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INTRODUCTION

Boreal Partners in Flight (BPIF) is a coalition of individuals working together to help conserve bird populations throughout boreal regions of North America. BPIF members include representatives from state, federal and provincial agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities, and private industry from Alaska and Canada. BPIF is an official state working group of the international Partners in Flight program (https://www.partnersinflight.org/).

BPIF meets annually to communicate project updates, identify new projects, and hold elections. The 28th annual meeting of Boreal Partners in Flight was held on 3-4 December in Anchorage, Alaska at the USGS Alaska Science Center. The meeting was attended by over 60 individuals representing 18 state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, private industries, and universities (Appendix B) — members attended in person or remotely from across Alaska and Canada. BPIF business topics included discussion on how to increase meeting attendance, increase our public education and outreach efforts and implement the new Landbird Conservation Plan (expected early 2020). This year’s meeting also included updates from National Partners in Flight, and the PIF Western Working Group, and presentations on a variety of research and monitoring activities.

This report contains minutes from the meeting, brief notes on topical discussions, and action items for 2020.

We offer our thanks to attendees for their participation, and extend an invitation to all who are interested in the conservation of northern landbird populations to join Boreal Partners in Flight. Contact Melanie Smith (melanie.smith@audubon.org) to be added to the BPIF listserv or visit the official website: http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/bpif/index.php

Kristin DuBour, Secretary

December 19, 2019
LEADERSHIP OF BOREAL PARTNERS IN FLIGHT 2019

Executive Committee

**Steve Matsuoka – Co-chair**  
Term: Dec 2017 – Dec 2019  
U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska Science Center  
4210 University Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508  
907-786-7075; smatsuoka@usgs.gov

**Melanie Smith -- Co-chair**  
Term: Dec 2018 – Dec 2020  
National Audubon Society  
431 West 7th Ave, Suite 101  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
907-440-1964; melanie.smith@audubon.org

**Jim Johnson – USFWS Landbird Coordinator**  
Term: ongoing  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Migratory Bird Management  
1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503  
(907) 786-3423; jim_a_johnson@fws.gov

**Colleen Handel – USGS Landbird Researcher**  
Term: ongoing  
U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska Science Center  
4210 University Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508  
(907) 786-7181; cmhandel@usgs.gov

**Steve Lewis – Alaska Raptor Group Chair**  
Term: Dec 2018 – Dec 2020  
US Fish and Service  
3000 Vintage Park Blvd, Suite 240  
Juneau, AK 99801  
907-780-1163; steve_b_lewis@fws.gov
Cathy Pohl – At-large Elected Member  
Term: Dec 2017 – Dec 2019

Catherine Pohl, Biological Consulting  
PO Box 21168, Juneau, AK 99802.  
907-586-1272, catherine.pohl@outlook.com

Katie Christie – At-large Elected Member  
Term: Dec 2017 – Dec 2019

Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518  
907-267-2332; katie.christie@alaska.gov

Lisa Mahon – At-large Elected Member  
Term: Dec 2017 – Dec 2019

Environment and Climate Change Canada  
91782 Alaska Highway  
Whitehorse, YT Canada  
867-393-7935; lisa.mahon@canada.ca

Kristin DuBour – Secretary  
Term: Dec 2017 - Dec 2019

USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System  
1011 E. Tudor Rd., MS 231  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
907-786-3450; kristin_dubour@fws.gov

BCR Coordinators

Alaska is organized into five biogeographic Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs): Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands (BCR 1), Western Alaska (BCR 2), Arctic Plains and Mountains (BCR 3), Northwestern Interior Forest (BCR 4), and Northern Pacific Rainforest (BCR 5). The coordinators for each region are:

BCR 1: Marc Romano (marc_romano@fws.gov)

BCR 2: Kristine Sowl (kristine_sowl@fws.gov) and Melissa Cady (melissa_cady@fws.gov)

BCR 3: Deb Nigro (dnigro@blm.gov)

BCR 4: Julie Hagelin (julie.hagelin@alaska.gov)

BCR 5: Gwen Baluss (gbaluss@gmail.com)
Standing Committees

These coordinators help steer BPIF progress within specific programmatic areas.

