, *Institute for Bird Populations*
* Mary Whitfield , USA, *Southern Sierra Research Station*
* David Younkman, USA, *American Bird Conservancy*
* Marlon Sotelo Reyes, Nicaragua, *Paso Pacífico*
* Eder Caceros, El Salvador, *AMBAS*
* John Alexander, USA, *Klamath Bird Observatory*
* Constance Downes, Canada, *Canadian Wildlife Service*
* Becky Whittam, Canada, *Canadian Wildlife Service*
* Alaine Camfield, Canada, *Canadian Wildlife Service*
* Carlos Funes, El Salvador/Honduras, *Universidad Zamorano/Asociación Hondureña de Ornitología*
* Orlando Jarquín, Nicaragua, *Quetzalli*
* Karla Lara, El Salvador/Honduras, *Universidad Zamorano/Asociación Hondureña de Ornitología*
* Viviana Ruiz-Gutiérrez, USA/Costa Rica, *Cornell Lab of Ornithology*
* Ana María Monge, Costa Rica, *SINAC, Ministerio de Medio Ambiente*
* Arvind Panjabi, USA, *Bird Conservancy of the Rockies*
* Tom Will, USA, *Partners in Flight*
* Sarah Kendrick, USA, *Missouri Department of Conservation*
* Jessie Reese, USA, *Virginia Commonwealth University*
* Bianca Bosarreyes, Guatemala, *Independiente/Universidad de San Carlos*
* Daniel Tenes, Guatemala
* Susan Bonfield, USA, *Environment for the Americas*
* Becky Keller, USA, *Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture*
* Tatiana Sánchez, México, *CONABIO*
* Jaime Stephens, USA, *Klamath Bird Observatory*
* Jacob Marlin, Belize, *BFREE*
* Pablo Elizondo, Costa Rica, *Costa Rica Bird Observatories*
* Roselvy Juárez, El Salvador, *Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica*
* Natalie Sánchez, Costa Rica, *Guanacaste Dry Forest Conservation Fund*
* Oliver Komar, Honduras, *Zamorano University/Asociación Hondureña de Ornitología*
* Sarah Otterstrom, USA/Nicaragua, *Paso Pacífico*
* Marvin Torrez, Nicaragua, *Universidad Centroamericana*
* Cara Joos, USA, *American Bird Conservancy/Central Hardwoods Joint Venture*
* Ingrid Anahi Tello López, México, *Universidad de Guadalajara-CUCSur*
* Sarahy Contreras Martínez, México, *Universidad de Guadalajara-CUCSur*
* Diego José Arévalo, El Salvador, *LaGeo*
* David King, USA, *U.S. Forest Service*
* Katherine Araúz Ponce, Panamá
* Roberto Vargas Masís, Costa Rica, *UNED*
* Alice Boyle, USA, *Kansas State University*
* Sheylda Diaz-Méndez, Puerto Rico, *Environment for the Americas*
* There was a count to obtain country representation: Guatemala (2), Honduras (5), El Salvador (6), Nicaragua (1), Costa Rica (3), Panama (2), Belize (1), Mexico (4), USA (16), Canada (4), Puerto Rico (1).
* There was a count of how many people have participated previously with PIF MESO: 12 (Note that no funding was available to ensure representation; meeting was open to anyone attending PIF VI/SMBC.)

BACKGROUND:

Carol presented a partial history of PIF MESO in a PowerPoint (text below).

Compañeros en Vuelo – Mesoamérica: The Beginnings

* + PIF MESO formed in 1999, first meeting at SMBC, Guatemala, 1999 (SMBC formed 1996)
  + PIF MESO Meeting with PIF Western Working Group at Neotropical Ornithological Congress, Mexico, 1999; developed state-to-country relationships
  + PIF MESO Meeting at SMBC, Panama, 2000
    - Megan Hill, Guatemala
    - Regional Coordinator, Guatemala
    - National Coordinators (elected by country process)
    - Park Flight Migratory Bird Program (building capacity through projects, internships, and technical assistance)

La Tangara: Newsletter of the International Working Group  
of Partners in Flight

