

JUNE, 2000

## ABC-Led Campaign Results in Unprecedented Pesticide Withdrawal

An impending Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decision to deny the cotton registration for the insecticide chlorfenapyr prompted American Cyanamid to withdraw its application to register the pesticide for use on cotton. The March 2000 withdrawal is the first time a pesticide has been taken off the market solely based on its threat to birds and wildlife, and comes after an intense, year long-campaign, led by ABC, which brought numerous conservation groups such as World Wildlife Fund, Defenders of Wildlife, National Audubon Society, Environmental Defense Fund and others together with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, scientists, and the public, in opposition to the controversial pesticide. Chlorfenapyr, belonging to a group of chemicals called pyrroles, was demonstrated to be highly reproductively toxic to birds in laboratory tests and was shown to be particularly persistent in soils (with a first-order half-life of a year or more), seeds, and vegetation, presenting a continued risk to wildlife long after its initial application. In order to be effective in killing the target pests (mainly beet armyworm), chlorfenapyr also needed to be applied during times that coincided with critical



Laysan Albatross - see articles on pages 11, 13 and 15. Photo: USFWS

reproductive events in species of birds which nest near cotton fields. "An incredible array of organizations and people came together to achieve a truly landmark result", said Kelley Tucker, Director of ABC's *Pesticides and Birds* Campaign. However, while chlorfenapyr use in the U.S. has been effectively stopped, agricultural use of this chemical continues in Latin America. ABC continues to monitor the registration and use of pesticides that affect birds, acting as an advocate for bird conservation to governmental regulators, and bringing together appropriate agencies and individuals to address currently harmful pesticide practices. The *Pesticides and Birds* Campaign is expanding its efforts in the hope of identifying problem pesticides that affect migratory and resident bird species, not just in the U. S., but throughout the Americas. *Contact:* Kelley Tucker, Director, ABC Pesticides and Birds Campaign, (202) 778-9666, <ktucker@abcbirds.org>.

## OCS Legislation Passes House - \$\$\$Billions Possible For Birds & Wildlife

The Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) legislation, which contains billions of dollars for state wildlife programs and land acquisition, passed the U.S. House of Representatives on May 11 by a vote of 315 to 102. The "Conservation and Reinvestment Act" (CARA) - H.R. 701 - was co-sponsored by 316 House members. The U.S. Senate held hearings on its Senate counterparts after House passage, and both the President and the Secretary of Interior expressed support with key amendments. Most "bad" amendments were rejected on the House floor, while several amendments suggested by conservationists were adopted. Some troubling amendments and language remain in the House bill but these can yet be rectified in the Senate or in a conference committee. The legislation is the result of difficult bipartisan negotiations and compromises by Rep. Don Young (R-AK), Chairman of the House Resources Committee, and U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA) and others. CARA has been called one of the most comprehensive conservation bills in decades, providing dedicated, reliable, annual funding for land, water, and wildlife conservation from offshore oil revenue. For bird advocates, it means the potential for \$350 million annually for state wildlife programs. **Continued on p. 2**

## CONTENTS

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Chlorfenapyr              | 1   |
| OCS Legislation           | 1-2 |
| Spotted Owl               | 2   |
| Oil Spill                 | 3   |
| Eiders                    | 3   |
| Single-hulled Tankers     | 4   |
| Waterbird Plan            | 4   |
| Shrike                    | 5   |
| Amazon highway Scheme     | 5   |
| Piping Plover             | 6   |
| Macaw Smuggler            | 6   |
| ABC Program News 7-10     |     |
| ABC Pesticide Web Pages   | 7   |
| Poster Competition        | 7   |
| Caspian Terns             | 8   |
| Pesticide Re-registration | 8   |
| Horseshoe Crabs           | 9   |
| Climate Change            | 9   |
| Tower EIS                 | 10  |
| NABCI                     | 10  |
| Plastics                  | 11  |
| Birdcast                  | 11  |
| Harris' Hawks             | 12  |
| Honduran Emerald          | 12  |
| Longline Observers        | 13  |
| Fundación Jocotoco        | 13  |
| Cormorants                | 14  |
| Swamp Sparrow             | 14  |
| Albatross Decline         | 15  |
| Nene                      | 15  |
| Ecuador Pipeline          | 16  |
| Membership Form           | 16  |

**Bird Calls is the Newsletter of  
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## OCS Legislation

Continued from p. 1

These funds would be provided under Title III of the bill. The President had placed \$100 million in his budget for FY 2001 for such funding for non-game wildlife. The House Appropriations Committee has cut this entire proposal from the budget. The Secretary of Interior, in his support for passage of CARA-style legislation, expressed concerns voiced by conservationists that the legislation should make provisions for the state wildlife funding to be primarily dedicated to non-game wildlife. The President, while advocating some changes, stated "I urge the Senate to move swiftly on this legislation. I am confident that, working together, we can create a permanent conservation endowment that will be a true gift to future generations." The Senate hearing went well, but some Senators expressed opposition based on the dedicated funding, and property rights proponents voiced concerns over Title II, which guarantees stable, annual funding for the Land and Water at a \$900 million level. This dedicated funding would provide for state and federal acquisition of parks and refuges and recreational lands. Negotiations between Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Frank Murkowski and Ranking Member Jeff Bingaman appear to be moving forward on a Senate version of the OCS legislation. The Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee has rescheduled a vote on CARA for the week of June 21. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <[gww@abcbirds.org](mailto:gww@abcbirds.org)>.

## California Spotted Owl - Petition for Inclusion on ESA

On 4 April, a coalition of environmental organizations, including the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), Defenders of Wildlife, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign, filed a formal petition to list the California subspecies of the Spotted Owl, *Strix occidentalis occidentalis*, under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).



**Photo: Jim Quinn**

The two other subspecies, Northern and Mexican, were listed in the 1990s. The California race occurs throughout the Sierra Nevada and southern California ranges, to around the Pit River in the north. The petition cites four separate studies showing that the owl's population is declining by up to 10% annually. Although interim guidelines for conservation of the subspecies were released by the Forest Service in 1993, no permanent plan has yet been agreed. A response from the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service is anticipated by early July. *Contact:* Noah Greenwald, CBD, (520) 623-5252, <[ngreenwald@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:ngreenwald@biologicaldiversity.org)>.

