



# 2015 Partnership Report

CREATING THE IDEAL ENVIRONMENT FOR BIRD HABITAT CONSERVATION



## About Pacific Birds

Pacific Birds convenes people to find common ground for conservation. We work with partners to advance strategic planning and on-the-ground project delivery that will benefit birds.

We are international in scope, guided by an [International Management Board](#) comprised of agencies and non-government organizations in the U.S. and Canada.

Learn more about what we do and where we work: [www.pacificbirds.org](http://www.pacificbirds.org)



Western Grebe  
Photo - Ron LeValley

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## The Cover Photo

Marsh Wren  
Peter Pearsall / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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## A Note from Our Coordinators

First and foremost, we would like to thank all the people who helped the Pacific Birds Partnership succeed in 2015. We had a defining year that began with a change in name for our 25 year-old Joint Venture, and ended with the selection of our conservation priorities.

As you will see in this report, we also continued with our core Joint Venture activities. As we have done for many years, we convened partners to share new science and discuss conservation issues and strategies; we worked with other bird initiatives and conservation partnerships to identify the most critical conservation threats and conservation gaps; and we helped partners find the funding support needed to implement on-the-ground projects. We recognize that some partners need this assistance more than others, so we worked hard to recognize partners who conserved important bird habitats on their own. In 2015, at least 24,000 acres of habitat were conserved within the Pacific Birds area.

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**OUR VISION:** A Pacific Region United for Bird Habitat Conservation

**OUR MISSION:** Creating the Ideal Environment 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.*

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Our largest milestone in 2015 was the selection of our conservation priorities. With our *Conserving Hawaii's Wetlands and Waterbirds* priority, we are greatly strengthening our existing planning efforts. This will lead to better identification of wetlands that support waterbirds in the face of climate change. With our *Sustaining Pacific Northwest Coastal Wetlands* priority, we face an ambitious and exciting challenge to identify the most important flyway-scale conservation actions for migratory birds that span across borders. Lastly, our *Preserving Pacific Northwest Oak and Prairie* priority puts us into new habitats altogether, cementing us as an All-Bird Joint Venture. We look forward to bringing our skills and perspectives to the table of existing partners that have been working to protect oak and prairie species.

Another large effort we undertook this past year was enhancing our communications. We improved the look of our website and newsletter, and we have committed to increasing our outreach efforts about birds and their needs.

Please contact one of us if you would like more information. We invite your participation and welcome your feedback.

Sincerely,

*Bradley Baker*

U.S. Coordinator



*Nasha Dargent*

Canada Coordinator





# Planning

## Conservation Priorities

In 2014 and 2015, we focused on a key question: How can the Pacific Birds partnership most strategically and effectively conserve the habitats that birds depend on?

To answer this, we solicited extensive input from partners and consulted experts in avian conservation. We also carefully evaluated federal and state conservation plans to look at which major habitats were essential for priority bird species within the Pacific Birds region.

In the fall of 2015, we announced three conservation priorities that will guide our partnership efforts over the next decade:

**Sustaining Coastal Wetlands of the Pacific Northwest**  
**Preserving Pacific Northwest Oak and Prairie**  
**Conserving Hawaii's Wetlands and Waterbirds**



Sara Evans-Peters, Pacific Birds Conservation Planner



Oak Grove in Evening Light  
Photo © Keith Lazelle







## Planning in Hawaii

Pacific Birds has been active in Hawaii for more than a decade. With the selection of Hawaiian Wetlands and Waterbirds as one of our major priorities, we strengthened our planning efforts there in 2015.

In May, we held a workshop using the Open Standards process. Partners evaluated the condition of coastal wetlands and brainstormed strategies to address the major threats to Hawaii's wetlands and waterbirds. Three major threat categories were identified during the workshop: altered freshwater hydrology, altered species composition and climate change. These threats will be essential considerations in our future work.

The *Pacific Birds Strategic Plan for Wetland Conservation in Hawaii*, currently in draft, will provide more information on these threats and the collective strategies needed to address them.

