

BIRD CALLS

*The Newsletter of the Policy Council
of American Bird Conservancy*



MARCH 1999

AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY

Conserving Wild Birds and their Habitats throughout the Americas

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A Message from Bruce Beehler, Chair, Policy Council of American Bird Conservancy:

I am sitting at my computer doing last minute tasks in preparation for a five-week trip through the Pacific and Southeast Asia. This means I will be up tomorrow pre-dawn to catch a flight west, but also means I will not be able to attend the spring ABC Policy Council meeting on March 16th. This I will be very sorry to miss. I have come to love these information-packed sessions for any number of reasons, not the least being the remarkable speakers we are able to attract. This time is no exception. Congressman Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD), U.S. Representative from Maryland's Eastern Shore, will be the luncheon speaker. Rep. Gilchrest exemplifies the best of Congress – a moderate Republican with a strong commitment to the environment. Being a Marylander, I am proud to have him as a representative of our State on Capitol Hill. I'm sure the Congressman will have plenty of interesting things to tell you on March 16th. While traveling, I will be able to log onto ABC's new and spiffy web site to catch up on things – it's www.abcbirds.org. Please pay a visit to the web site, and you will find loads of valuable news as well as key documents on lots of our ongoing work. For those who represent member organizations that would like to link with our site, please contact the ABC offices and they will be pleased to oblige you! Although I will be seeing my share of beautiful birds in the forests of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, and Viet Nam, I will be missing the first trickle of Washington's spring songbird migration. This is a most important annual event for me, and I love seeing the first Rough-winged Swallows along the C&O Canal, and hearing the sweet slurred notes of the Yellow-throated Warblers in the sycamores along the Potomac. I encourage all of you to get out when you can and revel in the Spring of '99!

Bruce M. Beehler <bbeehler@counterpart.org>

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I. SUCCESS STORIES

ABC INTERVENTION HELPS PROTECT HABITAT NEAR AIRPORTS

Alerted to a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) drafted by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that could affect bird habitat within a five mile radius of all airports, ABC met with key FAA officials to forge modifications to the agreement. Six Federal agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the EPA, would be bound by the MOU which seeks to reduce the risk of collision between aircraft and birds. To accomplish this objective, the MOU could have federal agencies cease expansion of wetlands, wetland mitigation projects, and refuges or change the management of refuges or wetlands that are within five miles of an airport. This would be to avoid the attraction of "hazardous wildlife"--any bird or any other animal that might collide with a plane. ABC and Audubon chapters believed that the MOU was overly broad and placed objectionable controls on land use beneficial to avian species. Gerald Winegrad of ABC arranged a meeting with FAA officials and agreement appears to have been reached to narrow the focus of the MOU. The MOU would be applicable mainly to over-abundant species such as resident Canada Geese, European Starlings, Rock Doves, Common Grackles, certain gull species, and deer. Further, there is consideration of removing any restrictions on wildlife refuges from the FAA. Revisions are ongoing and FAA officials have expressed an eagerness to work with the conservation community to resolve the issue. The FAA has documented about 23,000 birds killed annually since 1990 from strikes by aircraft. About 90% of the strikes occur under 2,000 feet. According to the FAA, aircraft collisions with wildlife have destroyed 43 aircraft since 1960 and killed more than 128 people. Gulls, waterfowl, and raptors account for 80% of all bird/aircraft collisions. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad at ABC.

GLOBAL SEABIRD ACCORD RATIFIED BY UN'S FAO

The United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization Committee on Fisheries has now approved the international accord designed to greatly reduce or eliminate the killing of seabirds on hooks set by longline fishing vessels. Acting in Rome, Italy the week of February 15, 1999, the international body approved a plan that would have fishing nations develop Plans of Action specifying how they will act to eliminate seabird bycatch. Now, only one step remains--ratification by the full FAO--before the plan goes into effect. Unfortunately, Black-footed and Laysan Albatrosses are still being killed in U.S. waters by Alaskan and Hawaiian longline vessels. Two endangered Short-tailed Albatrosses were killed in Alaskan waters this past September. In January, representatives of ABC, PSG, National Audubon and Defenders of Wildlife met with the Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service to discuss short comings in U.S. fisheries management. The Director announced funding for part of the studies in Alaska to ascertain the most effective gear and fishing practices to protect seabirds and advancing the formal consultation in Hawaii under the Endangered Species Act to protect the Short-tailed Albatross. Letters have been sent by Policy Council members to the Alaska fishery council urging prompt action to require night setting, weighted lines, and the use of bird scaring lines on all vessels. These methods could eliminate all, or nearly all, killing of seabirds. The Council has these measures under consideration and will act in April. In Hawaii, conservationists are still pushing for avoidance measures. A study of avoidance measures is due for completion in April, but the fishery council has yet to adopt any avoidance measure requirements. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad at ABC, <gww@abcbirds.org>.

