

November 2003

## Fenthion Withdrawn

ABC and its partners have achieved a major victory in the ongoing battle against the controversial pesticide fenthion. In March 2003, drug and chemical manufacturer Bayer announced its intention to voluntarily withdraw fenthion (used under the trade name Baytex) from the market. At the urging of ABC and its partners, EPA has now approved this withdrawal and has set a deadline for all sales to end by June 30, 2004, and all uses to end by November 30, 2004.

For more than two years ABC has led a campaign to remove fenthion from the market due to its extreme toxicity to birds. In collaboration with Defenders of Wildlife and the Florida Wildlife Federation, ABC filed a law suit against EPA in 2002 (*Bird Calls* Vol. 6, No. 3), citing violations of the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in the continued use of this highly toxic organophosphate pesticide, which is used to kill adult mosquitoes in four Florida counties. Fenthion has been implicated in the deaths of hundreds of birds in Florida including an endangered Piping Plover. All other counties in the United States have switched to less toxic alternatives.

In the past, fenthion was sold for many different uses, including flea and tick shampoos for dogs, as well as its formulation to kill birds, marketed as the "Rid-a-Bird Perch." However, these products were removed from the market due to concerns regarding human and animal health. "We applaud Bayer and EPA for this



The risk posed to Piping Plovers and other birds in Florida from fenthion has now been stopped. Photo: Clipart.com

decision. There is simply no justification for using fenthion when safer, equally effective alternatives exist for controlling mosquitoes and protecting the health of people, animals and the environment," said ABC's Dr. Patti Bright.

The three plaintiffs in the lawsuit have agreed to stay their case until the November 30, 2004 deadline. Should Bayer decide to sell the manufacturing rights to another company to begin producing the pesticide again, the groups have the ability to re-instate the action. *Contact:* Patti Bright, ABC, <pbright@abcbirds.org>.

**NOW AVAILABLE**  
***The ABC Guide to the***  
***500 Most Important***  
***Bird Areas in the U.S.***  
**See Back Cover for**  
**Details**

## Socorro Dove Set to Return to Wild after 30 Years

The Socorro Dove, endemic to the tiny, isolated island of Socorro, which lies off the northern Pacific Coast of Mexico has not been recorded in the wild since 1972. It was extirpated from the island through a combination of hunting, cat predation, and habitat loss. Fortunately several birds were captured in the 1920s, and these formed the nucleus of a breeding stock that may now provide a lifeline for the species.

Thanks to the efforts of the late Dr. Luis Baptista, working at the California Academy of Sciences under the auspices of the Island Endemics Institute, a project to reintroduce captive-reared birds began to take shape in the 1990s. The program has since been advanced by Juan Martínez-Gómez working at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. With support from the Mexican Navy, aviaries are now under construction on the island, awaiting the arrival of the first Socorro Doves to be seen there in 30 years.

In order to effect a successful restoration, it will ultimately be necessary to remove feral cats from the island, as well as introduced sheep that are hampering the re-growth of native vegetation. A locust swarm has also destroyed extensive tracts of habitat and needs to be eliminated. Additionally, Mourning Doves have since colonized or been introduced to the island. This species has previously hybridized with Socorro Doves in

*Continued on page 2.*

**CONTENTS**

Fention Withdrawn	1
Socorro Dove Returns	1 & 2
Mute Swan Control	2
Resolution in Lake Apopka	3
Wild-Fledged Condor Hopes	3
Rats Threaten Alaskan Auklets	4
Coalition Against Pesticide Use	4
CA Loop-hole Leads to Kills	5
Pursuit of Toothfish Pirates	5
Conservation Groups Team Up	6
Woodpecker Re-classified	6
ABC Releases "Green List"	7
Guans Fledge Chicks	7
Recovering Paradise	8
Study Finds Protection Needed	8
Fire Threatens Merganser	9
Birds Killed at Tower	9
New Guidelines for Turbines	10
Mountain Plover Not in Threat	10
US Shorebirds Threatened	11
FWS Proposes Parrot Imports	11 & 13
Financier Pulls Out of Project	11
US Albatrosses Threatened	12
Cats, TNR and the Law	12
Vulture Slaughter Agreement	13
Euthanasia Drug Kills Eagles	13
FWS 10-Year Plan for Birds	14
Depredation Order Approved	14
Birds in Brief	15
IBA Book Published	16

Abbreviations

ABC: American Bird Conservancy  
 FWS: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
 NMFS: National Marine Fisheries Service  
 EPA: Environmental Protection Agency  
 USDA: U.S. Department of Agriculture

**Bird Calls is the Newsletter of  
 American Bird Conservancy (ABC)  
 and the ABC Policy Council.**

Bird Calls is partially funded by a grant from the  
 International Affairs Division of the  
 U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service

**Editorial Committee:**

**George Fenwick  
 Merrie Morrison  
 Mike Parr  
 Gavin Shire  
 George Wallace  
 Gerald Winegrad**

**1834 Jefferson Place, NW  
 Washington, DC 20036  
 202-452-1535/ fax 202-452-1534  
 E-mail: abc@abcbirds.org  
 Web: www.abcbirds.org**

**The next meeting of the  
 Policy Council is at 9:45am on  
 November 13, in Washington, D.C.**

**ABC Policy Council Officers:**

**Chair: Jim Kushlan  
 <jkushlan@earthlink.net>  
 Vice Chair: Perry Plumart  
 <pplumart@audubon.org>**

# Step Back for Mute Swan Control

On September 17, FWS put a stop to the control of the alien Mute Swan by withdrawing all permits to kill the birds or addle their eggs. The Service has said it will not issue any new permits pending further review of the issue. This reversal followed a federal judge's order that the State of Maryland stop killing Mute Swans in the Chesapeake Bay while a lawsuit brought by the animal rights group, The Fund for Animals, challenging the FWS-issued take permit was still pending (*Bird Calls* Vol. 7, No. 2).

The killing of Mute Swans has been controversial for the government - supported by bird and wildlife conservation groups, but opposed by animal rights organizations and some vocal Maryland residents. In late 2002, one local Marylander successfully pursued a case in the U.S. Court of Appeals that afforded protection to the Mute Swan under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a statute designed to protect America's native species (*Bird Calls* Vol. 6, No. 1).

In early July, the Service completed a "Final Environmental Assessment for the Management of Mute Swans," that allowed for the take of up to 3,100 swans annually in the eastern United States and the issuance of depredation orders for egg addling and removal or sterilization of additional birds. The plan had been supported by 13 state wildlife agencies, 53 organizations (including ABC, Environmental Defense, Wildlife Management Institute, and Ducks Unlimited), and more than 2,600 individuals concerned with the damage that this species inflicts on native wildlife and habitats.