Education: Tricia Blake (tricia.blake@aksongbird.org), Lynn Fuller
Management: Kristine Sowl (Kristine_sowl@fws.gov)
Monitoring: Colleen Handel (cmhandel@usgs.gov), Steve Matsuoka (smatsuoka@usgs.gov)

2020 ACTION ITEMS

Action items listed here are also highlighted in red text in the document.

Action 1: Complete Landbird Conservation Plan 2.0 in 2020 (ongoing from 2019); organize a spring meeting to identify actions/priorities from the completed Landbird Conservation Plan 2.0.

Action 2: Contribute to PIF 30th anniversary events.

Action 3: Revive outreach/education committee (Emily Williams) and continue progress toward developing strategies for effective outreach/education on Alaska’s landbirds.

Action 4: Management subcommittee will continue to work with others to develop and implement strategies to comment on land management plans, policies, and initiatives that may impact landbirds, including commenting on the Tongass National Forest proposed changes to the roadless rule due December 17 (https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54511). Volunteers for this effort include Melanie Smith, Maureen DeZeeuw, Melissa Cady, and Caroline Van Hemert.

Action 5 (ongoing from 2019): Maintain progress on addressing species of concern, such as wetland species and aerial insectivores. See work by Weiser et al. below.
BPIF ELECTIONS

- Audrey Taylor will replace Steve Matsuoka as co-chair.
- Steve Matsuoka will replace Colleen Handel as landbird research lead.
- Lisa Mahon will continue in the Canada position.
- Katie Christie will continue in a member-at-large position.
- Kristin DuBour will continue as secretary
- Audrey Taylor suggested a student at-large position on the committee and can suggest students for the role.
- BCR coordinators will all continue; all but Marc were present in person or on the phone to confirm their willingness.

BPIF BUSINESS

- Steve Matsuoka asked us to consider why meeting attendance has declined and how to maintain momentum. Suggestions included:
  
  o Continue remote participation as many are taking that option over in-person attendance.
  Travel/funding cuts are a hurdle, especially for the management agencies. Melissa Cady suggested we send BPIF/ABC invites to staff biologists directly through agency email lists.
  o Encourage student participation. This meeting was held during finals week, which isn’t ideal. A student at-large position was suggested.
  o Check/update email listserv. Some addresses may have changed and people may not be receiving meeting information.
  o Some suggested changes to the meeting format to encourage participation: a) more active involvement/brainstorming/planning during meetings, including small working groups; b) clearer/specific objectives or meeting themes; c) initiatives to pursue (fodder for brainstorming sessions and structured discussions); d) offering training or workshops; e) other goals to start/plan collaborations such as dispersed networks of field sites for a particular project.

- Action 1: Organize a spring meeting to identify actions/priorities from the landbird conservation plan. The landbird plan should be released in January; this timing will work for actions to be taken next summer during field work. Those priorities/actions could be used to provide structure/material for the next annual meeting. There was general agreement that a small virtual meeting of the executive committee and anyone else interested would be useful. Melissa Cady also suggested a “launch talk” for FWS biologists at their monthly conference calls (10-20 min talk). The timing of the plan
coincides well with Refuge’s Inventory and Monitoring Planning efforts and might help refuges without landbird biologists (most refuges) consider landbirds within the scope of their conservation planning.

Other actions:

- Maureen will propose to BOEM leadership that BOEM join as a PIF partner at the national level; she will reach out for materials and bullet points.
- Consider non-landbirds that are falling through cracks (e.g., Sandhill Cranes).
- **Action 2: Contribute to PIF 30th anniversary events.** Colleen could provide an overview of BPIF history and progress. Also, we could contribute to blog posts as Bob Ford suggested.
- Increase public outreach education efforts:
  - We should all consider opportunities to be ambassadors to the public: leveraging the 3 Billion Birds message as well as Cornell’s “Seven Ways to Help Birds” (provide a message of hope). We could collectively develop a BPIF talk and rotate through people willing to give it at various venues such as festivals, Audubon chapters, other local public general interest groups. Writing for lay publications would be useful (perhaps not feasible for federal employees). Use social media; could leverage hobbyist photographers who might be willing to provide compelling content. Also utilize Audubon expertise/strategy for outreach, and any other group members’ skills/experience.
  - **Action 3: Revive BPIF outreach education committee.** Emily Williams is interested in being involved in that effort.
News and Progress on 2019 Action Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019 Action Item</th>
<th>Outcome/Update</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action 1: Promptly complete meeting notes and project summaries</strong></td>
<td>Complete – 2018 project summaries and meeting notes were distributed via listserv and are currently available on the BPIF website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action 3: Management subcommittee will work with others to develop and implement strategies to comment on land management plans, policies and initiatives that may impact landbirds.</strong></td>
<td>Ongoing – In 2019 the subcommittee commented on the Pebble Mine EIS and the Tongass Roadless Rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action 4: Maintain close ties to National Partners in Flight.</strong></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action 5: Maintain progress on addressing species of concern, such as wetland species and aerial insectivores.</strong></td>
<td>Ongoing – see work by Weiser et al. on p. 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Report on Action Item 2: Landbird Conservation Plan – Colleen Handel

