



**California Partners in Flight**  
*Working Together for the Conservation of California's Landbird Habitats*

## **EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

November 20, 2003

Location: Stockton Radisson Hotel

### **ATTENDEES:**

Bob Barnes (Audubon California), Ryan Burnett (PRBO Conservation Science), Heather Chase (National Fish and Wildlife Foundation), Karen Fullen (Natural Resource Conservation Service), Sherry Hudson (San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory), Kim Kreitinger (PRBO Conservation Science), Myrnie Mayville (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation), Chris McCreedy (PRBO Conservation Science), Bill Merkel (Golden Gate National Recreation Area), Sharon Miyako (San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory), Kristen Paratore (National Fish and Wildlife Foundation), David Pashley (American Bird Conservancy), John C. Robinson (U.S. Forest Service), Debra Schlafmann (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Rodney Siegel (Institute for Bird Populations), Kelly Sorenson (Ventana Wildlife Society), John Sterling (Jones and Stokes), Sarah Stock (Ventana Wildlife Society), Dan Strait (U.S. Fish and Wildlife)

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Version 1.0 of the **Shrubsteppe Bird Conservation Plan** is near completion and should be ready for review by early December. This plan will have 11 focal species and over 30 science-based recommendations. The lead author is Aaron Holmes of PRBO Conservation Science.
- Version 2.0 of the **Riparian Bird Conservation Plan** is near completion. Sacha Heath of PRBO Conservation Science updated references, data sources, focal species range maps, and recommendations. Additionally, 4 new focal species were added: Spotted Sandpiper, Tree Swallow, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Tricolored Blackbird. This new version should be available for downloading on the CalPIF website by early 2004.
- **The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act** establishes a matching grants program to fund projects that promote the conservation of birds in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The Act's purposes are to 1) perpetuate healthy populations of neotropical migratory birds; 2) assist in the conservation of these birds by supporting conservation initiatives in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean; and 3) provide financial resources and foster international cooperation for those initiatives. Project proposals need to demonstrate how a conservation partnership's activities will foster sustainable, effective, long-term programs to conserve neotropical migratory birds. For every \$1 received in grant funds, the applicant must commit \$3. For more information, refer to <http://birdhabitat.fws.gov>. A motion was made for Deb Schlafmann to write a letter in support of funding for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. This led to an extended discussion on CalPIF letter writing policies (see Interagency Committee summary).
- Discussions are taking place to institute a statewide **Tricolored Blackbird Survey** in 2004. This project will rely heavily on volunteer involvement, however the project will require a full-time coordinator to facilitate trainings, organize volunteers, and analyze results.
- **The Western Section of the Wildlife Society** will hold their annual conference at Rohnert Park, Feb. 26-29. There is a call for papers in the "Monitoring, Ecology, and Management of Passerines and other Landbirds" session chaired by Rob Hewitt. More information can be found at: <http://www.tws-west.org/>
- Audubon California will be publishing the **Important Bird Areas** book in early December. Watch their website for more details: <http://www.audubon-ca.org/>



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Karen Fullen gave an update on the latest NRCS projects and 2004 program funding outlook. Still to be resolved between the House and Senate versions of the Agriculture appropriations is whether or not to fund the Conservation Security Program (CSP), a new program in the 2002 Farm Bill. CSP has a unique role among USDA conservation programs. It identifies and rewards those farmers and ranchers who meet the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations, creates powerful incentives for other producers to meet those same standards of conservation performance on their operations, and provides public benefits for generations to come. It has the potential to increase wildlife conservation practices on agricultural land through incentive payments.

Karen will be attending a Fish and Wildlife scoping meeting in Washington DC the week of December 15. The objective of the meeting is to plan future direction of technology development to improve field delivery of programs such as WRP, WHIP, CRP, etc. Any suggestions on fish and wildlife related research, technology, and training needs should be directed to Karen at [karen.fullen@ca.usda.gov](mailto:karen.fullen@ca.usda.gov).

The 11<sup>th</sup> annual **Oregon/Washington PIF Bird Monitoring Workshop** will be held May 17-21, 2004 in Ashland, OR. These workshops are free to participants and generally attract 50-80 people annually. Topics covered include: survey methodology, program development, and study design. There was consensus amongst meeting participants that this might be an ideal venue for the next CalPIF meeting. Thus, a motion passed to conduct the next CalPIF meeting either immediately before or after the OR/WA PIF workshop.