The Mute Swan population in the Chesapeake Bay has grown from five

escaped birds in 1962 to more than 4,000 today. These birds are aggressive towards other waterfowl and have contributed to the extirpation of the Black Skimmer and Least Tern from key breeding sites in the Chesapeake. In addition, the swan population consumes 10% of all submerged aquatic vegetation in the Chesapeake Bay, an essential food source for native migratory waterfowl. FWS is now in a position where it sanctions the hunting of native Tundra Swans (even allowing an accidental take of the rare Trumpeter Swan), but does not currently permit the take of introduced, rapidly increasing Mute Swans. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

*Socorro, from Page 1.*



Socorro Dove. Photo: Dong Lin © California Academy of Sciences

captivity, making it necessary for researchers to carry out genetic tests to ensure that reintroduced birds are pure-bred. This could also become a problem for wild birds unless the Mourning Doves are removed.

Socorro Island is home to three additional bird species of extreme conservation concern: the Socorro Parakeet (endangered), the Townsend's Shearwater (critically endangered), and the Socorro Mockingbird (critically endangered). Habitat for these three species is also affected by sheep grazing, and the shearwaters are heavily predated by cats. *Contact:* George Wallace, ABC, <gwallace@abcbirds.org>.

## Resolution in Lake Apopka Bird Kill

The Department of Justice has concluded its investigation into bird deaths at Lake Apopka in Florida, and reached an agreement with the St. Johns River Water Management District, the agency responsible for the die-offs.

An estimated 676 birds, including American White Pelicans, Wood Storks, and Great-Blue Herons died in 1998 and 1999 when they ate fish from the lake contaminated with organochlorine pollutants, including DDT and dieldrin.

Following the Second World War, fertile farmland was created by draining part of Lake Apopka. Decades later, the St. Johns River Water



Several birds including wood storks died from organochlorine poisoning at Lake Apopka. Photo: Clipart.com

Management District purchased much of this land as part of their program to restore the lake. However, a 1997 study showed the soil contained high residues of toxic pesticides, which had been regularly used on the farms prior to their cancellation by the EPA. Despite this knowledge, in 1998, the district re-flooded 14,000 acres of land,

resulting in the release of the chemicals from the soil and the subsequent bird kills.

As part of the agreement reached with the Department of Justice, the St. Johns District agreed to pay \$90,000 to wildlife rehabilitators who worked to save the poisoned birds, and to pay FWS in excess of \$50,000 to cover the costs of investigating the deaths and to fund two new studies, including one into DDT-related eggshell thinning. The District has also agreed to cooperate with FWS in the protection of Wood Storks at the recently purchased 9,000 acre Matanzas Marsh, a relatively undisturbed tract of land that is home to one of the largest Wood Stork colonies in Florida. They have further pledged to take steps to ensure that similar incidents do not happen again, including staff training and the development of an "Avian Protection Plan." *Contact:* St. Johns Water Management District, (800) 451-7106.

## Hopes for a Wild-Fledged Condor Rise

The eyes of the California Condor Restoration Project biologists are tightly focused on a young condor nestling in Arizona. The bird is one of only six known to have hatched in the wild since the reintroduction program began in 1992, and stands the best chance yet of being the first ever to fledge. It is now as big as its parents, is flapping its wings, and is very observant of the world outside its nest.

Despite the fact that the bird has passed the most critical time in its life (the first two weeks after hatching), there is no guarantee that it will successfully fledge. Nevertheless, Peregrine Fund spokesman Bill

Heinrich was cautiously optimistic that it would survive to be the first wild-hatched California Condor to soar over Arizona in nearly 20 years.

The nest is located in an area of the Grand Canyon known as "The Inferno," that can only be reached by a grueling 12 mile hike. The inaccessibility of the site has meant that the young condor has yet to be banded. Instead, biologists are waiting for the bird to leave the nest before trapping it and fitting it with a transmitter.

A pair of condors at the California release site also hatched a chick this year, but the bird did not survive. Biologists removed the five-month old hatchling from its nest when they suspected something was wrong with its development. The bird was found to be severely undernourished and suffering from a respiratory disease. Despite efforts to turn the situation

around, the bird had to be euthanized. Two other wild condor pairs laid eggs this year, but neither hatched.

Meanwhile, a California man was charged with violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in the death of a condor. If convicted of this misdemeanor charge, Britton Cole Lewis, 29, could face six months imprisonment and a fine of \$15,000. Mr. Lewis allegedly shot adult condor number 8, a matriarch of the reintroduction program. AC8 was the last female condor to be taken from the wild in 1986 and had raised 12 young in captivity. She had been released in 2000, the first of the wild-caught birds to be returned to the wild. There are now 78 condors in the wild in the United States and 137 in captivity, with an additional five wild birds in Baja California, Mexico. *Contact:* Bill Heinrich, The Peregrine Fund, <bheinrich@peregrinefund.org>.

## Rats Threaten Alaskan Auklets

The world's largest colony of Least Auklets is under siege from introduced Norway rats. The colony, which currently numbers in excess of one million birds, is centered around Sirius Point on the island of Kiska. This is one of the most important sites for breeding seabirds in the Aleutian chain, and lies within the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, an ABC-designated globally Important Bird Area. The island also holds large numbers of Crested Auklets and other seabirds.

Recent research has shown that Least Auklet nesting success has been significantly reduced, with less than one in ten eggs producing chicks to fledging because of rat predation.



Least Auklets and other birds are threatened by rats on the Aleutian Island of Kiska. Photo: FWS

Population modeling by biologists has indicated that the current level of predation, which includes adult birds as well as chicks, could eventually extirpate the entire colony. Rats are present on 21 of the larger Alaskan islands. They reached Kiska during the

Second World War, gradually occupying the volcanic island's 70,000 acres.

The largest island to be successfully cleared of rats to date is the 29,300 acre Campbell Island, which lies approximately 400 miles south of New Zealand. However, FWS biologists hope to break this record by eventually clearing rats from the entire island of Kiska. To accomplish this task, thousands of pounds of rodenticide will likely have to be dropped by helicopter, costing more than one million dollars. An Environmental Impact Statement will also be needed and a public comment period will be required under the National Environmental Policy Act. Despite these hurdles, the future of Aleutian alcid colonies may depend on our ability to conduct future large scale rat eradications. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

## Coalition Acts to Prevent Toxic Pesticide Use

ABC and its partners in the National Pesticide Coalition have successfully prevented four states from using the pesticide carbofuran, a known bird killer, on millions of acres of cotton. Coalition members submitted a letter to EPA, co-signed by 61 organizations from around the country, urging EPA to deny requests from Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana to use the toxic pesticide under an "Emergency Exemption" clause (*Bird Calls* Vol. 7, No. 2).

