

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grants Program

Colorado, Mexico

Binational Partnership Receives a \$228,125 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 \$228,125 in funding for the U.S. – Mexico Grassland Bird Conservation Phase II Project in Colorado's Weld County in Congressional District 4. Project partners also will carry out activities in the Mexican State of Chihuahua to complement and further advance the conservation goals of this binational project. 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.

As a group, grassland-dependent bird species have declined more dramatically, more consistently, and over a more geographically widespread area than any other in North America in the last 25 years. The primary factors driving population declines are most likely habitat loss and degradation on both the breeding and wintering grounds. In this their project's second phase, U.S. and Mexican project partners are contributing a total of \$683,375 to continue with conservation actions begun in the first phase. Many species of high conservation concern will benefit such as mountain plover, long-billed curlew, ferruginous hawk, burrowing owl, Sprague's pipit, Baird's and Cassin's sparrows, lark bunting, and McCown's and chestnut-collared longspurs.

In Colorado

Partners will acquire conservation easements on 6,000 acres of shortgrass prairie habitat on private lands within or

adjacent to Pawnee National Grassland. This area is within the State's Western High Plains, where such habitat is being fragmented by an increasing number of roads, human settlements, and other land uses. Project lands are adjacent to a 4,640-acre tract on which partners are acquiring conservation easements with Phase I funding. Together, an even larger area will now be managed to benefit all birds within Bird Conservation Region 18 (Shortgrass Prairie).

In Mexico

The arid Janos/Casas Grandes grassland complex of northeastern Chihuahua, located in Bird Conservation Region 35 (Chihuahuan Desert), provides extremely important migration and wintering habitat to grassland bird species. This complex is threatened by ongoing agricultural conversion and destructive grazing regimes. Project partners will continue their bird monitoring program and collect data on habitat use and conditions. Partners will broaden environmental education and outreach to communities by working with the local government to create and fund an environmental specialist position in the Municipality of Janos. The opportunity to acquire some 48,000 acres of private ranchland, on which to establish an ecological research and education center, also will be pursued.

Project partners include The Nature Conservancy, Kaplan Foundation, LaSalle Foundation, Great Outdoors Colorado, Saskatchewan Wetlands



Long-billed Curlew

Lee Kamrey/USFWS

Conservation Corporation, Commission on Environmental Cooperation, USDA Forest Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Mexican Secretariat of the Environment's Chihuahuan Delegate Office, Ecology Departments in the States of Nuevo León and Chihuahua, Mexican National Institute for Forestry and Agricultural Research, Mexican National Institute of Anthropology and History, Profauna, Agrupación Dodo, and Agrupación Pradera.

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