

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grants Program

Alaska

Partnership Receives a \$79,449 Conservation Grant.

On May 3, 2004, as authorized under the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (Act), Steve Williams, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, acting on behalf of Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, approved \$79,449 in funding for the Nest Survivorship of Migratory Birds and Development in Arctic Alaska Project in the North Slope Borough. The Act is nonregulatory and calls for voluntary partnerships to develop initiatives in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean to conserve neotropical migratory birds and their habitats. Certain activities defined by the Act are eligible for funding, and partnerships must match grant requests 3:1. Contributions from U.S. federal partners do not qualify as match.

The North Slope of Alaska, in the Arctic Coastal Tundra Ecoregion, contains some of the most important breeding grounds for more than 20 species of neotropical migratory shorebirds and waterfowl. The North Slope also has been experiencing human and industrial development, particularly in relation to oil exploration and extraction. In the last 30 years, some of the migratory shorebird and waterfowl species that breed in the Arctic have exhibited population declines, possibly linked to an increase in predator populations as a result of development and other disturbances on breeding grounds that favor their success.

Preliminary results from research previously conducted by project partners at several sites across the North Slope suggest that at a local scale (within oilfields) there is a significant

correlation between the proximity of nests to industrial infrastructure and lower nest-success rates.

Partners now will expand their research to determine if there is a link between nest predation, oil-industry infrastructure, and nest survivorship at the regional scale, working at five sites across the North Slope that represent different levels of human/industrial development. Using remote camera systems, they will identify nest-predator species and also will continue to evaluate the impact of predators on tundra-nesting birds. Project results will provide a better understanding of predator-prey relationships in the region, and will help determine how development-related activities could be managed to minimize their impact on tundra-nesting migratory birds.

Partners include the Wildlife Conservation Society, BP Exploration (Alaska), Inc., ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc., ABR, Inc., Ellen McBean, Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They contributed a total of \$227,077 to advance the goals of this applied research project, which benefit the birds in Bird Conservation Region 3 (Arctic Plains and Mountains).



White-fronted Geese

Gary Kramer/USFWS

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