An Emergency Exemption enables one-time use of a pesticide based on a specific emergency, without going through the agency's full review

channels. In the 1990s almost all uses of carbofuran were withdrawn due to its high toxicity to wildlife, particularly birds. However, for the past several years, states have used the Emergency Exemption process as a loophole for gaining routine access to carbofuran, because it is a "cheap and easy" fix for fighting cotton aphids.

ABC and its partners submitted information to EPA indicating that other alternatives exist (including natural controls such as a parasitic wasp and a native fungus) that are non-toxic to wildlife, cheap, and effective. After reviewing the information, EPA indicated that it would deny the Emergency Exemptions and, as a result, all four states withdrew their applications. This was a significant victory because it may set a precedent for future Emergency Exemption applications.

However, in September, California

attempted to circumvent the EPA decision by requesting permission to use carbofuran on up to 300,000 acres of cotton under a "Crisis Exemption" clause. In this case, EPA had only 36 hours to deny the application, after which the state could begin using the pesticide. EPA failed to act before the 36 hour period elapsed, and California began using carbofuran.

ABC and its partners immediately submitted an opposition letter to EPA signed by 37 groups. The letter pointed out violations of the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act arising from past use of the chemical that resulted in the deaths of Bald Eagles and other birds, and demanded that EPA revoke the exemption. As EPA was preparing to make a decision, California decided to withdraw its Crisis Exemption and stop further use of carbofuran. *Contact:* Patti Bright, <pbright@abcbirds.org>.

## Loophole Leads to More Longline Albatross Kills

In August, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) violated the Endangered Species Act by authorizing longline fishing off California without analyzing the fishery's impacts on endangered species. The court held that NMFS is required by law to conduct consultations to assess the potential impact of longlining on all six species of sea turtles found in U.S. waters, as well as on the Short-tailed Albatross.

After the Hawaiian longline fishery

for swordfish was shut down in November 1999 due to sea turtle bycatch, more than 30 longline vessels began landing their catch in southern California instead. The boats fish without restriction beyond the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone. ABC representatives and others met repeatedly with NMFS officials to urge the closing of this deadly loophole that led to the killing of 450 Black-footed and 17 Laysan Albatrosses from October 2001 to February 2003, as well as numerous turtle deaths. NMFS responded in July by urging the Pacific Fishery Council to close the loophole and prohibit shallow-set swordfish longlines. However, the Council refused. The California mortality is in addition to the 7,886 albatrosses

known to have been killed between 1993 and 2001 in Alaska and the 18,318 killed in Hawaii in approximately the same period.

NMFS failed to adopt new regulations promised for the summer of 2002 that would greatly reduce the take of albatrosses and other seabirds in the Alaskan groundfish fishery. They also failed to collect any data on seabird bycatch in the Alaska halibut fishery, which consists of more than 1,700 vessels setting in excess of 25 million hooks. This is in violation of NMFS' own National Plan of Action for Seabirds, requiring such data collection under a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization agreement. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

## Australia Pursues Illegal Toothfish Pirates to the Ends of the Earth

A promise from the Australian Government to pursue illegal Patagonian toothfish poachers "to the ends of the Earth" was borne out this summer with the dramatic three-week chase by Australian customs officials across more than 4,000 miles of iceberg-ridden open ocean to capture the vessel *Viarsa 1*.

The chase began when the boat was seen allegedly fishing for toothfish - often served in restaurants as Chilean seabass - within Australian waters in early August. The ship was finally seized with the help of a South African ice breaker and a British fisheries patrol vessel in waters known as the "Roaring Forties," more than 2,000 miles south of Cape Town, South Africa.



The *Viarsa 1* was captured by Australian authorities after a prolonged chase. Officials found illegally caught Patagonian toothfish on-board. Photo: Australian Customs

Illegal fishing for Patagonian toothfish has raised alarm bells in the fisheries, seabird, and marine mammal conservation communities. More than 80% of toothfish that ends up on sale around the world is thought to be illegally caught, placing the species at risk of extinction from over-fishing. Of grave concern is the number of albatrosses and other seabirds, as well as turtles, killed by the longline hooks that are set to catch fish (*Bird Calls* Vol. 5, No. 3). More than 276,000

seabirds have been killed over the last five years in this fishery, of which at least 40,500 were albatrosses.

The capture of the pirate vessel, which was found to be carrying fish worth in excess of \$3 million on the black market, was praised by the Coalition of Legal Toothfish Operators, a group consisting of 27 member companies in ten countries. Further complicating the saga was the revelation that along with the fish, the Uruguay-flagged ship carried a Uruguayan Government scientific observer. The observer was later released back to his country after his government pledged full cooperation in the investigation, and to send him back to Australia for judicial proceedings.

The captain and crew of the ship face jail if convicted, and the boat could be scuttled. Similar, though less dramatic captures of illegal vessels were made by the Australian government in 2001 and 2002, clearly demonstrating the country's resolve on this issue. *Contact:* Gavin Shire, ABC, <gshire@abcbirds.org>.

## Conservation Groups Team Up For \$4 Million for Birds

ABC joined forces with more than 100 conservation organizations in urging Congressional appropriators to fully fund the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA). Leading national, regional, and local conservation and bird organizations signed a letter, pushing for full funding at \$5 million in the FY 2004 Department of Interior budget. The House bill proposed the full \$5 million but the Senate bill only proposed \$3 million. The final decision, was left to

conference committee, which compromised at \$4 million, an increase of \$1 million over last year.

Demand massively outstripped available funding for both FY 2002 and 2003 NMBCA grants: the 440 grant requests submitted to FWS for projects that protect, restore, and manage habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife in Latin America and the Caribbean, totaled more than \$175 million, chasing the available \$3 million.

The NMBCA requires that all money appropriated by Congress be met by a 3:1 ratio in matching funds. An ABC Policy Council Resolution, adopted in 2002, proposed increasing the authorized cap to at least \$20 million, and reducing the match ratio from 3:1 to 1:1. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

## NMBCA Grants Available

FWS has announced its 2004 Request for Proposals under the NMBCA. Visit: <http://birdhabitat.fws.gov>, and click on "Neotropical Birds Grants Program" for additional information and application materials. Proposals must be submitted electronically by January 16, 2004.

## Red-cockaded Woodpecker Re-classified in Florida

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission reclassified the Red-cockaded Woodpecker from a state "threatened species" to a "species of special concern" in September. At the same time, the commissioners voted to approve a new management plan for the species. The Commission left open the option to reconsider the downlisting decision at a future point.

