I. INTRODUCTION

Alaska is home to 135 species of breeding birds that principally use terrestrial habitats throughout the year. These birds, commonly referred to as “landbirds,” constitute the largest and most ecologically diverse component of Alaska’s avifauna and include grouse, eagles, hawks, owls, swifts, hummingbirds, kingfishers, woodpeckers, flycatchers, jays, chickadees, thrushes, warblers, and sparrows, among others (Boreal Partners in Flight 1999). Collectively, landbirds occupy all terrestrial and riparian habitats in Alaska, where they play vital roles in ecosystems by pollinating plants, dispersing seeds, distributing nutrients, engineering habitats, serving as prey, feeding on insects and vegetation, and acting as high-level predators and scavengers (Whelan et al. 2008). All of the major migratory flyways for North American landbirds converge in Alaska during the breeding season. This makes Alaska an especially important nexus for maintaining healthy bird populations throughout the Northern Hemisphere.

Landbirds also serve important roles in Alaska’s culture and economy. The Willow Ptarmigan, for example, is honored as the state bird, provides a traditional source of food for Alaskan Natives, and constitutes an important prey item for many predators. The Common Raven portrays strong symbolic meaning in Native Alaskan lore. The abundance of Bald Eagles, the national symbol, embodies the lure of Alaska for many tourists—intact wilderness and healthy populations of wildlife that have been lost in other parts of the world. Thousands of birdwatchers visit Alaska each summer to catch a glimpse of the many species of Palearctic landbirds found nowhere else in North America.

Boreal Partners in Flight (BPIF) was founded in November 1991 to help conserve this important natural resource. The group was originally formed as the Alaska Working Group of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program, and adopted its current name in 1994 to reflect broadening collaboration with neighboring Canadian biologists, who subsequently formed complementary working groups. BPIF’s goals, organization, and working activities were originally ratified in a 1992 Charter. These Terms of Reference update the original charter to clarify the tenets and structure of BPIF.

II. GOALS

A. To promote the range-wide conservation of landbirds in Alaska through management actions, monitoring programs, research, education, and public outreach.

B. To integrate the goals and objectives of BPIF with the goals of the international Partners in Flight program and its relevant subgroups, such as the Western Working Group, Partners in Flight Canada, and Partners in Flight British Columbia and Yukon.

C. To provide a structured forum in which to coordinate and enhance the exchange of landbird information among biologists, land and resource managers, conservation groups, and the public.

III. OBJECTIVES

A. To implement Partners in Flight’s Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan (Boreal Partners in Flight 2013), North American Landbird Conservation Plan (Rich et al. 2004), Tri-National Vision for Landbird Conservation (Berlanga et al. 2010), and subsequent editions of these conservation plans.
B. To facilitate the development and implementation of conservation partnerships and coordination of monitoring, research, and outreach programs for Alaska’s landbirds.

C. To implement applicable goals and objectives of other regional, national, and international landbird programs.

D. To identify current and emerging landbird conservation, management, and research issues and opportunities for collaboration along migration routes and wintering areas used by landbirds breeding in Alaska.

E. To periodically revise the Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan, including evaluating the status of landbird populations and habitats, identifying conservation priorities, and proposing conservation actions within Alaska’s Bird Conservation Regions.

F. To maintain a BPIF list server and website to promote communication about Alaska’s landbirds.

G. To compile and distribute an annual directory of projects involving landbirds in Alaska.

IV. ADMINISTRATION

A. Participation

BPIF includes representation from a wide variety of public and private entities that support the conservation of Alaska’s landbirds. Membership in BPIF is voluntary and open to all individuals inside and outside Alaska. BPIF is not under the auspices of any government organization, and thus its positions and recommendations should not be construed as those of any government agency.

B. Chair and Co-chair

An elected Chairperson administers BPIF with the assistance of an elected Co-chair (see section IV.K). The division of labor between them is discretionary, but it is recommended that the Chair assume the primary responsibilities and the Co-chair serve in support. The Chair will be responsible for the following:

1. Governing meetings.

2. Overseeing BPIF’s business between meetings.

3. Reporting on the activities of BPIF both to the group’s membership and to other state, national, and international entities. This includes preparing the annual summary of Alaska landbird projects.

4. Distributing minutes of BPIF meetings and reporting on progress of action items identified during either the group’s General Meeting or Executive Committee meetings.

5. Serving as the Chair of BPIF’s Executive Committee (see section IV.C).

6. Representing BPIF at relevant regional, national, and international meetings by Partners in Flight.

C. Executive Committee and Secretary
The Executive Committee (hereafter also as Committee) will be responsible for the following:

1. Assisting in organizing and planning BPIF meetings.

2. Soliciting and assembling agenda items from the membership to be presented at BPIF meetings.

3. Collectively prioritizing needs and seeking ways of getting work accomplished.

4. Providing written recommendations on advisory or policy issues presented to BPIF from nonmembers or on advisory or policy issues deemed pertinent to BPIF interests. A majority vote of the members present at the annual meeting or of the Committee is needed to pursue an issue.

