



2014 Partnership Report

CREATING THE IDEAL ENVIRONMENT FOR BIRD HABITAT CONSERVATION





A New Look for Pacific Birds

Pacific Birds has a newly minted logo. We want it to symbolize everything we stand for as an organization as we continue to evolve to meet the growing needs of our partners and of the birds. It is not a specific bird, but represents all the birds and the critical habitats it is our mission to conserve.



About Pacific Birds

Pacific Birds brings numerous interests together to find common ground for conservation, and creates networks to advance long-term planning and on-the-ground project delivery.

The Pacific Birds region includes Alaska, coastal British Columbia, Western Washington and Oregon, Northwest California, and the Hawaiian Islands.

Please see our website to learn more about Pacific Birds, and to see a full list of our board and staff.

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THE COVER PHOTO

Anchialine wetlands, such as this pool in the Ahihi-Kina`u Natural Area Reserve in Hawai`i, are extremely rare world wide.

Funding from the 2014 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program will allow the Division of Forestry and Wildlife to exclude feral ungulates, conduct public outreach, and otherwise protect the wetlands ecosystem surrounding these pools.

*Photo by
J. Rubey*



A Message from the Board Co-Chairs

It has been a busy and exciting year for Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture! Our partnership report summarizes and showcases some of the terrific bird habitat conservation work carried out by our partners. And partners is a key word. As our staff and board moved through a series of transitions in 2013 and 2014, we kept the partnership model right up front, even though much went on behind the scenes.

In this report, we can only scratch the surface of the good conservation work that is happening; we encourage you to peruse our website and talk to staff members to learn more about projects and priorities in your area and across the Pacific Birds region. We also encourage you to utilize our long history and collective conservation expertise. So if a staff or board member cannot help you with a project, let us help you find a partner that can!

In addition to the on-the-ground work implemented by all of you, our board and staff have worked hard to implement our new vision and mission by unifying partners and creating additional conservation opportunities. That happens in a number of ways: networking at partner meetings, identifying critical conservation areas, sharing information about funding, research, and citizen science, and directly assisting partners with planning and implementation. We also intend to focus on more strategically identifying and protecting avian habitats based on strong science from our own, and other, planning efforts.

We have also taken on a challenge that many partners will understand: to work more effectively across borders. Pacific Birds is the only joint venture with an International Management Board, and the board, staff and partners have already worked as an international team in many ways. But we recognize that we need to be even more proactive to further our U.S.-Canada connection and lead by example, so we will be working hard to be "one joint venture."

We are moving ahead over the next few years with our new vision, mission, and name and we are excited about the communications and business plans in development. We are also gathering and incorporating your input on key conservation initiatives to help us prioritize our work in the coming months. So thank you and congratulations to everyone on your conservation successes in 2014. We look forward to hearing project updates and seeing what you have in mind for habitat conservation over the next year.

Sincerely, and on behalf of the International Management Board,

Holly Michael *Barry D Smith*



Holly Michael / US Co-Chair



Barry Smith / Canada Co-Chair

OUR VISION

A Pacific Region United for Bird Habitat Conservation

By working together, we will ensure wild birds thrive in abundant and diverse habitats that we all help safeguard for future generations.

Our Mission

Creating the Ideal Environment for Bird Habitat Conservation





Sand Lake Estuary, Oregon
Photo by Zach Urness / Statesman Journal

Conservation Accomplishments in 2014

In 2014, Pacific Birds partners in the U.S. and Canada worked hard to permanently protect, restore or enhance approximately 30,000 acres of habitat. The reported projects behind these acres were initiated from a variety of public and private partners, and represent an array of collaborative and strategic efforts to enhance the conservation status of lands that are important to wildlife, people and biodiversity. Many of the projects were implemented to target wetland or other habitats identified as important to one or more avian species. More than 175 projects were reported during the 2014 fiscal year, with funding from federal, state, local and private funding sources.

While the number of protected acres are one measure of partner success, it is not the whole story. Habitat projects ranged in size from a one-acre restoration in Hawaii to several thousand acres in the Pacific Northwest, but all of the projects represent a regional or national priority for wildlife species and the habitats they depend upon.



Conservation Grants: Securing Funding for Habitats & Birds

Partners were successful in securing and leveraging millions of dollars in 2014 from federal and state grant programs, as well as from a variety of private and non-government programs and initiatives. Two major grant programs that fund partner work are highlighted here.