## Maryland Oil Spill Kills Ruddy Ducks

On Friday April 7th a leak at the PEPCO Chalk Point Generating Plant in southern Prince George's County, Maryland spilled over 110,000 gallons of oil into Swanson Creek and subsequently the Patuxent River. The spill had initially been contained within the creek, but a change in the weather, with accompanying 60mph winds, took the oil over the containment booms and out into the Patuxent. The tidal nature of the river sloshed oil back and forth and into the surrounding creeks and marshes, exacerbating the seriousness of the spill. Thirty-five dead Ruddy Ducks were picked up and 24 more were taken by cleanup crews to be rehabilitated along with four Osprey, three Coots, a Savannah Sparrow, a



An oiled Ruddy Duck is rehabilitated by Tri-state Bird rescue. Photo: Tri-state

Common Yellowthroat, a Virginia Rail, a Double-crested Cormorant, and several other birds. Ultimately four of the Ruddy Ducks died but 20 were subsequently released. "I'm very proud of the effort to save the birds, particularly the Rudies. We are very grateful to everyone who helped." said Dr. Virginia Pierce, veterinarian with Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research, the group responsible for retrieving the

oiled birds. Tri-State cares for over 4,000 native, wild birds each year and has participated in eight oil spill rescues this year alone. They were aided in the Patuxent River rescue by Chesapeake Wildlife Sanctuary, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Baltimore Zoo, and other rehabilitators. PEPCO was praised for its quick response in alerting Tri-State to the bird hazard and several PEPCO employees helped in the rescue operation. The Delaware River is the nation's second largest for oil shipping, with over 1,000,000 gallons per day transported along it. Ruddy Ducks migrate to the Chesapeake, and the oil spill posed a significant hazard to the Patuxent River population. *Contact:* Dr. Virginia Pierce, Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research, (302) 737-7241, <[www.tristatebird.org](http://www.tristatebird.org)>.

## Critical Habitat Designation Latest Move to Protect Eiders

In response to a law suit filed last March by the Center for Biological Diversity, the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) has issued proposed rules to designate Critical Habitat for Threatened, Spectacled and Steller's Eiders. The proposed critical habitat includes parts of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and areas of the Alaskan North Slope, east to the Colville River Delta (for more information see: [www.r7.fws.gov/ea/press00.html](http://www.r7.fws.gov/ea/press00.html)). The proposed rule for Spectacled Eider was issued on February 1, and for Steller's on March 13. The rules are currently under a public comment period, and will be finalized on December 1,



Spectacled Eider. Photo: USFWS

2000 and January 5, 2001 respectively. The suit was filed after the northeast corner of the National Petroleum Reserve (which adjoins Colville Delta - a particularly significant breeding area for Spectacled Eiders) was opened for leasing by the Department of the Interior in August 1998, potentially threatening key habitat for both species. Although the oil development itself is the subject of separate litigation by environmental groups, oil explora-

tion is already underway in some newly leased areas. Once finalized, these rulings will prevent federal actions from "destroying or adversely modifying" the designated Critical Habitat. Such actions may include further leasing for oil development or development that requires federal consultation. Following precipitous declines, the Spectacled Eider was added to the Endangered Species List in 1993 and Steller's in 1997. *Contact:* Center for Biological Diversity, (510) 841-0812, <[www.biologicaldiversity.org](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org)>.

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web at  
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## Single-hulled Tankers Still Pose Major Risk to Seabirds

The history of major oil spills worldwide reveals that most involve single-hulled tankers which are over 20 years old. Today, the average age of the U.S. tanker fleet is 23 years - significantly older than it was in 1989, at the time of the Exxon Valdez spill. Since the 1990 Oil Pollution Act (OPA), which calls for a gradual phase-out of single-hulled tankers and full replacement with double-hulled vessels by 2015, only one major oil transporter, Conoco, has so far voluntarily replaced all its vessels with double-hulled craft, although these vessels are used primarily in international rather than domestic U.S. trade. No new double-hulled tankers have been introduced in the domestic Alaskan trade since the Exxon disaster, although ARCO is currently building two double



**Double-hull tankers reduce the threat to wildlife from oil spills.**

hulled vessels in the U.S., which could be destined for domestic use (foreign built vessels are not allowed for transport of oil between domestic U.S. ports). Despite the 25% additional cost of a double-hulled vessel (at an average price of \$125,000,000), Conoco states that "The environmental and economic benefits of double-hulled tankers far exceed their additional costs". Citing a 1997 incident in which a 400 square foot gash was ripped in the side of Conoco's double-hulled tanker "Guardian" by a third-party barge while entering the Port of Lake Charles, Louisiana, Conoco

CEO, Archie Dunham said "the inner hull was undamaged and not a single drop of the ship's crude oil cargo was lost. The U.S. Coast Guard later estimated the potential environmental and economic impact on the port could have run into hundreds of millions of dollars." On 12 December 1999, the Maltese Registered tanker "Erika" split in two off the French coast, spilling three million gallons of crude oil, which deposited along 250 miles of the French seashore. Countless numbers of seabirds were oiled, and the local oyster industry was ruined. The tanker was single-hulled and twenty-four years old - just one year older than today's average U.S. tanker. ABC calls upon oil companies to follow Conoco's lead and speed up the replacement of older tankers with new double-hulled vessels ahead of the OPA required deadline to prevent such a catastrophe from being repeated here. *Contact:* Mike Parr, ABC, (202) 778-9705, <mparr@abcbirds.

## Colonial Waterbird Conservation Plan Advances

The planning process for the North American Colonial Waterbird Conservation Plan is now entering its final stages. Colony site protection, feeding habitat management, long-line fishery impact, cormorant impacts on catfish farms, killing birds under depredation permits, and developing a continent-wide monitoring system have all been issues engaged. Regional workshops have been held from Canada to the Dominican Republic, and from Maine

to Hawaii during the plan's development. A workshop on the 'Biological Basis for Colonial Waterbird and Seabird Conservation' is scheduled for the joint meeting of the American and British Ornithologists' Unions in Newfoundland in August. The First International Workshop on North American Colonial Waterbird Conserva-

tion will be held in Plymouth, Massachusetts, on October 30-31, 2000. The launch of the draft plan for review and the initiation of regional planning are the foci of the meeting and participation is welcome. *Contact:* James Kushlan <jkushlan@aol.com>, or Melanie Steinkamp, (301) 497-5753, <Melanie\_Steinkamp@usgs.gov>.



