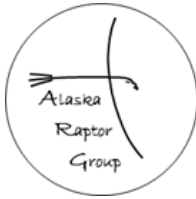


Boreal Partners in Flight / Alaska Raptor Group

2016 Annual Meeting Minutes

6 December, 2016

Cordova, AK



E-mail listserv: Contact Hilary Cooke (hcooke@wcs.org) to be added to the BPIF listserv, which provides periodic announcements on topics related to BPIF and other relevant landbird issues in Alaska and northwestern Canada.

Visit the Alaska Landbird Resource Information System, the official website of Boreal Partners in Flight: <http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/bpif/index.php>

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INTRODUCTION

The 25th annual meeting of Boreal Partners in Flight was held on for a half-day on 6 December 2016 in Cordova, Alaska in conjunction with the Alaska Bird Conference. This year's meeting was attended by 40 individuals representing a variety of state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and universities —members appeared in person, or attended remotely from across Alaska and boreal Canada. In addition to BPIF business, this year's meeting included breakout sessions for each Bird Conservation Unit and a variety of presentations on research and monitoring activities and updates on the Landbird Conservation Plan revisions and the Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey.

In summary, we:

- (1) Were updated about the Alaska Raptor Metadata Database, which can now be accessed through the USGS BPIF website
- (2) Engaged in focus group sessions for each Bird Conservation Region from which came action items for the upcoming year summarized in the “Action Plan for 2017” section
- (3) Received updates on: monitoring efforts for landbirds (ALMS) and Raptor Stoops species action plans

This report contains the minutes from the meeting, brief notes on topical discussions, and recommended actions for 2017.

We offer our thanks to attendees for their participation, and extend an invitation to all who are interested in the conservation and research of northern landbird populations to join Boreal Partners in Flight (contact Garrett Savory garrett.savory@colostate.edu).

Debbie Nigro, Co-Chair

Kristin DuBour, Secretary

6 November 2017

LEADERSHIP OF BOREAL PARTNERS IN FLIGHT

Executive Committee

Garrett Savory – Chair

Term: Dec 2015 – Dec 2017

Directorate of Public Works
ATTN: INFW-PWE (G. Savory)
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Fort Wainwright, AK 99703-6000
Phone: Office: 907-361-9689, Cell: 907-957-0128; Email: garrett.savory@colostate.edu

Debbie Nigro -- Co-chair

Term: Dec 2016 - Dec 2018

Bureau of Land Management
222 University Ave
Fairbanks, AK 99709
Phone: Office: 907-474-2324; Email dnigro@blm.gov

Jim Johnson – USFWS Landbird Coordinator

Term: ongoing

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Migratory Bird Management
1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503
Phone: (907) 786-3423; E-mail: 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
Phone: (907) 786-7181; Email: cmhandel@usgs.gov

Carol McIntyre – Alaska Raptor Group Chair

Term: Oct 2016 – Oct 2018

National Park Service
Fairbanks, AK 99708
Phone: 907-455-0671; Email: Carol_McIntyre@nps.gov

John Haddix – At-large Elected Member

Term: Nov 2016 – Nov 2018

Bureau of Land Management
Assistant Field Manager, Eastern Interior Field Office
222 University Ave Fairbanks, AK 99709
Phone: (907) 474-2350; email: jahaddix@blm.gov

Caroline Van Hemert – At-large Elected Member

Term: Dec 2015 – Dec 2017

U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska Science Center
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Phone: (907) 786-7181; Email: cvanhemert@usgs.gov

Hilary Cooke – At-large Elected Member

Term: Dec 2015 – Dec 2017

Wildlife Conservation Society Canada (WCS Canada)
2B-508 Hanson Street
Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada Y1A-1Z1
Phone: (867) 393-2447; E-mail: hcooke@wcs.org

Kristin DuBour – Secretary

Term: Dec 2016 - Dec 2018

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

BCR Coordinators

BCR 1: Jim Johnson (jim_a_johnson@fws.gov)

BCR 2: Kristine Sowl (kristine_sowl@fws.gov)