Northern American Wetlands Conservation Act Grants

In the 2014 funding cycle, U.S. Pacific Birds partners received six Small NAWCA grants (up to \$75,000) and one Standard NAWCA grant (up to \$1,000,000). The Standard NAWCA grantee, Ducks Unlimited, will work with the Willamette Valley Partnership to implement the second phase of a project to create a waterfowl migration and wintering corridor running the length of the valley. The project will protect, restore, and enhance 937 acres, and restore 94 of the protected acres, focusing on native forested and wet prairie wetlands, river corridors, and forested uplands.

The Small NAWCA grantees include the The Kohala Center, Inc, Skagit Land Trust, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California State Coastal Conservancy, and the Mason Conservation District. Collectively these projects will affect more than 3000 acres. The projects will install predator proof fence in Hawai`i, protect migratory bird habitat in the North Puget Lowlands and Chehalis River Basin, eradicate the invasive *Spartina* in Humboldt Bay, and restore habitat along the Skokomish River.



Spartina densiflora, Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Photo by USFWS

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants



Pacific Coastal Rainforest Afognak Island, Alaska

In 2014, Pacific Birds partners were awarded eight National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant awards- one each in Hawaii and California, and nine in Oregon and Washington. The combined grants represent more than eight million federal dollars, leveraged with nearly three million dollars from state and local governments as well as private partners. One of the largest projects in terms of acres is in Alaska, where the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the Great Land Trust will protect 2585 acres on Afognak Island.

In Hawai`i, the Department of Natural Resources will restore and protect coastal ecosystems in the Ahihi-Kina`u Natural Area Reserve by removing invasive plants and animals and installing fencing, and removing marine debris. The federally listed Hawaiian Stilt will benefit from this project, as well as several other priority species. Other coastal projects in Oregon, Washington and California will restore and protect habitat for fish and wildlife species, and benefit migratory bird species using the Pacific Flyway.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM ACROSS PACIFIC BIRDS



Great Land Trust adds nearly 1,000 acres to the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge
Photo by Carl Johnson / Great Land Trust

Alaska

Alaska's land trusts continued efforts to secure and enhance natural areas, wildlife habitat and open space during 2014. The acquisitions, easements and public interpretive projects have multiple values, from maintaining natural areas near communities to protecting wetlands and riparian areas for birds and other wildlife.

Bristol Bay Heritage Land Trust has further developed cooperative relations with land owners to negotiate purchases and easements on lands adjacent to the world-class salmon waters of the Kvichak, Nushagak

and Mulchatna Rivers. The Kachemak Heritage Land Trust continued to consolidate protection of the Anchor River Salmon Conservation Area, as well as constructing nature trails and hosting events that promote public appreciation of natural areas. In 2014, the Southeast Alaska Land Trust acquired more coastal and wetlands properties near Juneau, and continues to collaborate on maintaining the quality of the Mendenhall Wetlands.

The Great Land Trust has substantially expanded its work through a compensatory mitigation program, as well as contract management of a habitat program for the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council. They have been highly successful in protecting estuaries in Upper Cook Inlet. A highlight of 2014 was their donation of nearly 1,000 acres of wetlands to the State of Alaska for inclusion in the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge. The trust raised over a million dollars for this major transaction and is working with a local elementary school and partners to develop public access. Pacific Birds is a project partner and looks forward to seeing progress in 2015.

The year closed out with the 15th Alaska Bird Conference in Juneau during December. Pacific Birds again supported this conference where scientific presentations highlight advancements in bird research, management, and conservation. The conference hosted meetings of the Alaska Shorebird Group, Boreal Partners in Flight, and the Alaska Raptor Group. These sessions provided valuable opportunities for interactions among Pacific Birds staff and local, statewide and regional partners.

British Columbia

In 2014, the Crown Land Securement Partner Program (CLSPPP), administered by the Nature Trust of B.C., secured 388 acres on Vancouver Island to be added to the new Quatse Estuary Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Funding for acquisition, designation and management came in part from Wildlife Habitat Canada and the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation. Along the Pacific Americas Flyway, the Quatse Estuary is host to more than 60 species of wintering waterfowl and waterbirds, and the associated uplands provide habitat to more than 100 species.



Also on Vancouver Island, 230 acres were added to the Parksville-Qualicum Beach WMA, bringing the overall protected acres in the WMA to more than 3,000.

Ducks Unlimited Canada worked on several fronts in British Columbia to benefit waterfowl. With funding from the Canadian Wildlife Service, about 500 acres along the Fraser River Delta and on Vancouver Island were planted with cover crops for wintering waterfowl populations. Ducks Unlimited also secured a 65-acre easement along the Courtney River in order to be kept in farmland for the benefit of waterfowl.