**North American  
Colonial Waterbird  
Conservation Plan**

## San Clemente Loggerhead Shrike Struggles to Survive

The 2000 breeding season for the San Clemente subspecies of the Loggerhead Shrike is well underway, with 31 birds now in the wild and nine active nest sites. Of these 31 birds, nine were wild born, the remainder being captive-reared birds released since 1999. Four shrikes have fledged so far in 2000, and seven of the 33 Shrikes released in 1999 have survived to become breeders in 2000. Four of the nesting pairs in the wild contain captive-reared (one or both) birds attempting to breed in the first year following their release. If any of these pairs successfully hatch and fledge young, it will be the first time that successful recruitment of released birds into the wild population occurs. The Navy continues to make substantial commitment of monies and resources to shrike recovery, and despite the continuation of naval bombardment and other

military exercises in and around critical shrike habitat during breeding season, the Navy has made substantial efforts at better coordination with shrike recovery efforts. To further these ends, the Navy has hired a shrike Program Manager (a Ph.D. biologist) with experience in endangered, island species conservation, as well as an on-island coordinator for contractors assisting recovery efforts. A habitat recovery specialist will be visiting the island this month to ascertain what can be done to enhance recovery. In May, an attempt was made to conduct a controlled burn for an established firebreak, with a helicopter dropping fire-borne gel on a plateau above one of the five remaining, wild shrike nests. Fire escaped and burned about 320 acres, approaching within 350 meters of the nest. Fortunately, the nesting shrikes remained and the Navy is now reviewing the practice of fire-setting for firebreak maintenance. Nine captive pairs have produced 21 chicks to date and most of these juveniles will be released this year.

The Navy continues to pursue an Environmental Assessment to conduct increased bombardment activities and other military operations in and around shrike habitat. Gerald Winegrad of ABC recently met with a Navy official and the contractor conducting the EA to outline concerns with these plans. *Contact:* Gerald Wingrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.



Photo: Ron Garrison  
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## Brazilian Highway Scheme a Detriment to Rainforest

The Brazilian government has announced plans to build a new road system, which will effectively double the amount of paved highway in the country by the end of 2003. The plan, 'Avança Brasil', will create a network of 5,300 miles of paved roads, 3,000 miles of which will be within the Amazon rainforest. Some of these roads will be newly constructed, while others will entail the paving of already existing dirt roads. Two Brazilian groups Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia

(IPAM) and Instituto Socio-Ambiental (ISA), in conjunction with the Woods Hole Research Center in Massachusetts, have raised concerns about the potential impact a project of this scale could have on the region's ecology. Using studies based on other highway projects, they have produced a report showing that up to 55% of land within a 30 miles buffer zone, either side of a highway, can become deforested within 25-30 years of the highway's construction. In fact, 78% of Amazon deforestation takes place within 30 miles of paved highways. If this rate holds true for Avança Brazil, it could mean the destruction of up to

70,000 square miles of rainforest habitat. Paving roads makes them accessible year-round" said Dr. Georgia Carvalho of the Woods Hole Research Center, "and this means changes in land use. The deforestation impact does not come from the physical building of the roads but the extensive frontier expansion that comes in the years after." The aim of the report, produced jointly by the three groups, is to spark a debate within Brazilian society and raise awareness. It calls for a thorough investigation into the potential impacts of the plan. *Contact:* Woods Hole Research Center, (508) 540-9900, <info@whrc.org>.

## Partnership Protects Piping Plover

The Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, a partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian Wildlife Service, local State resource departments, and non-profit organizations (Ducks Unlimited, North Dakota Wetlands Trust, and the Delta Waterfowl Foundation, among others), is attempting to halt the decline of the Endangered Piping Plover in the northern Great Plains Region. The partnership, which has been operating informally since the 1990s has formulated a two-stage approach, concentrating on the beaches of the region's alkali lakes, home to most of the breeding pairs in the area. In the short-term, they will attempt to boost productivity to 1.6 fledged

young per pair by addressing predation by raccoons, and by predators with increasing populations such as American Crow, Ring-billed Gull, Great Horned Owl, and red fox. Most predation occurs on eggs and chicks under ten days old, and these will be protected with predator fencing around nest sites, colonies, and in some cases, entire beaches.



Photo: Richard Kuzminski

The long-range plan will focus on habitat issues, implementing such initiatives as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan to conserve tracts of plover habitat. Other strategies such as controlled burning and cattle grazing are also being considered. Bob Murphy, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said "At this time the species is still recoverable, and with the knowledge now in place about the bird's biology and behavior, it is as hopeful as it has ever been." He adds that it is not going to be inexpensive and they continued support will be needed to succeed. The hiring of a full-time biologist by the Nature Conservancy and the Joint Venture is expected to boost efforts. Contact: Bob Murphy, FWS, <Bob\_Murphy@fws.gov> or Jake Ivan, (701) 848-2722.

## Two and a Half Year Jail Term for Lear's Macaw smuggler

On April 14, 2000, at Newcastle Crown Court, U.K., parrot breeder Harry Sissen was sentenced to two and a half years in jail and ordered to pay \$8,500 in court costs, having been found guilty on four charges relating to the illegal sale and importation of parrots. The case, brought by British Customs, followed a raid on Sissen's property in 1998 in which 140 parrots of 25 species, including three Lear's Macaws were seized. Lear's Macaw is one of the most endangered bird species in the world, with a wild population of around 180 individuals. It is confined to a small area of North eastern Bahia, Brazil, where it nests on cliffs in a few small

colonies. The first three charges in the trial related to the illegal importation of Lear's Macaws and the fourth charge related to the illegal importation of six Blue-headed Macaws - both contrary to Convention in International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) regulations. The Blue-headed Macaw occurs in the western Amazon basin from extreme western Brazil to Peru and parts of Bolivia. Sissen smuggled the birds across Europe hidden in a car after buying them from illegal wildlife traders in Yugoslavia and Slovakia, and then allegedly left a trail of bogus documentation in an attempt to conceal the crime. Prosecution witnesses in the trial included U.K. opposition leader William Hague, who is also Sissen's local Member of Parliament. An attempt by the Defense Counsel to make light of the situation by intro-

ducing a reference to the famous Monty Python "Dead Parrot Sketch" during his cross-examination was ruled out by the Judge. Efforts to protect Lear's Macaw in the wild are currently underway under the auspices of the Lear's Macaw Recovery Committee. American Bird Conservancy is currently supporting work to protect the birds from illegal trapping in partnership with World Parrot Trust and the Barbara Delano Foundation. Contact: Mike Parr, ABC, (202) 778 9705, <mparr@abcbirds.org>.