BCR 3: Chris Barger (chris.barger@alaska.gov)

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

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

Standing Committees (formed in 2012, ongoing)

Education: Tricia Blake (tricia.blake@aksongbird.org), Lynn Fuller (lynn_fuller@pcjv.org)

Management: Cheryl Carrothers (ccarrothers@fs.fed.us)

Monitoring: Colleen Handel (cmhandel@usgs.gov), Steve Matsuoka (smatsuoka@usgs.gov)

ACTION ITEMS FOR 2017

Alaska Raptor Group

Action 1: Review draft of Gyrfalcon Raptor Stoops Action Plan when it is distributed.

Action 2: Please provide any feedback on the Alaska Raptor Metadata database to Chris Barger so he can make improvements.

BCR 2

Action 3: BCR 2 requested input from the Alaska Raptor Group on the need for bald eagle surveys on the peninsula.

Action 4: Need to look at mechanism behind the potential change in bird communities at the interface between boreal forest and tundra ecotone. Decline in tundra species and increase in shrub nesting species.

BCR3

Action 5: Determine if there are changes in predator populations of foxes and ravens. Increases in predation may be a result of climate change.

Action 6: Oil exploration and development is expanding. Need to pay attention to planning documents and provide comments.

BCR 4

Action 7: BPIF should suggest important areas for landbird conservation in the BLM planning effort. Julie Hagelin will contact Jen McMillen and ask her what kind of info they need from BPIF.

BCR5

Action 8: BPIF should take action to nominate species for consideration in species of concern/focal species for new Tongass NF Plan.

Action 9: Mine ALMS data for implications of habitat change in the Tongass. In particular, Yellow Cedar is in decline and has been petitioned for listing. However, we don't really know much about bird communities in Yellow Cedar habitat.

Action 10: do areas with OSFL get any kind of special management? Pull data from ALMS and BBS on OSFL in SE Alaska.

Action 11: Alaska Raptor Group would like to comment on the Tongass NF Plan. ARG compiled comments for the state wildlife action plan by species and region that would also be applicable for the identification of special species in the Tongass.

All BCRs

Action 12: Explore creating Boreal Avian Modelling Project-style tools to gather baseline information and make predictions for Alaska landbirds.

Action 13: Resample ALMS habitat data

Action 14: Continue ALMS plots, add more if possible

Action 15: Range expansions/transition zone work (see BCR 2, Action 4)

Action 16: Identify priority species for research

Action 17: Comment/assist with land management decisions – be involved in the process

Action 18: Consider research on boreal insectivores and wetland associated species

Action 19: Address action items from 2016 meeting

PRESENTATIONS

Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey (ALMS) and Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan – Colleen Handel

ALMS - We have greatly increased survey coverage since 1993 with the Breeding Bird Survey, but that survey is limited to roads and rivers. So in 2003 we started ALMS, that uses similar point count protocols. Plots are randomized, but constrained by access. We generally complete 400-500 points per year. In 2016 we completed 108 blocks and detected 181 species. We recently completed a joint analysis ([Handel and Sauer 2017](#)). The paper compares roadside BBS and offroad ALMS data, examines trends in landbird populations. Do those on the roadsides mirror those off road? Can we analyze them together? Are interior and coastal region different? Trends differed by region. For example, Ruby-throated Hummingbird is declining off road, but not apparently on roadside routes.

Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan - The plan needs a couple of more updates to reflect the revision of the continental plan. We need to decide which changes to incorporate; they have had changes to their species lists because the species assessment database has been updated. Changes are based on new and

hopefully better data; may have also used information from the Avian Knowledge Network. Our stewardship species list will not change. The group decided to include the revisions, but there was no overt interest in printed copies of the plan.