#### **Western Working Group Meeting**

Kim Kreitinger gave an update on the recent Western Working Group meeting in Silver City, NM. The Western Working Group accepted a motion to become "all-bird." WWG will now include four subgroups: PIF (landbirds), waterbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl. This combined structure, including meeting schedule, will be more efficient and allow greater participation in all initiatives.

The main purpose of the WWG meeting was to evaluate the population estimates in the PIF Continental Plan. These estimates are derived from Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data, thus this meeting gave the western states an opportunity to develop locally-derived population estimates for comparison. The states discussed the need for a consistent methodology to derive the local estimates which includes: 1) Determine density estimates either in the literature or unpublished, raw data; 2) Determine suitable habitat acreage available by BCR unit (GAP analysis, or other appropriate GIS layers); 3) Determine restoration potential of both habitat acreage and bird numbers. The states were given a list of 15 species for deriving local estimates. Although we only discussed two of those species, it was nevertheless an important exercise. It forced a reassessment of the continental estimates and emphasized the need to cross check the assumptions used when deriving continental estimates. For further information, contact Kim Kreitinger at [kkreitinger@prbo.org](mailto:kkreitinger@prbo.org).

#### **Continental Plan Update**

David Pashley discussed the status of the PIF continental plan. The comment period for this version is over and it will take some time to incorporate all of the comments that were submitted. David discussed the need to find a permanent source of funding for Partners in Flight and its products. He proposed selling the Continental Plans to raise funds. The group discussed whether people would buy hard copies of the plans if they were also available online.

The second revision of the Continental Plan will begin almost immediately after publication of the current version and will incorporate Mexican priority species. This Mexican assessment may drastically change the current PIF watch list. Species such as Aplomado Falcon and California Gnatcatcher that are of great conservation concern in the U.S. are much more stable in Mexico. Undoubtedly, this will be a source of debate in the next version of the Continental Plan: how to address species that are of local conservation concern, but not continental.

#### **Meadow Letter Follow-up**

Ryan Burnett discussed the meadow letter written to the US Forest Service. Participants at the June 2003 CalPIF Meeting at Sagehen decided it was important to address the Draft Supplemental Environmental



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Impact Statement (DSEIS) to the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA). The DSEIS includes fundamental changes to the standards and guidelines for vegetation, grazing, and recreation management within sensitive species habitat that creates significant risk to the long-term viability of many Sierra species. Thus, CalPIF representatives drafted a letter that emphasized the importance of riparian and meadow habitats, and highlighted the detrimental effects of these relaxed standards stated in the DSEIS. The letter also addressed the need for a comprehensive, adaptive management monitoring program if the proposed changes to the SNFPA are instituted. A monitoring program would provide a better understanding of the effects of management on sensitive species and would provide a framework for adaptive management to better balance the goals for fuels, grazing, and recreation with those for sensitive species.

Several drafts of the letter circulated amongst Sagehen participants for review. The final draft addressed Jack Blackwell, the Regional Forester at the Pacific Southwest Regional Office during the DSEIS comment period. The letter received positive feedback from the US Forest Service. The US Forest Service extended the DSEIS decision deadline to January. Senior staff within the US Forest Service asked John Robinson to write a section in the DSEIS pertaining to the need for a Willow Flycatcher conservation strategy. Although this is a victory, Ryan Burnett and others stressed that this conservation strategy should not be restricted to a single species, but rather should focus on all meadow-dependent birds. John Robinson mentioned the USFS annual biologist meeting in Feb. 2004 and that it might be worthwhile for the "meadow committee" to attend.

The meadow letter raised the issue of CalPIF's involvement in advocacy or policy letters. The National PIF policy is to not advocate on any policies or legislature. California Partners in Flight needs to clarify its limitations with advocacy: 1) Can CalPIF support literature reviews or factual letters if they are consistent with the CalPIF mission and do not take a position? 2) Should CalPIF form an NGO subgroup that would be responsible for such letters and thus absolve federal employees of responsibility? 3) Who should approve such letters, i.e., Executive Steering Committee, and should there be consensus? See the Agency Integration Committee notes for more discussion on this topic.