Research partners, with the help of citizen scientists, are continuing studies of shorebirds in British Columbia. Bird Studies Canada, in cooperation with Simon Fraser University, is in the midst of a three-year project to study Western Sandpiper abundance and site selection behavior in the Salish Sea and Vancouver Island region. This project aims to develop leading indicators and test model predictions across multiple Western Sandpiper stopover sites. More than 60 citizen volunteers have participated to date at 39 sites, mostly in British Columbia and a few in Washington. In addition to the shorebird study, volunteers are working as Caretakers in Canada's Important Bird Areas Program, devoting an estimated 14,000 hours annually to sites across Canada.

Partners in British Columbia are continuing their efforts to eradicate *Spartina*, an invasive salt marsh grass, from the intertidal zone along British Columbia's shorelines. This ongoing project involves federal and provincial partners in both B.C. and the U.S. The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), a long term Pacific Birds partner, has continued to enhance habitat by planting native wetland plants on several Vancouver Island sites. NCC has also been working on planning efforts related to the Kumdis Estuary on Hadia Qwaii.



Lesser Snow Geese from Wrangel Island, Russia rely heavily on the Fraser River Delta for overwintering
Photo by Vasilii Baranyuk © 2013

California

Growing concern over the impacts of climate change on local resources led California partners to focus on planning for coastal resiliency. A combination of subsidence and relative sea level rise is happening faster in Humboldt Bay than anywhere else in California. Humboldt Bay has nearly 30 miles of highly vulnerable shorelines that if breached, would incrementally increase the tidal footprint by over 1,500 acres for each 0.5 meter rise in tide elevation.

The Humboldt Bay Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Project funded by the California State Coastal Conservancy completed Phase II in 2014. The purpose of the project is to inform the public and local agencies of the risk that sea level rise poses to the communities and environment on Humboldt Bay and examine the process of developing adaptation strategies and options for critical regional assets. Phase II involved three components: (1) preparation of Humboldt Bay Sea Level Rise Hydrodynamic Modeling and Inundation Vulnerability Maps; (2) formation of a Humboldt Bay Sea Level Rise Adaptation Planning Working Group (APWG); and (3) preparation of a Humboldt Bay Sea Level Rise Adaptation Plan. Humboldt County was also selected to serve as a pilot study area for the California Collaboration on Coastal Resiliency (CCCR). The CCCR is an effort of the State Coastal Conservancy, Coastal Commission, Ocean Protection Council, and State Lands Commission to work together to assist local and regional groups with climate change adaptation.





Inundation of agricultural lands, Humboldt County
Photo by Aldaron Laird

The pilot program in Humboldt County will develop a process that will be useful in other parts of the state.

In addition to planning activities, California partners of Pacific Birds expended over \$19 million to restore, enhance and protect nearly 1,200 acres of upland, over 500 acres of wetland and nearly nine miles of riparian bird habitat. Projects included creek and stream restoration projects that not only provided wildlife habitat but protected adjacent communities prone to flooding such as the Salt River Ecosystem Restoration project. Most upland habitat projects involved protection of oak habitat, critical for a wide variety of migratory and resident birds.

Hawai'i

The Kauai National Wildlife Refuge, with assistance from numerous partners, completed installation of the first state-of-the-art predator exclusion fence on Kauai and the second such fence for the State of Hawai'i. The fence took about three months to construct, is almost a half-mile in length, stands 6.5 feet tall, and encloses an area of 7.8 acres. It will protect the endangered Nēnē (Hawaiian Goose), the Mōlī (Laysan Albatross), and other native birds and plants from introduced mammalian predators.

Once eradicated from inside, the absence of predators will make this coastal area an important translocation site for the threatened 'A'o (Newell's Shearwater).

Additionally, within the Hanalei portion of the Refuge three new wetland units were restored as habitat for five endangered waterbirds: Koloa (Hawaiian Duck), 'Alae'Ula (Moorhen), 'Alae Ke'oke'o (Coot), Ae'o (Black-necked Stilt), and Nēnē. These new management units provide prime waterbird foraging, loafing, nesting, and brood rearing areas within the protected confines of the refuge. Invasive trees were removed and 12 acres were contoured, with a water control structure installed, for managing invasive vegetation and promoting germination of native wetland plants. New fish screens on 18 acres will prohibit the entry of invasive fish thus improving plant diversity and significantly improving invertebrate abundance for foraging.