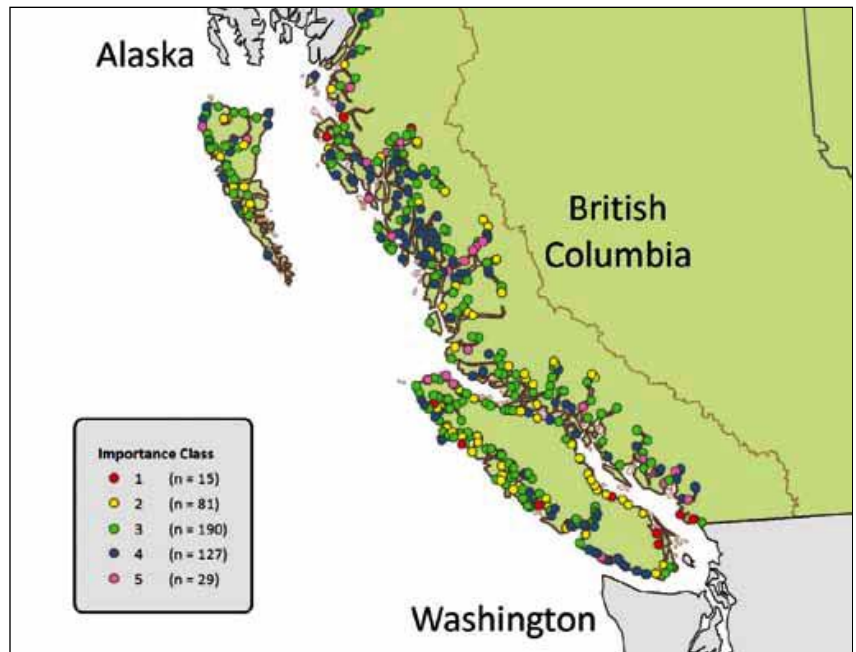
## British Columbia Updates

The British Columbia portion of the Joint Venture has had numerous conservation successes over the last 25 years. Nonetheless, we are still challenged by both knowledge gaps and the need for improved habitat program delivery. Several tools and programs are helping fill those gaps for partners, as well as providing science that can inform policy and engage the public.

Bird Studies Canada has been working with volunteer citizen scientists for many years to produce the [Breeding Birds Atlas of British Columbia](#), a comprehensive resource available online. More than 1,000 project participants helped map the province's breeding birds from 2008-2012, conducting over 53,000 hours of surveys. Several products were created once the participant data was reviewed and verified, among them: maps, relative abundance models, and bird species accounts. All told, the atlas reveals much about British Columbia's present-day bird populations, and it will play a pivotal role in bird conservation efforts in the British Columbia region of Pacific Birds.

Another tool for partners is the Pacific Estuary Conservation Program (PECP). PECP is a long-standing program formed by the Joint Venture in 1987 to identify, rank and conserve the 442 estuaries along the British Columbia coast. Since then, the PECP has done strategic planning and initiated multiple securement and restoration/enhancement projects.

The PECP concluded a major update in 2014 to incorporate new data. Partners used this updated information in 2015 to identify restoration opportunities for mitigation activities related to industrial development and to identify key estuaries where large projects should be limited or avoided.



# Habitat Conservation – Acres on the Ground



**Partners reported that 24,015 acres were conserved in 2015.**

How do we know this? Each year, Pacific Birds compiles partner habitat accomplishments for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We do this to better understand the collective impact of conservation efforts on a regional scale, to quantify the results of the partnership's work for Congress, and to showcase the work that partners do.

Hundreds of projects were reported by partners, only a few of which are highlighted here.

