

2.2.1 North American Bird Conservation Initiative

Project Summary

Launched by the CEC in 1999, NABCI is now part of the agenda of the North American bird conservation community. NABCI has successfully completed the initial phase of establishing the institutional basis for undertaking the conservation of all birds in all habitats in North America. Since 2002, NABCI initiated its on-the-ground phase to serve as a vehicle for integrated bird conservation. In 2003, the CEC will continue its facilitating role in building partnerships for on-the-ground implementation, including the enhancement of local capacity to participate in continental-wide conservation efforts. Moreover, further support will be provided to establish a harmonized biological knowledge base necessary for integrated bird conservation.

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of NABCI is to enhance cooperation among existing bird conservation organizations and initiatives to achieve effective protection of all birds in North America.

The main goal for 2003 is to initiate the application of NABCI as a vehicle for enhanced environmental planning and understanding, and for building local and continental partnerships.

The specific objectives for 2003 are:

- Foster the implementation of on-the-ground activities to conserve bird populations in North America, by supporting projects with high potential to demonstrate the NABCI approach.
- Create opportunities to build/strengthen local capacity for effective participation in continental bird conservation efforts, by addressing principal training needs identified in regional workshops held in 2002.
- Support the establishment of harmonized systems to assess and monitor the conservation status of birds throughout North America, by assisting in the completion of an assessment framework compatible, consistent and complementary within and among the three North American countries.
- Highlight the usefulness of NABCI as a vehicle for integration and biodiversity conservation by seeking areas of cooperation with ongoing CEC programs by scoping potential areas of collaborative attention, such as on pesticides and birds, with SMOC.

Expected Results

- Establish partnerships and fund NABCI projects related to the bird conservation “hubs”—important bird areas that host a significant variety of migratory species and that have been chosen for their high potential in forging North American partnerships (see Progress to Date, below).
- Establish capacity building programs to enhance success of NABCI’s on-the-ground projects.
- Improve the knowledge base through a harmonized bird assessment program based upon maps and shared criteria and databases for all bird species in North America.
- Achieve increasingly self-reliant NABCI institutional structures.

Rationale

Efforts for the protection of birds and their habitats are being carried out in each country of North America, but significant gaps still exist, and many bird populations continue to decline. Customarily, conservation projects and cooperative mechanisms—including Partners in Flight, the Waterbirds Conservation for the Americas, Joint Ventures, and Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network—have targeted the habitat and other needs of specific groups of species, such as waterfowl, shorebirds, colonial waterbirds, migratory and resident land birds, and various endemic and endangered species. None of these programs, however, has on its own the financial or human resources necessary to implement needs identified in planning activities and achieve full suites of conservation goals.

In response to the need to achieve greater coordination, NABCI’s strategy and action was developed in 1997, to assure the combined effectiveness of existing programs and achieve economies of scale.

NABCI is a vehicle to conserve all birds in all habitats. As an approach, this initiative is about protecting, restoring and enhancing populations and habitats of North America's birds through coordinated efforts at international, national, regional and local levels, guided by sound science and effective management. This is being accomplished through regionally based, biologically driven, habitat-oriented, governmental and nongovernmental partnerships, delivering the full spectrum of bird conservation across North America.

Launched in 1999 by the CEC, this initiative has become a unifying element for conservation planning, prioritization and implementation in all three countries. In addition to NABCI's strategy and action plan, institutional mechanisms are currently in place to ensure long-term support for this initiative: a trilateral committee and national committees have been formally established and national strategies have been developed in each country. NABCI is now a reality—one which is already significantly influencing the way key institutions establish their funding priorities for national and trilateral projects.