Nēnē, or Hawaiian Goose
Photo courtesy of NRCS





An estuary on the 357-acre Beltz Property, which will become a new Oregon State Park
Photo Zach Urness / Statesman Journal

Oregon

Coastal wetlands and oak woodlands, both high priorities for Pacific Birds, registered major conservation gains in 2014 as Oregon partners added key properties to their growing network of conservation lands. On the coast, land trusts and state agencies acquired more than 525 acres around Sand Lake, one of Oregon's least developed estuaries, and protected an additional 240 acres adjacent to Coos Bay's South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. Acquisitions in both areas included properties that have been identified as high priorities for conservation for more than 20 years.

In the Willamette Valley, land trusts secured long-term protection for more than a thousand acres in Yamhill and Lane counties with high quality oak woodlands and other relatively intact native

habitats. Both areas have become major anchors for habitat conservation in the valley. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program, with \$8 million to \$10 million per year provided by the Bonneville Power Administration, has become a major driver for conservation efforts in the Willamette Valley in recent years. On the coast, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and other state agencies have been leveraging state funds with federal grants to support expanded investments in coastal wetlands.

Washington

One of the largest acquisitions in Washington in 2014 was completed by The Nature Conservancy with the purchase of 2,300 acres of timberlands along the Queets River, adjacent to the Olympic National Park on the Washington coast. This acquisition is part of a multi-phase conservation effort to protect thousands of acres in the watersheds of key salmon rivers such as the Queets and its tributary Clearwater River. Protection of the riparian corridors along the salmon rivers and sustainable management of large blocks of forest land will provide habitat for many species of birds and other wildlife.

Coastal estuaries have long been identified as priority habitat for waterbirds. One project documenting just how important these coastal bays are was undertaken by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and their research partners, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur, U.S. Forest Service, Prince William Sound Science Center, U.S. Geological Survey, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Manomet Center for Conservation Science, and the University of Washington. They are documenting the resting and foraging sites used by the



Queets River, Washington
Photo by Keith Lazelle



Pacific Flyway population of Red Knots during their spring migration from Mexico to breeding areas in Alaska and Russia. Red Knots migrate long distances and then stop at a few staging areas to which they regularly return, so the population is especially vulnerable if these rest sites are disturbed. Washington researchers marked more than 360 birds in Washington in 2014, and also re-sighted Red Knots at Grays Harbor. Combining re-sightings from all years, about 35% of all knots marked in Mexico have been observed in Washington. A similar proportion of knots marked in Washington have been re-sighted again in Washington or Mexico. These results indicate the strong migratory connectivity between sites in Mexico and Washington.

The members of the Washington Association of Land Trusts that border Puget Sound formed the Shoreline Conservation Collaborative, committing to significantly increase the pace to protect and restore Puget Sound. They are off to a good start with the protection of 280 acres on the Lyre River on the Strait of Juan. Tom Sanford, Executive Director of The North Olympic Land Trust, said "The Lyre River estuary, streams, wetlands, tidelands, kelp beds, bluff backed beaches, and diverse upland forest are important habitat for salmon and wildlife." Other Puget Sound shoreline successes include acquisition of over a mile of Port Gamble shoreline and 535 acres of forest in Kitsap County and a permanent easement on a mile of shoreline important to the biological connectivity of the Nisqually River Delta. All of these acquisitions were made possible by the cooperation of agencies, local government, Indian tribes, and land trusts in the Shoreline Conservation Collaborative, as well as other non-profit organizations.



Lyre River, Washington
Photo by Lindsey Aspelund, North Olympic Land Trust



PACIFIC BIRDS – The Times They Are A-Changin’

In 2014, Pacific Birds initiated a suite of changes, based on direct input from partners. Some of the important steps towards becoming a more responsive and effective organization are summarized below.

Thank you to the partners who participated in this process!



Rufous Hummingbird
Photo by Bob Armstrong

WHAT WE HEARD:

- The Joint Venture is a trusted conservation entity.
- Pacific Birds is valued as a clearinghouse of information, especially about partner projects and funding options.
- The conservation landscape has significantly changed since the joint venture was formed; contemporary approaches are needed.
- There is a critical need for a regional landscape level approach to bird habitat conservation- for all of the birds and flyways we encompass.
- Our conservation work must embrace the best possible science to be more effective.

HOW WE'RE RESPONDING:

- We have developed a new vision, mission, name and logo that reflect our new focus.
- We will strive to build regional partner relationships across political boundaries and recruit new partners.
- We are developing communication strategies that will inform decision makers about the need for strategic, regional bird habitat conservation.
- We are evaluating how to raise more money for our partners to help them implement priority bird habitat conservation projects.
- Pacific Birds will develop regional, strategic conservation priorities, based on the best science and input from our partners.

