

# DoD Partners in Flight

## 2019 ANNUAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Mission Support through Focused Conservation!

The goal of the Department of Defense (DoD) Natural Resources Program is to support the military's combat readiness mission by ensuring continued access to realistic habitat conditions, while simultaneously working to ensure the long-term sustainability of our nation's priceless natural resources. DoD manages its lands, which provide a critical network of natural ecosystems and habitats for migratory birds, by implementing Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs). INRMPs guide natural resources management activities in ways that help ensure "no net loss" of mission capability, while also providing for conservation, rehabilitation, and sustained multipurpose use of installation lands.

Federal legislation, such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), Executive Order 13186 (*Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*), and the "military readiness rule" (50 C.F.R. §21.15), require impact analysis of military readiness and non-readiness activities on migratory birds. While sound natural resource management often directly supports mission objectives, balancing the conservation of sensitive and protected resources with military testing, training and operations can be challenging.

**DoD Partners in Flight** (PIF), comprised of a network of DoD natural resources professionals and subject matter experts, facilitates actions to conserve and enhance migratory birds and their habitats in direct support of the military mission. The DoD PIF network works with range and other DoD personnel, state agencies, and regional PIF working groups, non-government organizations, academic researchers, and natural resources consultants to collectively promote and coordinate bird conservation across DoD lands.

### 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 DoD PIF Accomplishments and Future Priorities

## Accomplishments

- ◆ Provided guidance to DoD leadership on strategies for implementing the MBTA and related Executive Order following the release of the Department of Interior Solicitor's M-Opinion, which reinterpreted the relevancy of incidental take under the MBTA. Promoted DoD's official guidance, via email and verbal communication at meetings, directing resource managers and installations to "stay the course" to avoid and minimize incidental take of migratory birds during both military readiness and non-readiness activities.
- ◆ Supported DoD's engagement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on policy, guidance, and other 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.
- ◆ Worked with OSD to continue updating the DoD PIF website on the DoD Environment, Safety and Occupational Health Network and Information Exchange (DENIX) website.
- ◆ Updated master DoD PIF subject matter experts list, identifying DoD contacts for a wide array of subjects (e.g., avian taxa, specific geographies, avian management topics).
- ◆ Worked with federal partners to launch the Federal Avian Data Center (FADC) node of the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN). 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.

## Priorities and Goals

- ◆ Provide technical assistance to installation biologists to support overall management of migratory bird populations in support of federal statutes, and to ensure migratory birds are sufficiently addressed in INRMPs and that management enhances mission flexibility.
- ◆ Improve communication, coordination, and cooperation between Air Operations and Natural Resource programs including integrating Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard plans into INRMPs to mitigate and reduce strike hazards.
- ◆ Develop a summary and guidance document for the recently finalized DoD list of Mission-Sensitive Species, which are at-risk species that, if federally listed, would have the greatest impacts to mission implementation. The list helps installations prioritize monitoring programs and NEPA documents, and guides the development and prioritization of conservation actions.
- ◆ Identify emerging issues related to migratory bird management and mission requirements.
- ◆ Continue building a DoD AKN Program that builds on current functionalities and tools, which increases DoD installation participation and makes the AKN the best avian database and decision-making tool for DoD.



Yellow-throated Warbler — Dana Bradshaw