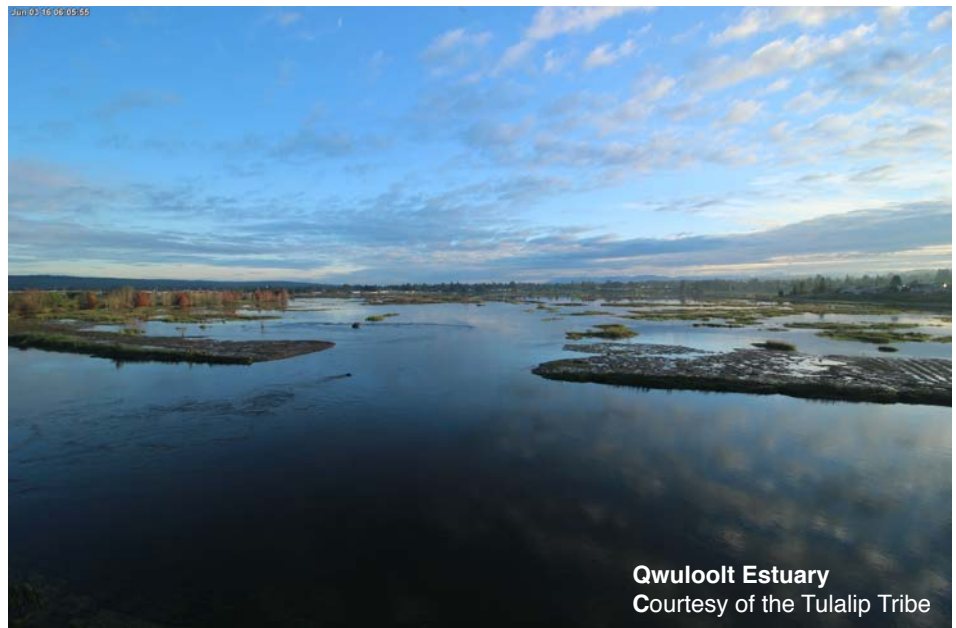
## Coastal Wetlands Habitat Conservation

*Qwuloolt* means “marsh” in the native Lushootseed language. So when the Tulalip Tribe in Washington envisioned an estuary restoration to undo some of the harm of landfills, diking and draining in the Snohomish Estuary, they named the project *Qwuloolt*. After a 20 year effort, partners finally celebrated the dike removal that restored natural hydrologic process to more than 400 acres.

The *Qwuloolt* Estuary Restoration Project represents a \$20 million investment. The project to transform the abandoned fields back to estuary was led by the Tulalip Tribe with assistance and funding from federal, state, and local agencies. Four U.S. Fish Wildlife Service National Coastal Wetland Grants were awarded for the project, and additional assistance and support has come from a suite of federal, state and non-government partners.

The Tulalip Tribe, with partners and grantors, also protected an adjacent 20-acre parcel at Heron Point in 2015. The parcel is a mix of old-growth forest and wetlands that is rich in intact wildlife habitat and home to a heron rookery.

The Heron Point project shows what the *Qwuloolt* project could look like after restoration, and will be managed by the Tulalip Tribe as part of the *Qwuloolt* Estuary Restoration Project.





In Alaska, the 160-acre [Elnen Bunkda conservation easement](#) was completed in 2015. It will conserve forests and wetlands along Cook Inlet that are important lands for traditional food harvest and are high value habitat for fish and wildlife species. This project was a joint effort by The Nature Conservancy, Great Land Trust and the Tyonek Tribe.

Near Juneau, the Southeast Alaska Land Trust conserved additional lands that adjoin the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge, as part of its accreted lands project. The Refuge is an Important Bird Area that hosts 140 species of birds.



Photo - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

***The Nature Trust of British Columbia, working with several partners and donors, protected 193 acres along the Salmon River Estuary on Vancouver Island in 2015. A number of fish and wildlife species will benefit, including all five species of Pacific Salmon, Roosevelt Elk, and Great Blue Heron.***



