

# 2016 Conservation Report



Pacific Birds  
Habitat Joint Venture

# Our Vision and Partnership

## *A Pacific Region United for Bird Habitat Conservation*

The staff and board at Pacific Birds work for others: to help secure funding, plan for strategic conservation, convene partners, and communicate successes. This summary report reflects that behind-the-scenes work, as well as the more visible work of our conservation partners. It also shows the progress made as we fully launched into our conservation priorities in 2016.

Our partners have reported to us that 77,000 acres were conserved in 2016. Hundreds of land trusts, resource agencies, and conservation groups across our region are actively protecting, restoring or enhancing bird habitat within our boundaries. Many others are working in planning, research, policy or communications to advance avian conservation.

*Regardless of their role, we thank partners for their conservation work in 2016!*

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# Priorities and Flyways

The geographic scope of Pacific Birds spans several avifaunal biomes around the Pacific basin. The conservation challenges are complex, but the need is clear—as a partnership, we urgently need to conserve habitats that species in decline depend on.

In late 2015, Pacific Birds selected three conservation priorities to better focus our efforts on the most critical habitats, species and actions. Most of our work in 2016 was connected to these priorities.

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

We are also committed to the idea that while birds may be found in our region for part of the year, we need to consider their habitat needs across seasons. This is why our boundaries expanded in 2016, and why we are setting the stage for additional outreach and conservation networking across multiple flyways. Stay tuned for more on these topics in 2017.







# HABITATS CONSERVED

***In Alaska and British Columbia, conservation projects will ensure that birds have quality habitat to nest, rest and refuel.***

In 2016, Alaska's [Great Land Trust](#) facilitated a landmark transaction with Ouzinkie Native Corporation to permanently conserve and make public over 36,000 acres on northern Afognak Island, as well as the majestic, offshore Triplet Islands.

The conservation project connects the adjacent Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge with Afognak Island State Park and includes 13 miles of coastline, 10 miles of salmon streams and over 6,000 acres of wetlands.

This project is particularly important for the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats. The area supports large numbers of seabirds, waterfowl, raptors and shorebirds and hosts a suite of landbirds that inhabit the westernmost coastal rain forest.

Afognak Island has a long history of being recognized for its exceptional fish and wildlife values. This project, three years in the making, resulted from the work of multiple dedicated partners.

***One species that benefits from the protection of coastal forests is the Marbled Murrelet, a Watch List species in the 2016 State of the Birds report.***



*2016 marked 25 years for the Pacific Birds partnership. We have tallied close to 1.3 million acres conserved over this time period.*



Nature Conservancy Canada

The Clayoquot Island Preserve near Vancouver Island encompasses 93 acres of forest and ocean front. The landowner purchased the small island in 1990 and recently donated part of the island to [Nature Conservancy Canada](#), a Pacific Birds partner. This project will conserve two especially important habitats—coastal sand dunes and eel-grass beds. Clayoquot Island is also a migratory stopover for hundreds of Pacific Brant.

Another Pacific Birds partner, [The Nature Trust of British Columbia](#), celebrated their 45th year of conservation work in British Columbia and reached a major milestone of 175,000 conserved acres. Learn more about the work of Pacific Birds partners in Canada in the [2016 Habitat Matters](#).





## ***Restoring floodplains benefits multiple fish and wildlife species.***

In December 2016, officials cut the ceremonial ribbon on a project in Oregon that is returning tidal flows to more than 500 acres of floodplain wetlands at Tillamook Bay.

The area is a major stopover for migrating and wintering waterfowl and shorebirds. In addition, restoration of these wetlands is key to rebuilding the watershed's depressed salmon populations. A major catalyst for completion of the floodplain project, however, was the benefits it promised for people in the local community. See our web [story](#), and learn more from the [Tillamook Estuaries Partnership](#).

In Washington, the Central Puget Lowlands Project is a collaboration to conserve wetland habitats in the Puget Sound region, with an emphasis on protecting and restoring floodplain wetlands. Funded in part by a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant, the project will acquire an estimated 166 acres of wetlands and associated uplands in fee title and conservation easement, restore an estimated 339 acres of wetlands and associated uplands, and enhance an estimated 12 acres of wetlands.

Restoration activities will result in self-sustaining, resilient habitats that will provide long-term benefits to over 150 bird species as well as other fish and wildlife. Three parts of the overall project were completed in 2016. [Ducks Unlimited](#) was the lead on the Waterwheel Project, shown at left, that will restore 40 acres of wetlands.