## Updated ABC Web Site Features New Pesticides and Birds Campaign Pages

ABC's *Pesticides and Birds Campaign* has updated its web pages with new information, links and resources. The Campaign has enjoyed recent success with the U.S. cotton-use withdrawal of chlorfenapyr (see front page article) and is now focused the use of other, potentially harmful pesticides. The web pages will provide the public with up-to-date information on all aspects of the Campaign, past and present, in the 'Ongoing Programs' and 'News and Advisories' sections, plus a hot key to the current leading pesticides and birds topic. The 'Frequently Asked Questions' section gives the public access to a comprehensive glossary of terms and in-depth explanations of how and why birds are affected by pesticides. The site also offers suggestions on how people can become more involved with the registration process, and help reduce the risks to birds from chemical use in and around the home. Detailed accounts of individual pesticides, their chemical composition, uses, and potential hazards are contained in the 'Pesticide Profiles' section, with new profiles expected to be added at the rate of about two per month. A broad range of links is provided to other pesticide-related web sites as well as other non-web-based resources.

Set your web browser to:  
<http://www.abcbirds.org/pesticideindex.htm>

## Ten-Year-Old Wins Poster Competition for National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day

The second 'National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day' took place on May 13. Wild Bird Centers of America (WBCA) joined with ABC in sponsoring a national Children's Poster Competition to help



publicize the event, which again coincided with International Migratory Bird Day. The response to the poster competition was outstanding. From over 300 entries showing happy indoor cats, the overall winner (pictured above) and winner in the age 10 - 12 category was Holly Popp from Salem, OH. Holly is 10 years old, belongs to the Salem Bird Study Club, and "just loves birds and cats". Holly and her bird club each won a \$250 gift certificate from WBCA. The winner of the 8 - 9 age (top right) category was Brendan Armstrong from Chico, CA, and the winner in the 6 - 7 age category (right) was Ashleigh Gibbs from Spring, TX. They each receive an R.T. Chickadee bird feeder and nest box kit, a bird guide, and an R.T. Chickadee plush toy. The winning



posters can be viewed and downloaded from ABC's Web site at: [www.abcbirds.org/catsindoors.htm](http://www.abcbirds.org/catsindoors.htm) and on WBCA's Web site at: [www.wildbirdcenter.com](http://www.wildbirdcenter.com). George Petrides, president of Wild Bird Centers of America, said, "Congratulations and thanks to all the children who sent artwork for this contest. It is encouraging that so many young people are interested in the future of our bird populations and maintaining the health and safety of our domestic pets." Thanks to ABC's dedicated campaign activists, a number of articles on appeared in newspapers around the country, including the San Francisco Examiner, Houston Chronicle, The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Los Angeles Daily News, and The Tallahassee Democrat. Two articles can be viewed at: [www.dailynewslosangeles.com/archives/2000/05/12/new01.asp](http://www.dailynewslosangeles.com/archives/2000/05/12/new01.asp); and [www.thesunlink.com/news/2000/may/0512catandbirds.html](http://www.thesunlink.com/news/2000/may/0512catandbirds.html).



## Court Injunction Stops Corps from Destroying World's Largest Caspian Tern Colony

In early April, ABC, the National Audubon Society, the Seattle Audubon Society and Defenders of Wildlife asked the U.S. District Court in Seattle, to enjoin the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from destroying the Caspian Tern colony on Rice Island in the Columbia River. The Corps and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) wanted to force all terns to relocate to East Sand Island and elsewhere, where the birds might consume fewer smolt of hatchery-raised and wild, federally listed coho and steelhead

salmon. Rice Island and East Sand Island have about 30% of the total North American population of



Salmon smolt  
Photo: Alaska Dept. Fish & Game.

Caspian Terns, and 72% of the west coast population. The court issued

a preliminary injunction because the Corps failed to prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement. After the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals denied the Corps' emergency appeal, the federal agencies abandoned their plans to disturb the terns this year. NMFS still blames the terns for part of the decline in salmon populations, despite the fact that salmon runs this year are the highest since 1938. The Corps is pursuing further appeals, apparently because it wants to remove the terns entirely from the estuary during the next few years. On a more positive note, a large portion of the Caspian Tern population has voluntarily moved to East Sand Island in response to improved nesting habitat there. *Contact:* Craig Harrison, Pacific Seabird Group, <charrison@hunton.com>.

## Update on Pesticides Undergoing EPA Re-registration

ABC continues to engage the public and a wide variety of NGO's and scientists in comment on pesticides that pose significant risks to birds. The Environmental Protection Agency has made it increasingly possible for the public to review pesticide assessments and submit comments regarding their concerns. Last December, ABC issued an action advisory on fenthion, a product with acute avian toxicity via dermal exposure, inhalation, and ingestion. Readers may remember that fenthion was the pesticide used in the notorious Rid-A-Bird perch, and although this use was canceled last year, livestock uses, and a Florida

aerial mosquito spray use are still permitted. Recently, in response to concerns regarding human and ecological effects, the registrant, Bayer, has voluntarily withdrawn the livestock use in the U.S., but this use may continue in Canada. ABC was asked to be part of a stakeholder meeting on continuing fenthion use to control adult mosquito populations in Florida, where officials continue to worry about mosquito resistance to malathion, and the potential for encephalitis outbreaks. They argue that new aerial application technologies and controls, plus a lack of documented evidence of bird kills after recent fenthion applications, prove that it poses little risk to birds. ABC disagrees, and with assistance from the Pesticides Advisory Council, has recently delivered a final argument for cancellation of all but emergency fenthion applica-

tion for mosquito control. The April Action Advisory issued on ethyl parathion and its extreme and unacceptable toxicity to birds resulted in approximately 1,000 letters and e-mails to EPA expressing concerns for birds and other wildlife. ABC is hopeful that after the comment has been reviewed and addressed, the weight of scientific evidence will lead EPA to consider a full cancellation. In separate letters ABC recommended further use restrictions for disulfoton, and argued for cancellation of many uses of phorate, with a short-term phase-out of any remaining registrations. The ABC *Pesticides & Birds Campaign* web site has copies of these documents. *Contact:* Kelley Tucker, ABC, (202) 778-9773, <krtucker@abcbirds.org>.