The Draft Landbird Conservation Plan has been peer reviewed and revised to reflect updated taxonomy and national PIF updates (including Watch List species and Common Birds in Steep Decline and associated scoring criteria)

Final approval by BCR chapters is expected by end of December and final USGS approval in January 2020.

Report on Action Item 3: Update from Management Subcommittee - Kristine Sowl

2019 Action item result: The subcommittee (Kristine and Melanie Smith) commented on the Pebble Project EIS; they drafted a letter and sent to ASG, BPIF and ARG chairs for approval before submitting.

Kristine proposed a draft process for the group to comment on plans/issues.

There were lots of missed opportunities last year because the current administration is pushing projects through but the committee had limited capacity to comment on projects. It took about two months to draft the Pebble letter and allow for sufficient time for comments.
Projects that will be open soon include: State North Slope Area Plan, State Copper Basin Area Plan, BLM Central Yukon Management Plan. If there are other projects we should be aware of please add them to Google Sheet (contact an executive committee member for access).

The group discussed commenting on the proposed changes to the Tongass National Forest Roadless Rule, which is due December 16 (see https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54511):

- Gwen Baluss suggested that it may not be worth it to comment at this late date. Tongass has a preferred alternative (full exemption); will likely go to court.
- However, many agreed that it could be helpful to have the group on record. Submitting any comment, even without a perfect process is important. A letter would allow us to raise issues for which we later want to have standing on.
- Deb Nigro noted that the comments must be substantive to receive consideration.
- **Action 4: Comment on the Tongass Roadless Rule.** The group agreed to submit a letter. Volunteers for this effort include Rebecca McGuire, Melanie Smith, Maureen DeZeeuw, Melissa Cady and Caroline Van Hemert. Gwen Baluss can consult but not participate as an employee. Melanie suggested consulting with Natalie Dawson (Audubon) about how to formally respond and possibly learn from Audubon’s comment, which is likely substantial. The group would like to develop a draft letter within a week.

Other general discussion on providing management plan comments:

- Individuals can submit comments even if you’ve already provided comments as part of a group. However, be aware that form letters count as one comment. Individual, unique letters would count as multiple comments. A simple, multi-line letter has much more impact than a clickable form letter, for example.
- Any individual is encouraged to provide comment outside of the group; we don’t necessarily need to agree on which issue to comment on.
- Deb Nigro volunteered to distribute notices for open comment periods through the BPIF listserv. Others can distribute notices through the BCR coordinators or listserv.
- Some noted that agency employees cannot solicit or ask for comments in their official capacity but they can announce deadlines. And they can solicit comments as a private citizen (on their time off). Audubon employees can solicit comments.
- A suggestion was made to develop a shared resource page for people to refer to while commenting. For example, it could include things like reports on species of concern, bird/habitat associations, raptor locations (consult raptor group), Important Bird Areas, T&E species, etc.
- Julie Hagelin offered to be a point of contact for agency comment on the NPRA plan revision. Get in touch with her if you want to contribute.
Report on Action Item 5: Addressing Species of Concern – Emily Weiser

For details, see Emily’s talk on project evaluating occurrence and habitat association of boreal species of concern.

Contact Emily (eweiser@usgs.gov) to send any data you may have on Rusty Blackbirds, Lesser Yellowlegs, or Olive-sided Flycatcher for boreal wetland bird modelling project. Currently she’s focused only on these three species but hopes to do this for many other species in the future.

She can use one-time inventory data (bird and habitat) although she’s hoping to finish up analysis this FY so would not be able to use new data collected this coming summer.

