

PUBLIC AWARENESS, OUTREACH, AND EDUCATION

Resources

Awareness, outreach, and education are key components of successful conservation programs. Listed below is a very small sample of the many resources available for learning more about Partners In Flight, Neotropical migratory birds, conservation issues, and ways you can help wildlife. Visit local offices of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Conservation District, or Extension services, or visit your local Audubon chapter for more information.

Publications

- Wyoming Game and Fish Department Stewardship Packet for Birds in Wyoming (contact: Andrea Cerovski, WGFD, 260 Buena Vista, Lander, WY 82520)
- International Migratory Bird Day Organizer's Packet (contact: Partners In Flight, www.PartnersInFlight.org)
- International Migratory Bird Day Educator's Packet (contact: Partners In Flight, www.PartnersInFlight.org)

Educational Tools

- Songbird Blues Boxes (All regional WGFD offices and Cheyenne headquarters, and the USFWS in Cheyenne have these trunks to lend, free of charge.)
- Sod Box (contact: Tim Byer, USFS, 2250 East Richards Street, Douglas, WY 82633)
- Tree Trunks (contact your local U.S. Forest Service office for availability)
- Wyoming Bird Flashcards CD (contact: Audubon Wyoming, 400 E. 1st Street, Suite 308, Casper, WY 82601)

Web Sites

- PIF home page: www.PartnersInFlight.org
- WY-PIF home page: www.sdvc.uwyo.edu/pif

Education Centers

- Audubon Wyoming Centers (contact: Vicki Spencer, Audubon Wyoming Executive Director, 400 E. 1st Street, Suite 308, Casper, WY 82601)
- Teton Science School (contact: Teton Science School Director, P.O. Box 68, Kelly, WY 83011)
- The Nature Conservancy (contact: Dave Neary, TNC Director, 258 Main Street, Lander, WY 82520)
- Wyoming Game and Fish Department Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camps (contact: WGFD Education Coordinator, 5400 Bishop Blvd., Cheyenne, WY 82006)

Key Concepts About Bird Conservation

The following list of key concepts for bird conservation should be communicated through education and outreach programs. These concepts are important to include in any program concerning conservation, and are indispensable in programs focusing on birds and their habitats (California Partners In Flight 2000).

- **Reproductive success may be the most important factor influencing population health.** It contributes directly to a population's size and viability in an area. A number of factors influence reproductive success, including predation, parasitism, nest site availability, and food availability.
- **Nesting habitat requirements vary among species.** Different bird species place their nests in different locations, from directly on the ground to the tops of trees. Most birds nest within 15 feet (5 m) of the ground. Managers should consider that habitat needs for different species vary. Leave grass and forbs greater than 6 inches (15 cm) in height for ground nesters; shrubs and trees for low to mid-height nesters; dead trees and snags for cavity-nesters; and old, tall trees for birds that build their nests in the canopy.
- **The breeding season is a short but vital period in birds' lives.** Birds nest during the spring and early summer of each year and raise their young in a rather short period. Nestlings are particularly sensitive to changes in the environment and are sensitive indicators of ecosystem health. Disturbance, such as vegetation clearing, habitat restoration, and recreation may result in nest abandonment, remove potential nest sites, directly destroy nests, expose nests to predators, and decrease food sources such as insects. Predators, such as domestic cats, skunks, and jays, can decimate breeding populations, and managers should avoid subsidizing their populations.
- **Understory (the weedy, shrubby growth underneath trees) is crucial to many birds.** A healthy and diverse understory with lots of ground cover offers well-concealed nest and foraging sites. Manicured parks and mowed lawns provide poor nesting conditions for all but a few bird species.
- **Native plants are important to birds.** Native bird populations evolved with the local vegetation, learning to forage upon and nest in certain species. Introduced plant species may not provide the same nutrition or nest site quality. Introduced plants can also quickly dominate an area, reducing the diversity of vegetation. Less diverse vegetation can lower the productivity and viability of a bird population.
- **Natural predator-prey relationships are in balance, but human disturbance creates an imbalanced system.** Interactions with predators are a natural and essential part of an ecosystem. However, a preponderance of nonnative predators or a sustained surplus of natural predators severely affects the health and persistence of bird populations. Feeding wildlife, especially foxes, raccoons, and skunks, should be discouraged. Feeders that are frequented by jays and crows and cowbirds should not be maintained during the breeding season (most songbirds feed their young

insects). Domestic and feral cats are responsible for an estimated 4.4 million birds killed each day by cats. It is not true that a well-fed cat will not hunt! In fact, a healthy cat is a more effective predator.

- **Natural processes, such as flood and fire, are integral to a healthy ecosystem.** They provide the natural disturbance needed in an area to keep the vegetative diversity high, an important factor for birds.

References and Additional Reading

California Partners In Flight. 2000. The Draft Grassland Bird Conservation Plan: A Strategy for Protecting and Managing Grassland Habitats and Associated Birds in California. Version 1.0. B. Allen, lead author. Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Stinson Beach, CA. Online <http://www.prbo.org/CPIF/Consplan.html>.