## Virginia Defies Horseshoe Crab Reduction Plan

The Atlantic States Fisheries Management Commission (ASFMC) has voted to find Virginia out of compliance with the ASMFC horseshoe crab management plan. Fourteen states voted in favor of sanctions against Virginia (to Virginia's lone vote in dissent) for refusing to adhere to a 25% reduction in the landings of horseshoe crabs in 2000. Virginia's refusal to comply will undermine conservation efforts. The reductions were ordered after conservationists argued that horseshoe crabs are being over-exploited for conch and eel bait. The crab decline in Delaware Bay is being linked to a commensurate decline in the breeding success of Arctic migrating shorebirds such as Red Knot, which feed on horseshoe

crab eggs. Virginia's landings would be reduced to 152,495 crabs under the ASMFC Plan, which is over five times the State's reported landings for 1997, but substantially less than the million crabs landed in 1998. Nearly all of Virginia's increased landings have come from crabs caught in federal waters. Vessels trawling crabs beyond the three-mile state limit are prohibited from landing them in New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, but a loophole allows the boats to bring them ashore in Virginia. In 2000, Virginia intends to land 710,000 crabs before the Secretary of Commerce can act to order a closure of the fishery. In response to recommendations by the ASMFC, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a formal notice in the Federal Register on May 3, 2000 to prohibit fishing for horseshoe crabs in federal waters (EEZ), encompassing a 30 nautical mile area off the mouth of the Delaware



Photo:

Bay. This sanctuary would protect a substantial number of crabs utilizing the continental shelf just outside the critical spawning area in the Bay. Virginia was the only state to vote against this sanctuary. Please write Secretary of Commerce William Daley, and inform him of the need to close Virginia's horseshoe crab fishery. Please also contact Governor James Gilmore of Virginia by phone, fax, or e-mail to request Virginia's compliance. Contact: Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

## Climate Change Update

According to the World Meteorological Organization the 1990s was the warmest decade and the 1990s the warmest century of the last one thousand years. Of the more than 100 years for which instrumental records are available, seven of the top ten warmest years all occurred in the 1990s, and 1998 was the warmest year on record. Even 1999, largely expected to be cooler than average due to the effects of La Niña, was the fifth warmest year on record and the twenty-first year in a row where the average global surface temperature was above normal. The annual global mean temperature is now 1.3°

F (0.7° C) above those recorded at the beginning of the century. Limited data from other sources indicate that the global mean temperature for the 20th century is at least as warm as any other period since approximately 1400 AD. Animals can be effective barometers of their environment. Their overall mobility and the physiological constraints that temperature and moisture impose on many of them make them effective indicators of the effects of climatic changes. Indeed, many different taxa (vertebrate and invertebrate) in various parts of the world are already exhibiting recognizable changes, such as pole-ward and elevational range shifts, and changes in the timing of events like breeding. The balance of evidence suggests that, for those animals exhibiting significant

large-scale patterns of change, the most consistent explanation is recent climatic change. Like the proverbial "canaries in the coal mine", wildlife seem to be providing an important early indicator of how ecosystems might respond to climate change. Jeff Price, of ABC, will be presenting some of the results of his research on the potential impacts of climate change on U.S. summer bird distributions at the July 11 ABC Policy Council Meeting. Contact: Jeff Price, ABC, <jprice@mho.net>.

**The Next Policy Council Meeting is July 11 at ABC's Washington, DC Office. For Information Call: (202) 778-9666**

## FCC Denies Request for EIS on Tower Impacts to Birds; Efforts Continue To Find Solutions

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) has refused a request from the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement on the impact of communication towers on migratory birds. FWS Director Jamie Clark had written the Chairman of the FCC on 2 November 1999, urging an assessment be done to determine the extent of avian mortality at towers, and to arrive at mitigation measures to prevent such deaths. The FWS pointed out that at least four million and perhaps more than 40 million birds are being killed each year at communication towers.



Dickcissels are commonly killed at communication towers. Photo: USFWS

Responding on March 22, 2000, some four months later, the FCC Chairman declined the request to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, but noted that FCC will continue to cooperate in seeking solutions. Meanwhile, the Research Committee of the Communication Tower Working Group (CTWG) met at ABC's offices in Washington, and a draft protocol for a research program to develop ways to mitigate the impacts of towers on migratory birds was developed. Researchers, industry rep-

representatives, FWS and FCC officials and conservation group representatives spent a day going over this protocol to ascertain what causes the deadly collisions and what can be done to prevent the deaths. Alternative siting, lighting, and construction designs will be examined to minimize losses. The CTWG is chaired by the FWS and the Research Committee was moderated by Tom Muir of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. The full CTWG will meet later in June to review the research protocol and determine if and how funding can be gained to complete the research. ABC is nearing publication of a study that has determined that some 230 species of birds are killed at towers, including 52 species on either the FWS Species of Management Concern List or the Partners in Flight Watch List. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

### The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) Advances in Bird Conservation Regions

Three Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) have been staffed explicitly for North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) purposes in recent months:

**Northern Rockies** - Dan Casey <dancasey@digisys.net> has been BCR Coordinator there since January, working for ABC with both the Intermountain West and Prairie Potholes Joint Ventures (JVs).

**Shortgrass Prairie** - Mike Carter <mike.carter@cbobirds.org> of Colorado Bird Observatory is BCR Coordinator for the shortgrass, working with both the Intermountain West and Playa Lakes Joint Ventures. He is involved in a program of landowner contact tied

to occurrences of several high priority birds (such as breeding Burrowing Owls and Ferruginous Hawks) and is raising awareness of this often overlooked ecosystem <<http://www.cbobirds.org/projects/pp.html>>.