PIF MESO Meeting at SMBC, Nicaragua, 2004

* Co-Chairs PIF International Working Group (José Manuel Zolotoff; Carol Beidleman)
* Country Coordinators: Selvin Pérez (Guatemala), Francisco Aceituno (Honduras), Wilfredo Rodríguez (El Salvador), José Manuel Zolotoff (Nicaragua), Alejandra Linner (Costa Rica), Karla Aparicio (Panamá)
* Regional Coordinator: José Manuel Zolotoff, Nicaragua
* Meeting topics: Work mechanisms NORTH-SOUTH and support to the PIFMESO network (Terry Rich); species assessment in México (Humberto Berlanga); IBAs in America (BirdLife International); group organization

PIF MESO Meeting at SMBC, Honduras, 2005

* Meeting topics: development of foundational document; presentation of projects, e.g. pine-oak conservation for *Setophaga chrysoparia* (Guatemala); PIF species assessment for Mesoamérica (Tom Will); donation of mist nets

Base document of group PIF MESO (partial text)

* What is PIF Mesoamerica
* PIF MESO Objectives
* General
  + To contribute to the conservation of Mesoamerican avifauna through the different activities of the Mesoamerican members and to establish a bridge of mutual cooperation with the different institutions in North America.
* Specific
  + Establish a regional working network through the formation of national groups, and to open a North-South channel of communication for the dissemination of technology and knowledge of birds and activities related to their conservation.
  + Design a training program, directed to strengthening and supporting the work of bird conservation.
  + Promote the development of bi national and/or regional bird conservation projects.
* Mission
* Vision
* Central Themes
* Work Structure
* Operation
* Achievements to Date

PIF MESO Meeting with PIF Western Working Group at North American Ornithological Conference, México, 2006

* + PIF Species Assessment Workshop, Arvind Panjabi (overview, uses and benefits, scoring, applicability to Central America, next steps)
  + Country updates
  + Grant opportunities
  + Equipment/other needs compiled by country coordinators, for MoSI stations, outreach (spotting scopes, binoculars, mist nets, banding equipment, banding and field guides)

SMBC-PIF Letter of Cooperation

* Signed at SMBC General Assembly in El Salvador, 2008
* Established a framework of cooperation between the SMBC and PIF, to develop events, publications, exchanges, and workshops in Mexico and Central America

SMBC-PIF Workshops (topics selected/ranked by countries)

* + Strengthening Partners in Flight Mesoamérica Migratory Bird Conservation Efforts through:
    - Bird Banding Training and North American Banding Council Certification Opportunity, El Salvador 2008
    - Training in Statistical Analysis, Belize 2009
    - North American Banding Council Certification Opportunity, Costa Rica 2010

PIF IV, McAllen Texas, 2008

* PIF MESO Coordinators received PIF Awards
* PIF MESO Symposium: Avian Conservation in Central America- Ongoing Projects and Future Needs
  + PIF MESO Needs Assessment: Education-Communication-Outreach; Training and Capacity Building; Research and Monitoring; Public Policies

PIF MESO Meeting at SMBC, Costa Rica, 2010

PIF V, Snowbird Utah, 2013

* PIF VI proposed/offered in Costa Rica by Pablo Elizondo—a great success in 2017!

How PIF MESO has made a difference (messages from Mesoamericans)

* PIF MESO has been an incredible resource for me as a student and young professional. It provided me the opportunity to work with people across regions and from the United States.
* In my opinion, Mesoamerica has given a very important step forward in Ornithology thanks to PIF MESO. Now more than ever, we must strengthen the bonds between the north and the south to prove to the political establishment that we need each other to continue the task of bird conservation.
* Partners in Flight in Mesoamerica has played a key role in my professional development and in other colleagues’ from the region. Which has, in turn, contributed to the knowledge and conservation of Neotropical birds.
* First, I must send warm regards from Panama, expressing my admiration for the work of PIF Meso, with its important support to Ornithology thanks to the donation of equipment, environmental outreach and exchange. I hope this initiative is held in time and that the support from the network keeps being fruitful.