Intensive management of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, including the use of prescribed burns on government lands (which account for 77% of the state's woodpecker population), has been credited with stabilizing the species in Florida. One site, Appalachian National Forest,



A FWS biologist installs a nestbox for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. This and other techniques have helped the species in Florida. Photo: FWS

contains the only population in the country that has been declared "recovered" by FWS. Birds have been translocated from there to other sites to help with the species' recovery.

State researchers had issued a biological status review of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker earlier this year and concluded it no longer meets their criteria for listing as endangered or threatened in Florida. The "species of special concern" classification indicates that state biologists have

determined that the species is in no immediate danger of extinction but still requires special management attention.

The Commission was keen to emphasize that reclassification will not result in less protection for the species, as state-implemented conservation measures are based on the management plan rather than the bird's classification. The national status of the woodpecker, as determined by FWS, will remain as endangered, providing unchanged federal protection for the species.

The new Florida management plan calls for continued improvements in the condition of the species, and maintaining 25 percent of the world's Red-cockaded Woodpecker population in Florida. Of the 38 globally Important Bird Areas identified by ABC in Florida (see back cover), 11 were chosen in part or whole for their populations of Red-cockaded Woodpecker. *Contact:* Henry Cabbage, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, (850) 488-8843.

## ABC Releases “Green List”

ABC has produced a list of all the highest priority birds for conservation in the continental United States and Canada. The new “Green List” builds on the species assessments conducted for many years by Partners in Flight (PIF) on landbirds, expanded to include species of all taxa.

In the past, conservationists have been faced with a plethora of lists, including the PIF Watch List, FWS’s Endangered Species List and Birds of Conservation Concern List, as well as other lists for shorebirds, waterbirds, and waterfowl. The reasoning applied to each of these assessments has differed, and thus, any single list of birds derived from these individual lists has been beset by problems of inconsistency.

Over the last year, PIF has made significant advances in species assessment, resulting in a greatly



The King Rail is listed in the category of *Highest Continental Concern* on the new ABC Green List. Photo: FWS

improved Watch List. ABC has gone a significant step further by taking PIF standards and applying them to all taxa to produce the Green List. This is the first time that a single, consistent set of criteria has been used for all birds in order to produce a comprehensive set of priority species for conservation.

The list is divided into three broad categories. Species classified as being

of the *Highest Conservation Concern* suffer from multiple problems and include many of the birds listed under the Endangered Species Act. Others birds in this category include the Lesser Prairie-Chicken, King Rail, Golden-winged Warbler, and Tricolored Blackbird. The second and third groups are of equivalent concern to each other, but for different reasons. *Moderately Abundant Species with Declines or High Threats* include Black Scoter, Marbled Godwit, Band-tailed Pigeon, Red-headed Woodpecker, Prairie Warbler, and Painted Bunting - birds that are still found in relatively high numbers, but are declining at an alarming rate. *Species with Restricted Distributions or Low Population Size*, covers species for which populations may be stable and threats apparently limited, but are limited in number or range. Reddish Egret, Costa’s Hummingbird, LeConte’s Thrasher, and Black Rosy-Finch are examples from this group. To view the entire Green List visit: [www.abcbirds.org/greenlist.htm](http://www.abcbirds.org/greenlist.htm).

## Reintroduced White-winged Guan Chicks Fledge

A group of eight captive-reared White-winged Guans have raised three chicks in the wild for the first time.

The White-winged Guan is considered critically endangered and is found only in arid valleys of the Departments of Piura and Lambayeque in northwest Peru. It inhabits dry forest, generally along watercourses. The species has been decimated by hunting,

and was believed extinct for more than 100 years until its rediscovery in 1977. Since then, a captive-breeding program has established a population of more than 100 birds. The exact number of birds in the wild is unknown, but is thought to number fewer than 200 individuals. The species is still declining and continued action is needed to prevent its extinction in the wild.

In 2001, the first captive-bred birds were reintroduced to the Chaparri Community Ecological Reserve. Now, a small population of eight reintroduced birds and three wild born chicks are prospering in the area. However, this population is small, and further reintroductions are needed to ensure the species’ survival. The long-term hope is that a healthy population

will expand to contact three other relict populations in adjacent valleys.

The White-winged Guan is a flagship species for the Chaparri reserve, and its conservation was one of the reasons for the reserve’s establishment. Adjacent communities are also showing interest in establishing similar reserves and supporting the conservation of the species. It is hoped that the initiative will result in an area of up to 150,000 acres of protected community lands as a safe haven for the White-winged Guan and other species. ABC has been supporting efforts to protect the species through locally-based groups, including Asociación Cracidae Peru, Bosques Sin Fronteras, Asociación Naymlap, and ProAves Peru. *Contact:* George Wallace, ABC, <[gwallace@abcbirds.org](mailto:gwallace@abcbirds.org)>.

## ReCovering Paradise

ABC has begun a pilot project in Colombia, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua aimed at reducing the destructiveness of cattle farming to birds and the environment. Named *ReCovering Paradise*, the project has partnered with more than 300 local farms so far, with financial support from the Global Environment Facility under the auspices of the World Bank.

A critical problem for bird conservation in Central and South America is the conversion of natural lands to pastureland for cattle. In recent years, many thousands of square miles have undergone such a transformation, and the process is speeding up. What was once forest that sheltered a wide diversity of bird species and provided habitat for migrants during the winter is becoming a biological desert. There is a way, however, to blunt or deflect the full force of this destructiveness



Cattle ranches can be improved for bird habitat by a practice known as silvipasture. Photo: CIPAV

and even redeem some of this landscape for increased biodiversity, not just of birds, but also of mammals, insects, and plants.

By offering farmers small annual incentives, the project encourages the adoption of more ecologically favorable practices - such as leaving and protecting patches of secondary woodland and other natural vegetation, creating fodder banks, planting trees, protecting stream banks from being trampled by cattle, not burning, and decreasing pesticide use. These practices - collectively known as silvipasture - create or maintain habitat

for a much wider diversity of resident birds. They also increase the amount of habitat available for wintering North American migrants such as the Tennessee Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Swainson's Thrush that often make use of secondary habitats but cannot survive in pastureland. The protection and expansion of riparian woodland is particularly important. If it is maintained in good condition, it can not only support a high diversity of birds, but can also serve as a corridor for these species to move from one patch of woodland to another.

Over the five year life of the program, working with local non-profit organizations and universities, ABC will test the effectiveness of this concept with repeated analysis of how the avifauna in the farms has changed in response to changing land use practices. If this pilot project is successful, it could demonstrate that silvipasture is an important tool for bird conservation in the New World tropics. *Contact:* Robert Chipley, ABC, <[rchipley@abcbirds.org](mailto:rchipley@abcbirds.org)>.