**Sonoran/Mohave Deserts** - Robert Mesta <Robert\_Mesta@blm.gov> has been working for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on the Sonoran JV since late in 1999. Half of the Management Board for this JV will be from the U.S. and half from Mexico. In numerous other BCRs, discussions within existing Joint Ventures, and within new partnerships are also leading to development of NABCI infrastructure. Agreement is now close to universal that bird conservation delivery mechanisms should work on all birds in all habitats. More information on bird conservation in other BCR's can be found on the following web sites:

Partners in Flight <[www.partnersinflight.org/pifbcps.htm](http://www.partnersinflight.org/pifbcps.htm)>;

North American Waterfowl Management Plan <<http://northamerican.fws.gov/>>;

Colonial Waterbird Conservation Plan <<http://northamerican.fws.gov/nawmphp.html>>;

U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan <[www.manomet.org/USSCP.htm](http://www.manomet.org/USSCP.htm)>;

Commission on Environmental Cooperation <[www.crossdraw.com/cec/](http://www.crossdraw.com/cec/)>.

ABC wishes to thank the following donors for their support of NABCI: the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, the LaSalle Adams Fund, the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, the Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation, and many federal and state natural resource agencies. *Contact:* David Pashley, ABC, (540) 253-5780, [dpashley@abcbirds.org](mailto:dpashley@abcbirds.org).

## High Seas Plastics Threaten Albatrosses

Ever wonder where that disposable lighter went? As the photo of the Laysan Albatross chick carcass on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge illustrates, plastic debris is being ingested by parent birds and fed to the chicks. How could this happen on Midway, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, 2,400 miles from the nearest continent? Adult Laysan Albatross feed throughout the North Pacific Ocean, following the oceanic currents, traveling hundreds, even thousands of miles in search of food. Debris of all colors, shapes and sizes is accidentally being eaten by the adults along the way and then fed to chicks back at the nesting grounds. Chicks normally regurgitate indigestible prey remains before they fly, but plastics can complicate this process, causing appetite suppression (which may be enough to dehydrate or starve chicks already in poor condition), mechanical blockages of the esophagus, stomach or gizzard, and torn or punctured organs resulting from sharp fragments. Scientists found one adult Laysan with a piece of plastic extending through the stomach, muscle, and feathers so that it was visible from the outside of the bird. Additionally PCB's, partially burned plastics, and synthetic additives may serve as sources of harmful chemical contaminants. Recent studies indicate that 50% by weight of the material regurgitated by albatross chicks consists of plastics - lighters, light sticks, pens, toys, partially burned plastic conglomerates, and tooth brushes. Black-footed Albatrosses also consume plastics, but Laysans seem to consume more than other seabirds. Studies in 1994-1995

found plastics in 97.6% of Laysan chicks sampled on Sand Island at Midway and preliminary research indicates that plastics consumption is increasing. Scientists on the Island have collected five gallon buckets filled exclusively with disposable lighters from the nests of Albatross chicks. How could our high seas become so contaminated with plastic debris? The majority of plastic material is generated from municipal, solid waste disposal at sea, coastal landfills and runoff, and from vessels. Despite the MARPOL Convention prohibiting ocean disposal of plastics, the Pacific, the world's largest ocean, is still receiving huge amounts, much of which originates from Japan and other Asian capitals. Efforts to enforce the MARPOL Convention and to educate nations and people about the use and disposal of plastic items must be enhanced. *Contact:* Heidi Auman, 808-599-5400, [hauman@midwayisland.net](mailto:hauman@midwayisland.net). Heidi can also arrange for eco-tour stays at Midway NWR.



Photo: Rob Shallemburger

## New Website Uses Radar to Track Bird Migration

A new website lets the public track bird migration across the Mid-Atlantic region using NEXRAD Doppler Weather Radar. [www.birdcast.org](http://www.birdcast.org) provides a morning and evening snapshot of the movements of migrating birds so the general public and city officials can help decrease potential threats along their routes. The two month long pilot program, focusing on the Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C. greater metropolitan areas, concluded this spring. The project will recommence in the fall, when web users will be able to get daily forecasts of bird movements, learn about the best viewing spots, and find out how human activity impacts birds. The program could aid people in making informed decisions about application of pesticides, or other activities that may harm birds. It may also provide an extra tool in the research being done into tower and building strikes by migrating songbirds. By encouraging the public to report bird sightings, project scientists will be able to gather information on migratory movements to correlate with the radar data. The site is co-sponsored by The Academy of Natural Sciences, National Audubon Society, Clemson University Radar Ornithology Lab, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Geomarine and US Environmental Protection Agency. *Contact:* <http://birdsource.tc.cornell.edu/Birdcast/home.html>.

## Tucson - Electrocution Primary Cause of Death for Harris' Hawks

There is renewed interest in a 1993 study, which revealed that the largest single cause of mortality of U.S. Harris' Hawks is electrocution on public utility poles, in light of a rising conflict between environmentalists and Tucson Electric Power Company. Over 150 people attended an April meeting held by The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) to raise awareness of the plight of the area's Harris' Hawks, dozens of which, along with Red-tailed Hawks, Great Horned Owls, Great Blue Herons, and other birds have been electrocuted in recent months alone. CBD claims that Tucson Electric is making insufficient effort to properly insulate its poles, needlessly killing birds, and further alleges that the power company is being less than forthright in reporting raptor deaths (there is no legal requirement for power companies to report electrocutions). In 1999, a lawsuit was successfully brought against Moon Lake Electric Company in Colorado for violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, when 12 Golden Eagles and five other raptors were electrocuted on the company's lines. CBD, working with Southeast Raptor Trust, is attempting to solve the problem through dialogue, research, public education and publicity rather than litigation but claims that efforts are being hampered by a lack of cooperation from the power company. The range of the declining Harris' Hawk, which commonly



**Two nesting, female Harris' Hawks killed simultaneously when one touched a live wire a-top a utility pole during a territorial squabble.**

perches on poles in social groups, is limited in the U.S. to southern Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and the southernmost tip of California, with the heaviest concentration between Tucson and Phoenix, where they are also most gregarious. It is the bird's communal nature that makes them so vulnerable to hazards such as electrocution. "If a cluster of birds is perched on a single pole, touching each other, and just one of them makes contact with a live wire, all of the birds could die." said Jim Dawson, author of the 1993 study. Of approximately 300 banded Harris' Hawks he released, 112 were killed by electrocution within three years. Dawson claims Tucson Electric is only retrofitting the few poles where hawk deaths have been reported, instead of pro-actively retrofitting the most dangerous poles before they kill birds. Tucson Electric attended the April public meeting and argued that it is making every reasonable effort to end unnecessary hawk deaths on its poles. *Contact:* Center for Biological Diversity, (520) 623-5252 x.303, <<http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/Harris.htm>>.

