

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act

Congress enacted the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) in 2000 to fund projects that help conserve populations and habitats of neotropical migratory birds in the Western Hemisphere. Neotropical migratory birds breed in the U. S. or Canada and spend the non-breeding season in Latin America or the Caribbean.¹

Methods

Congress appropriates funds for NMBCA on an annual basis and must reauthorize the program every five years.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Division of Bird Habitat Conservation (DBHC) is responsible for managing the NMBCA Grants Program. Projects in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean are all eligible for NMBCA funding. Applications for funding are open to any individual, group, municipality, or organization. Proposals are reviewed and competitively selected by a panel of neotropical bird experts from USFWS and other government agencies, who then make funding recommendations to the Director of USFWS. The Director selects the final projects for funding and a grant agreement is entered into between the recipient and DBHC.²

NMBCA requires that at least 75 percent of the appropriated funds be spent on projects outside of the U.S.³ Non-federal partners must match grant requests by a 3 to 1 ratio—meaning that for every dollar spent by the U.S. government, at least three additional dollars are contributed by a partner organization.³

Results

More than \$58 million in grants have been awarded by NMBCA to support over 500 projects in 36 countries since the program was initiated in 2002.² Moreover, despite only requiring a 3 to 1 match, partners have contributed funds at a 4 to 1 rate, matching federal contributions with nearly \$222 million since 2002.² Appropriations have ranged from \$3 million in fiscal year (FY) 2002 to \$4.9 million in FY 2010.² More than 4.2 million acres of habitat have been involved in NMBCA projects.²

Discussion

NMBCA grant supported projects include research and monitoring; law enforcement; community outreach and education; the protection and management of bird populations; and the maintenance, management, protection, and restoration of habitat. While NMBCA continues to receive annual appropriations, the program is not currently authorized. Reauthorization of NMBCA will help ensure funds continue to be appropriated for this important program.

Implications for Wildlife Professionals

NMBCA fosters strong partnerships between the U.S. government and conservation organizations at home and abroad, including national and international bird conservation initiatives like Partners in Flight, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), and the U.S. Bird Conservation Joint Ventures. Through these partnership and NMBCA funds, wildlife professionals are able to implement on-the-ground activities conserving 386 neotropical migratory bird species in the Western Hemisphere.⁴



Figure 1. NMBCA funded project locations in 2016 (Credit: USFWS)

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act: Features



IMPACT - Identifying Measures of Performance and Achieving Conservation Targets²

The IMPACT program focuses a portion of NMBCA funding (25-30 percent) on a select number of threatened neotropical migratory birds that are of high conservation priority. IMPACT seeks to achieve a measurable biological improvement in these species over the next 5-10 years through on-the-ground conservation projects that will directly improve the species' population. The IMPACT program currently focuses on 13 highly threatened species—including the red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*) and golden-cheeked warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*). IMPACT species are chosen both for their urgent conservation need and for the ability of conservation partners to monitor them and measure population-level results. As of 2016, the IMPACT program is funding 33 projects in 12 countries with a match ratio of 3.3 to 1.

Golden-cheeked warbler (Credit: USFWS)

U.S.-Mexico Grasslands Conservation Project⁵

The U.S.-Mexico Grasslands Conservation Project, the longest-running NMBCA-funded initiative, has utilized \$1.9 million in grants with \$6.2 million in partner match funds to support habitat protection and bird population recovery efforts on tens of thousands of acres from the Rocky Mountain Front to the Chihuahua desert. NMBCA funding has resulted in long-term wintering bird research and monitoring to develop the first population baseline for birds in regional Chihuahuan grassland and new public-private alliances that focus on grassland conservation research.



The U.S.-Mexico Grasslands Conservation Project benefits chestnut-collared longspurs (Credit: USFWS)



Arctic Shorebird Demographics Network^{2,6}

The Arctic Shorebird Demographics Network (ASDN) is a collaboration of 17 partners in the U.S., Canada, and Russia to study the decline of arctic shorebirds. The effort is led by Manomet, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Kansas State University. Studied species include dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), semipalmated sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*), and whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*). The project enables researchers to study populations across the entire range of a species to better inform conservation goals. ASDN conducted field seasons from 2010 to 2014 and obtained NMBCA funding. ASDN received over \$279,000 in grants with an additional \$862,000 in matching funds through their NMBCA applications in 2011 and 2012.

Semipalmated sandpiper (Credit: USFWS)

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4. Foulks, G. 2014. The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA): Thirteen Years of Hemispheric Bird Conservation. The All-bird Bulletin.
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The Wildlife Society - 425 Barlow Place, Suite 200, Bethesda, MD 20814 - policy@wildlife.org