

entire ecosystems. Produced by the *Partners in Flight* Information and Education Working Group, the guide will be particularly helpful to bird clubs and other grassroots groups working for habitat conservation. It will be available in January 1994 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (address below).

◆ *Directory of Volunteer Opportunities for Birders*—a listing of projects, surveys, and censuses in which birders can participate across the United States. Many of the projects involve neotropical migratory birds. Send \$2.00 to: American Birding Association, P.O. Box 6599, Colorado Springs, CO 80934.

PLEASE JOIN THE EFFORT!

Partners in Flight is preventive medicine—a program to save species and habitats before they become endangered. By addressing problems before they reach crisis proportions, we can solve them with less cost and effort. Furthermore, *Partners in Flight* ignores political boundaries—it promotes joint conservation efforts between agencies, organizations, states, and nations.

Your understanding of the problems facing neotropical migratory birds, and your support of efforts to conserve their populations, will ensure the success of this historic conservation program.



PARTNERS IN FLIGHT/AVES DE LAS AMERICAS

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1120 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20036



Cover: Scarlet Tanager by Mary Sibbritz

**WILL WE LOSE
OUR SONGBIRDS?**

Not if we can help it!

**PARTNERS IN FLIGHT/
AVES DE LAS AMERICAS**

MIGRANT BIRDS NEED HELP

Migrant birds herald the changing seasons. Each spring brings the warbles, chips, and trills of songbirds galore; each fall brings squadrons of hawks moving south. Birds by the millions embark on migrations across the Americas each year, traveling thousands of miles to complete a passage older than history.

In recent years, though, spring has grown noticeably quieter and the fall skies more still. According to the Breeding

Bird Survey, a volunteer bird count conducted each June by 2,000 birders across North America, many species of migratory birds declined during the past decade. Rose-breasted grosbeaks decreased by more than 40 percent; blackpoll warblers by more than 60 percent. And these are just two examples from a lengthy list.

Scientists are most concerned about neotropical (New World) migratory birds—more than 200 species that migrate north each spring to breeding grounds in the United States and Canada, then fly south to spend the bulk of the year in Mexico, Central or South America, or the Caribbean. This group includes such familiar birds as orioles, hummingbirds, swallows, thrushes, warblers, vireos, and tanagers.

WHY ARE SONGBIRDS VANISHING?

The destruction of natural habitat on breeding grounds, wintering areas, and along migration routes is devastating migrant songbird populations. Deep forest birds have been particularly hard hit because most virgin forests have been cleared for human development, and much of the remaining undeveloped land has been

broken into small parcels—a process known as forest fragmentation. Although small woodlots may look like good habitat for forest birds, woodlots are easily accessible to predators that destroy eggs and young, and to brown-headed cowbirds, which lay their eggs in the nests of other birds.

THE GOOD NEWS

Songbird populations can be saved. A comprehensive bird conservation program can turn around the declines of most migratory species. What's more, such a program has already been started. It's called *Partners in Flight/Aves de las Americas*, and its goal is to maintain populations of forest and grassland neotropical migratory birds throughout the Americas. Its tools? Habitat protection, management, professional training, and public education.

We know that with encouragement the birds will do their part. We just have to do ours—and that's what *Partners in Flight* is all about.

Partners in Flight is unprecedented in scope. It brings together more than a dozen government agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Defense, and Environmental Protection Agency. It includes all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies. More than 20 nongovernmental organizations have signed on, including The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, American Birding Association, Colorado Bird Observatory, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Tennessee Conservation League, and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. *Partners in Flight* also includes dozens of universities and the forest products industry. Biologists, educators, and policy makers from all these groups are working together to enhance migratory bird populations and the vital habitats that sustain them.

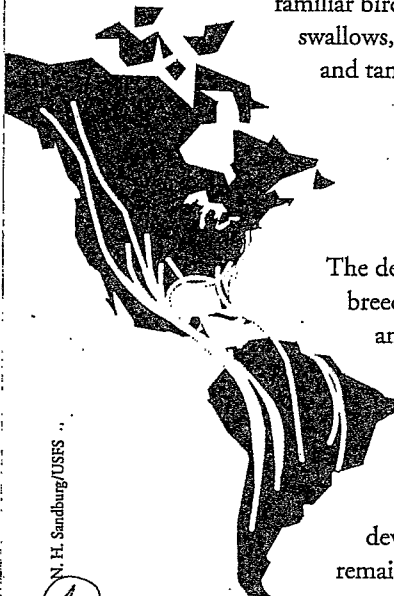
WHAT'S BEING DONE?

Although *Partners in Flight* is still a young program, success stories are already surfacing. Here are some examples.