## Study Finds More Protected Areas Needed

A global study released at the World Parks Congress in Durban South Africa this September by Conservation International shows that 223 of the world's threatened bird species do not occur within any of the world's protected areas. In total, 700 threatened vertebrate species were described as being totally unrepresented in any protected area, with a further 943 species poorly represented by small

reserves that alone may be insufficient for their effective, long-term protection.

The study, referred to as "The Global Gap Analysis" was conducted by Conservation International's Center for Applied Biodiversity Science, in collaboration with IUCN-World Conservation Union's World Commission on Protected Areas. Bird data was supplied by BirdLife International.

The World Parks Congress is a once-per-decade meeting of scientists, conservationists, protected area managers, and government representatives, which sets global priorities for protected areas. One of the key findings of this year's Congress was that the world's protected area

system must be rapidly and strategically expanded to include all endangered and critically endangered single-site endemics by 2006, and all threatened species by 2010. ABC is aiming to extend protection to these species through the Alliance for Zero Extinction (see *Bird Calls* Vol. 7, No. 2, and [www.zeroextinction.org](http://www.zeroextinction.org)), which is working to establish protected areas for the world's most endangered species. *Contact:* Mike Parr, ABC, <[mparr@abcbirds.org](mailto:mparr@abcbirds.org)>.

**Mark Your Calendars!!**  
**The next**  
**Policy Council Meeting**  
**is November 13.**

# Fire Threatens Brazilian Merganser

Fire has ravaged two of the last refuges of the critically endangered Brazilian Merganser, placing the future of the species in further jeopardy.

The duck's former range extended through Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay, but is now confined to a few scattered sites in Brazil, with numbers estimated to be below 250 individuals.

Two of the largest remaining concentrations were in the Serra da Canastra National Park in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais, and in Jalapão State Park in the northeastern state of Tocantins, both of which have suffered devastating fires thought to have been set by farmers to clear the land for agriculture.

The general decline of the species has been attributed to hydroelectric dams that disrupt river flow, decimating the bird's food supply; and to agricultural development and deforestation. Until recently, it was thought that the merganser had an additional stronghold along the tributaries of the São Francisco river in the northeastern state

of Bahia, where 34 individuals were reported by surveys during the late 1990s. However, no birds could be found during a recent expedition there. Even the Veredas do São Francisco Wildlife Refuge in Bahia, which was created to protect the state's tiny merganser population, is now devoid of the species.

Representatives of BirdLife International and the Brazilian group, Terra Brasilis, are calling for better protection from the Brazilian government for both the Serra da Canastra National Park and the Jalapão area to safeguard against further fires. *Contact:* BirdLife Brazil, <birdlifebrasil@uol.com.br>.

# Endangered Species and Other Birds Killed at Tower

A federally endangered Kirtland's Warbler and 328 other birds were killed on the rainy, overcast nights of September 6 and 7, at a 719 foot tall television tower in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina. Other species identified included American Redstart, Northern Waterthrush, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Ovenbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Worm-eating Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, and Red-eyed Vireo. These species, neotropical night-migrating songbirds, are commonly recorded in bird kills at tall towers.

Bird deaths at this particular tower have been documented for 40 years, including a kill of 1,604 birds of 40 species in 1962. The tower has an array of red, incandescent lights that flash in random order. Two other coastal towers nearby also had significant kills



An endangered Kirtland's Warbler was killed at a communication tower in September. Protection for birds, particularly night-migrating songbirds, at tall towers is inadequate. Photo: FWS

during the 1980s, but since the early 1990s, when their lights were switched from red incandescent to white strobes, few dead birds have been found. This supports other research, and is in line with the FWS guidelines suggesting use of white strobes.

The telecommunications industry has taken no voluntarily steps to modify tower construction for the protection

of migratory birds, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has steadfastly refused to demand mitigation measures as part of their permitting process. The FCC recently issued a "Notice of Inquiry on the Effects of Communication Towers on Migratory Birds," with public comments due by November 12. However, many conservationists view FCC's request for information when the problem and its solutions have been documented, as another stalling tactic.

Earlier this year, ABC, the Forest Conservation Council, and Friends of The Earth appealed individual towers and filed petitions against further tower construction in the Gulf Coast region (*Bird Calls* Vol. 6, No. 2). The groups sued FCC in the U.S. Court of Appeals when the agency failed to respond to the petition (*Bird Calls* Vol. 6, No. 3), but the judge dismissed the suit on July 2 as being premature. However, the court put the FCC on notice that they must act in a reasonable time on the petition or the suit can be filed again. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

# Guidelines for Wind Turbines

FWS has released its new guidelines for the building and siting of wind turbines, following shortly after the largest known incidents involving bird and bat kills at a wind farm to date. The bird kill occurred in mid-May at two turbines of the Mountaineer Wind Plant on Backbone Mountain, West Virginia, during a night of dense fog. Twenty-seven birds were recovered after crashing into the structures, including Blackpoll, Magnolia, and Canada Warblers, and Red-eyed Vireos. The bat kill occurred at the same facility in mid-August and totaled more than 250 bats. Initial blame for the kill was attributed to several flood lights that were kept on

all night. The lights were subsequently ordered to be switched off.

A 2001 study by the National Wind Coordinating Committee revealed an estimated average of 2.19 birds killed per year at each turbine. This figure declines to 1.825 birds killed per year per turbine if California is excluded. Some turbines produce zero avian mortality, particularly those of newer design. The new FWS, voluntary, interim guidelines for the siting of land-based wind turbines are designed to minimize these impacts from what is generally regarded as an environmentally-friendly means of electricity generation.

The guidelines focus on three key issues: the proper evaluation and selection of potential wind energy development sites, the proper location and design of turbines and associated structures, and research and monitoring to identify and assess

impacts on wildlife. FWS will collect public comment on the guidelines for two years. To view the guidelines visit: [www.fws.gov/r9dhcbfa/wind.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/r9dhcbfa/wind.pdf).

Shortly after releasing the new guidelines, FWS cited a proposed 20-turbine wind farm in Meyersdale, Pennsylvania as posing a potential risk to migratory birds and bats. In a letter sent to Texas-based Zilkha Renewable Energy LLC and Atlantic Renewable Energy Corporation in Richmond, Virginia, from FWS Pennsylvania Office supervisor, David Densmore, the service criticizes the poor research and monitoring conducted at the site, and declared that the risk to birds had been insufficiently addressed. Of particular concern at this site are Bald Eagles and the endangered Indiana bat. The project has since been purchased by Florida-based FPL Energy. *Contact:* Gavin Shire, ABC, <[gshire@abcbirds.org](mailto:gshire@abcbirds.org)>.