SNOWY PLOVER TO GET CRITICAL HABITAT

A federal judge ruled the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service must designate critical habitat for the threatened western Snowy Plover. When first listed in 1993, FWS said it could not list critical habitat. A court decision in 1995 mandated critical habitat designation, but FWS still failed to do so. The number of nesting areas along the West Coast reportedly has declined in the past 20 years by over 50% and 75%, respectively, in California and Oregon. FWS has until December 1, 1999 to finalize designation. *Contact:* David Blockstein, American Ornithologists' Union, at <oc@cnie.org>.

II. NEW ISSUES

NEOTROPICAL MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION ACT PROGRESSES

HR 39, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, sponsored by Rep. Don Young is progressing well in the U.S. House of Representatives. On February 11, 1999, a hearing was held by Rep. Saxton's Subcommittee of the House Resources Committee. This legislation authorizes \$8 million annually for matching grants (33% Federal share) to be made through the Secretary of the Interior for the conservation of neotropical migratory birds. At least 50% of the funds would be used for projects outside the U.S. This legislation is important in its Congressional recognition of the serious decline in many populations of migratory birds and through its efforts to help finance conservation projects both in the U.S. and in Latin America and the Caribbean. Policy Council members testifying, in addition to ABC, were National Audubon and World Wildlife Fund. Several Policy Council members have worked with Senator Spencer Abraham's office on the original introduction of last session's S. 1970 and this session's Senate counterpart to H.R. 39, S. 148. It is hoped that the introduction and passage of such legislation, with bi-partisan support, will begin an era of Congressional recognition of the need for a comprehensive approach to resolve the serious threats to migratory bird populations in this country and in nations to our south. The Senate bill is expected to be voted out of Committee in March and the House bill may move at about the same time. ~~*Contact:* Gerald Winegrad at ABC.~~

NEWELL'S SHEARWATERS THREATENED

Listed as a threatened species in 1975, the Newell's Shearwater breeds only in the main Hawaiian Islands. Since peaking in 1987, the number of chicks on Kauai counted by the Save Our Shearwaters Program (an index of population size and success) has declined by about 75%. Anecdotal information from the island of Hawaii indicates that the few remaining populations there may be under threat of destruction from human activities. The Pacific Seabird Group has asked the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to implement the 1983 recovery plan for this species, including conducting surveys to locate nesting sites and controlling predators near colonies. If FWS continues to fail to devote sufficient resources to manage this species, it may become necessary to file a petition to designate critical habitat or to list the populations on the islands of Hawaii, Molokai and Lanai as endangered. *Contact:* Craig Harrison, Pacific Seabird Group, 202-778-2240, <charrison@hunton.com>.

CONGRESS TO CONSIDER HISTORIC CONSERVATION LEGISLATION

The Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999 (CARA, H.R. 701 and S. 25) has been reintroduced as a major legislative priority of its lead sponsors. With 43 co-sponsors from both sides of the aisle in the House and Senate, it has captured the attention of many elected officials. CARA proposes to send over \$2 billion annually in Federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas revenue back to states to permanently fund: 1) coastal restoration; 2) land-based conservation and recreation (LWCF, both state and federal); and 3) wildlife conservation (the Teaming With Wildlife concept). Bird conservation efforts stand to benefit substantially from all three. The wildlife conservation component would provide state fish and wildlife agencies with resources to address the needs of declining bird species and to identify and restore critical bird habitats. The coastal

