

DoD Partners in Flight

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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What does bird conservation on military lands look like?

Department of Defense (DoD) lands provide a critical network of habitats for migratory and non-migratory birds, offering stopover areas for resting and feeding, and sites suitable for nesting and rearing their young. A large workforce of dedicated DoD biologists and natural resources managers implement a vast array of monitoring and management actions to conserve and enhance these valuable habitats and public lands in support of the military testing, training, and operational missions.

Because protection of birds and conservation of their habitats are not only good for birds, but good for the DoD mission, the DoD partnered with the budding national Partners in Flight (PIF) initiative in 1991. Since then, DoD has been a leader in bird conservation as it works to support conservation actions while maintaining military preparedness on its lands. The DoD PIF program facilitates a wide variety of bird conservation activities and initiatives that include all species of birds.

A network of DoD natural resources professionals work as the DoD PIF Steering Committee to support and communicate with installation personnel, state and regional PIF working groups, non-government organizations, academic researchers, and consultants to collectively promote and coordinate bird conservation across DoD lands.

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Our Mission

Providing expertise on the management and conservation of birds and their habitats to sustain and enhance the military mission

DoD PIF Website

<https://denix.osd.mil/dodpif>

2019 General Accomplishments



Yellow-throated Warbler — Dana Bradshaw

- ◆ Participated in the DoD Conservation Committee to ensure migratory bird related activities and issues were communicated to the Military Services and Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Natural Resources leadership. Continued to track progress on draft Rule for codifying the Department of the Interior Solicitor’s M-Opinion reinterpreting incidental take under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Promoted DoD guidance, via email and verbal communication at meetings, directing installations to “stay the course” to avoid and minimize incidental take of migratory birds during both military readiness and non-readiness activities.
- ◆ Actively engaged with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Division of Migratory Bird Management to gather information relevant for DoD policy and guidance and to discuss issues relevant to managing and monitoring migratory birds on military lands.
- ◆ Provided instruction about the MBTA at a U.S. Naval Civil Engineer Corps Officers School course, San Antonio, TX; and delivered an update on MBTA and Incidental Take at the Annual Meeting of the National Military Fish and Wildlife Association (NMFWA), Denver, CO.¹
- ◆ Successfully migrated DoD PIF website to the DoD Environmental, Safety and Occupational Health Network and Information Exchange (DENIX) website. New website can be found at: <https://denix.osd.mil/dodpif>.
- ◆ Updated master DoD PIF subject matter expertise (SME) list, identifying contacts for DoD-wide subjects, geographic areas, and avian taxa.
- ◆ Held the DoD PIF Annual Strategic Planning Meeting at NAS Corpus Christi (NASCC), Texas in April 2019. The 2019 meeting concentrated on finalizing a focused business plan, which will increase productivity and optimize mission support for the Military Services. Additional outcomes included establishing a schedule of deliverables to provide improved resources for installation personnel, collaborative meetings with NASCC and NAS Kingsville Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) program personnel to discuss program highlights and potential for enhancement, and conducting a base-wide avian inventory to supplement information and data for the NASCC Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP).
- ◆ Worked with federal partners to launch the Federal Avian Data Center (FADC; <https://data.pointblue.org/partners/fedadc/>) node of the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN; <http://www.avianknowledge.net/>). The FADC supports required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and impact analysis of DoD activities on migratory birds. Continued to combine and archive DoD’s avian data into the AKN.²
- ◆ Contributed two articles to the DoD Natural Resources Program’s *Natural Selections* newsletter.¹
- ◆ Reviewed and ranked all avian-related DoD Legacy Program pre-proposals.
- ◆ Continued to lead and engage several working groups to further bird conservation and management priorities across DoD, adding a new Eagle working group in 2019. Priorities and accomplishments for each of the active 2019 working groups are included below.

¹ DoD PIF National Coordinator

² DoD PIF Technical Coordinator

Working Group Updates

Research and Monitoring

Priorities

- ◆ Identify research-related bird conservation issues of highest relevance to mission requirements and installation needs.
- ◆ Develop ideas and projects to facilitate bird and habitat-related research projects important to DoD.
- ◆ Contribute DoD data to regional bird conservation projects.
- ◆ Encourage appropriate collaboration with research efforts (e.g., Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units, Joint Ventures).
- ◆ Develop partnerships with leaders in emerging fields of research, such as the Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program/Environmental Security Technology Certification Program (SERDP/ESTCP), and others.
- ◆ Promote the use of *Coordinated Bird Monitoring Plan* Technical Recommendations, including standardized protocols and methodologies for bird monitoring, data entry, and archiving.
- ◆ Provide technical assistance to installation biologists so DoD monitoring efforts provide pertinent data for INRMPS, NEPA documents, and overall migratory bird and bird habitat management.
- ◆ Identify and resolve questions relevant to avian monitoring on military installations.
- ◆ Participate in AKN through the FADC to access best available information, data, and decision support tools.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Participated in the Collaborative Wildlife Protection and Recovery Initiative, an interagency team that seeks to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and predictability of conservation, management, and consultation outcomes for federally listed species.