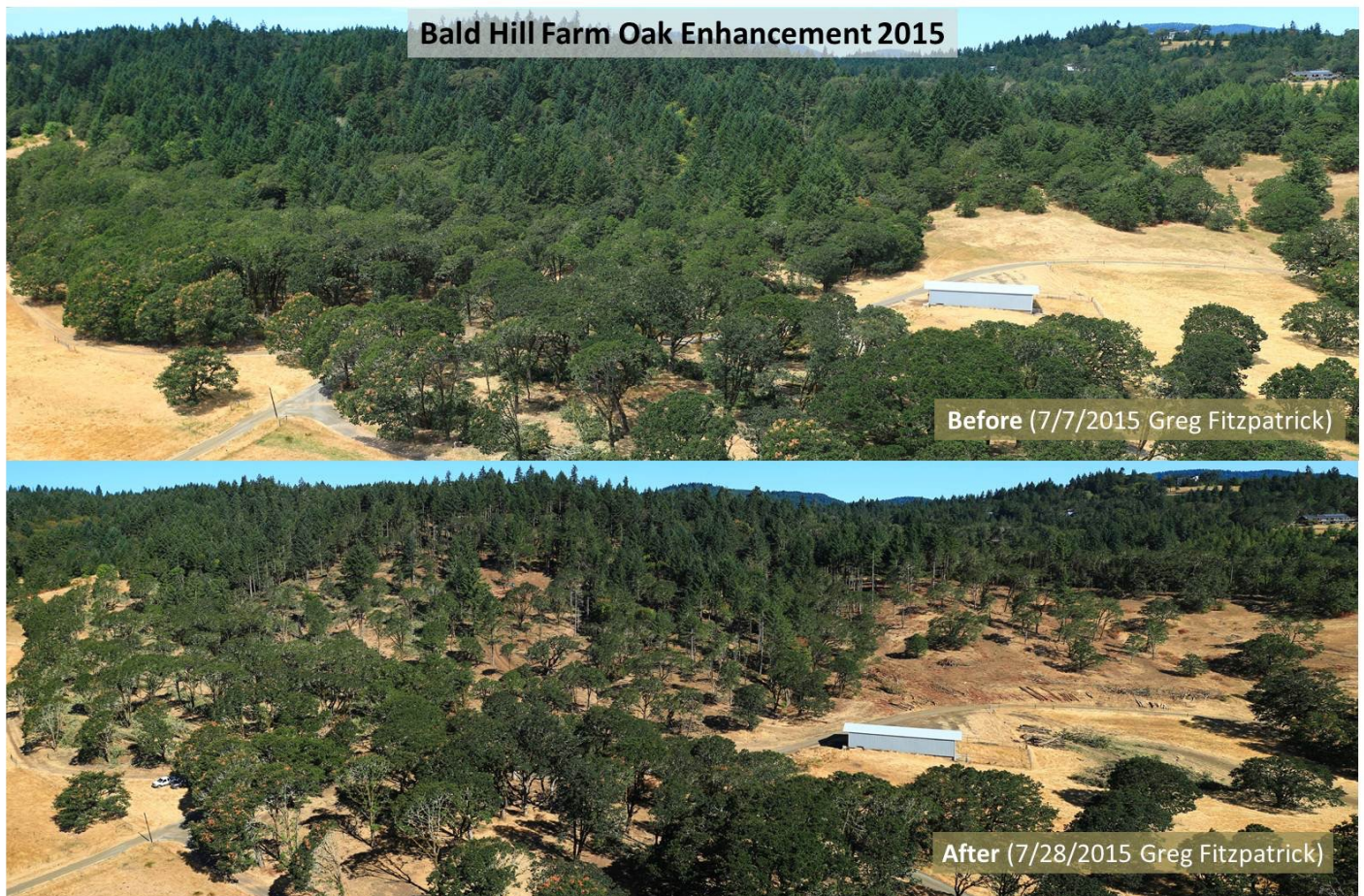


## Oak and Prairie Habitat Conservation

In 2015, Joint Venture partners in Oregon added more than 1,000 acres of oak and prairie habitat to the existing network of conservation lands in the Willamette Valley. Most of the projects were accomplished via the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program, with funding provided by the Bonneville Power Administration.

In Washington, land acquisition and management projects in South Puget Sound will benefit bird species such as Streaked Horned Lark, Western Meadowlark and Savannah Sparrow. Partners, including Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources and the Center for Natural Lands Management, also continued to work on multiple fronts across the oak and prairie landscape in Washington.

Conservation actions included removal and control of pest plants, planting native plant plugs, seeding prairie acres with native forbs and grasses, prescribed burning and the direct introduction and monitoring of rare species. In Thurston County alone there are now 3,632 conserved acres in the oak and prairie conservation network.



Drone photos before and after conifer removal at Bald Hill Farm in Oregon. Photo courtesy of Greenbelt Land Trust.





## Looking Ahead - Grants Secured in 2015

### NAWCA will continue to protect birds and wetlands.

In 2015, Ducks Unlimited, Inc and a suite of partners were awarded a \$1 million Standard NAWCA grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It will be used to protect, restore and enhance 937 acres as part of the third phase of the Willamette Valley Partnership Project. Grant funds will be matched by more than \$2 million in non-federal funds. The intent is to create a waterfowl wintering and migration corridor throughout the Willamette Valley and create several publicly owned and managed wetlands complexes.