Western Working Group of PIF – Barbara Bresson

WWG PIF met in Homer in April 2016 and in Long Beach, WA in October. Next meeting is April 10-12, 2017 in Santa Fe; they would love to get 1-2 BPIF representatives at that meeting. At the Homer meeting they generated a list of things we could collaborate on, for example, avian keratin disorder (they are looking for other clusters of detections). It would be good to get more of BPIF folks onto the western working group listserv. The new continental conservation plan has extinction risk models. For example, for olive-sided flycatcher we've included population trends and identified threats. This highlights which species are top priorities in the Joint Ventures. There are 86 watchlist species in the new plan, 22 of those have already lost 50% of their populations. Some common species have dropped dramatically, like evening grosbeak.

Planning – Julie Hagelin

Steve Matsuoka and Julie Hagelin are working up a small paper focused on state and federal planning and how those factor into conservation planning. State management plans and state area plans, some area plans are currently in the works. BPIF could be more proactive in approaching plan liaisons to get our priorities included.

BPIF BUSINESS

Gwen requested annual summaries for next BPIF Annual Report, due January 15. Email borealpif@gmail.com. Please as any grad students leaving Alaska to submit a report summary so that we don't lose that information. Use last year's report as a template (fonts, margins, etc.) and Audubon's style of bird names (e.g. Song Sparrow) for consistency. Meeting notes and annual reports will be compiled and placed on the USGS Landbirds website: <http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/bpif/index.php>.

2015 meeting minutes were approved.

We voted to move forward with action items identified in BCR groups. BCR coordinators will move on action items as they see fit.

Elections: Debbie Nigro elected as co-chair (replacing Gwen Baluss),

BCR Coordinators are as follows:

BCR1: Jim Johnson,
BCR2: Kristine Sowl
BCR3: Chris Barger
BCR4: Julie Hagelin
BCR5: Gwen Baluss

Next year's meeting will be at USGS in Anchorage. The new Landbird Conservation Plan will be out and we may want to take time to address it.

A big THANK YOU to Gwen Baluss for chairing the last two years!

ALASKA RAPTOR GROUP

ARG Overview – John Shook

ARG promotes the conservation of Alaska raptors and their habitats. Membership is open; if you'd like to become a member contact carol_mcintyre@nps.gov. You can find ARG through the USGS Alaska Science Center website, including powerpoint slides from this presentation: (https://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/bpif/raptors/alaska_raptor_group.php). Steering committee changes:

- Chair: Carol McIntyre
- Secretary Chris Barger
- Added Melissa Burns, resigned Laura Phillips and Jim Johnson
- Now at large: Travis Booms, M. Burns, Steve Lewis, John Shook and Denny Zwiefelhofer

Raptor Stoops (Species Action Plans)

Raptor Stoops is a species action plan that identifies issues of concern and conservation actions for each raptor that breeds in AK. As each is finalized it will be added to the website and updated as necessary. It will be used as a vehicle for updated Management Plan for Alaska Raptors. An action plan for Gyrfalcon has been started. The draft will be mailed out to the group for review.

Alaska Raptor Metadata Database – Chris Barger

The Alaska Raptor Metadata Database can be accessed via the USGS Landbirds BPIF website or you can Google it. To enter the site, you will need this login information: username **chris** and password **raptors**.

There are three options after you login: 1) Submit metadata – Chris needs to OK this before you will see it online, 2) View metadata – it's a work in progress but allows users to view and filter database and 3) Download metadata – presents as an excel file; will soon add filter capability. Please provide feedback to Chris so he can make changes.

Alaska Raptor Publications 2015-16

Thirteen publications were highlighted on a range of topics including factors influencing recovery of the American Peregrine Falcon (Bruggeman et al. 2016), Gyrfalcon home ranges and movements on the YK Delta (Eisaguirre et al. 2016), growth rates and plumage development in snowy owl nestlings (Holt et al. 2016) and a review of long-term population monitoring studies of diurnal raptors in Alaska (Ritchie et al. 2016)

Selected Raptor Projects from around Alaska

- Southcentral AK GOEA population estimate (UAF, NPS, USFWS)
- Lead poisoning (Chris Barger at ADFG)
- Nesting raptors on the Upper Kobuk and Black Rivers (WHPacific/ABR and BLM/ABR)
- And others...