SAN PEDRO RIPARIAN NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

The San Pedro River runs northward through the Sonoran Desert of southeastern Arizona. Vegetation along its banks

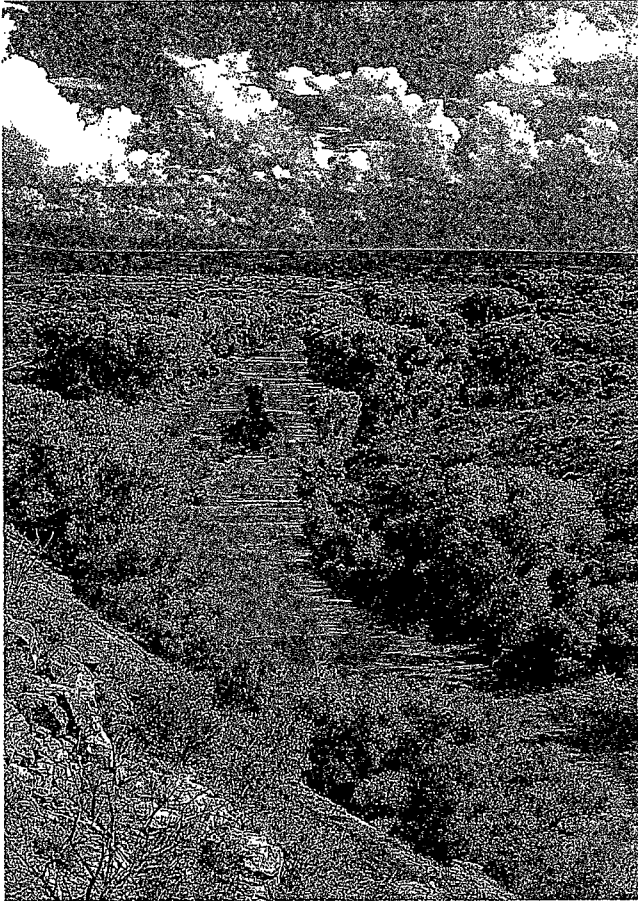
Willow Flycatcher by Mike Hopiak



N. H. Sandburg/USFWS

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Courtesy Houston Audubon Society

With cattle fenced out, this 40-mile stretch of the San Pedro River is once again excellent bird habitat.

provides food and cover for hordes of migratory birds, some that travel onward, some that stay to nest.

Much of the area around the river is public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management, which until recently allowed grazing on the river banks. But in 1989 the Bureau designated a 40-mile section of the river as the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area and fenced cattle out. Within four years, many species of neotropical migrants increased greatly as a result of the improved riverbank habitat. For example, nesting summer tanagers increased by 100 percent, while yellow warblers and western wood peewees each increased by 400 percent.



Tim Gallagher

Vital bird habitat along the coast of Texas and Louisiana will be improved and protected by these new initiatives.

HIGH ISLAND AND GULF COAST INITIATIVES

Thousands of exhausted songbirds that arrive along the Gulf Coast during spring migration will soon gain more room to rest and recuperate. Early in 1993, Houston Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy announced the High Island and Gulf Coast Conservation Initiatives, long-range efforts to improve and protect habitat along the Texas and Louisiana coasts.

The initiatives will preserve part of the Chenier Plain, which extends east from High Island, Texas, into Louisiana, and offers wooded patches of land where neotropical migrants can rest and feed. Degraded habitat will be restored at High Island and Little Pecan Island, Louisiana, including 155 acres of land recently donated by Amoco Production Company. Other partners include the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Phillips Petroleum Company.

PROJECT Tanager

How does forest fragmentation affect the breeding success of migrant songbirds nesting throughout North America? We may know the answer soon, at least for the four species of tanagers that nest there. Project Tanager, coordinated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is sending hundreds of birders afield to count tanagers in forest tracts of varying sizes. Participants come from a variety of birding and natural history organizations such as Audubon chapters and bird clubs.

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Tim Gallagher

Birders are putting their skills to work for research in Project Tanager.

Project Tanager is one of the most highly organized efforts ever made to enlist volunteers in the study of birds, and is supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the National Science Foundation. The U.S. Forest Service is a special partner, and plans to use findings from the project to help design land-management strategies for migratory bird conservation.

TRAINING RESEARCHERS IN LATIN AMERICA

South of the U.S. border, *Partners in Flight* is an international partnership, involving numerous Latin American participants, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, and both the Pacific Southwest Forest Experiment Station and International Forestry Program of the U.S. Forest Service. The partnership is empowering Latin American biologists by providing the techniques and tools they need to monitor neotropical bird populations.

The partnership began by drafting a handbook of field methods to use in monitoring landbirds, *Manual de Metodos de Campo para el Monitoreo de Aves Terrestres*, and



Rick Bonney

Through extensive training programs, Partners in Flight is providing the tools that Latin American researchers need to study birds effectively.

an accompanying training syllabus. Cooperators have also begun training workshops throughout the Americas to exchange and evaluate monitoring methods. The U.S. Forest Service has offered internships to Mexican biologists, who receive advanced training in bird population studies. In addition, the group plans to set up demonstration research stations in Latin America, which will serve as centers for training and dissemination of the handbook and syllabus.

FIND OUT MORE

The future of *Partners in Flight* depends largely on public support and involvement. You can help! To learn more, send for a free copy of the *Partners in Flight Newsletter*, which includes plans, progress reports, resource listings, and a comprehensive roster of contact people in both government agencies and conservation organizations. Write: *Partners in Flight*, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 1120 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20036.

OTHER RESOURCES:

- ◆ *Migrant Birds: A Troubled Future?*—a slide presentation explaining the plight of neotropical migrants and the *Partners in Flight* program. Produced by the Information and Education Working Group of *Partners in Flight*, the program can be ordered from the Crow's Nest Birding Shop, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York, 14850 (607/254-2400). Price: \$50.00 plus \$3.95 shipping.
- ◆ *Save the Birds: A Guide to Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation*—an easy-to-understand booklet listing dozens of bird conservation opportunities from the backyard to

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