restoration component would enable 30 coastal states (including Great Lakes states) to restore coastal habitat and associated animal species. Full funding of the Land & Water Conservation Fund would let states and the Federal government protect key habitat for migratory birds. Co-sponsors Young (D-AK) and Murkowski (R-AK), chairmen of the Senate and House committees that will review CARA, expect hearings to begin this month; the legislation could arrive on the House and Senate floors for a full vote this summer. CARA has engaged other elected officials, including President Clinton (Lands Legacy Initiative), Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Rep. George Miller (D-CA), who have recently unveiled similar proposals. These new initiatives will ultimately play a role in shaping the final version of CARA. Now is the time to inform members of the House Resources and the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committees that you support CARA. Also, urge Senate committee members to raise the wildlife conservation funding level in S. 25 to the 10% (\$459 million) level specified in the House bill. Write your members at U.S. Congress, Washington, DC 20515, or call their legislative staff who handle natural resource issues at 202-224-3121. For more information on CARA, visit <www.house.gov/resources/ocs>, <www.senate.gov/~landrieu>, <thomas.loc.gov> and <www.teaming.com, e-mail teaming@sso.org> or call 202-624-7890.

FUTURE OF PANAMA CANAL LANDS

After decades of protecting extensive rainforests in a crucial bird migration corridor, the Department of Defense (DOD) is leaving Panama. The Panama Canal Treaty of 1977 states that all 80,000 acres of the 18 Army, Air Force and Navy bases will be given back to the Panamanians by the end of 1999. Many of these lands have already reverted, a significant percentage of which are now within Soberanía and Las Cruces National Parks. However, the fate of large tracts of undisturbed or minimally disturbed DOD rainforest remains uncertain. Through the Legacy Resources Management Program, DOD Partners in Flight projects have documented the importance of these lands for migratory and resident birds and provided the Panamanian government with a sound scientific basis for the preservation of the wild areas. A March 1996 conference brought together numerous agencies and NGOs. The conference report, including land use maps, can be viewed at <<http://www.denix.osd.mil/denix/Public/ESPrograms/Conservation/PanamaHeritage/pan-heritage.html>>. A February 1998 conference assembled representatives from virtually all Panamanian land management agencies and conservation NGOs to facilitate the development of ecotourism on DOD lands. Last December, an international conference under an Action Plan for the alliance of tourism, conservation, and biological research was held. One research publication presented to the hundreds of participants dramatically documented the importance of the upper Panama Bay to two million shorebirds annually. However, development pressures are intense. Some areas in the report have already been drained and developed, and extensive areas of rainforest are threatened. The future of the substantial and critical tropical habitats within Canal lands is being determined now. *Contact:* Chris Eberly, DOD PIF, 540-253-5675 or <ceberly@dodpif.org>.

SHOREBIRD RESEARCH FUNDS DRY UP AT COPPER RIVER DELTA

A critical staging area and migratory bottleneck for the entire Pacific Coast flyway, Alaska's Copper River Delta ~~hosts more than five million birds of 36 species each spring -- one of the greatest concentrations of migrating~~ shorebirds in the world. Since 1980, the Delta has been mandated, under the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act, to be managed for the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitat. In 1990, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) nominated the Delta to be a Hemispheric Site in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). Now the USFS, the Delta's primary landowner, plans to stop shorebird research as of May due to a lack of funds. This move will cancel ongoing research into the phenology, distribution and abundance of shorebirds on the Delta during spring migration, as well as numerous planned studies of Western Sandpipers, Pacific Dunlin and Black-bellied Plover, among others. Research supports public education and land management decisions. Past studies have yielded essential information that guides conservation efforts throughout the hemisphere. Future work is vital to the effective management of bird species that are suffering general declines throughout their range. *Please write to:* Mike Dombeck, Chief, USDA Forest Service,