#### **Desert Bird Conservation Plan**

Chris McCreedy gave an update on the status of the Desert BCP. Chris chaired a workshop in early November that brought together 25 people from California, Arizona, Nevada, and Mexico that are interested in contributing to the plan. The group tackled issues central to any CalPIF plan, namely the plan's habitat coverage, threats to these habitats, focal species selection, and some management prescriptions. They also discussed possible overlap with other CalPIF BCP's (riparian and coniferous in particular), and debated whether to include habitats such as the Salton Sea, agricultural lands, and riparian in the Desert BCP (the Riparian Plan does not adequately address desert riparian habitats). A draft version of the Desert Plan may be available by Spring 2004. There is still a need for species account authors, reviewers, etc. If interested, contact Chris McCreedy at [cmccreedy@prbo.org](mailto:cmccreedy@prbo.org).

#### **State Wildlife Grants**

Deb Schlafmann discussed the appropriation of SWG money to the State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan. There are 8 required elements for this plan:

- (i) Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife, including low and declining populations, as the State fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the State's wildlife;
- (ii) Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified in (i);
- (iii) Descriptions of problems that may adversely affect species identified in (i) or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors that may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats;



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- (iv) Descriptions of conservation actions proposed to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions;
- (v) Proposed plans for monitoring species identified in (i) and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in (iv), and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions;
- (vi) Descriptions of procedures to review the State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan at intervals not to exceed ten years; and
- (vii) Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review, and revision of the State comprehensive wildlife conservation plan with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the State or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats.
- (viii) Provisions to ensure public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of projects and programs.

Deb stressed that it is important to attend future plan scoping meetings to ensure that the BCP recommendations and CalPIF priorities are incorporated. Also, Deb emphasized that some SWG funding should be allocated to landbird coordinators.

**All-Bird Workshop**

Kim Kreitinger discussed the plans for an All-Bird Workshop in California. These workshops are funded through the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA). Typically each state receives approximately \$8,000 to cover conference room costs, catering services, printed materials, 4 bird experts to chair the sessions, and travel expenses for state agency employees (up to \$500/employee). All-Bird Workshops help to coordinate the conservation activities and ensure the smooth delivery of the goals and objectives within the: U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, N.A. Waterbird Conservation Plan, N.A. Waterfowl Plan, and the PIF Bird Conservation Plans. The California All-Bird Workshop is also an opportunity to provide products to be incorporated into the State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan. This will likely be a 2-3 day workshop in Fall 2004. Point Reyes Bird Observatory staff will be meeting with California Department of Fish and Game employees in early December to discuss dates, location possibilities, and session topics. Contact Kim Kreitinger at [kkreitinger@prbo.org](mailto:kkreitinger@prbo.org) for further details.

COMMITTEE UPDATES—

**AGENCY INTEGRATION COMMITTEE**

**CHAIR-Dan Strait**

PARTICIPANTS: Karen Fullen, Kelly Sorenson, Myrnie Mayville, Heather Chase, Kristen Paratore

The meeting was spent addressing a task given the committee by CalPIF members. The committee was asked to resolve the question of whether or not CalPIF should "lobby" for legislation, funding bills, etc. A concern was expressed that members of CalPIF should not take a position on an issue if their employing agency, nonprofit organization, etc. has not. The committee seeks to determine that if CalPIF takes a position on an issue; will the agency or organization as a member of CalPIF be held responsible for that position? The committee members agreed to consult their legal and/or ethics staffs to determine if and under what conditions they can participate in advocacy for legislation, funding bills, or other potentially political issues. The Chair will report the committee's findings to the CalPIF Co-Chairs.

The Chair later reported the results of the committee meeting to the CalPIF membership. He also reported that draft forest management plan revisions for several Southern California National Forests are due to be



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released for public comment in January. Initial preparation of Forest Plan revisions will begin in January for some Northern California Forests. The committee will be reviewing and commenting on the plans early in 2004.