Potential benefits for establishing linkages between NABCI and other program areas in 2003, and beyond, are significant. Due to their visibility, ubiquitous distribution and responsiveness, birds can serve both as a flagship for the conservation of all biodiversity and also, due to the wealth of information for them as a group, as a unique indicator of the health of the continent's ecosystems. The latter attribute has recently been demonstrated in a landmark study addressing the environmental impacts of acid rain (published for the first time for North America; *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS), 20 August 2002: 11235–11240). Hence, in the context of the CEC, NABCI has supported program integration. For instance, within the biodiversity program, links have been established with the terrestrial and marine species of common conservation concern; with the Pollution and Health Program, in 2003 links will be explored between pesticides and human health; and between NABCI and CEC's Environment, Economy and Trade program, looking into sustainable coffee as a financial mechanism for biodiversity conservation.

Progress to Date

Since 1999 the CEC has partially supported the operation of NABCI national committees to help create the institutional framework necessary to achieve progress of this initiative. In response to the request made by the CEC Council in 2001, a 1999–2002 review of NABCI was undertaken and presented in the 2002 Council Session. Based upon the progress made, Council reiterated CEC's continuous support to this activity. The report is currently available through CEC's web site: <www.cec.org/files/PDF/BIODIVERSITY/nabci_Report-final-englishmaps.pdf>.

As NABCI becomes part of bird conservation institutional frameworks, currently true especially in Canada and the United States, starting in 2002, the CEC has been *gradually* shifting its resource allocation from operation to knowledge-base enhancement and on-the-ground project delivery.

With regard to project implementation, following the recommendations from the second trilateral NABCI meeting, held in 2001, in 2002 a joint effort to identify "hub" areas for implementing NABCI projects took place. Led by the analysis of a broad group of Mexican partners, based on the highest priority Important Bird Areas and the characteristics desired in all three countries in such projects, six "hubs" were identified: Marismas Nacionales (Nayarit-Sinaloa), Chamela-Cuixmala (Jalisco), El Triunfo (Chiapas), northeastern Yucatán peninsula (Ria Lagartos in Yucatán and Cozumel, and Sian Ka'an in Quintana Roo), El Cielo (Tamaulipas), and the grasslands of the Chihuahuan Desert. Throughout 2002, workshops have been held, bringing together local players from these areas and trilateral partners to develop, among other things, a prospectus of potential trilateral cooperation projects. Though the projects were based initially on shared migratory birds, NABCI national coordinators, supported by national and trilateral committees and the CEC, are working with partners such as Joint Ventures and others in Canada, Mexico and the US to provide opportunities to form multiple links with the aforementioned hubs.

Concomitantly, current work supported by the CEC provides the basis for long-term monitoring projects critical for addressing the effects of widespread human-caused environmental changes like climate change, habitat fragmentation and acid rain. In 2002, CEC workshops contributed to the establishment of a compatible, comparable, consistent framework to assess, for the first time, the conservation status of species and populations of birds throughout North America. In 2003, regional workshops will be continued in Mexico to complete this year's framework for data sharing and establishing common priorities. Canada and the United States already have mechanisms for assessing the status of bird populations and Mexico's incorporation will allow a more complete understanding of the status of all birds in North America. This effort will be complemented by maps showing the distribution of Mexican birds that are currently being completed with the partial support of the CEC.

In order to promote public participation, the CEC organized two international conferences: NABCI-I and II, held in Puebla and Querétaro, Mexico, respectively, in 1998 and 2001. In each case, over 100 participants, representing NGOs, academia, private individuals and the governments from the three countries, met to develop the concept of NABCI. The number of organizations embracing the NABCI approach is growing rapidly, as was evident in the recent Third International Partners in Flight Conference: *A Workshop on Bird Conservation Implementation and Integration*, Monterey, California, 20–24 March 2002. Over 620 participants from Canada, Mexico, the United States and Latin America attended to work on effective approaches to conservation of all birds and to forge international partnerships for future action.

Finally, as a means of strengthening the trinational institutional capacity and extending NABCI to other countries, during 2002 the national committees, in close collaboration with the *Canada/Mexico/United States Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management*, and partially supported by the CEC, drafted the “Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of North American Birds and their Habitats.” This non-binding agreement is to be presented for ministerial signature in 2002 or early 2003, initially involving the three North American countries.

