Partners in Flight

Helping Species at Risk | Keeping Common Birds Common
Voluntary Partnerships for Birds, Habitats, and People

Partners in Flight Steering Committee Action Brief

North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference
March 2023

The mission of Partners in Flight (PIF), a landbird conservation initiative created in 1990, is keeping common birds common and helping species at risk through voluntary partnerships. PIF's strategic goals to maintain healthy landbird populations, keep species from becoming threatened or endangered, promote full life-cycle conservation of migratory birds, and promote the value of birds as indicators of environmental health and human well-being are as relevant today as they were 33 years ago.

The PIF Steering Committee greatly appreciates the support and leadership the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has provided by funding and housing the U.S. PIF Coordinator position. Given the current vacancy in the position, the Steering Committee strongly supports a timely replacement of the PIF Coordinator position, and the essential engagement of qualified interim detailees, to ensure a smooth and effective transition in PIF leadership and operations.

Current PIF direction is driven primarily by the 2014 Strategic Planning document and the 2016 PIF Landbird Conservation Plan. Our top priorities and projects include:

- Enhancing Migratory Bird Joint venture engagement such as species evaluation, creation of population targets for landbirds, and conservation delivery of upland habitats.
- Increasing conservation delivery capacity through "Conservation Delivery Specialist" for multistate projects by partnering with Joint Ventures, Regional Flyway Councils, and USDA Forest Service and other federal and state agencies.
- World Migratory Bird Day 2023 with the theme of "Water: Sustaining Bird Life" (https://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/)
- Securing long-term support for the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN) from federal agency partners of the Council for Migratory Birds. Department of Defense is now requiring use of the AKN for all appropriate avian data collected on military installations.
- Maintaining PIF Science Communications position with Klamath Bird Observatory.
- PIF Awards in Leadership and Lifetime achievement. Eight recipients in 2023 (will be announced at this meeting during BLM and Paetners in FlightAwards reception, Thursday, March 23).
- Supporting implementation of the Road to Recovery (https://r2rbirds.org/), an independently funded enterprise focused on the recovery of the most rapidly declining birds in the Western Hemisphere.

As part of the 30-year anniversary, the PIF Steering Committee held online workshops in 2022 to evaluate the accomplishments and short falls of the last 30 years and to consider what bird conservation may need for the next over the 30 years. Results as follows:

- A progress report to evaluate the 2014 PIF Strategic Action Plan was completed. Of the 46 objectives listed: 72% were completed: 28% were partial completed. Many remain high priorities for the future and are now linked to the NABCI 5 game changing paradigms.
- A new set of priorities for the next 10 years to advance the relevancy and impact of the urgent need to conserve Neotropical birds and reverse the loss of 3 billion birds:
  1. Human well-being targets and human dimensions become a standard component of PIF plans and projects.
  2. PIF increase engagement with partners across the hemisphere to operate as a multi-national initiative across full annual cycles of birds.
  3. PIF is committed to recognizing the rights, worldviews and conservation contribution of Indigenous people, communities, and Nations in Canada, Mexico and the United States and to exploring ways to collaborate in the future.
  4. PIF (US, Canada) works with Latin American partners to advance Conservation Investment Strategies for Watch List species and their geographies.
  5. PIF supports policy development that is positive for bird conservation through a variety of means, including marketing and providing science, data, and technical support.
  6. PIF builds technical capacity, as well as institutional capacity in the areas of leadership and organizational culture, to make bird conservation more efficient and effective.

PIF is supported by **Working Groups** that focus on geographies of interest or subject matter. These Working Groups are open to all and depend on the shared expertise of our diverse partner network. Recent accomplishments include:

Western: *New Western Forest Initiative implemented with Pacific Birds Habitat and Intermountain West JVs and the USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region. New draft Desert Thrasher Conservation Plan, led by Sonoran JV and US Fish and Wildlife Service Southwest Region. New Western Hummingbird Partnership conservation planning led by Environment for the Americas. Enhanced Western Motus Network, exponential growth in new stations, and a new dedicated US coordinator sponsored by American Bird Conservancy. "Conservation without Borders" workshop series on international networking. Next meeting April 24-27 Las Vegas, NV.*

Eastern: *New Conservation Investment Strategies for Central and South America's Mid-elevation forests and Latin America's Gulf Caribbean Slope. Support development of an Eastern Grasslands Conservation Investment Strategy. Reach out to the forest products industry to collaborate on deciduous forest conservation practices. Develop new analytical approaches that combine data to identify important high priority migratory stopover areas (with Birds Canada and Audubon).*

International Science: *Updated the Avian Conservation Assessment Database (ACAD) to incorporate: nonbreeding assessment scores at the regional level; new percent-population-based area importance scores, eBird data and Status and Trends models; and a climate vulnerability threat score. Also maintaining Landbird Population Estimates Database and updated with new refined species' survey-detection distances to improve population estimates. Central American Avian Conservation Assessments are due to be released this spring. These two data bases (hosted by Bird Conservancy of the Rockies) remain the go-to assessment databases for North American and Latin American bird species and remain a high priority for future funding. Next meeting Sept. 8-20 in Blacksburg, Virginia.*

For more information, contact PIF Steering Committee Co-Chairs: Natalie Savoie for Canada (Natalie.Savoie@ec.gc.ca) or Mike Green (michael_green@fws.gov) for United States.