**Wood Duck**  
Photo - Roy W. Lowe / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

### Partners received 11 National Coastal Wetlands Grants in 2015.

- In Hawaii, a 66-acre pond on Molaka'i is slated to be protected, benefitting 'alae ke'oke'o (Hawaiian Coot) and ae'o (Hawaiian Stilt).
- In California, the California Coastal Conservancy and partners will restore wetlands that will directly benefit salmon and shorebirds.
- In Oregon, four coastal projects will protect almost 300 acres that support more than 100 bird species and an enhancement project will influence 1700 acres of floodplain.
- In Washington, two restoration projects will restore 158 acres in the Skagit River Delta and Kilisut Harbor. And three proposed acquisition projects will protect 480 acres of declining coastal wetlands, intertidal wetlands, and upland and riparian habitats.



## Oak and Prairie conservation funding got a major boost in 2015.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has committed \$5 million over 5 years to local partnerships working in the northern Willamette Valley in Oregon and the Klamath Mountains in Oregon and California. USDA will work through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) to fund habitat restoration on thousands of acres of private land in two of the region's biggest oak and prairie strongholds.

[The Klamath-Rogue Oak Woodland Health and Habitat Conservation Project](#) is targeting lands in two watersheds that span the Oregon-California border. Partners, led by the Lomakatsi Restoration Project and Klamath Bird Observatory, expect to add \$1.3 million in matching funds and in-kind contributions to the \$3 million allocated by NRCS. Much of the work involves removal of conifers that are crowding out the older oaks.

[The North Willamette Valley Upland Oak Habitat Restoration Project](#) in Oregon will combine \$2 million from NRCS with \$3.9 million from a suite of partners to restore and protect oak, prairie and savanna habitats. Led by the Yamhill Soil and Water Conservation District, the group is focusing on 19 priority areas identified in the Oregon Conservation Strategy. Restoration work will not only benefit birds, but also the endangered Fender's blue butterfly, which depends on healthy native prairie habitats.

Birds expected to benefit from these upcoming projects include the Black-throated Gray Warbler (shown), Lewis's Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, California Towhee, Western Scrub-Jay and a number of other landbird species.





## Highlights from 2015

- We hosted or co-hosted partnership meetings in British Columbia, Washington, Oregon and Hawaii. These meetings brought a wide diversity of partners together to advance bird conservation efforts.
- Our monthly e-news, *Partner News and Resources*, topped 1200 subscribers in 2015 and a high percentage of subscribers open the news campaigns and visit the links. That tells us we are helping partners get news they need for their work.
- Pacific Birds contributed to the North American Bird Conservation Initiative's All-Bird Bulletin, **Partnerships with Land Trusts for Bird Conservation**, which showcased bird habitat conservation by land trust partners across the country.
- We sponsored regional conferences and local events that brought partners together or enhanced their fundraising efforts.



Partners at a Pacific Birds and Washington Audubon hosted meeting in Long Beach, Washington.

## From Our Newsletter

Early in 2015, we published a post contributed by Dr. Richard Fuller from the University of Queensland, Australia. He wrote about the conservation challenges facing the Bar-tailed Godwit, a species that breeds in Alaska and Siberia and winters mainly in Australia and New Zealand.

[This East-Asian-Australasian species is one of a number of shorebirds that have shown population declines in recent years.](#)



Photo - Lucas DeCicco / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Some of our other stories from 2015:

[The Smallest of Pacific Birds](#)

[Oak Conservation Project Benefits Landbirds](#)

[Alaska Land Trusts—40,000 Acres and Going Strong](#)





# The Year at a Glance

**THANK YOU** to all our partners who helped conserve habitat for Dunlin and other species in 2015.



Photo - Lucas DeCicco

## Our 2015 Goals

- Develop conservation priorities based on partner input.
- Collaborate with other landscape and bird initiatives to advance mutual conservation goals.
- Convene partners in Hawaii for planning related to Hawaii waterbirds and wetlands.
- Enhance our digital communications, improve our website, and share additional partner success stories.
- Continue to support and assist our partners doing on-the-ground habitat protection.

## Major Accomplishments in 2015

We finalized the selection of our conservation priorities.

We forged new working relationships with Landscape Conservation Cooperatives and other regional and national partnerships and initiatives.

Pacific Birds and partners took conservation planning for waterbirds in Hawaii to a new level.

Our news went out monthly to 1200 partners and receives positive feedback from subscribers. Our website got an overhaul in anticipation of a new site we will be developing in 2016.

More than 24,000 acres were conserved in 2015.

