

November 1, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairwoman
Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Chairwoman Boxer:

We write to urge you to bring S.690 to a vote by the full Senate. This important bipartisan legislation introduced by Sens. Ben Cardin and Mike Crapo seeks to strengthen the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) to meet the growing needs of America's rapidly declining migratory birds. The legislation has become even more important in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, since nearly all of the birds impacted by the Gulf spill, including the tragically oil-coated Brown Pelicans that have been seen by millions of Americans, are neotropical birds.

America is blessed with a spectacular abundance and rich diversity of birds, with more than 800 species inhabiting the mainland, Hawaii, and surrounding oceans. Unfortunately, the *U.S. State of the Birds Report* tells us that many of our native bird species are in decline, and many are threatened with extinction.

The NMBCA supports partnership programs to conserve migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean, where approximately five billion birds of over 340 species, including some of the most endangered birds in North America, spend their winters. Projects include activities that benefit bird populations such as habitat restoration, research and monitoring, law enforcement, and outreach and education.

The NMBCA has a proven track record of reversing habitat loss and advancing conservation strategies for the broad range of neotropical birds found across America and the Western Hemisphere. From 2002 to 2010, the program supported 333 projects, coordinated by partners in 48 U.S. states/territories and 36 countries.

Moreover, this critical conservation program is a good value for taxpayers, leveraging over four dollars in partner contributions for every one that we spend. More than \$35 million from NMBCA grants has leveraged over \$150 million in matching funds and \$7 million in nonmatching funds. The public-private partnerships, along with the international collaboration it stimulates, are integral to preserving vulnerable migratory bird populations. We believe expanding this program is vital to achieving conservation goals throughout the hemisphere.

Migratory birds are not only beautiful and interesting creatures eagerly welcomed by millions of Americans into their backyards every year; they help generate billions of dollars annually to the U.S. economy through wildlife watching activities, and they help our farmers by consuming harmful insect pests that threaten many important commercial food crops and forests.

This legislation will help ensure that the broad range of migratory birds, from songbirds to waterfowl, will have the healthy habitat they need on both ends of their annual migration so they can continue to play their vital biological, recreational, and economic roles.

We urge the full Senate to take up this important piece of legislation using the omnibus lands package or another appropriate legislative vehicle. The future of America's migratory birds, including those threatened by the Gulf oil spill, depends on the Senate's action.

Sincerely,



George Fenwick
President
American Bird Conservancy



David Yarnold
President
National Audubon Society



Peter A. Seligmann
Chairman and Chief Executive
Officer
Conservation International



Robert Bendick
Director, U.S. Government Relations
The Nature Conservancy



Rodger Schlickeisen
President and CEO
Defenders of Wildlife



Michael Hutchins, Ph.D.
Executive Director/CEO
The Wildlife Society