# FWS: Mountain Plover Not Threatened

On September 9, FWS withdrew its proposal to list the Mountain Plover as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The decision was based largely on data that FWS says show that the plover is more common on private farmland than was previously thought. Although the species depends on shortgrass prairie, a habitat type that has declined significantly since the eradication of the huge bison herds that grazed much of the West, the birds have been able to adapt in part to pastureland, cropland, sod farms, and other habitats similar to shortgrass prairie.

FWS also cited new data indicating that black-tailed prairie dog towns,



FWS has decided that the Mountain Plover does not merit threatened status despite its small population. Photo: USGS

which provide habitat favored by Mountain Plovers, are more abundant than was originally thought. Conservation programs, such as the flagging of plover nests prior to tilling or planting, and encouraging intensive grazing in plover nesting areas have also apparently helped the species.

The Mountain Plover is restricted to North America, and its population is estimated at between 5,000 and 11,000

individuals. Multiple conservation partnerships involving federal and state agencies and conservation organizations are currently underway to improve plover nesting habitat on public and private lands. Regardless of its listing status, the Mountain Plover remains a species of conservation concern because of its small population and restricted habitat requirements. The species is also listed on the ABC Green List (see article P. 7) in the category of Highest Continental Concern. *Contact:* Bob Leachman, FWS, 970-243-2778.

**JOIN ABC TODAY**  
**Use the membership**  
**form on the back**  
**cover or join on-line**  
**at: [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)**

## South Korean Wetland Project Threatens Shorebirds

The tidal flats at Saemangeum on the Yellow Sea Coast of South Korea are under threat from a barrage construction project that could destroy more than 80,000 acres of shorebird habitat. The wetland complex supports 27 species of shorebird in globally significant numbers, including Alaskan-breeding Dunlin and Bar-tailed Godwits. Several of the species using Saemangeum on a regular basis are listed as threatened, including the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Spotted Greenshank, and Saunder's Gull. Additionally, more than 30% of the world's Great Knots winter at the site.

The construction project began in 1991 and has been consistently questioned by scientists and the public. In 2000, it was temporarily halted while an expert panel conducted an environmental review. The panel's findings were not made public, but the



Bar-tailed Godwits, which breed in Alaska are under threat from a development project in South Korea. Photo: FWS

project has since been restarted.

One of the main reasons for the project was to create new rice fields, but in the intervening period, South Korea has developed a huge rice surplus. At a forthcoming court hearing, Korea's Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will defend the project against environmental groups. The groups claim that water in barrage lakes created to irrigate rice fields will be so polluted by industrial waste from the rivers that feed the area, that it will destroy the crops. ABC is working through the State Department to oppose the project. *Contact:* Mike Parr, ABC, <mparr@abcbirds.org>.

## FWS Proposes Import of Wild Parrots

Despite opposition from numerous scientists and conservation groups, FWS has published a proposed rule to allow the importation of wild-caught Blue-fronted Amazon parrots into the United States from Argentina. If this proposal (published in the Federal Register on August 6) is approved, it will result in the first wild-caught parrots legally imported into the

country for more than a decade.

As previously reported in *Bird Calls* (Vol.7, No.1), FWS has been working to determine whether a wild capture program for the species in Argentina meets requirements for sustainable harvest under the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992. ABC, World Parrot Trust, Conservation International, Friends of the Earth, and other concerned groups sent letters under the Service's public comment period opposing the proposal.

The main criticisms that have been leveled at the scheme are: insufficient basic biological studies to verify that the proposed take level, especially of

## Key Financier Pulls Out of Peru Gas Project

Citing environmental concerns, the U.S. Export-Import Bank rejected \$213.6 million in loan guarantees for Peru's "Camisea" gas development project this August. The project aims to tap a huge gas field in the Peruvian Amazon and to pipe the gas to the coast for domestic consumption and export.

Part of the export plan includes a marine terminal and fractionation plant, which is being constructed less than five miles from Paracas National Park. The park includes a complex of seabird breeding islands and their surrounding waters. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) decided in September to go ahead with a \$75 million loan to the project despite opposition from the U.S. Agency for International Development and several environmental groups. IDB cites a \$5 million loan to the Peruvian government to help clean up Paracas Bay as evidence that the project will improve, rather than degrade marine habitats.

Given the \$1.2 billion already invested, it seems unlikely that the entire Camisea project will now be halted, but environmental groups are aiming for the minimum impact possible. The development at Paracas lies close to the global stronghold for the endangered Peruvian Diving Petrel, along with important colonies of the vulnerable Humboldt Penguin, and other sensitive seabird species. Associated pollution and development may have disastrous consequences for the area's ecosystems. *Contact:* Mike Parr, ABC, <mparr@abcbirds.org>.

*Continued on Page 13.*

## U.S. Albatrosses Now Threatened - Campaign Continues

The Laysan Albatross, which breeds in the United States on islands in the northwestern Hawaiian chain, has been listed as vulnerable for the first time under IUCN-World Conservation Union criteria. The species' population has declined by more than 30% over the past decade, primarily due to mortality from longline fishing. The Black-footed Albatross also breeds in Hawaii. It was first listed as vulnerable in 2000, but has already been upgraded to endangered. This is based on an estimated future decline of more than 60% over the next 50 years if current rates of longline mortality are not reduced.

ABC continues to press the U.S.



The Laysan Albatross is now a threatened species due to longlining. Photo: FWS

Government to mandate measures to protect seabirds from longline fishing hooks, including the deployment of inexpensive bird-scaring devices (*Bird Calls* Vol. 4, No. 3) that have been shown, through extensive ocean trials,

to almost eliminate bird mortality.

A campaign, launched by ABC, has garnered thousands of public e-mail messages to decision-makers at NMFS and other agencies that regulate longline fisheries. Speaking at the International Fisher's Forum in Honolulu in November 2002, NMFS Director William Hogarth told representatives from 28 states and 18 countries that his e-mail had been flooded by more messages from concerned citizens on this issue than on any other.

ABC has also now published its report "Sudden Death on the High Seas" in Chinese, in collaboration with Pacific Environment and a Chinese bird conservation group. China has one of the world's largest longline fleets and this takes a high toll on pelagic birds. The report will be distributed to Chinese fishery, wildlife, and planning officials, as well as to Chinese conservationists. A Spanish version is also planned. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

## Cats, TNR and the Law

The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) caused a furor recently when it prohibited the towns of Birdsboro and Newport from sanctioning Trap/Neuter/Release (TNR) programs for feral cats. Volunteers trap stray and feral cats, have them spayed or neutered, and then release and continue to feed them at the trap site. This practice is illegal under current state law, but the relative obscurity of this statute prompted PGC to propose a new law, clearly stating that domestic dogs and cats may not be released into the wild.

