

New Hampshire



Mary Koncher

The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture

Partners working together for the conservation of native bird species in the Atlantic Flyway region of the United States.

The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV) is a partnership of federal, regional and state agencies and organizations focused on the conservation of habitat for native bird species in the Atlantic Flyway of the United States from Maine south to Puerto Rico. The joint venture coordinates planning and delivery of bird habitat conservation, resulting in more effective and efficient conservation and the ability to focus limited resources on continental, national, flyway and regional bird conservation priorities.

North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grant Projects

Habitat conservation in New Hampshire is experiencing tremendous success through the assistance of joint venture partners and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). Sixteen NAWCA grants totaling \$8 million have been approved to protect over 126,000 acres (grant and match acres) of critical wetlands and associated uplands within New Hampshire and adjacent areas of Vermont. These grants have been matched by almost \$27 million in partner funds.

Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership:

Protecting the Great Bay Watershed

The Great Bay estuary is a major wintering area for American Black Duck, and supports over 80% of all waterfowl populations wintering in New Hampshire. That area has been recognized as a waterfowl focus area in the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Waterfowl Implementation Plan. Large mudflats exposed during low tide provide important habitat for at least 27 species of shorebirds and 13 species of wading birds. Great Bay also supports important fisheries including striped bass, shad, and shellfish. The watersheds of Great Bay support 12 rare natural communities and 66 rare plants. The Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership (GBRPP) is a coalition of public and private conservation groups that formed in 1994 to help protect the remaining critical habitats within and around Great Bay. GBRPP has undertaken a comprehensive, landscape-scale approach to conservation and habitat protection by developing and implementing conservation strategies through a combination of scientific field studies and ongoing communication with local, regional, state and national conservation representatives. Between 1995 and 2007, GBRPP has been awarded six standard and three small NAWCA grants for land protection projects focused on the rich migratory bird and wildlife habitats of Crommet Creek, Lamprey River and Piscassic River project areas. In addition to the \$6.15 million in NAWCA grant funds and over \$15 million in match, GBRPP has received over \$40 million in grants from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. These combined funds have led to the protection of over 8,314 acres of critical habitat.

Connecticut River Watershed Projects

Three NAWCA projects have been awarded to protect the natural resources of the Connecticut River watershed. The Connecticut River is an important migratory corridor for many species of birds wintering along the Atlantic Coast. Because of the importance of the river, approved projects have been a collaborative effort among partners in both New Hampshire and Vermont and are part of a broad-based initiative with the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge to protect the Connecticut River watershed. Palustrine emergent and forested wetlands, wet grasslands, and the farmlands and forests along the river provide tremendous migration habitat for such high-priority species as Black Duck, Mallard, Bobolink, Eastern Bluebird, Upland Sandpiper, and other migratory shorebird species. Those same habitats provide nesting and brood-rearing habitat for the American Woodcock, a species with a documented long-term decline. While the Upper Valley Connecticut River



and Connecticut River: Northern Valley Conservation projects focused on protecting habitats in the river corridor, the Connecticut Lakes Headwaters project focused on the forests and wetlands in the upper reaches of the watershed in northernmost New Hampshire. This project—the largest ever public/private land conservation project in New Hampshire—resulted in the creation of a 25,000 acre natural area surrounded by 146,400 acres of working forest protected through a conservation easement.

Bird Conservation Regions

• **The Atlantic Northern Forest**

New Hampshire falls within the Atlantic Northern Forest Bird Conservation Region (BCR 14). In 2005 BCR 14 became the first Bird Conservation Region in North America to develop an ecoregional bird conservation plan that encompasses all bird species and their habitats. That conservation plan, “Atlantic Northern Forest Blueprint” (<http://www.acjv.org/bcr14.htm>) was developed by representatives from all four Canadian provinces and five states that make up this region. This group worked together to assess priority species and habitats, identify major threats and conservation strategies, develop preliminary population objectives, and map priority focus areas for conservation action. The region’s highest priority bird habitats include coastal areas (saltmarsh, mud flats, and islands), freshwater wetlands, and spruce-fir forest (especially high-elevation forests). Many BCR 14 partners from across the region have continued to work together to form the “International Bicknells Thrush Conservation Group” (<http://www.bicknellsthrush.org/>), a collaboration to conserve the region’s only endemic breeding bird, which is rare and declining. This species seems to be particularly vulnerable to issues that affect many priority bird species, including atmospheric deposition, climate change, alternative energy development, and habitat loss on its wintering range.