FWS ADOPTS GOOSE RULES TO ADDRESS ARCTIC TUNDRA DEGRADATION

Two proposed measures to reduce mid-continent populations of Lesser Snow Geese and Ross' Geese (light geese) will be implemented. Increased survivorship of adult (a consequence of ample food supplies yielded by agricultural and refuge development along the birds' migration routes) have caused these populations to explode from an estimated 800,000 in the 1960s to between three and five million today. This has triggered an ecological crisis on the birds' nesting grounds in the arctic tundra. The geese feed by eating the plant roots; competition for food has pushed geese to over-graze salt marshes, denuding large swaths. In the short arctic growing season, this habitat degradation will take years to recover. In many areas, it may be permanent. In 1996, biologists surveying the 1,200-mile stretch of coastline along west Hudson and James Bays estimated that 35 percent of the original habitat has been destroyed, another 30 percent severely damaged, and the remaining 35 percent overgrazed. Many bird species that nest in the same areas as the geese show signs of decline or have otherwise been affected, including Red-necked Phalaropes, Dowitchers, Hudsonian Godwits, Stilt Sandpipers, Yellow Rails, Oldsquaw, Parasitic Jaegers and Lapland Longspurs, among others. After extensive consultation with the Canadian government and a rulemaking process that generated hundreds of public comments, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) published two rules in the Federal Register of February 16 that will allow 24 states to take conservation measures aimed at reducing the population of light geese. States will be able to permit the use of electronic goose calls and unplugged shotguns during the remaining weeks of their light goose seasons this year, provided that other waterfowl and crane seasons have been closed. States may also implement a conservation order under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that would let hunters take light geese outside of traditional migratory bird hunting seasons. The FWS is also changing the way it manages mid-continent national wildlife refuges to make them less attractive to geese. The FWS will seek input from stakeholders to begin to determine the scope and participants for a long-term study of other potential control measures. *Contact:* Ellen Paul, American Ornithologists' Union, <epaul@dclink.com>.

III. UPDATES

MOST OF LARGEST CASPIAN TERN COLONY TO BE RELOCATED

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has determined that destroying 87% of the nesting habitat of the Caspian Tern colony on Rice Island in the Columbia River estuary will not significantly affect the environment, and therefore requires no Environmental Impact Statement. The Corps intends to vegetate all but one acre of the eight acre colony and disturb Caspian terns that attempt to nest there. It will try to relocate the colony to East Sand Island, 16 miles closer to the ocean, by developing 16 acres of nesting habitat, placing decoys and playing taped vocalizations there, as well as controlling any predators. Rice Island is the largest Caspian Tern colony in the world and is used by 30% of the North American population. The National Marine Fisheries Service blames the terns for part of the decline in salmonid populations because the birds eat hatchery-raised smolts of federally listed coho salmon and steelhead. This project assumes that relocating the colony will reduce predation on out-migrating salmonid smolts. A study will be conducted to test this hypothesis. *Contact:* Craig Harrison, Pacific Seabird Group, 202-778-2240 or <charrison@hunton.com>.

EFFORTS CONTINUE TO REDUCE BIRD KILLS AT TOWERS

The Office of Migratory Bird Management (MBMO) of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) has launched a discussion with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Federal Aviation Administration, airline and

communications industry officials, and the conservation community about measures that can be taken to reduce avian mortality resulting from bird collisions with communications towers. MBMO has asked a dispute resolution organization to contact all interested parties and plan a full discussion session on the issue. It is hoped that this will lead to research into tower siting, design and other technologies to reduce the incidence of bird collisions with towers and the guy wires that keep them in place. ABC has been involved in encouraging the development of research guidelines and promoting solutions to tower siting and lighting and bird safety. Meanwhile, the pending FCC rule to preempt state and local zoning and land use restrictions on the siting, placement and construction of broadcast transmission facilities has effectively been shelved. Although the FCC has not withdrawn the rule, there are no immediate plans to publish and implement a final rule. The effort led by the National Audubon Society and ABC to compel the FCC to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement helped shelve the regulations. FWS and ABC will be co-sponsoring a symposium at Cornell on tower kills on August 11. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad at ABC or Ellen Paul, American Ornithologists' Union, <epaul@dclink.com>.