CURRENT SNAPSHOT:

* Vicky Galán.- Indicated that although there were few that represent PIF MESO in the conference, each country could briefly state the activities they are involved in, such as conservation activities, as well as share about their country situation or institutions.
* Edwin Juarez.- Suggested that they can share a project they are involved in and this would provide a scope for what are the opportunities for communication and collaboration.
* Viviana Ruiz-Gutiérrez.- Suggested that this could take some time and that there are representatives that implement projects missing from each country.
* Each person proceeded to present their country reality or to share experiences regarding PIF.
* Oliver Komar.- Suggested that it would be useful to obtain a summary of what PIF’s current situation is, how it operates, in which countries it is active.
* Guido Berguido.- Began by introducing Adopta El Bosque, the organization he represents. He indicated that it has not been part of PIF but that some of the people working there have received training through the Park Flight internships. Currently, Adopta El Bosque is trying to connect their activities with the Neotropical Flyways Project with SELVA and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The work of other colleagues in the country includes Karla Aparicio’s efforts with environmental outreach and Harpy Eagle research. Another example is Audubon Panama, an entity that works with shorebirds. He stated that they are very excited to join the conference’s initiatives.
* Pablo Elizondo.- He described that PIF is not an NGO, it is an initiative. Its objective is to facilitate processes, connections and projects. PIF in Costa Rica has been critical to begin initiatives such as the Costa Rica Bird Observatories, the national system of bird banding, and the development of a scholarship program between Costa Rica and other USA stations. The Park Flight Program was great to establish capacity building. Among the connection example there was the establishment of contacts between the US and the Costa Rica Ornithological Association.
* Orlando Jarquín.- He indicated that Marvin Torrez is the most appropriate person to provide a summary since he has been involved more in PIF.
* Marvin Torrez.- He summarized that the person designated as a PIF coordinator in Nicaragua was José Manuel Zolotoff; since then there has been a lack of activities but a small network is still communicating. He considered that the network communication might not be enough to consider the program of PIF active, for instance other activities that have not continued include the publication of the newsletter La Tangara. Despite this, the network of professionals remains alive. This communication among Nicaraguan professionals does not stand out as PIF necessarily or there is ambiguity, because many have been part of PIF in the past.
* Marlon Sotelo.- He works for Paso Pacífico. He summarized their activities as monitoring of *Empidonax traillii* and *Coccyzus americanus*. They are interested of being part of initiatives.
* Oliver Komar.- He indicated that the last coordinator that PIF had in Honduras was David Medina. He proposed to the Honduran Ornithological Association (ASHO) to incorporate PIF within the ASHO activities. But since then there has been no clarity on what has happened to PIF. However the Honduran community is active in conservation since it works in the promotion of birdwatching. Many of these people might not know about PIF but they have been participants of the resident bird assessment for Central America, an example of Honduran participation.
* Vicky Galán.- She described how in El Salvador PIF has worked as a network and is independent of an institution. There have been four coordinators, and it has worked. However currently there is no coordinator (as of at least a year ago). Among the activities that PIF El Salvador has conducted are two symposia and a Facebook page that is kept active and is a place to share information and experiences. She considers that these activities are important to share knowledge.
* Daniel Tenes.- He summarized that in Guatemala there is an initiative known as the birdwatching national working group, focused especially on endemic bird species. The PIF group has been inactive and another group that has been inactive is the Ornithological Association of Guatemala.
* Bianca Bosarreyes.- She added that with Daniel Tenes they have been part of PIF but that this group is not active now. She has the equipment that PIF had donated years ago and she has been using it as an aid for people that need it for research purposes, particularly students. The equipment includes mist nets and books and, with these, research is conducted. She mentioned that even when there have been no PIF meetings, she has always tried for people to recognize PIF. She shared that she is organizing some Christmas Bird Counts in Guatemala and that she may use the PIF logo for these activities.
* Humberto Berlanga.- He indicated that in Mexico there has been collaboration with PIF in many activities. The collaboration has facilitated initiatives and projects across the larger PIF network.
* Jacob Marlin.- He summarized that in Belize there was a coordinator, William García. William tried to coordinate efforts five years ago, but unfortunately he didn’t obtain a lot of support from across the country. There was, nonetheless, some work conducted and some equipment was donated, but currently PIF is inactive. He added that apart from PIF, last year the National Birding Working Group was created to promote a national strategy for bird conservation and to provide advice about policy. This group is very active with members of academia, NGOs, and the best bird guides in the country. To this date, he considers it is the most inclusive bird organization.
* Vicky Galán.- She asked if there is anybody else that wished to add something.
* The section concluded and the next topic in the agenda was addressed.