Information, resources and collaborations generated from presentations

National PIF Update – Bob Ford

The 30th anniversary of PIF is in 2020 and they are planning a variety of events. One ideas is to theme a Boreal working group meeting around the 30th anniversary. The group should talk about AOS Ontario (August 2021) meeting collaborations too.

https://www.partnersinflight.org/

PIF Western Working Group Update – Tanya Luszcz

Next WWG meeting April 21-23 in Saskatoon, SK. Boreal birds could be an agenda item. They plan to incorporate some aspects of 30th PIF anniversary.

Southern Wings– collaboration for priority species conservation with Latin American countries (see www.fishwildife.org).

Join the listserv! http://www.wwgpif.org/

Other Discussion

- Jeff Wells (National Audubon’s Boreal Conservation Program; jeff.wells@audubon.org) suggested that we contribute to continental conservation efforts by highlighting conservation values (through outreach and communication) of the Alaska boreal within the context of entire boreal biome. Many avenues exist, for example: symposia, meetings, conversations with decision-makers, etc. Might be an opportunity for joint session at AOS/Canadian Society of Ornithologists Meeting in Ontario.
• Trans-boreal models of bird densities and population sizes (Peter Solymos) - View national bird species model results from the Boreal Avian Modelling Project (BAM) at Borealbirds.github.io

• Contribute to National Audubon’s Migratory Bird Initiative Platform (Melanie Smith) by sharing your data in MoveBank (https://www.movebank.org/) or directly with Audubon MBI (melanie.smith@audubon.org). You can also inform them of known threats to birds that they might incorporate into the tool. Stay tuned; the platform will launch June 2021.

• Movement Ecology and Population Trends of Snowy Owls (J.F. Therrien) - Snowy Owls were moved to the Watchlist recently due to declining population trends. J.F. asked for more abundance and density data from Alaska. Courtney Amundson suggested that FWS Migratory Bird Management might have owl data from their annual waterfowl survey flights on the North Slope and will get in touch. Julie Hagelin and Travis Booms may also have important data to share about harvest in Alaska since snowy owls are allowed/available to harvest under the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council subsistence regulations with unlimited bag limits.

• Apps for avian data collection (Christopher Swingley & Kristen Rozell, ABR, Inc.) - Thinking about test running this with ALMS this summer. There is opportunity to apply this more widely if we want.

• Using ARUs to monitor songbirds in Alaska (Davyd Betchkal) - Avian Acoustic Discovery (www.Github.com/nationalparkservice/acoustic_discovery) is a programming tool for Alaskans to automatically detect bird song with long-form audio recordings. ARUs are a tool that may be useful but are not a replacement for field observers. Important to understand the limitations of various methods (people vs. recorders) and the strengths, then pick a tool for your purpose/question.

• Blackpoll Warbler migratory behavior (Bill DeLuca) - Bill is interested in any potential Alaska collaborators.

• Tree Swallows - There was interest in discussing a national tree swallow working group to share information and collaborate. Audrey Taylor will contact Elizabeth Gow about this. Elizabeth is interested in adding other sites to her work, including Alaska sites if any collaborators are interested.

• The MOTUS Network (David La Puma) – see www.celltech.com

Finally, we’d like to extent a big THANK YOU to meeting organizers! We appreciate your efforts to make this year’s meeting a success.
APPENDIX A. MEETING AGENDA

27th Annual Meeting

3–4 December 2019, USGS Alaska Science Center, Leslie Holland-Bartels Conference Room, 4210 University Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508

Remote connection
URL: https://usgs.zoom.us/asc, Audio: 855-547-8255, Audio passcode 76048811
- You will need to use your telephone to access the conference audio.
- Please mute your telephone and computer microphone and disable your computer video during presentations.