## World Bank to Assess Status of Honduran Emerald

The World Bank has called for an ecological study of the Río Aguán Valley, Honduras, to establish what impacts a proposed road project may have on the endemic and endangered Honduran Emerald, the only bird species entirely restricted to Honduras. The Olanchito-San Lorenzo sub-project would pave and widen a road through the valley, and will likely encourage further land clearance in the area, as it will make it easier for farmers to get perishable crops such as citrus fruit and bananas to market. The Emerald is restricted to dry thorn forest, an ecosystem that currently has no legal protection in the region, and one which has already been substantially reduced for cultivation. The ecological study will establish the likely impact of the road project on the bird's habitat and identify any mitigation measures that may be necessary such as a compensatory protected area. The species appears to occur in relatively high densities within its limited and dwindling habitat, so the potential for conserving a significant population in a relatively small area provides hope for the species. *Contact:* Mike Parr, ABC, (202) 778-9705, <[mparr@abcbirds.org](mailto:mparr@abcbirds.org)>.

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## NMFS Cuts Hawaiian Longline Observer Program

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced in May the elimination of 12 of the 14 positions in the Hawaiian longline fisheries observer program. Conservationists had called for an increase in observers to help provide valuable information on seabird and turtle mortality, and the effectiveness of measures to prevent the killing of these protected species. Now the decision by NMFS headquarters effectively cripples the Hawaiian observer program and threatens U.S. leadership in the implementation of the International Plan of Action for Seabirds, negotiated and agreed upon by all member nations of the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO). The U.S. delegation to the FAO, led by Terry

Garcia of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)/NMFS, fully supported a strong agreement that included a call for increased observer coverage, so NMFS has violated its own position by dismantling the observer program. Ironically, at the time of the announcement, the Second International Conference on Albatrosses and Other Petrels was in progress in Honolulu, with NMFS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel in attendance. The 140 delegates from 17 nations were appalled at this decision by the U.S. government, and scientists and policy specialists passed a resolution at the Longline Workshop that noted with regret, the lack of support for these observer programs despite their effectiveness, and urged nations to enhance observer programs. Comments were made by attendees that if a wealthy nation such as the U.S. could not support such ob-

server programs, how could less developed nations be expected to do so. The U.S., with NMFS as the lead agency, is now preparing its National Plan of Action for Seabirds under the UN FAO Agreement. Since this agreement is voluntary, U.S. leadership is critical to other nations' cooperation. The Hawaiian fishery kills thousands of Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses and although a Short-tailed Albatross has never been reported killed in Hawaiian waters, they have been recorded from longline vessels there. ABC and others have asked Secretary of Commerce Daley to reverse the NMFS decision. Conservationists continue to press for a strong National Plan of Action for the U.S. to include better regulations in Alaska, and strong regulations in Hawaii, where none currently exists. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, (202) 778-9652, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

## New Conservation Group Helps Ecuadorian Birds

The 1997 discovery of the Jocotoco Antpitta by Dr. Robert Ridgely of the Academy of Natural Sciences has sparked an important bird conservation effort in Ecuador. Over the past several decades, Ecuador has moved to protect large representative areas of its major biomes as national parks and ecological reserves, protecting many of the country's 1,600 or so bird species. But some other species - the Jocotoco Antpitta, El Oro Parakeet, and Pale-headed Brush-Finch, to name a few - have fallen between the cracks. The Antpitta is now the flagship species for Fundación

Jocotoco, a local organization dedicated to protecting Ecuador's most imperiled bird species and their habitats through the establishment



Photo: Doug Wechsler, ©Vireo

of a system of private nature reserves. Founded in 1998, Fundación Jocotoco has made great progress acquiring critical bird habitat at four sites in southern Ecuador. It plans a network of as many as eight reserves, the management of which would be funded partially through ecotourism. Fundación Jocotoco is a model for other tropical countries and a way for donors to leave a legacy of bird protection in the world's most bird-rich areas. Funds are presently required to develop reserve management capacity and step up the purchase of additional critical parcels. *Contact:* Bob Ridgely, Fundación Jocotoco, (215) 299-1059, <ridgely@discovery.acnatsci.org>, or <pegpenr@aol.com>.

# Cormorant Management Plan Underway

On May 25, 2000, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) completed the last of ten scheduled public meetings around the U.S. to receive public comment on the proposal for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Double-crested Cormorant Management. The EIS will consider a range of management alternatives to address population expansion of the Double-crested Cormorant. Representatives of ABC, Humane Society of the United States, and the Ornithological Council spoke at the first hearing held in Washington, DC, and all emphasized the necessity of basing management decisions on sound science. At the public meetings at Syracuse and Watertown, NY, sport fishermen and others supporting lethal control of cormorants, far outnumbered bird conservationists (an estimated 160-1).



**Fishermen are calling for a hunting season on Double-crested Cormorants**

Only one speaker called for restraint in controlling cormorants while all others generally emphasized the need to immediately and drastically reduce or eradicate them. Several speakers mentioned that fisherman will begin shooting cor-

morants again as a "civil disobedience" action if the government doesn't start greatly reducing cormorant populations. As Double-crested Cormorant populations have grown significantly, illegal and legal killings of thousands of cormorants has occurred (the illegal slaughter of over a thousand nesting cormorants occurred at Little Galloo Island near Watertown, NY during summer 1998). Congressional interest has forced the issue of how to manage or "control" their numbers to the forefront. Legislation introduced by Rep. McHugh from upstate NY would require a cormorant hunting season. Riders have been put on bills forcing FWS to conduct a costly EIS, as fishing interests besiege Congressmen to do something about the cormorants. Piscivorous birds around the U.S. are being blamed for fisheries declines, though there is little scientific evidence to support this (also see article on Caspian Terns in this issue). In addition to the public hearings, FWS has received 205 written comments in response to the notice on the EIS. From those letters, numerous management options were identified, ranging from protecting cormorants to initiating a hunting season on them. A depredation order was issued in 1998 by the FWS for cormorants at aquaculture facilities in 13 states, the first such depredation order in many years. Aquaculturists are allowed to shoot cormorants without obtaining MBTA depredation permits. FWS needs to hear from those concerned about this issue from a conservation perspective. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org> or for web available data on the Cormorant and the EIS, call the FWS Migratory Bird Management Office, (703) 358-1714.

