

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 Grants

Lake Champlain, the Connecticut River Valley, and other wetlands forming the boundaries of Vermont are important habitats for a host of migratory birds. Since the passage of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) in 1989, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has awarded \$4.5 million in grants for projects to conserve and protect nearly 165,000 acres in these areas. Numerous agencies, organizations, and private landowners in Vermont and neighboring states have matched grants with more than \$26.1 million in partner funds. A broad array of partners are currently working on a new Phase of habitat protection up and down Lake Champlain. These projects use as match some large forestlands acquired in New York from Domtar and Finch-Pruyn, as well as a large conservation easement on farmland along several miles of the Chazy River. Several critical wetland habitats will be permanently protected by partner efforts, which will also expand public access to the lake.

Regional Efforts to Conserve Birds

• Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain

The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture and the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture of Canada are working in partnership to conserve native migratory bird species throughout the Lower Great Lakes/ St. Lawrence Plain Bird Conservation Region (i.e., BCR 13), which includes the Champlain Valley in Vermont and New York. The BCR 13 bird conservation plan (<http://www.acjv.org/bcr13.htm>) identifies the highest priority bird species and habitats in this region, as well as the focus areas most important to achieving the plan's goals. Birds associated with agricultural grasslands, shrub-habitat, and wetlands are the highest conservation priorities. In this region, which stretches from Northeastern Ohio to Western Vermont, the three highest priority landscapes for conservation action include the Champlain Valley, as well as eastern Lake Erie and eastern Lake Ontario (and the adjacent portion of the St. Lawrence Valley). A host of partners, including Audubon Vermont, the University of Vermont, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Vermont Fish and Game are actively working with private and public landowners to provide grassland habitat that is managed in a way that is compatible with grassland birds such as Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark. These efforts include research and monitoring to understand which areas are most productive for birds, and see if bird populations in some areas would respond positively if they were managed differently.

• The Atlantic Northern Forest Bird Conservation Region

Most of Vermont falls within the Atlantic Northern Forest Bird Conservation Region (i.e., BCR 14). BCR 14 was 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

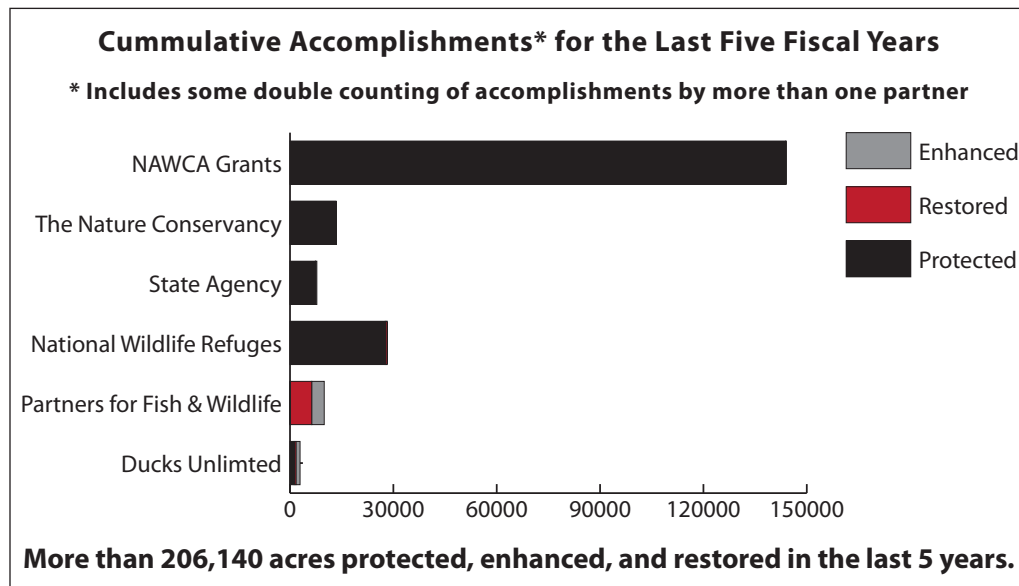


Blueprint” (http://www.acjv.org/documents/BCR_14_Blueprint.pdf) was developed by representatives from all four of the Canadian provinces and the five states that make up this region. This group jointly developed a list of the highest priority species and habitats, identified major threats and conservation strategies, developed preliminary population objectives, and mapped focus areas that are particularly important for the conservation of different bird groups. 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 partners from across BCR 14 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 restricted to high-elevation forests (i.e., mountaintops) and declining in much of its range. This species seems to be particularly vulnerable to issues that affect many priority bird species, including acid rain, mercury deposition, climate change, alternative energy development, and habitat loss on its wintering range (e.g., the Dominican Republic). Partners in BCR 14 are also addressing habitat needs of several declining species associated with early-successional (i.e., shrubs or young forest) habitat, through the Northern Forest Woodcock Initiative (<http://timberdoodle.org/northernForestInitiative>). Partners have created a set of demonstration areas that allow landowners to better understand how to best manage for these declining species, and researchers are evaluating the response of woodcock to management efforts across the region.

BCR planning efforts will help direct limited resources more efficiently to the most important habitat areas for migratory birds in the Vermont portion of these two regions.

• *Audubon Vermont’s Forest Bird Initiative*

Audubon Vermont’s Forest Bird Initiative is integrating science, education, and public policy to conserve forests within Vermont that are important to birds. They are working with multiple partners to identify, monitor, and promote stewardship at a network of forest Important Bird Areas (IBA) that support a significant number of breeding forest birds, especially “responsibility” species (i.e., those with a high proportion of their global range within the Atlantic Northern Forest). Audubon Vermont is also creating a partnership with Maine Audubon, New Hampshire Audubon, and Audubon New York to develop regional conservation programs for forest birds.



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Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Partners:

Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Puerto Rico, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Wildlife Management Institute, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, U.S.G.S. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center



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