

Integrating Migratory Bird Conservation Initiatives in the Americas (Flyways in the Americas)

INTRODUCTION

The wonder of migration has always fascinated humankind and the arrival and departure of migrants is one of the most impressive natural phenomena. Migratory birds, both inter- and intra-continental migrants, link people, cultures, and development and conservation issues, and offer an extraordinary opportunity for international collaboration. Flyways are considered as ecological networks, providing links among their component parts, and the populations of birds using them provide an ecological link in themselves. There are different migrants as in the case of the African-Eurasian region, these different groups show different migration patterns.

Many migratory bird populations are sharply declining due to known threats, and there is an increasing sense that these declines are linked to the bigger environmental issues facing humankind. Effective conservation of migratory birds requires action beyond any one set of political borders, a fact recognized in the development of multiple bilateral, trilateral and multilateral agreements for the conservation of migratory species, and in numerous calls to action. Despite the long history of international cooperation for migratory bird conservation, and the increasingly coordinated array of international initiatives covering distinct taxonomic groups and geographic regions, relatively few advances have been made in terms of advancing range wide conservation of migratory species through linked on-the-ground action.

There is a global Working Group on Flyways to act as a think tank on migratory bird flyways and frameworks. This group is tasked with reviewing scientific and technical issues for conservation of migratory birds and their habitats, and relevant international instruments, initiatives and processes, as the basis for future Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) policy on flyways and contributing to the future work of CMS. Globally there is broad participation of the Scientific Council, Ramsar Convention, the African- Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), international NGOs (BirdLife International, Wetlands International), Americas Waterbird Conservation Council, Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative, East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership, Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation of the EU and international experts as well as a wider consultation group contributing to the work of uniting flyways initiatives globally.

CMS has worked on scientific and technical issues and priority issues related to flyways and management of migratory species and their habitats and it was received with gratitude the work undertaken by the Working Group on Flyways at its meeting in Edinburgh on 20-21 February 2011. Global models, such as “The Hague Action Statement” issued on the 15th Anniversary of the AEWA in June 2010, and Target 11 of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets 2020 approved by the Convention on Biological Diversity, calls for more areas of terrestrial and inland water, coastal and marine areas, especially relevant for the conservation of migratory birds. Wings over Wetlands (WOW) project developed under the aegis of AEWA and implemented by Wetlands International and BirdLife International is the largest initiative to date in the African Eurasian region for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and the sites on which they depend. It is also associated with the Critical Site Network Tool, a portal designed to obtain information about the critical sites for waterbird species required through their annual cycle and to assist site managers, national authorities and international organizations. The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) is a critical initiative and effective tool in the Americas for shorebirds.

To advance an Americas Flyways Initiative, governments, range states, CMS Secretariat, Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI), Waterbird Council for the Americas, BirdLife International and other organizations working on flyways are to develop an overarching conservation Action Plan for the Americas, recognising especially the established programmes of work that exist in North America and between both American continents, and taking into account existing instruments in the region. The instrument to be developed needs to cover intra-regional migrants also, in particular Neotropical Austral Migrants.

MANDATE AND FURTHER CONSULTATIONS

A mandate by the Plenary at WHMSI IV (Miami, 9 December 2010) was given to a task force to advance “Integrating Migratory Bird Conservation Initiatives in the Americas (Flyways in the Americas)” concept through the following points:

1. Given the enabled environment for a cooperative agreement for Flyways in the Americas, advance its development and implementation.
2. Identify leadership and/or leaders on migratory bird conservation to support integration and enhance efficiencies of current flyway initiatives and other partners.
3. Develop needs, including capacity building, to address threats to migratory bird species
4. Create a forum to discuss common issues in the flyways countries
5. Inform the donor community about needs and actions to address threats to migratory bird species.
6. Identify potential sources of funding to support hemispheric, regional and country initiatives
7. Engage decision makers and identify strategies to support their work
8. Provide tools to strengthen NGO capacity and opportunities
9. Help identify and/or compile information on critical sites for migratory bird species in the hemisphere and their protection status.
10. The WHSMI Steering Committee is asked to:
 - Report back to participating countries on results of this session
 - Help improve the communication between governments and civil society organizations to support governmental decision-making
 - Encourage bird conservation groups to work together on common issues such as site designation, sharing of data, constituency.
 - Strengthen information networks and cooperation among countries in the whole flyway
 - Develop common stories for public outreach, education and communication

The mandate given by the plenary of WHMSI IV in Miami (6-9 December 2010) was presented in the Americas Partnership Meeting of BirdLife International held 13-17 December 2010 in Pedro Vicente Maldonado, Quito (Ecuador), and at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Waterbird Conservation Council (WCC) held 15-17 February 2011 in Santa Marta (Colombia), and furthermore in the Americas Partnership Meeting of BirdLife International held 4-8 June 2012 in Dominican Republic. In the three events, the concept and its evolution received full support and some recommendations to move this forward in close cooperation with the WCC and BirdLife International, as well as the other initiatives in the Americas, which are represented on the task force created in WHMSI IV. Since then an intense exchange of opinions and documents was developed within the Americas. Two rounds of consultations were done through the internet and this is the final version of the document.

