

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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Policy Brief Series

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act

Congress enacted the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) in 2000 to conserve the populations and habitats of neotropical migratory birds in the Western Hemisphere through federal grants. A neotropical bird is defined as one that breeds in the U. S. or Canada and spends 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 (FWS) Division of Bird Habitat Conservation is responsible for managing the NMBCA Grants Program. Projects in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean are all eligible for funding from the NMBCA. Anyone can apply for NMBCA funding including individuals, municipalities, and organizations. All project applications are reviewed for eligibility and then evaluated by a panel of FWS staff and outside experts. The panel makes recommendations to the FWS Director, who selects the projects for funding.²

NMBCA requires that at least 75 percent of the appropriated funds be spent on projects outside the U.S.³ Non-federal partners must match grant requests by a ratio of 3 to 1; for every dollar spent by the U.S. government, at least three additional dollars are contributed by a partner organization.³ For project activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, the 3:1 non-Federal share may be cash or in-kind contributions.

Results

More than \$50 million in grants have been awarded by NMBCA since 2002 when the program was initiated.² Appropriations have ranged from \$3 million in fiscal year (FY) 2002 to \$4.9 million in FY 2010.² Partners have contributed an additional \$190.6 million in match dollars to the program. More than 3.7 million acres of habitat have been involved in NMBCA projects since 2002.²

Discussion

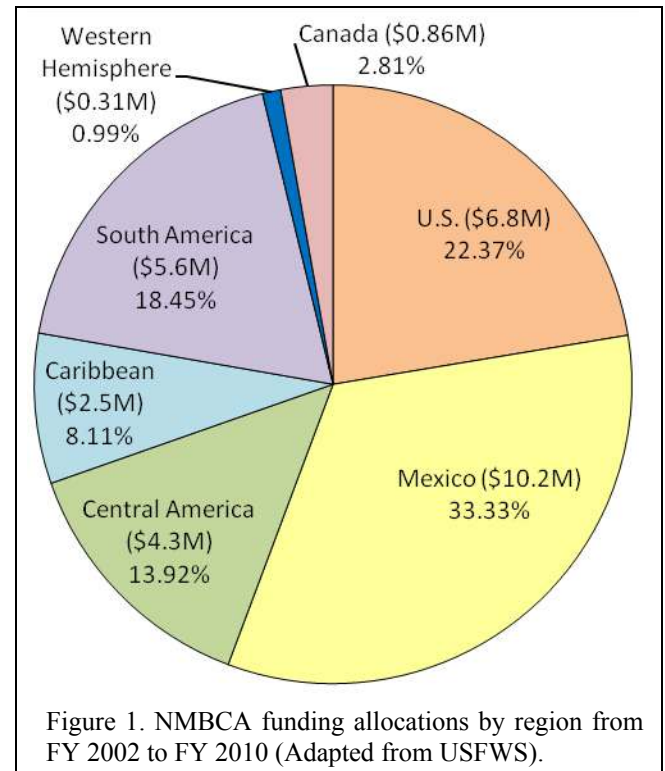
NMBCA grants have supported 451 projects in 36 countries. Projects include research and monitoring, law enforcement, community outreach and education, the protection and management of bird populations, and the maintenance, management, protection and restoration of habitat.

NMBCA continues to receive appropriations from Congress even though the act is no longer authorized. Reauthorization of NMBCA would ensure funds continue to be appropriated for conservation.

Implications for Wildlife Professionals

NMBCA fosters a strong partnership 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.

Wildlife professionals are able to implement on-the-ground activities conserving 386 neotropical bird species in the Western Hemisphere thanks to NMBCA funds.⁴



Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act: Features



Chestnut-collared Longspurs benefit from the U.S. - Mexico Grasslands Conservation Project (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's 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.

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. Studied species include the Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*), and Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*). ASDN has been conducting field studies since 2010 and received NMBCA funding in 2011 and 2012. ASDN received over \$279,000 in grants with an additional \$862,000 in matching funds through their NMBCA applications in those two years.



Semipalmated Sandpiper (Credit: USFWS).



Golden-cheeked Warbler (Credit: USFWS).

IMPACT - Identifying Measures of Performance and Achieving Conservation Targets²

The IMPACT program focuses a portion of NMBCA funding (25%-30%) on a select number of threatened neotropical migratory birds like the Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*) and Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*) 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 population. 13 species are eligible for funding of conservation projects under IMPACT, an additional 87 species are eligible for IMPACT funding relating to research, monitoring, or assessment focused projects. These additional species are listed under the Endangered Species Act, marked as Birds of Conservation Concern, or a Watchlist species.

Sources

- 1 American Bird Conservancy. 2009. Saving Migratory Birds for Future Generations: The Success of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act.
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- 3 Ducks Unlimited. 2005. Reauthorization of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA). <<http://www.ducks.org/conservation/public-policy/reauthorization-of-the-neotropical-migratory-bird-act-nmbca>> Accessed 27 Aug 2014.
- 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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- 6 Manomet. 2014. Arctic Shorebird Demographics Network (ASDN). <<https://www.manomet.org/ASDN>> Accessed 3 Sept 2014.



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