MOVING FORWARD:

* Vicky Galán.- She asked the following questions to the group: How will we proceed? Should we re-establish PIF? She indicated this is an open discussion based on the points made so far.
* As a complementary activity, comments were added to large flipchart sheets (included at the end of the minutes).
* Humberto Berlanga.- He added that it would be a good opportunity to hear from USA and Canada about what is PIF?
* Edwin Juárez supported this motion and he asked the US and Canada participants.
* John Alexander.- He thanked everyone for the opportunity to be a part of the meeting. He commented that he has been able to work with several of the participants. He indicated that PIF in the US is not an organization, it is a partnership with many entities, groups, and individuals. It is structured with a board, regional working groups, members of a scientific committee and coordinators at the state level. He considered the framework has been effective.
* Greg Butcher.- He commented that what might have been effective for PIF is that there are opportunities to meet twice a year and that it is a good opportunity to promote actions. The scientific committee is very active and every five years they have a meeting to evaluate species again; they also work with Mexico and Canada. The PIF Western Working Group meets twice a year and works closely with Mexican partners. Tom Will represents the central part of the US, Randy Dettmers and Ken Rosenberg represent the Northeast, and Dean Demarest represents the Southwest. Each group has had different levels of activity but since 1990, they have all continued with their roles.
* Alaine Camfield.- She indicated that the involvement of Canada has been small but significant, and that they have tried to contribute in the best possible manner. The scientific committee is at times opportunistic and not strategic, but she considers that it is important to advance towards a PIF strategy in Canada. She indicated that there are differences in the US about conducting conservation and highlighted that we are all unified by migratory birds and that we should focus on that. Moving forward she suggests that should be a vision.
* Judith Scarl.- She mentioned that in North America, PIF is not the only conservation initiative and that bird conservation is complicated. She indicated that the focus has been on landbirds, but NABCI represents other taxonomic groups in three different countries. She added that it is important to work with PIF because of their work in sites of interest, while NABCI works at an “umbrella” level.
* Edwin Juarez.- Added that he believed PIF Mesoamerica has focused on all birds and their habitats.
* Humberto Berlanga.- He shared that in Mexico, after a very long discussion with NABCI, a better coordination was accomplished through different initiatives. He indicated that the difficulty is that there are few people working with many birds, thus they focused on an integral vision. He added that finally the vision has prospered although there are still many groups that work on their own. He considered that they accomplished a broader interaction with different groups and that this is important to plan future activities.
* Francisco Abarca.- He indicated that one of the questions was to see if PIF should be re-established and he believed there was not enough representation of different groups. He suggested a two-step process: 1. One volunteer from each of the Central American countries can be a link. Within each country this person would contact all the people that work in bird conservation, through a directory or university that works with birds. 2. After identifying the volunteer, three months can be considered for those who would like to be a part of PIF and then decide who has the capacity to coordinate.
* Francisco Abarca.- Asked if there was a PIF Mesoamerica document and if that was the case then it should be updated.
* Edwin Juárez responded that Carol briefly presented it during her presentation (and can be made available).
* Viviana Ruiz-Gutiérrez.- Commented that the Alliance for the Conservation of Central American Birds (ACCA) has been active for approximately five years and that there is a database with organizations and people that work in various areas, similar to NABCI’s framework. Additionally there are PIF MESO participants that are part of the Alliance. Since ACCA operates like NABCI, it could be a model for an organization or group PIF MESO to be a part of. Additionally, the ACCA is rotational among different members from academia, NGOs, the government, and others. There are meetings at the Central American level as well as the country level.
* Pablo Elizondo.- He considered that an interesting exercise would be to ask the participants what they want PIF MESO to be. What would be the objectives of the group? How can the group work better? There are differences among countries that range from equipment loan to activity organization such as bird walks and symposia. He asks: What is the next step that participants wish to take? What is it that is expected of PIF from participants? Is it a center to provide materials and training? Is it a group to create connections among initiatives?
