Coniferous Forest Plan (Continued from page 1)
reverse the declines of many coniferous forest-associated bird populations and to proactively maintain stable conditions of others. Six implementation tasks were also identified in the conifer plan and are part of the overall implementation plan being developed for the Conifer Plan. Ultimately, these implementation tasks will provide a framework for land managers and partners to set bio-regional habitat conservation priorities that benefit coniferous forest-associated wildlife.

One of the unique features of the Coniferous Forest BCP is the inclusion of a feedback form that can be used by land managers and/or other partners to let us know how the plan is working and what needs improvement. The potential utility of this feedback form was immediately recognized by various bird conservation planners; and a modified version of this form has been posted on PRBO's web site at www.prbo.org/calpif/feedback.html to allow anyone to provide feedback on any of the existing bird conservation plans in California.

The Executive Order on Migratory Bird Conservation: A Presidential Mandate for Coordinated Federal Action

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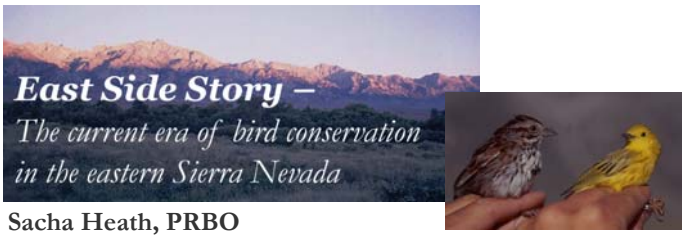
A recent Presidential Executive Order is laying the groundwork for better federal coordination and joint efforts to conserve bird populations. This new tool is already increasing interagency cooperation on bird conservation.

Executive Order 13186, titled "Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds," was signed by President Clinton in January 2001, and directs any Federal agency whose actions have a measurable negative impact on migratory bird populations to develop a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to promote migratory bird conservation.

The MOUs will establish protocols to guide future agency regulatory actions and policy decisions; renewal of permits, contracts, etc.; and the creation of or revisions to land management plans. In addition to avoiding or minimizing negative impacts to migratory bird populations, the EO requires agencies to, pursuant to their particular MOU, restore and enhance habitat, prevent or abate pollution affecting birds, share new inventory, monitoring, and research findings with the Service and other appropriate agencies, and develop partnerships with non-Federal entities to further bird conservation. The EO also requires the Interior Secretary to establish a Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds to oversee implementation of the EO.

Each MOU should also ensure that agency plans and actions promote the comprehensive migratory bird planning efforts such as Partners in Flight, National Shorebird Plan, North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and North American Waterbird Plan

The MOUs developed in this process will help federal land managers to better incorporate bird conservation activities into their management plans and actions. In California, for example, this means that National Forests, National Parks, and other federal land management units will need to place an increased emphasis on birds during their natural resource planning and while conducting analyses required by the National Environmental Policy Act.



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The eastern Sierra Nevada is a region that inspires one to both celebrate and seek understanding of a complex landscape and its accompanying bird life. A fusion of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, the high Great Basin desert and northern Mojave desert has inspired bird lovers, naturalists, researchers, educators, conservationists and land managers for decades.

This year's summer solstice marked the first annual Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua – a weekend bird festival at Mono Lake. A culmination of effort on the part of the Mono Lake Committee (MLC), USDA Forest Service, California State Parks, Eastern Sierra Audubon Society (ESAS) and PRBO Conservation Science (PRBO) made this event a successful "knowledge festival" that combined multiple daily bird walks, songbird monitoring workshops, evening science programs, bat workshops and demonstrations of current bird monitoring and research. Participants included resource managers, children, amateur and professional birders, old friends to the Mono Basin and drop-in visitors.

The event was a culmination of a surge of interest in bird conservation over the last several years in the Eastern Sierra -a surge with deep historical roots. The well-known story of the MLC's battle to save Mono Lake need not be repeated here, but one should remember that the plight of the California Gull was key to the success of returning water to Mono's tributary streams. The eastern Sierra Nevada has since been home to several restoration and management efforts that are both intentionally and unintentionally creating or regenerating bird habitat. In addition, the region has seen decades of bird monitoring and research projects geared primarily toward the applied conservation of birds and their habitats.

Specifically important to the success of bird conservation in the region is the support and interest of multiple county, state, and federal agencies, non-profit conservation and private groups and an exceptionally active local amateur and professional birding community. Such efforts include:

- The Bureau of Land Management Bishop Field Office (BLM) and Inyo National Forest (INF) have integrated songbird monitoring on most of their major riparian drainages as a means to provide timely information for management and planning decisions.
- California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) is actively involved in encouraging songbird, waterfowl and shorebird monitoring as primary components of major habitat alteration or restoration projects in the region.
- Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest has implemented a baseline songbird monitoring project within riparian habitats along the east and west Walker River drainages, the first of its kind for the Forest.
- Devil's Postpile National Monument is using a combination of bird, micro invertebrate and vegetation sampling to monitor the effectiveness of their riparian meadow restoration efforts in the monument.

