

CONTRIBUTED PAPERS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9 ♦ 1:15 PM - 3:00 PM

Challenges/Opportunities

MEETING ROOM: JAMES

1:15 PM

Bird-friendly Recommendations for Bottomland Forests in South Carolina: Birds and People on Common Ground

Matthew Johnson, Brandon Heitkamp —National Audubon Society

For more than forty years, Audubon has acquired and now manages more than 15,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest in South Carolina. Over this time, we have identified the bird species which benefit most from various bottomland types and conditions. Many of these birds are species of high conservation concern which breed in the bottomland forests of the southeastern United States, including Swallow-tailed Kite, Prothonotary Warbler, and Swainson's Warbler. Audubon has now partnered with state and federal conservation agencies, other private conservation organizations, consulting foresters and private landowners in South Carolina to promote a set of Bird-friendly Bottomland Hardwood Forest Management Practices. These practices introduce forest managers and landowners to the birds that breed in these southern forest types, and describe the habitat requirements that these species need to reproduce successfully. In addition, our recommendations suggest ways that bottomland forests can be managed to create and sustain habitat vital to these birds, while also generating revenue for landowners.

In the past year and a half, we have reached hundreds of foresters and private and public landowners by conducting ten outreach events. These events include half- and full-day workshops for private landowners and foresters, presentations for the state forestry commission and local forestry clubs, Society of American Foresters field trips, and online webinars. In addition, we've implemented our suggested practices on a tract of land at one of our sanctuaries in the state, which has and will continue to serve as a model for our suggestions. Our portion of this session will highlight the work that Audubon South Carolina has done to contribute to flyway-scale management and outreach for priority forest birds. Additionally, we will suggest future needs for priority species in the state and describe how upcoming outreach events might promote even greater interest by landowners and forest managers.

1:35 PM

Bridging the Gap Between Land Trust Activities and Bird Conservation Resources in the Eastern U.S.

Emily Cosbar, Cornell University; Ashley Dayer, Amanda Rodewald, Ron Rohrbaugh — Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Land Trusts represent one of the most effective approaches to conservation in the United States, protecting more than 47 million acres of private land through conservation easements and fee title acquisition. The number and impact of land trusts continues to rise, particularly in the eastern U.S., where a high proportion of land is privately owned. Despite sharing many mutual goals, collaborative ties between the bird conservation community and land trusts have been slow to develop. In 2014 we conducted an online survey of regional and local land trusts throughout the United States (n = 613; response rate = 42%) in order to examine current efforts of land trusts to conserve birds and habitat. Our analysis examined the responses of land trusts conserving land in the eastern U.S. (n = 355) as compared to those in the rest of the U.S. (Midwest and West; n = 239). Of the eastern land trusts, 55% reported that bird conservation had factored into their prioritization process for land protection. Bird conservation benefits also factored into 35% of decisions about land purchases and 45% of conservation easement decisions in the past five years. Sixty-six percent reported that more than half of their land had value as bird habitat, and active management for bird conservation was practiced in both forests (40%) and grasslands (44%). Interestingly, bird conservation plans were seldom used from national (13%) or regional/state (32%) levels, and for individual species (11%). Compared to the other regions, the eastern land trusts were not different in terms of prioritizing bird conservation or managing habitat. However, they were significantly less likely to purchase land or put it under easement specifically for birds, and similarly less likely to consult any bird conservation plans. These results indicate that the bird conservation community in the eastern region should work more closely with land trusts to support their interest in bird conservation and ensure the effectiveness of their activities. Based on additional results about land trusts' motivations for