## **RESEARCH AND MONITORING COMMITTEE**

PARTICIPANTS: Sherry Hudson, Ryan Burnett, Chris McCreedy, David Pashley, Bill Merkle, Rodney Siegel, Sarah Stock

1. ***Need to create top 10 list of inventory/monitoring priorities across the BCPs to ensure that the most important surveys are conducted, analyzed, and shared.***

The group decided to evaluate each CalPIF Bird Conservation Plan and identify both the priorities of the plan and gaps in data/geography. \*Action: **These will be sent to Bob Allen for compilation by Feb. 1.**

**Shrubsteppe** – Aaron (Chris McCreedy will tell him)  
**Grasslands** – Bob  
**Coniferous** – Rodney and Ryan  
**Oak Woodlands** – Sherry  
**Coastal Scrub/Chaparral** – Barbara Kus? (Sherry e-mail her)  
**Riparian** – Chris McCreedy and Sacha  
**Sierra Nevada** – Rodney and Ryan

2. ***Explore the ways that large-scale efforts could be partnered with the different agencies and perhaps seek funding as a group.***

The group felt that ideas for large-scale efforts would be created from the ‘top ten list’ of inventory/monitoring priorities. The first steps are to identify and prioritize; the next steps will be to find funding and to implement.

Other ideas for large-scale efforts

- **Promoting the integration of restoration and monitoring:** Numerous restoration efforts are taking place without monitoring to evaluate the results.
- **Migration and winter surveys:** standardizing among stations, expanding, etc.

3. ***The need to write a Wetland Bird Conservation Plan***

The Executive Steering Committee should address this topic. The Research and Monitoring Committee advocates the completion and revision of the existing BCPs prior to creating new plans. Also, it is important to confirm that existing BCPs are being used and implemented before attempting to fund new plans. If a Wetland BCP were initiated, the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture (CVHJV) would be an integral partner. Approximately 80% of California wetlands occur within the Central Valley, thus within the CVHJV boundaries.

## **COMMUNICATION AND RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE** **CHAIR-Kim Kreitinger**

PARTICIPANTS: John Robinson, Bob Barnes, Sharon Miyako

The Communication and Recruitment Committee reviewed the committee goals as stated in November 2002 meeting: 1) Communicate the mission of CalPIF; 2) Increase CalPIF participation; 3) Measure



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successes and impacts of CalPIF activities and products; 4) Get heads of organization to make PIF a priority within their organization; and 5) Raise funds.

The group also reviewed some of the accomplishments and tools of the Communication and Recruitment Committee:

- **CalPIF Listserve** – facilitates communication between all members and interested parties; over **120** people have subscribed to the CalPIF listserv since its inception in late 2002. There are at least 32 different affiliations: 6 universities, 4 military, 14 NGO's, and 12 governmental organizations.
- **CalPIF Website** – informs public about CalPIF mission, BCP plans, and landbird conservation. Since July 2003, there have been over **15,000** page views on the CalPIF website.
- **CalPIF Display** – informs broad audiences about CalPIF mission, BCP plans, and the CalPIF study area database and focal species range maps. Intended for use at festivals and events where the BCPs are distributed. First used at the Central Valley Birding Symposium, Nov. 2003 where approximately 50 of both the Riparian and Oak Woodland plans were distributed.
- **CalPIF Newsletter** – updates interested parties on CalPIF projects and conservation issues in the state. Also, increases participation in CalPIF and informs new audience when handed out at festivals and events.

The Communication and Recruitment Committee discussed some tasks that need to be accomplished. The first item was the next newsletter. The group brainstormed on article ideas and decided that the next newsletter should highlight the Desert BCP. Other article possibilities were OR/WA monitoring workshop, Neotropical Migratory Bird Act, requests for feedback on the Bird Conservation Plans, and a CalPIF annual accomplishments report that demonstrates the importance of CalPIF by listing past successes. John Robinson suggested that this should go beyond an annual report and incorporate all of our accomplishments since inception in 1992. Any other newsletter ideas should be sent to Kim Kreitingner at [kkreitingner@prbo.org](mailto:kkreitingner@prbo.org).

The Committee also discussed a recurring topic: the need for a CalPIF Communication Strategy. A Communication Strategy would explain the mission of CalPIF, identify the need for CalPIF, define the impacts CalPIF wishes to have, define the objectives, identify new target audiences, and list products or deliverables that exist as a result of California Partners in Flight. Once this information is defined, it will facilitate a more organized outreach approach. CalPIF could then move forward with outreach materials such as a simple brochure, etc. A "Communications Strategy" meeting may be scheduled after the first of the year for those interested.