Tuesday December 3rd Agenda

Joint session of the Alaska Shorebirds Group and Boreal Partners in Flight

8:00 – 8:15 1. Welcome, introductions, agenda overview. Rebecca McGrua, Wildlife Conservation Society, Melanie Smith, National Audubon, & Steve Matsouka, USGS


8:30 – 9:10 3. Management Subcommittee update and next steps. Kristine Sowl, USFWS *


9:30 – 9:35 5. Filling vacancies in the BBS, Alaska. Laura McDuffia, FWS

9:35 – 10:05 6. Trans-boreal models of boreal bird densities and population sizes. Peter Solymos & Diana Stalberg, Boreal Avian Modelling Project *

10:05 – 10:25 Break

10:25 – 10:40 7. Evaluating broad-scale occurrence and fine-scale habitat association of boreal species of concern. Emily Weiser, USGS

10:40 – 11:00 8. National Audubon’s Boreal Conservation Program. Jeff Wells, National Audubon *


11:40 – 11:50 11. CAFF’s State of the Arctic Terrestrial Biodiversity Report - Bird Section Summary. Casey Burns, BLM

11:50 – 12:10 12. Movement ecology and population trends of Snowy Owls. Jean-Francois Therrien, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary *
12:10 – 1:30 Lunch (on your own)

Annual Meeting of Boreal Partners in Flight: PIF updates, Avian tools and applications

1:30 – 2:00 13. International and U.S. PIF Program update. Robert Ford, FWS *

2:00 – 2:20 14. Western Working Group PIF update. Tanya Luszcz, ECCC *


2:40 – 3:00 16. Apps for digital collection of avian field data. Christopher Swingley and Kristen Rozell, ABR Inc.

3:00 – 3:20 Break

3:20 – 3:50 17. Using automated recording units to monitor songbirds in National Parks. Davyd Betchkal, NPS

4:00 – 4:20 18. Genetic structuring among Rusty Blackbirds across their breeding range. Sarah Sandhagen, USGS


4:40 – 5:00 20. Simulating avian responses to future changes in climate & fire activity across boreal Alaska and adjacent Canada. Steve Matsuoka, USGS

5:30 – 7:30 Social gathering at Matanuska Brewing Company (535 W. 3rd Ave, downtown Anchorage)

Wednesday, December 4th Agenda

Annual Meeting of Boreal Partners in Flight (continued): PIF updates, Species of Concern

8:20 – 8:40 21. PIF Canada and the boreal region. Alaine Camfield and Becky Stewart, ECCC *

8:40 – 9:00 22. Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan 2.0. Colleen Handel & Steve Matsuoka, USGS

9:00 – 9:20 23. Implementing a Boreal Monitoring Sampling Design in the Yukon & Gray-headed Chickadee sampling using ARUs in the northern Yukon. Lisa Mahon, ECCC *

9:20 – 9:40 24. Blackpoll Warbler: A boreal songbird’s 20,000 km migration across North America and the Atlantic Ocean. William DeLuca, National Audubon *

9:40 – 10:00 25. Behavioral responses to spring snow conditions contribute to long-term shift in migration phenology in American Robins. Ruth Oliver, Yale University *

10:00 – 10:20 Break

10:20 – 10:40 26. Mercury exposure and effects for the Rusty Blackbird. David Evers, Biodiversity Research Institute *

10:40 – 11:00 27. Continent-wide monitoring of the annual cycle of Tree Swallows. Elizabeth Gow, University of Guelph *

11:00 – 11:20 28. Alaska Swallow Network update. Jaime Welsch, FWS *


11:40 – 12:00 30. Future-proofing the Motus Network as it marches westward. David La Plante, Cellular Tracking Technologies *

12:00 – 1:30 Lunch (on your own)
<table>
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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>1:50 – 2:10</td>
<td>32. Annual movements by juvenile Golden Eagles in Alaska. Carol McIntyre, NPS *</td>
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<td>2:10 – 2:30</td>
<td>33. Another canary in the coal mine: Forecasting risk and changes to annual cycle dynamics of birds in a warming world. Emily Williams, NPS *</td>
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<td>2:30 – 2:50</td>
<td>34. Olive-sided Flycatcher in southeast Alaska: Habitat, survival, mercury, and migration research. Catherine Fohl, Fohl Consulting *</td>
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<td>2:30 – 3:10</td>
<td>35. Migratory path, important stopovers and wintering areas of Olive-sided Flycatchers breeding in interior and southcentral Alaska. Julie Hagelin, ADFG</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:10 – 3:20</td>
<td>Break (short)</td>
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<td>3:20 – 3:30</td>
<td>36. Elections</td>
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<td>3:30 – 4:00</td>
<td>37. Next steps and closing remarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:00</td>
<td>Meeting adjourned</td>
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* Presentation given remotely
## APPENDIX B. MEETING ATTENDEES

