

**American Bird Conservancy  
National Audubon Society**

**Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
The Wildlife Society**

March 19, 2010

The Honorable Jim Moran  
Chairman  
Interior Appropriations Subcommittee  
B-308 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael Simpson  
Ranking Member  
Interior Appropriations Subcommittee  
1016 Longworth HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Simpson:

The Bird Conservation Funding Coalition (BCFC) consists of national organizations that jointly advocate for federal funding to advance bird conservation. Birds are not only beautiful and interesting creatures eagerly welcomed by millions of Americans into their backyard every year; bird watching is also a big business. According to a report released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, birdwatchers contributed \$36 billion to the U.S. economy in 2006, the most recent year for which economic data are available. The report, "Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis," shows that total participation in bird watching is strong at 48 million and has remained steady since 1996. Birds also naturally provide billions of dollars worth of pest control each year, benefitting farmers and consumers alike.

We ask that you once again provide funding to programs we believe are crucial for maintaining healthy and abundant bird populations throughout the United States. For many of these programs, the need is far greater than the recommended levels. However, we recognize our nation's severe fiscal constraints and are thereby requesting a modest increase for this coming fiscal year. These programs are:

- **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grants Program (NMBCA)**

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grants Program supports partnership programs to conserve birds in the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean, where approximately 5 billion birds representing 341 species spend their winters, including some of the most endangered birds in North America. Between 2002 and 2008, the program supported 260 projects, coordinated by partners in 44 U.S. states/territories and 34 countries. More than \$25 million in federally appropriated dollars have leveraged over \$116 million in partner contributions. The BCFC respectfully requests the Committee prioritize FY2011 funding for the NMBCA at \$6.5 million, an increase of \$1.5 million from the amount appropriated in FY2010.

- **Joint Ventures (JVs)**

Joint Ventures exemplify a highly successful and cost-effective approach to the conservation of all migratory bird populations. JVs are regionally based partnerships of public and private organizations dedicated to the delivery of bird conservation within their boundaries. They also have a long history of demonstrated success in implementing bird conservation initiatives mandated by Congress and by international treaties. For every federal dollar that was invested in

JVs from 1999-2004, more than \$44 in non-federal partner funds was brought to the table for on-the ground habitat conservation and restoration projects, biological planning, and outreach. The BCFC respectfully requests the Committee allocate \$18 million for FY2011, an increase of \$ 4 million from the appropriated amount in FY2010.

- **Science and Monitoring**

Science and Monitoring done within the USFWS Office of Migratory Bird Management provides invaluable information on the status and trends of bird species necessary for sound management decisions. This scientific information helps to ensure that funds are allocated wisely within all other BCFC priorities. The BCFC respectfully requests the Committee provide \$35 million for this important program, an increase of approximately \$4 million from the appropriated amount in FY2010.

- **North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)**

NAWCA provides funding for conservation projects for the benefit of wetland-associated migratory birds in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Unfortunately, more than half of the original wetlands in the U.S. have been lost, contributing to the steady decline of migratory birds. Approximately 4,000 partners through 1,943 projects have received more than \$1 billion in grants from 1990-2009 which have contributed another \$2.06 billion in matching funds to affect 25.2 million acres of habitat. The BCFC respectfully requests the Committee prioritize FY2011 funding for NAWCA at \$52.6 million, an increase of approximately \$5 million from the level appropriated in FY 10.

- **State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program**

The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program is the nation's core program for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered and supports strategic conservation investments in every state and territory. The conservation actions funded by this program puts thousands of Americans to work to remove invasive species, restore and protect habitat, reintroduce native wildlife and to work with private landowners to improve habitat for at risk birds and wildlife. In order to ensure the states and territories can implement needed conservation actions that will retain and create thousands of jobs that will save both wildlife and taxpayer dollars, we ask you to support the reduction in the non-federal match requirement from 50% to 35% to help financially strapped states. The BCFC respectfully requests the Committee allocates \$100 million for FY2011, an increase of \$10 million from the level appropriated in FY2010.

- **International Affairs within the US Fish and Wildlife Service**

Wildlife Without Borders (WWB), located within the USFWS Division of International Conservation, is a mainstay of bird conservation in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. WWB programs are a foundation for long-term conservation efforts because they focus on developing in-country capacity and leverage four dollars for every federal dollar appropriated. The BCFC respectfully requests the Committee prioritize FY2011 funding at \$22 million which is an increase of \$8 million from the level appropriated in FY2010.

- **International Programs within the USDA Forest Service**

International Programs within the USDA Forest Service support an array of extremely effective bird conservation projects with a relatively small budget. Among these are restoration of Kirtland's Warbler with programs in Michigan and the Bahamas, and conservation of breeding habitat in Canada's Boreal Forest. This modest increase in funding would be used to expand and accelerate work on these projects, as well as projects benefiting the rapidly-declining Cerulean Warbler, declining prairie grasslands birds, declining forest birds such as the Wood Thrush, conservation of mangroves and wetlands of Mexico's Pacific Coast and conservation of habitat for migratory hummingbirds in forests of western US, Canada and Mexico. The BCFC respectfully requests the Committee provide \$16 million for FY2011, an increase of \$6.2 million over FY2010.

- **USGS American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)**

BBS has been providing data crucial for migratory bird conservation planning since 1966. Today, the BBS provides the foundation for non-game, land bird conservation in North America with over 3,200 skilled volunteer participants sampling 3,000 routes annually across the continental U.S. and southern Canada. The BCFC respectfully requests the Committee provide this important program with the highest possible level of funding.

Birds, other wildlife, and their habitats are perhaps the greatest legacy we have to leave to our children and subsequent generations. Money that is spent now on wildlife programs will be repaid many times over in a cleaner healthier environment from which we will all benefit.

Again, we thank you for your steadfast support of these critically important programs.

Sincerely,

Darin C. Schroeder  
Vice President of Conservation Advocacy  
American Bird Conservancy

Michael Daulton  
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