PGC held a public hearing on

October 6, 2003 in Harrisburg, at which ABC voiced its support of the Proposed Rule. ABC's position was echoed by representatives of Audubon Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Pennsylvania Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, Pennsylvania Bluebird Society, Pennsylvania Trappers Association, Rehabitat Inc., and others. However, the Commissioners seemed sympathetic to the emotional appeals from people who practice TNR, and the next day, the language relating to dogs and cats was stricken from the Rule. In addition, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives passed a resolution endorsing October 16 as National Feral Cat Day. Since TNR is still illegal according to the existing law, State Representative Ron Buxton

is reportedly now looking for co-sponsors to introduce a bill to make TNR legal in the state.

In Florida, an administrative law judge issued a ruling on August 29 upholding the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission's (FWC) policy regarding feral cats (*Bird Calls* Vol. 7, No. 2). Alley Cat Allies had filed a petition claiming that FWC had not conducted adequate research, failed to allow sufficient time for public comment, and did not consider more humane alternatives in the instigation of their policy. The judge issued a summary final order declaring FWC did not violate any procedures by formulating a policy to protect wildlife from the threat of free-ranging, domestic cats. *Contact:* Linda Winter, ABC, <lwinter@abcbirds.org>.

## Agreement to Prevent Vulture Slaughter

Due to protests from ABC and other groups over the continued killing of Turkey and Black Vultures in Virginia, USDA's Wildlife Services (WS) has agreed to exhaust all non-lethal methods of control before exterminating birds.

Representatives from ABC and other groups, including the Humane Society of the United States, the Virginia Society of Ornithology, Fairfax Audubon Society, and the Raptor Research Foundation, met with officials from WS's national, regional, and Virginia offices to discuss concerns over the increase in lethal take of vultures in the state.

Between 1989 and 1991, the total national take of vultures was just 157 birds. In 2001, WS killed 159 vultures in Virginia alone, increasing this to 562



USDA's Wildlife Services has agreed to exhaust all non-lethal methods of vulture control before exterminating birds. Turkey Vulture. Photo: Clipart.com

in 2002 (including 371 Black Vultures at a boat ramp in Dutch Gap). In 2003, WS-Virginia applied for a FWS permit to kill 2,500 Black Vultures and 1,500 Turkey Vultures per year in the state, an increase of more than 700%. Conservationists and FWS questioned such an escalation and

ultimately, only 50 vultures were killed during the first six months of 2003.

In addition to agreeing to exhaust non-lethal methods before killing vultures and minimizing the number taken, WS has agreed to consult with Dr. Jim Fraser of Virginia Polytechnic Institute, regarding one large roost at Radford, and to examine the reasons why this site is attracting so many vultures. WS-Virginia will explore the use of vulture effigies and other proven techniques at Dutch Gap in lieu of trapping and killing vultures.

All attendees at the meeting acknowledged the lack of data on vulture population sizes in Virginia. It was agreed that WS will collaborate with other scientists to explore the methodology that could be used to assess these populations.

ABC and others believe that an Environmental Impact Statement is required to more fully examine the impact of vulture take on Black and Turkey Vulture populations in Virginia (*Bird Calls* Vol. 7, No. 1), a position disputed by WS. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

## Euthanasia Drug Kills Eagles

More than 130 Bald and Golden Eagles and other animals have been poisoned by the euthanasia drug sodium pentobarbital over the last five years. The poison is used to put down sick livestock. The laws governing the disposal of the carcasses are state specific, and it would appear that many of those regulations are insufficient to prevent the deaths of scavenging wild animals.

Included in the death toll, along with the eagles, are corvids (including ravens, crows, and magpies), vultures, hawks, and gulls. Of particular concern

are the deaths of a threatened Wood Stork and an endangered California Condor. So far, cases of pentobarbital poisoning have been recorded in 14 states and Canada.

Some of the carcasses have been improperly disposed of. Others, it seems, may have been dealt with correctly according to state law (which may include burial), but the carcasses were subsequently dug up by scavengers such as foxes or dogs.

FWS law enforcement officials have prosecuted past cases under both the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which carry heavy fines and possible imprisonment. FWS is working to educate both farmers and veterinarians as to the dangers of

improper carcass disposal, and how to avoid wild animal deaths from this type of poisoning. *Contact:* FWS Law Enforcement (202) 758-1949.

### *Parrots from page 11*

juveniles, is indeed sustainable; potential damage to nesting trees during harvest; the fact that there are already so many parrots in the United States that thousands have been abandoned in Florida and California; the lack of independent, local oversight of the program; and the possibility of abuse from illegal traffickers. *Contact:* Mike Parr, ABC, <mparr@abcbirds.org>.

## FWS Ten-Year Plan for Birds

FWS is developing a new strategic plan for migratory birds that will set the course for the agency's work in this area for the next decade. The Plan, which is available in its entirety on the FWS web site (see below) has three principal goals: 1) Protect, restore, and manage migratory bird populations to maximize their ecological sustainability and socioeconomic benefits; 2) Protect, conserve, and restore migratory bird

habitats to ensure long-term sustainability of all migratory bird populations; and 3) Improve hunting, birdwatching, and other outdoor, bird-related experiences and opportunities, and increase awareness of the value of migratory birds for their ecological, recreational and economic significance.

In the Plan, the Service acknowledges the lack of information on population status and trends for most migratory birds, and identifies the need to develop statistically rigorous surveys for birds of conservation concern, poorly-known species, and overabundant species. It also identifies

the need to protect, restore, and manage priority bird habitats, but includes no budget or explanation for how this work would be expanded over and above current programs, many of which are themselves underfunded. A range of additional, detailed strategies are set out, including those concerning permits and regulations, and cooperation and communication. The public comment period on the draft plan closed in early October. A summary of public input will be presented by the Service at the Migratory Bird Conservation Forum to be held in January, 2004. *For more information visit:* [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).

## FWS Approves Depredation Order for Killing Cormorants

In October 2003, FWS published the final rule for the management of Double-crested Cormorants. After a process that took four years, including open hearings, public comment periods and development of an Environmental Impact Statement, FWS will allow state wildlife agencies, Native American tribes, and USDA's Wildlife Services (WS) to kill unlimited numbers of cormorants in 24 states where the birds are "injurious to a public resource" (defined as fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats). Unlike the current regulations, no permits will be required to kill birds, destroy their eggs, or disturb their roost or breeding sites. The new rule also expands the current aquaculture depredation order, which has been in place in 13 States since 1998, to allow



The numbers of Double-crested Cormorants killed could increase significantly because of a new FWS. Photo: Clipart.com

WS to kill cormorants at winter roost sites in 12 of those states.