## ***Conserving oak habitats is critical for several landbird species.***

In 2016, [Columbia Land Trust](#) completed the first phase of a project that could eventually protect 10,000 acres with intact, high-quality oak and pine woodland habitat along the upper Klickitat River in southern Washington. The recently secured parcel encompasses 2,400 acres along both sides of the Klickitat River Canyon at the northern end of the range of Oregon white oak in the East Cascades Ecoregion. The property, to be held by the Washington Department of Natural Resources and co-managed by the land trust, is adjacent to the state agency's existing 2,300-acre Klickitat Canyon Natural Resource Conservation Area.

The second phase of the project, expected to be completed in 2017, would protect another 3,200 acres, filling one of the last major gaps in a network of public and private conservation lands along the Klickitat River. The area from the eastern edge of the Columbia River Gorge north to the Yakama Indian Reservation is at the heart of the most extensive remaining oak woodlands in Washington.

Studies conducted in the mid-1990s by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife detected 72 bird species in the Klickitat's oak woodlands, nearly 70 percent of them neotropical migrants such as Nashville Warblers and Ash-throated Flycatchers.

Woodlands in south-central Washington also appeared to fill a unique niche among the Pacific Northwest's oak habitats, providing habitat for dozens of bird species that were not reported in similar habitats in Oregon and northern California.



John Benson © Creative Commons

***Nashville Warblers were found to nest in the area's oak woodlands in densities among the highest reported anywhere in their range.***





Daniel Holbrook

## ***Non-native predators are one of the largest threats to birds in Hawaii.***

In Hawaii, bird habitat conservation is often focused on managing imminent threats and restoring or enhancing habitats. One of these habitat projects was the installation of a predator-proof fence at Kīlauea Point National Wildlife Refuge. Almost a half mile in length and enclosing a 7.8-acre area, the fence surrounds the first bird nesting sanctuary on the island of Kauaʻi.

After the completion of the fence in 2014, and subsequent predator eradication, two endemic marine bird species were translocated into the enclosed area—the threatened ‘A’o (Newell’s Shearwater) and the endangered ‘Ua’u (Hawaiian Petrel). Both species receive heavy predation by cats and rats where they nest in the upper reaches of the mountainous island.

The enclosure will be a core sanctuary and may help prevent extinction of these birds. [See our story](#) about the work of [Pacific Rim Conservation](#) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Hawaii.



***Traps are used to remove invasive rodents before and after birds are translocated to fenced areas.***



# FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS

Federal conservation programs, such as the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) program, are making a difference for birds in our region. Two Small NAWCA grants in the U.S. and a Standard Grant in Canada were awarded within the Pacific Birds region in 2016.

Partners also received seven National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program awards which will protect, restore or enhance coastal wetlands and adjacent uplands. And, while the on-the-ground gains are a hemisphere away, several Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act grants awarded in 2016 will benefit species that nest within our boundaries but winter in other parts of the flyway.

Pacific Birds also utilized some new funding approaches in 2016. Recognizing the critical need to make gains on Streaked Horned Lark conservation, [several partners joined forces](#) to fund a Conservation Specialist position housed within Pacific Birds.

## ***Puget Sound NAWCA grant***

In early 2016, Skagit Land Trust secured a Small NAWCA Grant to protect 67.5 acres within the Nookachamps Watershed in the North Puget Lowlands ecoregion.

Partners on the project include the Skagit Audubon Society, Washington State Department of Ecology and the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board, as well as a local high school, community members and neighboring landowners. [See our story.](#)

## ***Grayland Acquisition***

The Washington State Department of Ecology, partnering with Ducks Unlimited, was awarded a National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant to help fund the acquisition of 1,750 acres of mixed, threatened habitats in Grays Harbor County, Washington. The acreage contains estuarine and palustrine wetland habitats, tidal mud flats, old-growth forested uplands, interdunal wet/swale complexes, commercial timber lands and wet meadow/grasslands.

The project will benefit 31 fish species that use the Chehalis watershed, and the property contains habitats that support the Dusky Canada Goose, Marbled Murrelet, and other avian species.



***Wetlands in the Nookachamps Watershed***



***Grayland Acquisition***



## ***Saving Winter Habitat***

The bays and shorelines of Chiloe Island, off the coast of Chile, support about 30% of the global population of Hudsonian Godwits as well as wintering Whimbrels and other shorebird species. In 2016, a Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act grant was awarded to the [National Audubon Society](#) to help conserve the godwits and other species.

The project, Saving Critical Wintering Habitat for the Hudsonian Godwit on Chiloe Island, seeks to counter the current threats to the wintering species, including deforestation, development and degradation of the intertidal mud flats. Project partners will promote sustainable, habitat focused conservation practices and policies related to agriculture and ranching.

Partners will also work in a variety of ways to engage the community and support conservation projects that will maintain longterm ecological viability of five key watersheds on the island. Additional species that will benefit include Red Knot, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstone, Surfbird, Baird's Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Franklin's Gull, Elegant Tern and Barn Swallow.