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<td>Courtney</td>
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*§ indicates a member of the PIF WWG.
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* remote participant, § presenter
APPENDIX C. BCR UPDATES

BCR 1/Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands

BCR 1 reported one active project in 2019. Rachel Richardson, Steve Matsuoka, Daniel Ruthrauff (all USGS), Jim Johnson (USFWS– Migratory Bird Management), Marc Romano (USFWS – Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge), and Audrey Taylor (UAA) continued their study of McKay’s bunting (MCBU) and Pribilof rock sandpiper (ROSA). Population surveys for ROSA were conducted on St. Paul Island in May. In July, they focused on nest searching and productivity monitoring for MCBU. The team will finalize surveys for ROSA on St. George Island in early May 2020. Data collected for this study is currently being analyzed to provide a second population estimate for each species and identify factors potentially influencing breeding populations. Additionally, these data will be used to inform the development of a long-term population monitoring plan necessary for assessing future threats and changes. Forthcoming products will include spatial models of abundance and population change and estimates of reproductive success and nest failure rates.

BCR 2/Western Alaska

National Wildlife Refuges:

- Alaska Peninsula/Becharof National Wildlife Refuges – Staff uploaded refuge bird checklist data to eBird (4300 checklists and 5 million detections spanning 1980s – 2018) which will result in better performance of eBird for users on the Alaska Peninsula and lead to improved range maps. Biologists conducted some preliminary field work toward developing a habitat model/population estimate for endemic Song Sparrows. Biologists completed two ALMS plots; the Kanatak ORBBS site was foiled by poor weather.
- Yukon Delta NWR - monitored about 45 tree swallow boxes, of which 36 or so were occupied. A high school intern and Friends of Refuges volunteer conducted most of the work. About 2/3 of the occupied boxes fledged young.
- Togiak NWR staff and local participants conducted the 2018 CBC in early January. Ten participants documented 662 individual birds and 15 species. This is the second year in a row that we have observed overwintering of a white-crowned sparrow and two golden-crowned kinglets.
- Kodiak NWR– staff operated a Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) station in June and July; this was the 10th year of operation (2010-2019). The most commonly caught species were Fox Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Pacific Wrens, and Wilson’s and Yellow Warblers.
- Alaska Peninsula/Becharof, Izembek, Togiak and Kodiak NWR staff also conducted BBS surveys. The Cold Bay (Izembek) BBS was restarted after a 9 year hiatus.
In addition, there are three raptor projects ongoing in BCR 2:

- ADFG cliff-nesting raptor surveys for occupancy and productivity in the Nome area
- Peregrine Fund research on Gyrfalcon breeding ecology in the Nome area
- Rough-legged Hawk migration study placing satellite tags on hawks in the Nome area

**BCR 3/Arctic Coastal Plain and Foothills**

No report

**BCR 4/NW Interior**

- USGS Alaska Science Center continues to investigate avian keratin disorder to determine whether a novel avian virus (*Poecivirus*) causes widespread beak deformities in Black-capped Chickadees and other landbirds in southcentral Alaska. Contact: Caroline Van Hemert.
- Ted Swem (USFWS) continued annual monitoring of American Kestrels (occupancy, success, productivity, DNA sampling) at ~40 nest boxes in Delta, AK with Boise State U. and Peregrine Fund.
- Pacific region of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC; Andrea Norris, Krista De Groot and Wendy Easton) is investigating cumulative effects of disturbance on habitat for landbirds in BCR4 portion of British Columbia. The focus currently is on single-species models to work out a framework, but the desire is to create multi-species models.
- Pam Sinclair (ECCC, Yukon Territory) studied Bank Swallows for use of natural vs artificial habitats, nesting phenology, persistence of colonies, and re-use of nesting burrows. She created a public poster highlighting maps and band encounters in cooperation with Yukon Bird Observatories. She contributed to range-wide migratory connectivity project for Common Nighthawks and Genoscape project for Rusty blackbirds and revisited historic breeding areas within boreal wetlands for Short-billed Dowicher, *caurinus* subspecies, in advance of COSEWIC assessment.
- Tara Stehlin at Yukon College modeled distribution and abundance of Olive-sided Flycatchers and Western Wood Peewees in NW Canada under different climate scenarios and limitations to range change due to lags from vegetation and insect phenology patterns.
• USGS, ADF&G, and BLM are beginning a new project to model habitat associations, distributions, and hotspots in Alaska for three wetland-associated boreal species of concern: Lesser Yellowlegs, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Rusty Blackbird. Contact: Emily Weiser (eweiser@usgs.gov).