• **New England/Mid-Atlantic Coast Region**

New Hampshire falls within the New England/Mid-Atlantic Coast Bird Conservation Region (BCR 30). This diverse and populous region extends along the Atlantic Coast from southern Maine to Virginia, and provides habitat for millions of breeding, migrating, and wintering birds. In December, 2004, an ACJV workshop focused on this region brought together 85 bird conservation partners from state, federal and nongovernmental organizations from ten states to reach consensus on the highest priorities for bird conservation in the BCR. Using results from the workshop, an implementation plan for BCR 30 was completed in 2007. The implementation plan highlights regional habitat and species population objectives, priority species, focus areas, and priority projects to achieve regional bird conservation objectives. A Steering Committee and two working groups have formed to oversee implementation of bird conservation in the BCR. A habitat working group was formed to identify the key questions that need to be answered through habitat mapping and modeling, and what tools and products are required to answer them. A monitoring working group formed to assess and address the availability of biological information necessary to manage and conserve the highest priority bird species in the region. Visit the BCR 30 website to view the plan and focus area maps at <http://www.acjv.org/bcr30.htm>.

Both BCR planning efforts will help direct limited resources more efficiently to the most important habitat areas for migratory birds.

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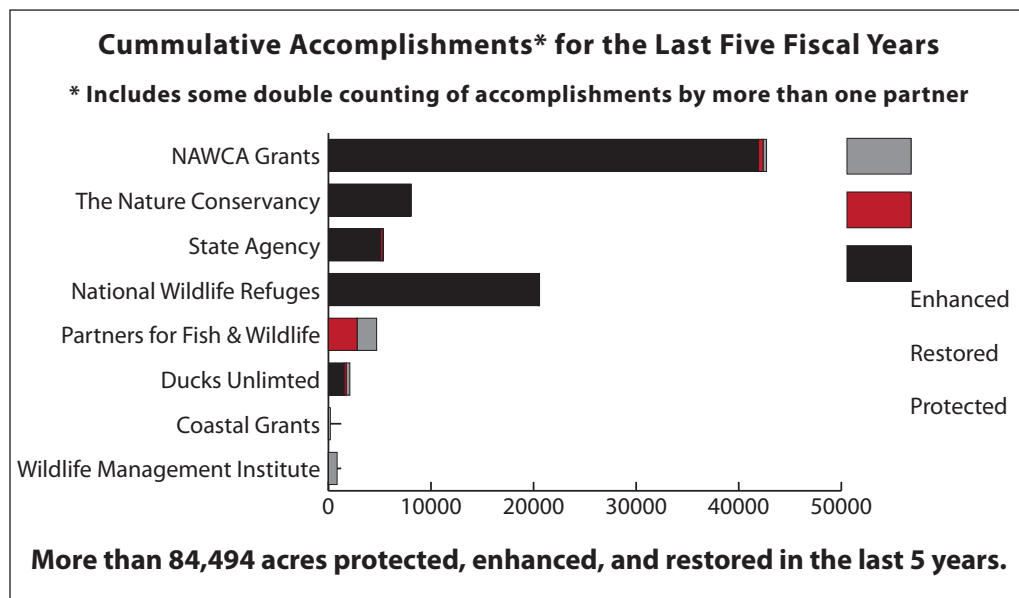
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 New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania,
 Rhode Island, South Carolina,
 Vermont, Virginia, Puerto Rico,
 Ducks Unlimited, Inc.,
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