Broad-billed Hummingbird — Tim Burr

- ◆ Provided general monitoring recommendations to several DoD installations either initiating or enhancing their monitoring programs.
- ◆ Continued a DoD Legacy project designed to archive more than 1 million avian monitoring data points from DoD installations into the AKN and provided input into design and function of the FADC.
- ◆ Collaborated with Boise State University, and multiple partners, to continue field data collection for a SERDP investigation focused on American Kestrels titled, *Variation in phenological shifts: How do annual cycles and genetic diversity constrain or enable responses to climate change?*



American Woodcock — Jeff Bolsinger

Climate Resilience and Adaptation

Priorities

- ◆ Stay informed of current trends, actions or projects that are being executed to combat climate change on the environment. Share information on successful and unsuccessful measures or actions within the DoD.
- ◆ Develop and disseminate avian best management practices for installations to integrate into their standard operating procedures and INRMPs.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Initiated Fact Sheet based upon DoD guidance document titled, *Climate Adaptation for DoD Natural Resources Managers*.
- ◆ Researched bird species that are more vulnerable to climate change that may impact DoD installations.



Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan Guidance

Priorities

- ◆ Ensure the Military Services are provided with the necessary information and guidance to sufficiently address migratory birds in INRMPs.
- ◆ Provide up-to-date information on legislative and policy changes affecting management of migratory birds on DoD lands and waters.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Reviewed nearly all DoD INRMPs for information regarding Mission-Sensitive Species (MSS) presence/absence on installations.
- ◆ Continued to provide technical information and recommendations to installations seeking advice for properly incorporating migratory birds in INRMPs, in accordance with 2017 *DoD Guidance for Addressing Migratory Bird Management within INRMPs*.

Energy

Priorities

- ◆ Stay informed of current trends in renewable energy projects on DoD installations.
- ◆ Share information on bird interactions with energy and associated utilities such as power lines, solar facilities, outdoor lighting, and tall towers.
- ◆ Develop and disseminate best management practices to avoid and minimize negative effects of energy utilities and projects on migratory birds.
- ◆ Develop and maintain a list of all DoD installations with solar farms or facilities.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Distributed USFWS guidelines for tall towers and information about raptor protection on power lines to the DoD PIF community.
- ◆ Distributed information on Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle Electrocutation Prevention In-lieu Fee Program authorized by USFWS to sell mitigation credits for bald and golden eagles. More information can be found at: www.eaglemitigation.com
- ◆ Researched best practices for reducing negative effects of bright outdoor lighting on migratory birds.
- ◆ Partnered with the Department of Energy and applied for a grant from the Department of Interior for a monitoring project to record and measure avian mortalities at solar facilities on DoD installations.



Golden Eagle — Rick Harness

Mission-Sensitive Species

Priorities

- ◆ Develop a summary and guidance document of DoD PIF MSS, or those species that if federally listed, could significantly impact the military mission. The MSS list assists installations with prioritizing monitoring and management efforts, and accurately preparing NEPA documents. The MSS list will help to guide development of conservation actions to support Executive Order 13186 (*Responsibilities of Federal Agencies To Protect Migratory Birds*), the associated Memorandum of Understanding with USFWS, and the “military readiness rule” (50 C.F.R. §21.15).
- ◆ Confirm presence of MSS on specific installations, and determine the degree of impact to installation missions should any species be federally listed.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Ranked 93 bird species based on population status and trend information and selected 16 MSS. Also selected 37 “Tier 2” species that are on a “Watch List” for future consideration as MSS.
- ◆ Finished reviewing INRMPs for presence of MSS on military installations and assessed degree of potential impacts their listing would have on DoD missions.
- ◆ Completed draft Fact Sheet of MSS to include description of the ranking process.
- ◆ Submitted final ranked list of MSS to the DoD PIF Steering Committee for review and comment.
- ◆ Provided the draft MSS list to OSD and Military Services for review and concurrence.