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East Side Story – The current era of bird conservation in the eastern Sierra Nevada (continued from pg. 2)

- The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) is incorporating songbird, waterfowl and shorebird monitoring into most of their stream diversion and restoration projects.
- The Inyo County Water Department, who is responsible for the monitoring component of a plan to rewater the 70 mile stretch of the Lower Owens River (Lower Owens River Project (LORP)), has made great efforts to ensure that bird monitoring be included as a measure of the project success.
- Non-profit groups Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, Mono Lake Committee (MLC) and the Owens Valley Committee are integrally involved in public education and outreach, emphasizing bird and habitat conservation issues, and are currently working on a Eastern Sierra Birding Trail map, with hopes to encourage the non-extractive economy of bird adoration.
- The MLC has encouraged bird-monitoring efforts along Mono's major tributary creeks, supporting the idea that songbirds can be used as a tool to monitor the restoration process.

Statewide CalPIF meeting held in Mono Basin

Last June, CalPIF hosted a conference in conjunction with the Riparian Habitat Joint Venture's first bioregional workshop for the Sierra Nevada bioregion (*see article pg. 5*). The meeting was located in Lee Vining at the Mono Basin Scenic Area Visitor Center and all of the major management and private groups listed above attended as speakers, workshop participants, or assisted in organizing the event. The meeting was a huge success, highlighting the major bird and habitat conservation issues in the eastern Sierra region and providing a venue for the various groups to swap information and plan future work.

BLM presented work on their sage grouse monitoring project, which was well complemented by a presentation by PRBO on their songbird monitoring work in eastern Oregon and Washington's shrub-steppe habitats. UC Santa Barbara's Stephen Rothstein highlighted the Brown-headed Cowbird research that he previously conducted in the eastern Sierra. His talk complemented presentations by INF on new Sierra Nevada-wide Willow Flycatcher management guidelines, and by PRBO on the Eastern Sierra Riparian Songbird Conservation Project that includes a USFS Region 5 PIF-funded study on cowbird parasitism near riparian-based livestock pack stations. CDFG highlighted the major threats to wildlife populations in the region, and discussed major habitat projects such as the Owens Dry Lake dust mitigation project. LADWP continued along these lines highlighting their songbird monitoring work in the Owens River Gorge and future plans for the LORP. PRBO's Riparian Habitat Conservationist highlighted bird conservation efforts on private lands and PRBO updated participants on the progress of the CDFG supported California State Species of Special Concern project. INF highlighted their Dechambeau Ponds waterfowl restoration project and a member of the Walker Lake Working Group passionately described the immediate threats to the ecology of Walker Lake. The status of the Nevada Breeding Bird Atlas was presented by Great Basin Bird Observatory and California Audubon discussed their Important Bird Area project.

The latter part of the meeting incorporated talks geared toward wider PIF efforts, including a description of the recently finished Coniferous Bird Conservation Plan, and the USFS Adaptive Management Strategy for Bird Conservation in the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment. US Fish and Wildlife Service presented their regional PIF perspective and Jim Cole of Intermountain West Joint Venture highlighted the importance of "all-bird" monitoring with the inclusion of upland, in addition to riparian and wetland, habitats.

In the last two years, two major bird-related events have occurred, hosted by several agencies and private groups in the eastern Sierra Nevada. This alone demonstrates the momentum and support for bird conservation efforts in the region, not withstanding the long list of projects and active state, federal, county and private participants in the region. The region serves as a good example of how to turn inspiration into support and action, with the intention of conserving birds and the habitats in which they thrive.

The Sierra Nevada Research and Conservation Program

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The Sierra Nevada is enormously important to many of western North America's Neotropical migratory birds. IBP, in partnership with Forest Service biologists and the Forest Service PIF program, conducted field work on three research and conservation projects in the Sierra this year.

The Manter Fire Project

We are studying the short and longterm effects of standreplacing fire on avian communities and population dynamics in the southeastern Sierra. Our 30 sq-km study area encompasses adjacent patches of mature forest, similar forest consumed by the 2000 Manter Fire, and chaparral resulting from another standreplacing fire in 1950. Preliminary findings indicate that even some severely burned areas still host a surprisingly high diversity and abundance of birds, but that bird density decreases sharply at a threshold distance from the edge of the unburned forest. If confirmed by ongoing work, these results may help land managers implement firebreaks or prescribed burns in a way that maximizes habitat value for breeding birds.

Great Gray Owl Survey

The endangered California population of the Great Gray Owl is primarily restricted to the Greater Yosemite area. Recent Forest Service guidelines require stringent conservation measures in and around meadows where Great Gray Owls nest. In 2001, we surveyed potential nesting sites on Sierra National Forest, just south of Yosemite National Park. We detected owl pairs at seven sites, plus owls of indeterminate breeding status at two additional sites. This year, we are surveying other potential breeding sites at the southern and northern extremes of the Sierra.

BBS Habitat Classification

We are classifying habitat and taking archival photographs at each point count station along all 48 Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) routes in the Sierra Nevada. A detailed understanding of which habitats are currently well sampled or poorly sampled by

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