ACTION PLAN FOR THE FLYWAYS IN THE AMERICAS

The objective of a “Flyways in the Americas” is to advance in a participatory and inclusive way, the conservation of migratory bird species in the hemisphere linking populations to their sites for the benefit of people. This is to be done while working on five different fronts that include

1. Promoting the conservation of threatened migratory species from extinction, while addressing key threats and conserving key sites and habitats (e.g., of flagship or umbrella species) which will be beneficial to a wider set of migratory species.
2. Promoting the removal of landscape-scale barriers to migration, including illegal and unsustainable hunting and the proliferation of poorly-planned infrastructure.
3. Promoting the conservation of networks of critical stop-over sites, through action on the ground by local people and communities, and the demonstration of approaches to habitat conservation that can be scaled-up for wider, landscape-level application.
4. Acting as an umbrella initiative to provide support for building capacity for flyway-scale conservation including the strengthening of local and national capacity and the interaction among them, at critical points on the flyways and the strengthening of collaboration and support among working parties.
5. Understanding and addressing the wider land-use issues facing migratory birds through targeted research and advocacy work, and to strengthen the global and regional policy and financing mechanisms for the conservation of key habitats for migratory birds.

1. Given the enabled environment for a future cooperative agreement for flyways in the Americas, advance its development and implementation

A wealth of migratory bird initiatives, several of which can be described as “flyways approaches,” already exists in the Americas (see Annex 1). CMS is discussing with other International Initiatives (BirdLife International, Wetland International, etc.) “flyways approaches” in the Americas. Based on the experience gained by other initiatives, it is proposed to:

1. Complete a compilation of flyways initiatives at different levels in the Americas which need to be included in a hemispheric approach
2. Based on the cooperative agreements already existing, draft a first version of a flyway agreement to be discussed and voluntarily signed by parties involved in conservation of migratory birds in the Americas
3. Once signed by at least 60% of initiatives identified, develop a joint action plan for the implementation to avoid overlapping and duplication of activities
4. Develop a web-enabled forum to disseminate actions

2. Promote the identification of leadership and/or leaders to support the integration, enhance efficiencies of current flyway initiatives and other partners.

1. Identify “champions/leaders” for migratory bird species in the Americas who could volunteer to the support for integration among groups or individual partners working on the identified species, habitats, or threats.
2. Link to available databases of migratory bird species in the Americas for updates on information on their natural history, conservation status, and individuals/institutions working locally, sub or supra-nationally on their biology and conservation.
3. Develop a strategy to reach target constituencies for the conservation of a prioritized list of migratory bird species in the Americas.

3. Develop needs, including capacity building, to address threats to migratory bird species

1. Develop a common list of priority species, networks of sites for those species, and potential funding sources.
2. Conduct an assessment of, and map out, existing involvement in migratory bird and flyways initiatives in the Americas (to identify strengths, opportunities and existing capacity).
3. Identify north-south and south-south potential interactions for mutual benefits in capacity building to address needs for conservation of migratory bird species.

4. Create a forum to discuss common issues in the flyways countries

1. Capitalize on existing parties' knowledge and experience working with other flyways/migratory bird initiatives in the Americas.
2. Develop a web-enabled forum for discussion of flyways conservation in the Americas
3. Facilitate in national, regional or hemispheric/global events (conferences, seminars, workshops, etc.) awareness raising and actions that promote the conservation of migratory bird species.

5. Inform the donor community about needs and actions to address threats to migratory bird species

1. Develop a conceptual framework of state-of-the-art conservation practices of migratory bird species in the Americas
2. Produce a 5+ year strategy with the priorities to market the financial and technical needs for the conservation of migratory species.
3. Print brochures (proposals) and outreach and promotional materials to fundraise and create alliances to advance the conservation of migratory species in the Americas.

6. Identify potential sources of funding to support hemispheric, regional and country initiatives

1. Develop short concepts for projects focused on priority species and addressing priority issues, which build on existing partner expertise/capacity and existing migratory bird initiatives.
2. Conduct a gap analysis and prioritize conservation actions for migratory bird species to facilitate financial flows to advance range-wide conservation for flyways species.
3. Develop alliances or joint ventures with the Academia and Science and Technology Councils in countries to advance research needed for the conservation of migratory bird species.
4. Identify public figures who could "champion" the conservation initiatives for the Americas in each region/sub regions through outreach messages.