Actions

Overview

The actions outlined below are designed to 1) secure the key involvement of the NABCI national committees and spurring self-reliance of this operational structure; 2) increase the rate of trinational, on-the-ground delivery of integrated bird conservation projects in the short term; and 3) strengthen the opportunities for sharing information aimed at assessing the status of birds through continuous monitoring and, eventually, a reporting system. In 2004, the CEC will assess the evolution of NABCI as a self-sustaining initiative and will benefit from the guidance provided by the Biodiversity Conservation Working Group. Priority areas for continued CEC involvement after 2003 are: 1) strengthen NABCI structure; 2) continue support to NABCI demonstration projects, and 3) establish a mechanism to monitor and report on bird conservation in North America.

2003	Estimated Resources Required (C\$)
Action 1: Support the operation of NABCI national committees	80,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity 1: Support national steering committees to implement trinational cooperation projects (per diems of the NABCI National Coordinators). 	10,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity 2: Continue phasing out CEC support provided to the operation of NABCI by providing partial support to Mexico’s national coordinator. 	60,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity 3: Initiate marketing of NABCI to increase its resource base by directly engaging major corporations, multilateral organizations, international wildlife organizations, etc. 	10,000
Action 2: Implementation of NABCI projects and integration with CEC programs.	60,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity 1: Provide seed support for implementation of cooperation demonstration projects related to NABCI "hubs" and depending upon the results of the NABCI demonstration projects supported in 2002, as well as upon the regional NABCI workshops at the six hubs. Where possible, key cooperative themes of <i>continental significance</i> currently addressed by the CEC will be identified to enhance cooperation opportunities among CEC programs. 	60,000
Action 3: Training to bolster local capacity for undertaking continental bird conservation efforts.	40,000

North American Agenda for Action: 2003–2005
Conservation of Biodiversity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity 1: Promote capacity building and training efforts, guided by NABCI national action plans and informed by the discussions resulting from the workshops that took place in the six hubs during the second part of 2002. 	40,000
Action 4: Evaluation: establishing a common bird baseline on the conservation status of birds in North America.	20,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity 1: Complete North America’s first trinational bird assessment by integrating Mexico’s information, initiated in 2002 with CEC support. 	15,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity 2: Contribute to the scoping workshop on the links between pesticides and birds at a trinational scale, an initiative led by CEC’s Sound Management of Chemicals (SMOC). 	5,000
Total resources required	200,000

Actions 2004–2005

The envisioned priority areas are: 1) strengthening NABCI structure, 2) continue support to NABCI demonstration projects and establish programmatic links to ongoing CEC programs; and 3) help consolidate a North American bird monitoring and reporting system that has the potential to contribute to the CEC’s SOE process. In 2004, the CEC will assess the evolution of NABCI as a self-sustaining initiative and will benefit from the guidance provided by the Biodiversity Conservation Working Group.

Public Participation

In 2003, full use of the renewed NABCI web site <www.nabci.org> will be made, to reach a wider public and muster targeted support for ongoing NABCI activities.

Capacity Building

Guided by NABCI national action plans and informed by the discussions resulting from the workshops that took place in the six “hubs,” in 2003 partnerships will be sought, to ensure the exchange of information and knowledge for developing effective North American joint projects.

Expected Partners and/or Participants

Based upon the results of the workshops developed in 2002–2003, and building upon existing governmental and nongovernmental partnerships, new organizations will be enticed to participate in this initiative.

Currently, Cornell University, Conabio and UNAM are key partners in assessing the status of birds throughout North America. Furthermore, this activity is currently a candidate for receiving funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s *Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act*.

Linkages to other CEC Projects

In the implementation of demonstration projects associated with the six “hubs,” special consideration will be given to exploring the potential for integrating NABCI with other CEC activities. Some of these include shade coffee (Environment, Economy and Trade program area), grasslands and marine initiatives (Conservation of Biodiversity program area), trade of wildlife (Law and Policy program area), NABIN, pesticides and birds (Pollutants and Health program area), etc. The results of the efforts related to the assessment and monitoring of the status of birds are envisioned as a key contributions to CEC’s mandatory state of the environment report.