HORSESHOE CRAB PROTECTION ADVANCES

ABC and National Audubon, along with their Policy Council partners at World Wildlife Fund, Defenders of Wildlife, and New Jersey Audubon, have led efforts to protect the horseshoe crab from over-harvest and thereby protect the hundreds of thousands of Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and other shorebirds that depend on its eggs. Through these collaborative efforts New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland have all adopted strong ~~measures to reduce the take of the crabs for eel and conch bait. The horseshoe crab has been elevated from a~~ creature of little concern to State and Federal agencies to a high priority species because of these efforts. The Governors of the key states have been directly involved, a classic case of how well the Policy Council works to resolve a conservation issue. These efforts led to the adoption of an interstate fishery management plan in December 1998 by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Although weaker than advocated, it does require some protections and is strong on research and data collection. It is a major triumph to have an interstate fisheries group adopt a fishery management plan for the crab, as many more species of greater commercial value are in decline. The ASMFC Plan requires New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland to continue their present regulations while the other states are encouraged to cap landings in 1999. The Commission is to develop restrictions for the entire Atlantic Coast for adoption by the states in 2000. The key horseshoe crab states are required to collect complete landings data, conduct beach spawning surveys, conduct egg counts on spawning beaches and to do trawl surveys for adult crabs. Protection of habitat is also encouraged. Under new regulations, Maryland watermen reduced harvest by 83% in 1998; New Jersey by 60%; and Delaware by 34%. But fishery pressure has shifted to Virginia because of a loophole in Virginia law that allows unlimited landings of crabs taken from outside its three mile limit. Landings in Virginia have since increased twenty-fold. ABC, National Audubon, WWF, Defenders of Wildlife and Virginia groups signed a joint letter to the Secretary of Natural Resources of Virginia and most of the groups met with him in Richmond on February 18 urging prompt action to close the loophole. The Virginia Marine Resources Commission has scheduled a public hearing on new horseshoe crab regulations for February 23, 1999. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad at ABC.

EFFORTS CONTINUE TO HALT LAUNCH SITE ON SOMBRERO ISLAND

Together with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK), ABC continues to lead the effort to prevent the development of a rocket-launch site on Sombrero Island. The tiny island of 95 acres is located about 56 km northwest of Anguilla (to which it belongs) in the British West Indies. Essentially uninhabited except for a lighthouse staff of five, it is free of mammalian predators and surrounded by deep water with

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healthy fisheries. Among the species nesting on Sombrero are Red-billed Tropicbirds, Brown Boobies and Masked Boobies (all species of special concern), and Roseate and Least Terns (listed as both species of special concern and endangered). The proposed launch site would destroy essentially all nesting habitat on the island. The Environmental Assessment conducted on behalf of Beal Aerospace, the Texas company that wants to build the launch site, has not been officially released, but it has been made available to the government and citizens of Anguilla. Copies are now being reviewed by a number of seabird biologists. Beal is pressing for permission to build a dock, which would render the island vulnerable to mammalian predators, and has engaged in a public-relations campaign to

persuade Anguillans that the project would benefit them financially. A British Overseas Territory, Anguilla has asked the British National Space Agency and the British Nature Conservancy to review the Environmental Assessment, which was not required under British or Anguillan law. It is unclear whether the British government could or would actually veto the project. Meanwhile, Beal has stepped up its efforts to argue that the effects on birds and other wildlife will be minimal. Beal has publicly announced that it will begin launching rockets from Sombrero in October, 2000. Beal discounts the concerns expressed by conservationists and has pledged to establish a seabird sanctuary within 200 miles of Sombrero and at least equal in area to Sombrero. In addition, if necessary to ensure increased seabird populations, Beal Aerospace will sponsor a seabird-breeding program at the sanctuary. *Contact:* Gerald Winegrad at ABC or Ellen Paul, American Ornithologists' Union, <epaul@dclink.com>.

IV. ABC'S WORKS IN PROGRESS

ABC LAUNCHES PESTICIDES AND BIRDS CAMPAIGN

With the hiring of Kelley Tucker, ABC has launched its long-awaited Pesticides and Birds Campaign. A federally licensed wildlife rehabilitator with a Master's degree from the University of Chicago, Kelley has studied Swainson's Hawk nesting productivity, worked in Chicago's Safer Pest-Control Project and served as a consultant to the MacArthur and Joyce Foundations. The campaign will focus on creating broad public awareness of the increasing problem of wildlife pesticide poisonings. While the issue receives little press, many scientists believe the problem is at least as great as in the days of *Silent Spring*. The campaign's mission is to reduce wild birds' risk of exposure to pesticides that can be proven to have lethal and sub-lethal effects when used according to law and accepted practice. Kelley will focus on building strong cooperative relationships among conservation organizations, government agencies, commercial concerns, research institutions, animal welfare groups and other stakeholders. Campaign goals include working with government agencies to strengthen wildlife protection in pesticides management and regulation; conducting a public campaign against the "Fatal Five" pesticides routinely killing birds in the U.S.; disseminating information to NGOs and government agencies; building cooperative relationships with pesticide companies; and establishing a pesticide incident reporting system. The program will be guided by an advisory council of wildlife toxicologists, regulatory authorities and other specialists. *Contact:* Kelley Tucker, 202-778-9773 or <ktucker@abcbirds.org>.

