

DoD Partners in Flight Programs

Bird Conservation Programs in the Military



Mission

To conserve migratory and resident birds and their habitats on Department of Defense lands.

DoD PIF Programs

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Partners in Flight (PIF) program sustains and enhances the military mission by maintaining healthy landscapes and training lands through proactive, habitat-based conservation and management strategies. The key components to DoD PIF's work are its partnerships at state, regional, national and international levels, as well as the following programs.

Bird Conservation Planning

Bird conservation plans identify species and habitats most in need of conservation, and establish objectives for bird populations and habitats in ecoregions and states. These plans not only identify the specific habitat requirements of priority species, but also focus on the types and quality of habitats required by birds at the landscape scale. Information and recommendations in the plans are based upon science and consensus among interested groups and subject matter experts.

Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans

The Sikes Act Improvement Act of 1997 provides the means to link the goals and objectives of natural resources planning on DoD installations with those of the bird conservation plans. The Act mandates that Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMPs) are completed and implemented through ecosystem management practices that include large-scale, landscape-level goals that reach beyond installation boundaries. INRMPs also must address non-consumptive use of wildlife, and must be completed with review by both state and federal agencies. DoD PIF provides information to help natural resources personnel incorporate the best information on bird conservation into installation INRMPs. When developing INRMPs, natural resources personnel need to take into account several factors, including: developing and implementing inventory and monitoring programs; coordination with mission requirements; habitat conservation; collaboration and cooperation with other agencies and organizations; outreach and public access; integration with national and international bird conservation initiatives; and adhering to regulations. By taking into account these factors, natural resources personnel can provide the best information on bird conservation.

Coordinated Bird Monitoring

The Coordinated Bird Monitoring (CBM) Plan for DoD ensures that DoD meets its legal requirements for monitoring birds in the most cost effective manner possible. Monitoring includes short-term assessments, effectiveness monitoring and long-term status monitoring programs. CBM is an effort to increase the efficiency and utility of bird monitoring through improved coordination. The CBM Plan identifies four deliverables:

1. a review of existing bird monitoring programs on DoD lands;
2. guidelines for the design of bird monitoring surveys on DoD lands;
3. a plan for monitoring bird species of concern on DoD lands; and
4. recommendations for DoD's role in continental bird monitoring programs.



*Henslow's Sparrow, an Audubon Watchlist species, thrives on U.S. military installations.
Photo: Teresa Vanosdol*

North American Bird Conservation Initiative

The goal of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) is to deliver bird conservation through regionally-based, biologically-driven, landscape-oriented partnerships delivering the full spectrum of bird conservation across the North America continent. It integrates PIF bird conservation plans with international planning efforts for waterfowl, shorebirds, and waterbirds into structures analogous to existing North American Waterfowl Management Plan Joint Ventures. The resulting joint ventures manage all types of birds in all habitats.



Important Bird Areas

Important Bird Areas (IBA) are sites that are exceptionally important for bird conservation. The worldwide IBA program is administered by BirdLife International through a network of country partners. The IBA criteria are divided into four categories based on vulnerability and/or responsibility. For a site to be identified as an IBA, it must, during at least some part of the year, contain critical habitat that supports:

1. species of conservation concern;
2. range-restricted species;
3. species that are vulnerable because their populations are concentrated in one general habitat type; and
4. a significantly large concentration of breeding, migrating, or wintering birds, including waterfowl, seabirds, wading birds, raptors, or landbirds.

The goal of the IBA program is not just to recognize the sites as important, but to mobilize the resources needed to protect them. There are 56 DoD and Army Corps of Engineers sites identified as IBAs; these sites are unique in the fact that they already have a conservation plan in place: the installation INRMP.

Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard

Each year, civil and military aircraft strike thousands of birds. The Air Force and Navy combined report at least 5,000 bird and wildlife strikes involving military aircraft every year. These strikes cause in excess of \$33 million in damages. Yet only an estimated 20% of actual bird strikes are reported. Because pilots and crews use the same low altitude airspace as large concentrations of birds, preventing bird strikes is a serious issue to the military. DoD continually implements and improves aviation safety programs in an effort to provide the safest flying conditions possible. One of these programs is the Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) prevention program. Throughout DoD, air operations, aviation safety, and natural resources personnel work together to reduce the risk of bird and wildlife strikes through the Operational Risk Management process. Development and implementation of an effective BASH program requires constant interaction between installations natural resources managers, aviation safety and air opera-

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tions communities, and pilots and aircrews. Habitat modifications and scaring birds away from the runways are an integral part of the answer, but understanding the behavior and



Bird Conservation on DoD Lands

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movements of birds in relation to the airfield environment and military training routes by pilots and aircrews is also a critical factor in reducing bird strikes. By identifying the bird species involved and the location of the strike, researchers and airport managers can better understand why the species is attracted to a particular area of the airport or training route. DoD PIF coordinates with and provides information to DoD's BASH programs, in an effort to ensure that decisions are made with the most current bird conservation data.

DoD PIF Strategic Plan

The DoD PIF Strategic Plan offers a coordinated framework for incorporating bird habitat management efforts into installation INRMPs. DoD's bird conservation strategy focuses on inventory, on-the-ground management, education, and long-term monitoring to determine changes in bird populations on DoD installations. The DoD PIF Strategic Plan can be found at www.dodpif.org.



*Banded Burrowing Owl, Kirtland AFB
Photo: Octavio Cruz-Carretero*

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