The Executive Committee will be composed of eight people, representing various diverse backgrounds and interests in landbird conservation. Designated positions on the Executive Committee will include the Chair, Co-chair, the Landbird Coordinator for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 7, a U.S. Geological Survey landbird researcher, and the Chair of the Alaska Raptor Group (see section IV.D). The remaining three at-large positions will be filled through election by BPIF members (see section IV.K). The Committee will strive to have geographic diversity, diversity in taxonomic expertise, and representation from non-governmental organizations, private organizations, and state and federal agencies.

A Secretary will be appointed from within the group of elected Executive Committee members. The Secretary will take and prepare typed minutes of meetings. Minutes will include items that were discussed and any actions that were agreed upon. Minutes will be prepared within one month of a meeting’s occurrence and will be distributed to Group members and interested parties via the list server and website.

Ad-hoc and Standing Technical Committees may be formed on an "as-needed" basis to assist the Executive Committee.

D. Alaska Raptor Group

The Alaska Raptor Group is a formal sub-group of BPIF whose mission is to promote the conservation of Alaska raptors and their habitats. The Alaska Raptor Group meets independently and includes its own Chair and Executive Committee, but reports its activities back to BPIF.

E. Bird Conservation Region Coordinators

Bird Conservation Region (BCR) Coordinators are formal regional representatives who help BPIF develop and achieve goals at the BCR level. Key functions include the following:

1. Informing BPIF’s membership of existing or emerging conservation issues at the BCR level.

2. Helping the Executive Committee develop written positions on regional conservation issues.

3. Writing and revising BCR sections within the Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan.

4. Developing and implementing strategies that address BCR objectives included in the Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan.
F. Staff

The Landbird Coordinator for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 7 will serve as the staff person for BPIF. Duties of the Coordinator will include the following:

1. Keeping a current list of contact information of BPIF members and others interested in implementing the Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan.

2. Supporting the Chair and Executive Committee in developing agenda items for and facilitating discussion of issues at BPIF meetings.

3. Working with the Secretary to maintain a list server that facilitates communication on landbird research, monitoring, and education efforts among BPIF members and others.

G. Website

The U.S. Geological Survey’s Alaska Science Center will administer a website for BPIF.

H. Meetings

1. General Meeting. BPIF will meet at least annually or as often as necessary to fulfill the objectives of the group. The Chair will be responsible for determining the time and location of meetings. The BPIF representative(s) in the host community will be responsible for meeting arrangements. Meetings are open to all.

2. Executive Committee Meeting. A quorum of five of the eight members of the Executive Committee is required to conduct business. Attendance may be in person, via teleconference, or via other acceptable electronic means. If an Executive Committee member is unable to attend a meeting, he/she may designate a proxy to serve on his/her behalf. The proxy will be authorized to participate fully in discussions, including voting. All BPIF members are welcome to attend Executive Committee meetings, but voting is limited to Committee members. Notification of the timing and agenda of any Executive Committee meeting will be sent to all BPIF members prior to the meeting.

I. Expenses

Unless there is prior agreement, anyone attending BPIF General or Executive Committee meetings is responsible for his/her own travel and per diem expenses.

J. Decision-Making Protocols

BPIF will strive to obtain consensus on all issues and to work cooperatively to advance the goals of the Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan. In situations where consensus is not possible, but a decision or action is required, BPIF will take official action only with approval by a majority of the assembled quorum of the Executive Committee. Each member, regardless of the position held, will be allotted one vote. Between BPIF General Meetings, the Chair will be authorized to make administrative decisions and the Executive Committee will be authorized to make advisory or policy decisions. Official decisions or actions considered during a BPIF General Meeting will be authorized only after receiving a majority vote of members present at the meeting.

K. Election of Chair, Executive Committee, Secretary, and BCR Coordinators
Vacancies for Chair, Co-chair, Executive Committee members, and BCR Coordinators will be filled during annual elections by the general membership at a BPIF General Meeting. Election to all positions will be decided by simple majority vote. The Chair and Co-chair will serve for two-year terms offset by one year. The Co-chair will assume the position of Chair during the second year of his/her term and a new Co-chair will be elected to replace the outgoing Chair. An effort should be made to have the Chair rotate from among members representing nongovernmental, state, and federal organizations.

Other Executive Committee members and BCR Coordinators will serve for two years, with at least one-half of the Committee members being elected during each annual meeting. Executive Committee members may be elected for consecutive terms if so desired. Members of the Executive Committee may also jointly serve as BCR Coordinators. The Executive Committee will fill unanticipated vacancies by a majority vote of the Committee, and the identified person will serve the remaining portion of the term until the next scheduled election.

L. Amendments to the Terms of Reference

Changes to Terms of Reference will occur by a simple majority vote of the members present at a BPIF General Meeting.

M. Logo and Stationery

BPIF will have an official logo and letterhead stationery. Changes to the logo and stationery will only be possible by a majority vote of the members present at a BPIF General Meeting.

V. LITERATURE CITED