PACKARD FOUNDATION GRANT AIDS PARTNERS IN FLIGHT ON THE WEST COAST

ABC, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) are the co-recipients of a recent grant from the Packard Foundation to further Partners in Flight efforts in California, Oregon, and Washington. ABC is leading the effort in Oregon and Washington and has hired Bob Altman as PIF Coordinator for those two states for two years. Bob has been a mainstay of the OR/WA PIF Chapter for years, and this new position enables him to direct his time and skills full-time to completion of Bird Conservation Plans, and to then enter a conservation implementation phase. The first product is a draft plan for coniferous forests west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains. This area historically has been an environmental

battleground centered on the Spotted Owl, Marbled Murrelet, and old-growth issues. The PIF plan deals with the remainder of the land avifauna from an entirely non-regulatory standpoint, and is moving toward recommendations as to sustainable balances among successional stages in each of several subregions. Maintaining natural structural characteristics of forests at all of these stages should assure continued health of the high priority birds in the system. Additional planning efforts have begun for the valley lowlands of the Puget Trough and Willamette Valley, east slope conifers of the Cascades as well as the Blue and Okanogan Mountains to the east, the shrub-steppe and riparian complex of the Columbia Plateau, and the complex Klamath-Siskiyou forest of southwest Oregon. For more information on efforts in these states *contact:* Bob Altman at <alt8bird@aol.com>. PRBO is in the lead in California, and is using the Packard grant to build on the solid foundation established through the Riparian Habitat Joint Venture and the bird conservation plan for that habitat. PRBO has contracted with key individuals to produce plans for the

four next most important habitat types and regions of California: the Sierra Nevada, grasslands, oak woodlands, and coastal scrub/chaparral (habitat for California Gnatcatcher and other priority species). For more information, *contact*: Geoff Geupel at <ggeupel@prbo.org>. NFWF is using Packard funds to begin accomplishing the recommendations of these plans. \$900,000 will be available for on-the-ground projects in the three states that effectively conserve bird habitat. Particular attention will be given to proposals that engage private landowners, leverage existing sources of funding, and build partnerships among non-traditional associates. *Contact*: Greg Elliott at <elliott@nfwf.org>. A small portion of the funding from ABC will also be used to help support Partners in Flight in British Columbia and the Yukon. *Contact*: David Pashley at ABC at: <dpashley@abcbirds.org>.

ABC'S WEB SITE IS ON LINE

American Bird Conservancy's new web site is up and running! Check out <www.abcbirds.org>. The site contains detailed information about the Policy Council and its bird conservation issues, past copies of *Bird Calls*, and details about the other programs of ABC. Learn more about Partners in Flight, the Important Bird Area (IBA) program, Pesticides and Birds Campaign, and the *CATS INDOORS!* program (see following article). Download great information on bird conservation. We encourage you to link your web site with ours. *Contact*: Mike Parr at ABC: <mparr@abcbirds.org>.

CATS INDOORS! GOES ON-LINE

Now that ABC's web site is up and running at <www.abcbirds.org>, an array of information from the *Cats Indoors!* program is available on line. Fact sheets and posters (see inside back cover) can be downloaded from the *Cats Indoors!* page. Recent additions to the library including a new fact sheet (what to do about a neighbor's cat in your yard), as well as new, ready-to-use public service announcements. Meanwhile, the network of activists continues to grow. In Vermont, the Addison County Humane Society and Otter Creek Audubon Society have joined forces to educate their community about the benefits of keeping cats indoors. Their effort to pass a local cat ordinance is getting media coverage. In coordination with the Santa Barbara Audubon Society, a California activist started a *Cats Indoors!* campaign. She has also enlisted the support of the local animal control agency and cat adoption group, which are distributing brochures to vet clinics and pet stores. A number of researchers are conducting studies on cat predation of wildlife in Kansas, Connecticut, California, Florida and Tennessee. Some interesting discoveries: a researcher in Kansas has found that a declawed cat has killed more birds than any other cat in her study. A study ~~comparing two grassland parks in California found no California Quail or California Thrashers in the park with a colony of over 20 cats, but these species were always seen in the cat-free park. In addition, the cat park had a greater number of house mice, but the cat-free park had more native deer mice.~~ For more information or ideas on how to get involved, *contact*: Linda Winter at 202-778-9619 or <lwinter@abcbirds.org>.