	<p>conservation and resources of interest, we will discuss recommendations for how the bird conservation community can best engage with land trusts.</p>
<p>1:55 PM</p>	<p>Pennsylvania Boreal Conifer Forest Bird Challenges and Opportunities <i>Douglas A. Gross, Pennsylvania Game Commission</i></p> <p>Pennsylvania mountain conifer forests found primarily on glaciated parts of the Allegheny Plateau, are dominated by spruce and hemlock are diminished from pre-settlement forest. Unlike other Appalachian Mountain spruce forests, those in Pennsylvania are mostly palustrine woodlands. The boreal conifer forests that support bird species of conservation concern are peatlands at headwaters of high quality cold water streams. They are habitat islands, isolated from other boreal forests but nested within large forest blocks. The timber era (late 1800's – early 1900's) destroyed most of the PA spruce forests, but there has been partial recovery of both the plant and bird communities through benign neglect. These forests support the most southerly extent of breeding Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, <i>Empidonax flaviventris</i>, and Blackpoll Warbler, <i>Dendroica striata</i> (both PA Endangered). Both species, especially Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, are persistent at some locations despite rarity. Other state conservation concern species in this habitat guild include Swainson's Thrush (<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>), Northern Waterthrush (<i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i>), Red Crossbill (<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>), and formerly Olive-sided Flycatcher (<i>Contopus cooperi</i>).</p> <p>These boreal conifer forests also host numerous other northern species including high continental conservation priorities including Canada Warbler (<i>Cardellina canadensis</i>). Many representative species are not well-served by Breeding Bird Surveys and require specialized surveys for adequate monitoring. Successful implementation of Northern Saw-whet Owl (<i>Aegolius acadicus</i>) survey demonstrates possibilities. Vegetation structural diversity is an important factor of locations that support the rarest species and diverse assemblages. Climate change and energy extraction are potential threats. Natural conifer regeneration at sites show management potential despite many obstacles. A combination of protection and silviculture practices are planned for management of this threatened ecosystem. These are being stepped down into local planning of public lands. Absence of regular, systematic surveys could be resolved with a series of off-road point counts, perhaps an extension of the Mountain Bird Watch project south into the Appalachians with a geographically appropriate target species list. More sensitive surveys would serve to better gauge responses to looming threats.</p>
<p>2:15 PM</p>	<p>Virginia Working Landscapes: Using a Citizen Science/Landowner Group to Monitor Annual Cycles of Resident and Short-distance Migrant Birds in Grasslands <i>Amy E.M. Johnson, George Mason University and Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute; William McShea, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute; David Luther, George Mason University; Tom Akre, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute</i></p> <p>Virginia Working Landscapes (VWL) is a program convened by the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI) to encourage the sustainable use of Virginia's working landscapes for native biodiversity. This landowner-based network deploys volunteer naturalists, trained by SCBI staff, to monitor grassland biodiversity on public and private lands by conducting annual breeding bird surveys and growing season surveys of plants and pollinators. To date, we have monitored 57 fields on 44 properties spread across 12 northern Virginia counties and have trained more than 100 citizen scientists. The results of these surveys provide information on specific habitat requirements for grassland and shrubland birds and will help guide management recommendations to land managers.</p> <p>In addition to breeding season events, we are also interested in identifying species' distributions and habitat use during the non-breeding season. Thus, during winter of 2013-2014, we initiated surveys on 28 VWL properties for wintering grassland birds. Fields were visited once a month from December – February and three 200m transects were walked by a single observer in each field. Winter vegetation was measured in each field during the final month of avian surveys. By including winter surveys in our biodiversity monitoring program, we can examine the role of management practices and grassland composition across the entire annual cycle for our target resident and short-distance migrant grassland and shrubland birds.</p>

Contributed Paper: Challenges/Opportunities continued

2:35 PM – 2:55 PM	<p data-bbox="326 170 1422 275">Trials and Tribulations of Working to Reduce Bird–Window Collisions at a Suburban Office Park <i>Rebecca Schneider, Conservation Management Institute, Virginia Tech; Chrissy Barton, Kara Kosarski — Virginia Tech</i></p> <p data-bbox="326 296 1422 411">We began surveys for bird and window collisions in October 2013 in a suburban office park in Blacksburg, Virginia. Twenty–one buildings were selected for surveys with the purpose to find the most problematic windows and implement solutions to reduce and/or eliminate the number of bird deaths. Surveys continue to take place to this date, with the goal of surveying one complete year.</p> <p data-bbox="326 453 1422 632">Building managers, documenting dead birds, funding, and volunteer management have all presented challenges to our project. Although the problem of birds and windows has generated attention recently, there can be resistance to making changes to the windows that are hazardous to birds. Some reasons building managers give for not altering windows include: solutions obstruct views for employees, general aesthetics, interference with the heating and cooling systems, and lack of funds to purchase available solutions. Documentation of window collisions is further impeded by a high incidence of scavengers.</p> <p data-bbox="326 674 1422 852">When there are a large number of buildings that potentially pose a threat to birds, studies are needed to identify problem areas. Fixing the hundreds of existing windows in the office park is unrealistic. The effort to survey numerous buildings requires a robust volunteer effort. We successfully raised funds through a crowdfunding site for our pilot project in January 2014. The small amount of funds raised helped provide field guides to volunteers, two small (\$500) fellowships, and window solutions. However, this study continues to be a volunteer effort.</p> <p data-bbox="326 894 1422 1003">Even with these obstacles, since October 2013 we have documented 139 birds, representing 35 species that have died due to collisions with windows. By studying this issue for a year, we will contribute to the data on this important topic and build a case so building managers can make necessary changes to protect our migratory birds.</p>
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