FWS received more than 9,700 comments on the proposed rule, 85% of which opposed it. ABC, Environmental Defense, the Pacific Seabird Group, and 18 other scientific and conservation organizations had submitted a joint letter opposing the measures as an abdication of FWS

responsibility under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and contrary to the service's own pledge to "pursue management strategies that are biologically justified based on the best available science."

Leading waterbird scientists and conservation groups decry the persecution of cormorants, asserting that the birds are being made scapegoats for fishery declines caused by other factors. Perceived conflicts with sport fish are not a scientific basis for such drastic actions.

Under the current system, approximately 47,000 Double-crested Cormorants are killed each year in addition to the destruction of thousands of their eggs. Under the new rule, FWS gives up its individual review authority, and allows state and federal agencies in 24 states to decide when, where, and how many birds they will kill. This new rule, effective November 7, sets a dangerous precedent for other piscivorous birds that are being blamed for fisheries declines. To view the final rule and related documents, visit: <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/issues/cormorant/cormorant.html>. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, <[gw@abcbirds.org](mailto:gw@abcbirds.org)>.

## Birds in Brief

### New Seedeater Discovered, Disappears?

A newly-described bird species, the Carrizal Seedeater, has been reported from Venezuela. The species is named for a tiny, uninhabited island in the River Caroni, in the Orinoco Basin, where the only known individuals were found. Unfortunately, the species was located during wildlife surveys associated with the construction of a new dam on the river, and habitat on the island has since been destroyed. The birds were found in spiny, impenetrable bamboo thickets, which is perhaps why they have eluded detection for so long. Fortunately there are additional extensive thickets of bamboo in the Caroni basin, and it is hoped that further populations will be discovered. *Contact:* Clemencia Rodner, Venezuela Audubon, <presidencia@audubonvenezuela.org>.

### Tern Persecution Down in Washington State

USDA's Wildlife Services (WS) substantially reduced its killing of waterbirds in 2003, particularly Caspian Terns in the Columbia River estuary on the Oregon-Washington border. ABC and its partners have urged WS to cease all take until researchers finish their studies on the impact of waterbirds on salmon at dams and hatcheries, and complete a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (*Bird Calls* Vol. 6, No. 2).

Caspian Terns have been blamed, without credible scientific evidence, for salmon declines in the Columbia estuary, home to the largest Caspian Tern breeding colony in the world. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad, ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

### FWS to Allow Import of Icelandic Eider Down

FWS is proposing to allow the import of Icelandic eiderdown from wild-nesting Common Eiders into the United States. Conservationists have expressed concern that harvesting down disturbs the eiders during their crucial nesting period, and that other birds such as raptors that prey on the eiders are killed by harvesters. FWS contends that the wild Icelandic Common Eider population has been increasing and can withstand the harvest, though other Northern



Down from Common Eiders will be imported into the U.S. if a new FWS proposal goes through. Photo: FWS

Hemisphere populations appear to be declining. In addition, under the new FWS proposal, Iceland must verify each season that they will not kill or injure other protected birds. Of the three other Northern Hemisphere eider species, the Spectacled and Steller's Eiders are both listed as near-threatened by the IUCN-World

Conservation Union. To comment on the proposed regulations, e-mail: [eiderdown@fws.gov](mailto:eiderdown@fws.gov) prior to the December 2 deadline.

### Fabian a Setback for Bermuda Petrel

This September, Hurricane Fabian devastated parts of Bermuda, home to the endangered Bermuda Petrel. Thankfully, the birds are not present on the island during prime hurricane season, yet the storm caused severe damage to nesting burrows in Castle Harbor National Park. In the 1960s, only 18 breeding pairs of petrels survived. Now, thanks to conservation efforts, that number has risen to 57, but the hurricane could prove disastrous to the species' recovery. ABC will cover this story in depth in the forthcoming issue of its magazine *Bird Conservation*. *Contact:* Jeremy Madeiros, Bermuda Dept. of Conservation Sciences, <Cahowman@yahoo.com>.

### Rain Helps Ducks

The 2003 spring survey of breeding ducks across North America, conducted by FWS in collaboration with the Canadian Wildlife Service, shows an increase of five million birds over 2002 to a total of 36.2 million. This was largely due to higher early rainfall totals that produced ideal nesting habitat. This included more than five million small ponds throughout waterfowl nesting grounds. Due to a slight recovery in Canvasback numbers, a limited hunting season will be allowed this year, and the limited season will continue for the Northern Pintail, though this species is still 39 percent below its long-term average population. *Visit:* <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/reports/status03/trend.pdf>.



The American Bird Conservancy Guide to the 500 Most Important Bird Areas in the United States is now widely available at bookstores. Written and researched by ABC staff, the book provides detailed accounts of the most valuable places for birds and bird conservation in the country. Comprehensively indexed, and including maps and illustrations, the book is the perfect companion to all bird field guides.

“A book that every birder (and nature lover and land manager) should read and discuss,” David Allen Sibley.

Visit: <http://shop.abcbirds.org> for more details and to order your copy. Price: \$25.95

Join ABC or try our special free magazine offer. Detach the form below, fill in your details and mail to: American Bird Conservancy, P.O. Box 249, The Plains, VA 20198.

- Yes! I want to support ABC. I will receive *Bird Conservation Magazine* and *Bird Calls* newsletter.
- I would like to try a free issue of *Bird Conservation Magazine* before committing to joining ABC.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Visa/MC: \_\_\_\_\_ Expires: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Select a Membership Level\*

- \$40 Vireo
- \$100 Meadowlark\*\*
- \$250 Tanager\*\*\*
- \$500 Curlew
- \$1,000 Falcon Club
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify)

\*Amounts listed are in U.S. Dollars. Please make checks payable to American Bird Conservancy. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.

\*\* Supporters at the \$100 and above levels receive a copy of American Bird Conservancy’s All the Birds of North America. The fair market value of this gift is \$19.95 and reduces your tax-deductible contribution by that amount. If you do not wish to receive this gift, please check here .

\*\*\* Supporters at the \$250 and above levels also receive a copy of The American Bird Conservancy Guide to the 500 Most Important Bird Areas in the United States. The fair market value of this gift is \$25.95 and reduces your tax-deductible contribution by that amount. If you do not wish to receive this gift, please check here .

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 2392  
MERRIFIELD, VA

