



## Department of Defense Partners in Flight

Fact Sheet #15  
May 2008

## Department of Defense Partners in Flight Program

### Mission

*To conserve migratory and resident birds and their habitats on Department of Defense lands.*



The Strategic Plan and detailed Annual Report can be found at [www.dodpif.org](http://www.dodpif.org), or through the contact information on the next page.

# 2007 Annual Report

## *DoD Partners in Flight Program*

### Conserving Birds and Their Habitats

The international Partners in Flight (PIF) program is an umbrella network of agencies, academic institutions, corporations, and non-governmental organizations. Department of Defense (DoD) bird conservation programs are a vital part of this network. The DoD PIF Program works to develop cooperative programs and projects with PIF partner organizations ensuring a focused and coordinated approach for the conservation of resident and migratory birds and their habitats

As signatories to the federal PIF Memorandum of Agreement, the DoD military service branches are part of the national PIF steering committees. A lead DoD representative, appointed by the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Environment), and a fulltime program manager promote and coordinate PIF efforts within DoD. A network of biologists and natural resource managers represent DoD in the various regional and technical PIF working groups. DoD PIF representatives cultivate and maintain positive working relationships with partners, develop cooperative agreements for implementing bird conservation programs and projects on military lands, facilitate communication and information sharing across geographical and political boundaries, and participate and provide leadership in various state, regional and national PIF working groups and committees.

The DoD PIF Strategic Plan identifies actions that support and enhance the military mission while also achieving the overall PIF goal of maintaining secure populations of priority birds. Regional and Technical Working Groups pursue additional priorities, and a series of Fact Sheets identifies emerging programmatic priorities. The species of concern

database helps identify priority bird species on every military installation. An annual planning workshop of the DoD PIF Representatives provides guidance to Fact Sheet development and ongoing bird conservation priorities for DoD.



*Gray Vireo is a national species of concern. DoD is a leader in New Mexico's Gray Vireo recovery plan. (Photo: Rob Frei)*

### Partnerships and Leadership

The role of DoD in national and international bird conservation was again visible in 2007. DoD is a full participating member of the US Committee of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), making DoD directly involved in tri-national conservation planning involving Canada, the US, and Mexico. The DoD PIF Program Manager served as Vice President of the National Military Fish and Wildlife Association, and DoD was represented at national, regional, and state steering committee meetings of Partners in Flight. DoD PIF is involved in partnerships that are active, being formed or explored to address migratory connectivity of breeding and wintering grounds, observations of seabirds from Navy ships at sea, movements of the Western Burrowing Owl, Kirtland's Warbler breeding and wintering links, Rusty Blackbirds, Bicknell's Thrush, Henslow's Sparrow, Cerulean Warbler, and prairie and grassland habitats.

## Accomplishments and Recognition

In addition to hosting a symposium at The Wildlife Society annual conference and technical sessions at the annual National Military Fish and Wildlife Association training workshop, migratory bird sessions were invited at the Sustaining Military Readiness Conference, TWS Western Section meeting, and a State Wildlife Action Plan-INRMP Workshop. In July, White Sands Missile Range was at the forefront of the first release of Northern Aplomado Falcons on public lands in support of reintroduction efforts. Also in New Mexico, Kirtland AFB is a key partner in the state's Gray Vireo recovery plan, and hosts one of the largest single populations of this species. A Rusty Blackbird study on Fort Richardson, Elmendorf AFB, and Tanana Flats Training Area (Fort Wainwright) in Alaska showed that DoD lands support significant priority bird species without compromising the military mission. Tanana Flats is one of the most important known breeding sites for the species.

One of the major contributions of DoD PIF to the Legacy Program is the review process to evaluate all pre-proposal and full proposal submissions to the annual Legacy funding cycle. The network of DoD PIF Reps reviewed 26 bird-related pre-proposals for the 2008 Legacy



*Burrowing Owl, a USFWS Focal Species, being banded on White Sands Missile Range part of a Legacy-funded Desert Southwest CESU Banner Project. (Photo: Trish Griffin)*



*Rusty Blackbird populations have declined 90-98% since 1966. A study by Alaska Bird Observatory and USFWS showed that military lands in Alaska clearly provide important Boreal forest nesting habitat for this species. The study is documenting significant new information on the nesting ecology of Rusty Blackbirds.*

*Photo: G. Hofmann & C. Mettke-Hofmann*

funding cycle to see if each one meets required criteria to warrant a full proposal submission. Of these, 18 full proposals were then requested and reviewed in detail and scored in each of 10 criteria developed by the DoD PIF Program. A total of 12 projects were approved for \$1,381,000 in funding. Legacy funding for bird conservation projects has now exceeded \$30 million, and also provides the funding for management of the DoD PIF program.

## Migratory Bird Legislation

A Final Rule exempting the Armed Forces from the incidental taking of migratory birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act during military readiness activities was promulgated in the Federal Register on February 28, 2007. Guidelines for implementing the Rule and the migratory bird MOU (pursuant to Executive Order 13186) were developed. The guidelines focus on the NEPA process for any ongoing or proposed activity that may impact migratory birds. In addition, conservation measures were included that document ongoing DoD activities that provide a benefit to birds and habitats. Additional conservation measures will be developed as the need arises. Approval of the guidelines is expected in early 2008.

Recognizing that monitoring birds on DoD lands is important, DoD PIF initiated a project idea for improving the efficiency and value of avian monitoring on DoD lands. The project, *A DoD Coordinated Bird Monitoring (CBM) Plan*, is being developed through the US Geological Survey, under the framework of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative.

The CBM Plan will lay out when, where, and how to monitor birds. DoD PIF also worked closely with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology on developing custom DoD interfaces to eBird and Avian Knowledge Network for data entry, archiving and analyses. These web-based tools will be of significant value to DoD installation natural resource managers in support of the Final Rule, Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and for other local needs. It will also provide a secure, permanent data repository for DoD monitoring data while allowing resource managers the tools to analyze data to identify potential impacts from proposed or ongoing military activities.

## Getting the Word Out

Educating both the military and the public is a vital function of the DoD PIF program. Outreach materials were produced, presentations and briefings were given, and articles were written. Ongoing support of International Migratory Bird Day links international outreach materials and events with local military communities. Consultations with DoD natural resource professionals on integrating bird habitat conservation into management plans are one of the most significant contributions of DoD PIF.

## For more information on the DoD Partners in Flight Program:

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