7. Engage decision-makers and identify strategies to work with land-owners and large corporations

- 7.1 Develop common priority issues/threats (landscape barriers to migration) and the governments (central, sub-nationals, etc.) involved and responsible for addressing those issues.
- 7.2 Involve hemispheric (E.g., OAS) and regional (E.g., NAFTA, MERCOSUR, UNASUR, etc.) and take advantage of political meetings to communicate and involve decision-makers in the needs of flyways conservation.

- 7.3 Involve corporations in the flyways to contribute within their social and environmental responsibility initiatives (E.g., Rio Tinto's partnership with BirdLife International) to advance the flyways agenda.
- 7.4 Promote work with unions of producers at the national levels and when feasible with supra-national unions of producers to conserve species, sites and the productive landscape.

8. Provide tools to strengthen NGO capacity and opportunities

- 8.1. Build on and unite existing projects that are being developed and implemented by organizations in the flyway.
- 8.2. Disseminate existing tools to promote their use and avoid duplication of mechanisms and tools.
- 8.3. Develop manuals and guidelines of "good practices" to approach decision-makers and advocate for the conservation of migratory bird species.

9. Help identify the key sites for migratory bird species in the hemisphere and their protection status.
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- 9.1. Develop projects which help strengthen existing flyways/migratory bird initiatives, and especially the members' role within them (and which avoid duplication of effort).
- 9.2. While many organizations in the Americas have a strong focus on migratory birds, few have been developed (as yet) at the flyway level. The approach taken to date has been "linking sites, linking people," which can be summarized as:
- 9.2.1.1. Identifying comprehensive, flyway-scale, networks of IBAs and others priority habitats for priority migratory bird species in the Americas.
- 9.2.1.2. Developing sustainable initiatives to advance the conservation of migratory species at networked sites through the linking of local communities and conservation approaches.
- 9.2.1.3. Documenting these networks of connected sites and people, both on the web and in written media, as a means of promoting their conservation.
- 9.2.1.4. Facilitating the establishment of regular monitoring systems for these networks.
- 9.3 Develop educational materials (e.g., video) to motivate all audiences, especially children, on the importance of the conservation of the "flyway in the Americas" and disseminate the material as broadly as possible to reach the largest number of people in the Americas "linking species, sites and people."
- on public outreach, education and communication.

Task Force:

Chaired by Alberto Yanosky (Guyra Paraguay / Birdlife International)

- ✓ **Bert Lenten** (Convention on Migratory Species)
- ✓ **Carmen Quiroga** (Flamingo Conservation Group)
- ✓ **Asociación Calidris** (Fernando Castillo, Richard Johnston)
- ✓ **Debbie Hahn** (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies)
- ✓ **Diego Luna** (Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network)
- ✓ **Jose Manuel Mateo** (Dominican Republic's Initiatives)
- ✓ **Lisa Sorensen** (Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds)
- ✓ **Maria Rivera** (Ramsar Convention)
- ✓ **Sara Lara** (American Bird Conservancy)
- ✓ **Vladimir Puentes** (Government of Colombia)

Observers: Andrea Grosse (Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act – NMBCA/USFWS)

Participating Institutions and Leaders

- 1) American Bird Conservancy (Sara Lara)
- 2) Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Asociación de Agencias de Pesca y Vida Silvestre (Debbie Hahn)
- 3) BirdLife International (Rob Clay, Itala Yepes)
- 4) CMS (Bert Lenten, Monika Thiele, Francisco Rilla)
- 5) Guyra Paraguay (Romina Cardozo, Cristina Morales, Alberto Yanosky)
- 6) Nature Canada (Ian Davidson)
- 7) SCSCB - Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (Lisa Sorenson)
- 8) WCC
- 9) WHMSI (Herbert Rafaele / Krishna Roy)
- 10) WHSRM (Diego Luna)

Annex I: Initiatives in the Americas with “flyways approach”
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- WHMSI
- WHSRN/RHRAP
- WCC
- SRGA-PRISM-WHSG-ISS
- RAAHO
- CMS
 - MdE Cauquén Colorado
 - MdE Flamencos Altoandinos
 - MdE de Pastizales
 - ACAP
- Ramsar
 - Estrategia de Humedales Altoandinos
 - Iniciativas de manglares, Caribe y Cuenca del Plata
- CRIMBI
- CNAA
- Censo Caribeño de Aves Acuáticas
- GCFA
- Society of Wetland Scientists – capítulo Sudamericano.
- Waterbird Conservation Society – capítulo Suamericano.
- Iniciativa *Calidris mauri-C. alpina*