• USFWS (Landbird Section, Migratory Bird Management) conducted wetland breeding bird and alpine area surveys efforts on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER). Monitoring/banding continues for Lesser Yellowlegs on JBER and the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge. Bird surveys are also ongoing at Long Range Radar Sites across Alaska. Contact: Laura McDuffie.

• Emily Williams at (Denali National Park and Preserve) reported the Denali population of Canada Jays lay clutches >3 eggs (27 nests=4 eggs, 1 nest=5 eggs). Food cache recovery in jays included not only caching individuals, but also the cacher’s mate, unrelated jays and other animals. Denali Avian Youth Mentoring Program organized a school-wide Christmas Bird Count. Ongoing studies of migratory connectivity of American Robins and Dark-eyed Juncos resulted in a note to WJO—4 tagged robins in Denali wintered in different areas. Blood-sampling of multiple passerines aims to quantify disease prevalence and infection risk in resident and migratory species.

• Many contributed to annual BBS and ALMS surveys

BCR 5/NW Pacific Rainforest

Habitat

The Tongass National Forest (TNF) was on the forefront of bird conservation news. Several decisions by the agency due in the upcoming year will affect forest management.

• **TNF Roadless Rule Exemption.** Comments on the Roadless Rule DEIS were due Dec. 17, 2019. The USDA preferred alternative would allow new road construction within about 9.2 million acres that had been off-limits to road building. Boreal PIF and ASG chairs submitted a comment letter expressing support for the No Action alternative, citing concerns for a number of priority bird species and lack of thorough biological and economic impact assessments.

• **Prince of Wales Landscape Level Analysis Project.** This EIS covers upcoming timber sales, restoration, thinning, weed management and recreation development for the next 15 years on POW. The Record of Decision was signed March 2019 for Alternative 2 (average harvest of 25 million board feet of old-growth timber annually during the first 5 years, then less in subsequent years). The first planned timber sale has been suspended after litigation. A court ruling on the legality of the broader approach of the LLA under NEPA is due by March 2020.
Central Tongass Landscape Level Assessment. This is a long term NEPA project that will cover all aspects of management on 3.7 million acres on the Wrangell and Petersburg Ranger Districts. An EIS is expected summer 2020.

Updates for all Alaska Region FS projects can be found at: https://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/components/reports/sopa-111005-2019-04.html#1. Meanwhile, the TNF has stated commitment to second growth management (particularly thinning) and riparian restoration in logged areas. There may be opportunities for researchers to better inform such projects.

USFWS denied an Endangered Species Act listing petition for Alaska yellow-cedar Callitropsis nootkatensis. The cedar has experienced significant die-offs in the past few decades, affecting about 400,000 hectares. (See https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ece3.5383 and https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=FWS-R7-ES-2015-0025-0013). A 2019 study showed that dead cedars are supplanted by hemlock (Tsuga sp.). It is unknown how this gradual change in conifer composition in stands containing yellow cedar will affect forest birds, although literature suggests that some species may prefer hemlocks over cedar for foraging and nesting.

Monitoring and Research

BBS surveys continued on most routes throughout the region. ALMS continues on the Chugach National Forest and Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, but has stalled on the Tongass NF due to budget shortfalls. The CBC continues in larger communities. Single species research includes ongoing study of breeding habitat and migration of the Olive-sided Flycatcher (Catherine Pohl Consulting) banding of Rufous Hummingbirds and Tree Swallow Box monitoring (Juneau Audubon Society), and Sooty Grouse monitoring (ADF&G).

Education and Outreach

There are at least 7 birding festivals continuing annually within Alaska’s BCR 5, all of which have a strong community education component in addition to bringing ecotourism to the region.

In Dec. 2019, the Southeast Alaska Birding Trail became “live” on Audubon Alaska’s website. Comments from Alaskan birdwatchers and researchers are invited, especially in the first few months before the official kick-off in spring 2020. The trail will showcase festivals, Important Bird Areas, and other birding opportunities. (https://ak.audubon.org/southeast-alaska-birding-trail)