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SECOND PAN AMERICAN ROUNDTABLE PLANNED

Following the success of the first Partners in Flight Pan American Roundtable, a second meeting has been scheduled for June 17th at 1250 24th Street NW, Conference Room 5A/B. The meeting will run from 10:00 until 4:00. Draft agenda items include panel discussions on bird conservation strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean, information sharing among conservation groups, and conservation issues in the Caribbean, *contact*: Mike Parr <mparr@abcbirds.org>.

CONSERVATION COUNTERPARTS PROGRAM LAUNCHED

American Bird Conservancy has launched a new program 'Conservation Counterparts' which aims to link conservation-minded North American groups with conservationists and researchers in Latin American and the Caribbean. A brochure with information on the first twelve conservation projects that can be adopted by U.S.-based organizations is available from ABC (202-778-9666), and can be viewed on the ABC website at <www.abcbirds.org>.

V. THE BIRD IS THE WORD

FWS DIRECTOR MAKES MIGRATORY BIRDS A TOP PRIORITY

FWS Director Jamie Rappaport Clark recently announced that migratory bird conservation is one of her top four priorities for the next two years. This January, an interdisciplinary team of FWS staffers from around the country drafted an action plan for 1999 and 2000. The plan describes measures that will be taken to address the threats migratory birds face from habitat loss in the Western Hemisphere, contaminants, man-made structures and other human activities. FWS is committed to furthering new conservation vehicles such as the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan and the North American Colonial Waterbird Conservation Plan. Established programs such as Partners in Flight and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan will benefit from expanded efforts by the Service in the next two years and beyond. The Director's other top priorities are ecosystem management, invasive species, and refuges. Actions taken to address these items will also benefit bird populations. *Contact:* Mila Plavsic, FWS, 703-358-2153 or <Mila_Plavsic@fws.gov>.

PRESIDENT'S BUDGET INCLUDES MORE MONEY FOR BIRD CONSERVATION

The President's budget for fiscal-year (FY) 2000 includes over two million new dollars to benefit the migratory bird program under the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. This represents an opportunity to pursue multiple management activities that are essential to long-term migratory bird conservation. FWS hopes that partners, including ABC Policy Council member organizations, will support this initiative, which will benefit more than 500 species of birds and their habitats in 12 ecoregions throughout North America. Among the Service's goals for FY 2000 is the establishment of a network of long-term monitoring programs to document population trends of species of concern. Information obtained through evaluation of the data will support up-to-date assessments of declining populations. Other monitoring and management programs proposed for FY 2000 will document the environmental impact of overabundant species on crucial habitat, and allow wildlife managers to experiment with new or expand existing control measures. Of equal importance will be the development of educational materials and outreach strategies to inform the conservation community and private citizens about species whose numbers have changed at an alarming rate in the past several years. In addition, partnerships developed through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan are expected to protect or restore thousands of acres of habitat that are important to birds. This new funding is a great start to meeting the migratory bird program's recognized needs. *Contact:* Paul Schmidt, FWS, 703-358-1769 or <Paul_R_Schmidt@fws.gov>.

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The Newsletter of the American Bird Conservancy Policy Council

REVIEW: *REBEL WITH A CONSCIENCE*

This book, by one of the National Audubon Society's great presidents, portrays major events in the history of the environmental movement. Author Russell W. Peterson was also active in predecessor organizations of the ABC Policy Council and is a friend to many on the Council today. Russ helped integrate the international conservation movement and focused it on environmentally sustainable development. This book describes his conflicts with industry, which contended that environmental regulations are bad for business; Russ shows how the opposite is true. He also covers his successful efforts to convince environmental groups to support programs to reduce population growth, a prime cause of habitat loss and degradation. The book can be ordered from Associated University Presses at 609-655-4770.

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