* Oliver Komar.- He highlighted that ACCA is a process that has incorporated some people from PIF MESO, besides government entities. One of ACCA’s objectives is to work towards the use of the species assessment results. He considers it is important to work together. He reiterated that PIF has not been very active in many countries, except Costa Rica. He congratulates Pablo for his accomplishments. He feels that PIF MESO was not working as a regional initiative. The ACCA is not an imposition and there are coordinators picked for the next two years [they will be rotational]. This Monday [during the conference] we announced the idea of ACCA as an open process with the same vision of PIF. He points out that they are the same in that regard. To avoid past inconsistencies it will be important to know the selection process for coordinators and to know when they are not able to continue, so they notify us. He asks how these problems have been avoided in the US, and wonders if it is because there are multiple partners. He summarizes that PIF MESO was composed of students that dreamt of working in bird conservation and some members had jobs already. As students these people were limited to work on other initiatives, and additionally it was difficult to coordinate regionally.
* Arvind Panjabi.- He indicated that one of ACCA’s accomplishments was the involvement of more areas. PIF seemed to involve mostly NGOs and the academic sector was not very involved and it is important because they conduct research and long-term monitoring. Additionally ACCA involved the governments, which he was not sure were involved with PIF MESO. This does not mean it will be easy to keep the process. He thinks that in the US there have been difficulties when people have moved or due to lack of support. Therefore the link with multiple areas is important.
* Viviana Ruiz-Gutiérrez.- She added that there is an open voting process where each country selects the identity per country and then there is a rotational process. The rotational process refers to the different areas: for one term a leader can be from the government, whereas the next could be represented by the academia. She encouraged to involve decision makers.
* Edwin Juarez.- He indicated that his experience with the PIF Western Working Group (active for 14 years) was that the state government sector was always invited but participation is not always constant. Additionally, at times this creates challenges because state objectives and ideas may not line-up with what PIF is working on.
* Claudia Macias.- She considered that there should not be a competition between initiatives since there are few working in bird conservation and there is also limited funding. She expressed that she was not aware of the PIF MESO details and that in Mexico there has been a direct connection with the US. She considers PIF’s benefits which she believes were reflected in the attendees. She expressed the advance of ACCA is of importance and sees an opportunity for both PIF and ACCA to collaborate and join initiatives.
* Judith Scarl.- She expressed that NABCI has had difficulties that are being worked out. The first step was to define what NABCI is and isn’t. There is a mission, vision, and proposed values. Currently, there is a focus in actions and goals. People are part of either board or committees and at times meetings have 100 attendees which shows the involvement of allies.
* Viviana Ruiz-Gutiérrez.- Proposed that PIF joins the ACCA, since there has been a lot of work conducted currently. The name is recognized throughout the region and it is a good opportunity to join efforts. She considered it is not a competition because several groups have been involved.
* Carol Beidleman.- She indicated that the next step could be to organize a structure that involves members at all levels. For instance, PIF has communication channels and the scientific committee is very active, and there are tools for implementation and conservation. She asked: How to reach the next step? How do we involve everyone that wishes to contribute in each country? How do we secure communication moving forward?
* Edwin Juarez.- He shared that he liked the idea of joining ACCA and PIF MESO. How can this structure be worked in Mesoamerica?
* Arvind Panjabi.- He mentioned that one thing that has worked well in the US and Canada are listservs. He added that Oliver had suggested they should have a Facebook page, but he is not aware if everybody is on Facebook. He indicated that there is a need for a main communication channel.
* Humberto Berlanga.- He suggested that both ACCA and PIF MESO exchange objectives so they organize themselves and they move forward.
* Alaine Camfield.- She proposed help through a person from Canada that will be working on restructuring NABCI Canada. She mentioned that this person will share their experiences throughout the process with PIF MESO.
* Carol Beidleman.- She asked: Is there value in finding a strategic opportunity for people to meet?
* Oliver Komar.- He suggested the next SMBC.
* Carol Beidleman.- She communicated it will be in Nicaragua next year.
* OIiver Komar.- He asked Marvin if he can organize a symposium between ACCA and PIF in the Nicaragua conference.
* Marvin Torrez.- He accepted this proposal and agreed to work on it.
* Carol Beidleman.- She thanked all participants for their attendance and ideas.

\*Flipchart sheet comments:

* Identify a link per country to contact people, institutions, to know if they want to be a part of PIF.
* ACCA is based on NABCI’s model and shares the same vision that PIF does.
* What do we want PIF MESO to be?
* How does the rotation function?
* ACCA accomplished involving more areas and actors: government, academia, NGOs.
* Link ACCA with PIF MESO.
* These initiatives are not a competition; they should be linked.
* Listservs and Facebook are good options.
* Establish a pathway to explain well what ACCA is and what are its objectives.
* The process in Canada may inform the process in Mesoamerica.
* SMBC Nicaragua is a follow-up opportunity, and Marvin Torrez will organize an ACCA/PIF symposium.