*Conservation projects that consider the full life cycle of migratory birds are critical for sustaining populations. The Hudsonian Godwit nests in the northern reaches of Pacific Birds, but faces more imminent conservation threats a hemisphere away.*



Kristine Sowl - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



# CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

## ***Preserving Pacific Northwest Oak and Prairie***

### Oaks, Vineyards and Landbirds

Focusing primarily on the Willamette Valley's wine industry, the Willamette Partnership is recruiting landowners to protect and restore oak habitat through the [Willamette Valley Oak Accord](#).

Participants voluntarily commit to a baseline assessment of oak habitat on their property and improving habitat condition through onsite or offsite restoration. Supported in part by a grant from Pacific Birds, the initiative introduces landowners to the importance of oak woodland and prairie conservation, and creates a stewardship standard for land managers and owners.

### A New Business Plan

In 2016, Pacific Birds contributed staff time and funding support for an exciting project aimed at conserving prairie-oak habitats and the species that rely on them. Partners, including [American Bird Conservancy](#), [Center for Natural Lands Management](#), [Klamath Bird Observatory](#), the [Willamette Partnership](#) and Pacific Birds, are nearing completion of a business plan: *Prairie, Oaks, and People – A Conservation Business Plan to Revitalize the Prairie-Oak Habitats of the Pacific Northwest*. The plan presents the case for a 10- to 15-year investment in prairie-oak conservation.

### The Oak Prairie Work Group

Pacific Birds staff has also provided facilitation and planning guidance on the development of a Strategic Action Plan for the Intertwine Alliance's [Oak Prairie Work Group](#). The Strategic Action Plan is an addendum to the Alliance's Regional Conservation Strategy that addresses Oregon's white oak ecosystems.



***The Oak Titmouse, below, will benefit from conservation efforts in oak habitats.***





## Conserving Hawaii's Wetlands and Waterbirds

Pacific Birds continues working with Hawaii partners to identify the most pressing conservation needs of waterbirds and to pinpoint the habitats that will best protect them. The *Pacific Birds Strategic Plan for Wetland Conservation in Hawaii* (in draft), will establish shared conservation priorities, prioritize threats, and recommend implementation strategies.



**Above: The 'ālae' ʻula (Hawaiian Common Moorhen) is one of Hawaii's endangered endemic species.**

Progress was made on two major components of the plan in 2016: a geospatial analysis that will prioritize wetlands based on how well they meet the recovery objectives of endangered waterbirds and habitat for migratory birds and an analysis of threats and conservation strategies.

Pacific Birds staff and partners are currently working to fill several data gaps that are needed to complete the plan. These include: entering and ensuring quality control of waterbird data that is critical to the geospatial analysis, digitizing and incorporating historic wetlands soils maps that will depict a more accurate picture of wetland loss in Hawaii, and incorporating information on sea level rise.

## Sustaining Coastal Wetlands of the Pacific Northwest

Pacific Birds has been engaged in a multi-stakeholder effort, led by the North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative, to identify conservation targets of interest in the lower Columbia River and the coasts of Oregon and Washington. Known as the [Pacific Northwest Coast Landscape Conservation Design—a blueprint for a climate resilient landscape in the Lower Columbia and outer coasts of Oregon and Washington](#), the goal is to produce a GIS product that shows the current status of conservation targets, the threats that affect them, and potential future scenarios for those targets. Pacific Birds is taking the lead on identifying targets and threats using innovative methods adapted from [The Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#).

Across a broader region, Pacific Birds staff has also been working to determine the need and feasibility of a region-wide Decision Support Tool that will assist partners with their bird habitat conservation work. The development of this tool would help guide the prioritization of conservation actions related to coastal wetlands from northern California to the Gulf of Alaska.

**Left: Birders at the Copper River Shorebird Festival during spring migration.**





# COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

***We believe that communications and outreach is critical to successful conservation, and that support for bird habitat conservation depends on people knowing why birds matter.*** To this end, we send out a monthly e-newsletter, full of information about birds, funding opportunities, research, human dimensions and news from around the flyways. Each newsletter also highlights the latest website posts, ranging from partner projects to the latest news from national and international bird conservation initiatives.

Visit our [news and stories page](#) to see the latest stories. See a sample newsletter and [subscribe](#) on our home page.

## Research

Most of the Pacific population of Barrow's Goldeneye winters along coastal Alaska and British Columbia. Recent studies using telemetry are helping to answer questions about linkages between specific wintering, breeding and molting areas, and to identify key habitats vital to the population.

[See the story.](#)



## Citizen Science

In 2016, [Kachemak Bay Birders](#) completed their 8th year monitoring shorebirds that stop over in Kachemak Bay during spring migration. The monitoring data helped make a strong case to significantly expand two local Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) sites.