Bachman's Sparrow, a Mission-Sensitive Species — Paul Block

National Environmental Policy Act Guidance

Priorities

- ◆ Develop and distribute tools on how to incorporate migratory birds within NEPA and other planning documents.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Continued to develop draft document titled, *Guidelines for Addressing Migratory Birds in NEPA Reviews*. The working group is amending the document to incorporate new draft NEPA guidance from the USFWS, as well as changes in interpretation of the MBTA due to the 2018 Solicitor's Opinion on incidental take. Additional internal reviews conducted by DoD NEPA subject matter experts.
- ◆ Continued to coordinate with USFWS Migratory Bird Office on changes to interpretation of incidental take.



Willow Ptarmigan — Charlie Van Tassel

Eagles

Priorities

- ◆ Provide subject matter expertise and institutional knowledge of eagles on DoD lands.
- ◆ To become a resource for and work collaboratively with installations to provide sound science on and assist in streamlining processes and permitting for eagles.
- ◆ Stay informed of national efforts such as the Western Golden Eagle Team.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Established in 2019 and held regular meetings to develop and refine group's purpose, priorities, and mission statement.
- ◆ Developed draft spreadsheet to summarize eagle species occurrences and management actions across DoD installations.
- ◆ Reviewing White Sands Missile Range draft Golden Eagle Management Plan.
- ◆ Reviewing various installation eagle take permits.



Golden Eagle — Rick Harness

Education and Outreach

Priorities

- ◆ Educate DoD senior leadership about national and regional bird conservation organizations and initiatives, and how they support mission relevant goals.
 - ◆ Inform military and installation civilians about DoD and/or USFWS guidance/policy regarding compliance with migratory bird requirements on DoD lands.
 - ◆ Promote and distribute educational and outreach materials about important or timely issues.
 - ◆ Develop, distribute, and post success stories about conservation and mission interactions. Distribute these accomplishments as appropriate to wider audiences via social media.
 - ◆ Participate in educational outreach events to installation personnel, the public, and partners both nationally and internationally.
 - ◆ Develop and conduct webinars for DoD personnel on bird conservation topics of mission relevance.
 - ◆ Post and/or distribute approved migratory bird guidance documents to inform INRMPs, NEPA, and other planning documents.
- ◆ Provide technical guidance to DoD leadership and resource managers on the implementation of Executive Order 13186, DoD/USFWS MOU, the “military readiness rule,” and the DOI Solicitor’s M-opinion.

Accomplishments

- ◆ DoD PIF National Coordinator contributed to the DoD Natural Resources Program’s *Natural Selections* newsletter, including an article on why bird monitoring is important on Department of Defense installations and a tribute to the late Dr. David Pashley.
- ◆ Increased our social media audience by 71%.
- ◆ Distributed information on migratory bird issues via DoD PIF listserv.
- ◆ Maintained the DoD Bird Conservation Photo “Shutterfly” image library.
- ◆ Hosted bird education and outreach events (e.g., World Migratory Bird Day, National Public Lands Day) throughout the country, highlighting DoD’s commitment to bird conservation.



Cape May Warbler—Chris Eberly

Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard

Priorities

- ◆ Explore, test, and disseminate information on the newest technologies and management techniques that emphasize non-lethal methods of mitigating BASH.
- ◆ Improve communication, coordination, and cooperation between Air Operations and Natural Resource programs.
- ◆ Coordinate data collection and natural resource management between BASH and Natural Resources Programs and promote the integration of BASH into INRMPs.
- ◆ Train airfield personnel about and communicate the importance of reporting all bird strikes and sending strike samples to the Smithsonian Feather Identification Lab.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Kicked off a year-long study at MCAS Iwakuni looking at the efficacy of acoustic technologies as an avian deterrent.
- ◆ Coordinated with NAS Kingsville on BASH hazards caused by vultures flying within approach and departure zones. This is a pervasive problem on military airfields and one that may require technological innovation solutions.
- ◆ On Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, continued monitoring the effects on grassland bird numbers in relation to the 7-14 inch grass height management on McGuire airfield using breeding season point count surveys.
- ◆ Initiated a study on 300 acres of grassland surrounding a Test Runway at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in which bird numbers will be monitored while half the grassland is maintained at 7-14 inches and the other half is left to grow tall.
- ◆ DoD PIF Representatives from Chesapeake Bay area installations collaborated with federal/state/public partners to evaluate historic research and design future research efforts in support of potential Bald Eagle depredation permits (for relocation or lethal control). These efforts support resolution of serious BASH risks posed by these birds in the region
- ◆ Continued a Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit agreement identifying Bald Eagle nests in southeast Virginia/northeast North Carolina. This supports the natural resources and BASH management for Hampton Roads installations.
- ◆ Participated in the development of new DoD PIF Fact Sheets and the administration of the DoD PIF Photo Library website.