## Coastal Plain Swamp Sparrow - Potential Decline Researched

The Coastal Plain Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgina nigescens* is a rare and poorly-known subspecies first described in 1951 from the Mid-Atlantic region of the Eastern Seaboard. Its wintering grounds are unknown, and its breeding range encompasses a relatively small area of coastal marsh from southern Maryland to northeast



**Photo: Dan Sudia**

New Jersey. This subspecies prefers brackish shrub swamps associated with intertidal estuarine environments, and appears to be concentrated in the Chesapeake-Delaware Bay area. It arrives on its breeding grounds after the two other races of Swamp Sparrow have migrated through. Recent surveys of traditional breeding areas for the Coastal Plain race indicate that a substantial decline may be occurring, or that a distribution shift may be taking place. Volunteers are needed by Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Center and wildlife agencies for ongoing surveys in MD, DE and NJ to establish the current range and population size. *Contact:* Jon Beadell, Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, (301) 497-5559, <monint3@usgs.gov>.

## Black-footed and Laysan Albatrosses Decline, International Action Urged

Representatives of 17 nations attended the Second International Albatross Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii, where researchers revealed steady declines in the population of Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses. The vast majority of these birds breed on the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, and both are killed on Alaskan and Hawaiian longline fishing hooks. The Black-footed Albatross was listed in 1998 as Vulnerable by the IUCN. Its global breeding population has since dropped from 61,866 pairs to 54,563 pairs. Laysan Albatrosses have declined from 558,415 pairs in 1998 to 448,862 pairs in 2000. The other Northern Hemisphere Albatross, also killed on U.S. longlines, is the globally endangered Short-tailed Albatross, which breeds only on Torishima Island in Japan. Once numbering over five million birds, it now numbers about 1,250 birds, marking a very slow recovery from near extinction in the 1940s. At the conference, participants agreed to pursue the formation of a Northern Hemisphere Albatross Steering Group, which would focus monitoring and research, and facilitate collaboration to protect all three Northern Hemisphere species. Participants also passed the resolution on longline observers (see separate story). Delegates expressed concern over the failure of the vast majority of longlining nations to assess impacts on seabirds. A Longline Workgroup unanimously called for all longlining nations to comply with the International Plan of Action for Seabirds adopted by the United Nations Food and Agricultural

Organization (UN FAO). Only six nations are currently preparing plans of action to meet the February 2001 deadline. Letters will be sent to all longlining nations urging their compliance to assure protection for the seabirds that forage the world's oceans. ABC and its partners continue to work with NMFS to try and foster a strong U.S. National Plan of Action to serve as a model for other nations. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.



Laysan Albatrosses  
Photo: Gerald Winegrad, ABC

## Safe Harbor Agreement to Restore Nene

Hawaii's state bird the Nene, or Hawaiian Goose, is to be introduced to Molokai. Under the Safe Harbor Agreement, Nenes will be released into the wild on private ranchland on the island, where the bird has not occurred in centuries. When the Nene became the state bird of Hawaii in 1957, prospects for its survival seemed slim. It had nearly disappeared during the previous decade as a result of the combined effects of over hunting, habitat loss, and predation by introduced animals such as mongooses, feral cats, dogs, and pigs. A captive breeding program had been initiated in 1949, and since then more than 2,000 captive-bred Nene have been returned



Nene. Photo: USFWS

to the wild. At present, small populations of this bird occur on three of the Hawaiian islands: Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai, but its survival in the wild is still dependent on continuing re-introductions from cap-

tive stock. An agreement recently reached between the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources and the Puu O Hoku Ranch Company is intended to also give the geese a foothold on Molokai. Although there are archaeological records of the goose on Molokai, it had probably disappeared by the time Captain Cook first visited the islands in 1778. Nenes forage in cattle pastures, and the continuation of ranching operations is expected to be compatible with the bird's needs. The Nene agreement was recently approved by the board of the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources and is expected to receive final approval after a 60-day public comment period. *Contact:* Michael Bean, Environmental Defense, (202) 387-3500, <mb@edf.org>.

## Ecuador Pipeline to Impact Mindo Important Bird Area

A new crude oil pipeline across the Andes is to be rerouted through Ecuador's first Important Bird Area (IBA). Mindo, which lies on the western slope of the volcano Pichincha, about 25 miles west of Quito, is one of Ecuador's principal birding locations. The majority of the primary forest there is already protected, and 40 restricted-range or globally threatened bird species occur in the area, including the much sought-after Giant Antpitta, and Tanager Finch. A spectacular supporting cast includes Toucan Barbet, Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, Golden-headed Quetzal, and Andean specialties such as the Torrent



**Toucan Barbets are a near-threatened species found in the Mindo IBA.**  
**Photo: Paul Salaman**

Duck, and Andean Solitaire. An Argentine construction company, Tenco International Construction Corporation (TECHINT), began surveying in this area and has already illegally cleared trails and cut trees in reserves and on private property, including through a territory of the globally threatened Moustached Antpitta. An Environ-

mental Impact Statement by the Texas-based company Entrix Americas clearly shows this area to be highly sensitive. The forest clearance associated with the pipeline construction, the opening up of pristine areas to local hunters, the risk of erosion and siltation of the Mindo hydrological system, plus the risk of future oil leaks, all present a serious threat to the forest and its threatened birds. Local landowners have initiated legal action against TECHINT, and filed an official complaint with the Pichincha regional forest service. Recently, contact has been established with some of the companies in the consortium, and a series of demands to minimize impact of a potential pipeline has been presented to them. *Contact:* Paul Coopmans, <coopmans@ecnet.ec>.

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