[Learn more.](#)





# BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS



*Above: Partners discussing wetlands restoration on a field trip following the Hawaii workshop.*



Greg Shine - Bureau of Land Management

## Hawaiian Wetlands and Waterbird Workshop

This two-day workshop was attended by ninety people from across the islands. Keynote speakers included Dr. Sam 'Olu Gon III of [The Nature Conservancy](#), and Gerrit Vyn and Ashley Dayer from the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#). Topics included the cultural connections to water, wetlands and birds; flyway migrations; human dimensions; and delisting waterbirds. The workshop was hosted and supported by Pacific Birds and the Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife.

## Alaska Bird Conference

Pacific Birds once again sponsored [this forum](#) to exchange information on recent bird research, management and conservation. The two-day program featured presentations and posters on a wide array of bird species and topics. Both plenary speakers and a number of presenters focused on the challenges of understanding climate change in order to better guide bird science and conservation planning in Alaska.

## The Wetlands Conservancy

For more than 30 years, [The Wetlands Conservancy](#) has educated and assisted landowners, neighborhood groups, land trusts, and watershed councils about ways to support fish and wildlife, clean water, open space and people's appreciation of nature. The Conservancy has been a key partner in the development of our coastal wetlands conservation priority and has also been engaged in multiple other ways to promote the goals of Pacific Birds. Pacific Birds sponsored one of the Conservancy's fundraising events in 2016. Those funds will be used for wetlands conservation projects.

***Pacific Birds' mission is to create the ideal environment for bird habitat conservation. One way we do this is to bring organizations together to talk conservation and share resources.***



## Waterfowl and Agriculture, Working Together - 24th Trumpeter Swan Conference

This 2016 conference, sponsored by Pacific Birds, was held in British Columbia and hosted by the [Trumpeter Swan Society](#) and the [Somenos Marsh Society](#). More than half of the continental Trumpeter Swans nest or winter within the Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture region, and many of these birds can be found in wetlands and agricultural fields in British Columbia and Washington during migration and winter. Experts shared initiatives to mitigate issues such as compensation for “lure” crops that attract swans away from other winter grasses important to dairy cattle.

## Oregon Wildlife Foundation

[Oregon Wildlife Foundation](#) works to conserve fish, wildlife, and the natural habitat in Oregon. The foundation has recently become a fiscal sponsor for Pacific Birds which will allow us to seek and distribute new funding sources for our partners. Oregon Wildlife Foundation formally adopted two of our conservation priorities and will be dedicating a portion of their annual budget to coastal wetland and oak and prairie habitat projects. Pacific Birds sponsored a fund raising event with the Foundation in 2016.

## Health and Outdoors Initiative

The [Health and Outdoors Initiative](#) is working on multiple fronts to build resilience and strengthen communities throughout Oregon. One component of the initiative, the Health and Outdoors Action Framework, is designed to catalyze stronger bonds between people and the outdoors in ways that improve both health and environmental outcomes. The framework is focused on reducing inequities in health and outdoor access in communities. Numerous partners, including the Willamette Partnership, Intertwine, and Pacific Birds, have been involved in some way with this large effort. Our support of this initiative reflects our belief that people must be engaged with and appreciate nature in order to support conservation.



Lora Leschner

*Above: Graeme Fowler, a local waterfowl expert, leading a tour of local farms to look at the impacts of grazing swans to farm crops.*



Barry Troutman



# EXPANDING OUR BOUNDARIES

In 2016, [our boundaries expanded](#) to include all islands within the Hawaiian Islands Archipelago and all islands in the South Pacific that are U.S. territories and freely associated states. At the same time, we resolved a long-standing question: How far out to sea do our boundaries go?

Hundreds of species rely on habitats across the East-Asian Australasian, Central Pacific and Pacific Americas Flyways. An alarming number of migratory species, such as the [Bar-tailed Godwit](#), have experienced sharp declines in recent decades. With recent research shedding more light on the nature of the threats to these world travelers, it is critical that conservation partners work across flyways as well as within geopolitical boundaries.

The [Pacific Birds International Management Board](#) also approved new seaward boundaries in 2016. We now include all habitats within 200 nautical miles of shore. In extending this boundary, the Board recognized the critical importance of open water and offshore habitats to migratory birds, especially seabirds.

*The Wandering Tattler is so named for its wide travels across the North and South Pacific. It nests, migrates or winters throughout much of the Pacific Birds territory.*



Robin Horn © Creative Commons





# CONTACTS

*“Since 1991, Pacific Birds has been considering the flyway needs of migratory birds. For that reason, we work as an international joint venture, with the full participation of board and staff in both the United States and Canada.”*

*-Barry Smith, Canada Co-Chair, Pacific Birds International Management Board*

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