National Military Fish and Wildlife Association Bird Conservation Working Group

Priorities

- ◆ Provide communication across the Military Services to installation managers and headquarters staff on bird-related issues at installations.
- ◆ Maintain working group membership distribution for sharing of bird conservation related legal or policy updates, management lessons learned, and collaboration potentials.

Accomplishments

- ◆ Coordinated and facilitated working group discussions and technical sessions at annual NMFWA Workshop.
- ◆ Continued to build on working group membership list to maximize interaction across installations and Military Services.
- ◆ Worked on, discussed, and disseminated information on AKN; eBird issues; public relations; and military community participation, awareness, and appreciation of bird conservation on DoD properties.
- ◆ Developed and distributed inter-Service survey compiling issues, concerns, and management priorities at installations. Survey's stated objectives include: facilitate learning by installation managers as to who has similar issues across the Military Services; facilitate collaboration and 'lessons learned' and/or innovation sharing; and assist in the compilation of the big picture of DoD successes for defense of future resourcing.



Burrowing Owl — Doug Burkett



Snowy Owl — Jeff Bolsinger

List of Representatives 2019

Regional Representatives

Jeff Bolsinger, Fort Drum – NY, VT
Trish Cutler, White Sands Missile Range –
West TX, NM, CO
Jackelyn Ferrer-Perez, Fort Hood – East TX,
AR, LA
Greg Fleming, Fort Belvoir – FL
Emily Gaydos, Camp Lejeune – MS, AL, GA,
Marine Corps East
John Joyce, JB McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst – NJ,
DE, MA, CT, RI, ME, NH
Frans Juola, NAVFAC Pacific – HI and Pacific
Islands
Jeff Keating, Fort Riley – KS, NE, SD, ND, OK
Robbie Knight, Dugway Proving Ground – UT
Cindi Kuntz, NAVFAC NW - WA, OR
David McNaughton, Fort Indiantown Gap – PA,
OH, IN
Elizabeth Neipert, USACE ERDC - AK
Kyle Rambo, NAS Patuxent River – MD, WV,
KY
Vacant - IA, IL, MI, MN, MO, WI
Alan Schultz, Fort Bragg – NC, SC, TN
Bob Schallmann, NWS Seal Beach - CA
Tiffany Shepherd, Luke AFB – AZ
Diane Walsh, MCAS Camp Pendleton –
Marine Corps West
Kevin Warner, Idaho Army NG – NV, ID, WY,
MT
Michael Wright, NAS Oceana – VA
Tim Burr, Junior Kerns, & Joe Hautzenroder -
Reps Emeriti



DoD PIF Steering Committee 2019

Program Representatives

Program Manager – Ryan Orndorff
National Coordinator – Rich Fischer
Technical Coordinator – Elizabeth Neipert

DoD Representatives

Army – Brian Moyer
Air Force – Jason Gibbons / Rebecca Meyer
Navy – Tammy Conkle
Marine Corps – Jacqueline Rice
Army National Guard – Jay Rubinoff
Army Corps of Engineers – Rich Fischer
DoD Natural Resources – Ryan Orndorff /
Megan Scanlin

USFWS Liaisons

Migratory Birds – Eric Kershner
Endangered Species – vacant
Sikes Act – Jarrad Kosa



Working Group Members

Research & Monitoring

R. Fischer (chair), T. Burr, E. Neipert, D. Bradshaw, G. Fleming, M. Wright, D. McNaughton, T. Shepherd

INRMP Guidance

R. Fischer (chair)

Climate Resilience & Adaptation

D. Walsh (chair), D. Bradshaw

Energy

T. Cutler (chair), D. Walsh

Mission Sensitive Species

G. Fleming (chair), R. Fischer, J. Bolsinger, J. Rubinoff, T. Cutler, J. Keating

Seabirds

B. Schallmann (chair), C. Kunz, F. Juola, G. Fleming

Invasive Species

D. Bradshaw (chair), E. Gaydos

Education & Outreach

B. Schallmann (chair), J. Ferrer-Perez (communication), E. Gaydos, R. Knight, T. Shepherd (annual report), A. Schultz, D. McNaughton, T. Burr, E. Neipert (website)

BASH

P. Block (chair), K. Rambo, J. Joyce, M. Wright, T. Conkle, T. Shepherd

NEPA Guidance

G. Fleming (chair), J. Rubinoff, J. Keating

NMFWA Bird Conservation Working Group

B. Schallmann (co-chair), A. Schultz (co-chair)

Eagles

T. Cutler (co-chair), R. Knight (co-chair), T. Shepherd (co-chair), M. Wright, K. Rambo, J. Joyce, L. Hartzell