Bald and Golden Eagle Movements –Steve Lewis

Bald Eagle movement strategies project is part of a PhD dissertation by Rachel Wheat. Four movement strategies were observed: 1) breeder (year-round resident), 2) localized (residents that aren't breeding; floaters), 3) Migratory (regular seasonal movements between summer and winter ranges and 4) nomadic (irregular movements with little inter-annual consistency; wanderers). A paper is being submitted to Movement Ecology.

Golden Eagle carry-over effects project is cooperative with NPS, USGS and USFWS; study site is Denali NP. Goal is to identify linkages between conditions of non-breeding areas and reproductive success of migratory GOEA. Movement of 21 GOEA to date.

Golden Eagles – Chris Barger

Grad student Joe Eisaguirre (UAF) is working on this project; study site is Gunsight Mountain. Goals: 1) identify migration routes, wintering areas and habitats, 2) assess potential energy development in areas used by eagles, 3) Quantitative assessment of migration and summer habitat usage. 69 GOEAs captured and 53 PTTs deployed (2014-2016); no plans for 2017 captures.

Rough-legged Hawks – Jeff Kidd

The project deployed 52 GPS units on breeding and wintering grounds. Birds tagged on wintering grounds dispersed all over the arctic to breed. He's looking for an interested graduate student.

Territory Occupancy and Reproductive Success of Golden Eagles (1988-2016) – Carol McIntyre

Data were collected using systematic aerial and ground-based surveys during incubation (occupancy) and brood rearing (success and production). Results indicate that territory occupancy is stable but there is variability in the proportion of females that lay eggs and nesting success (i.e., long term decline). Variation is largely explained by food abundance during pre-laying period. Next steps are to identify drivers of this trend.

Gyr Falcon Research and Conservation in Western AK – David Anderson (Peregrine Fund)

This research looked at diet (prey delivery to nestlings) and climate change. They found that birds specialize in ground squirrels and ptarmigan, both of which are vulnerable to effects of climate change. In addition, some territories do better than others (greater occupancy and production) but they're not sure why.

What's next for ARG?

A number of projects are on the radar for the future:

- Effects of wind turbines – how can we help developers microsite turbines to limit impacts to raptors? (e.g., Eva Creek, Fire Island, Pillar Mountain proposed near Tok and turbines within migratory corridors)
- Lead poisoning
- Rapid Landcover change and impacts to species such as GYRF and GHOW (e.g., if prey remain white after snow has melted, they are more available)
- Vent covers on outhouse stacks – TWS is looking for permission to install covers on outhouses on public lands (i.e. parks)

NOTES FROM BCR BREAKOUTS

BCR 1/Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands

No representative present.

BCR 2/Western Alaska

- Discussed work being done on refuges and how to prioritize projects. Refuges are currently going through workforce planning efforts. There is a need for completed prioritization plans and states ranking tool Alaska Species Ranking System.
- Request for help from Alaska Raptor group to weigh in on the need for bald eagle surveys on the peninsula.
- Colleen Handel (with Steve Matsuoka) reported on work being done in the interface between boreal forest and tundra ecotone (Nome/Seward Peninsula area). There seems to be a shift in bird communities: declines in tundra-nesting species and increases in shrub-nesting species. They're looking at mechanisms behind that change.

BCR 3/Arctic Coastal Plain and Foothills

- Discussed two critical threats: oil development and climate change. The boreal forest is moving northward and predators (e.g., foxes and ravens) are moving with it. Increases in predation may be a result of climate change. In addition, nest success of tundra passerines is very high. As these predators move in, what are the impacts to passerines?
- Discussed changes in Peregrine falcon habitat; there are a lot of peregrines.
- Oil exploration and development -ice roads and helicopters are impacting local people and likely wildlife. Possible marine or land based pipeline at Smith Bay, currently in the exploration drill phase.

BCR 4/NW Interior

- Raptor surveys - ABR and others are doing surveys of raptor use and nesting in areas of the Alaska Range. Looked at developing a habitat model to predict raptor occurrence on Air Force training airspace. In order to influence Air Force use of 500' or lower airspace, would need to show take. Possible need for direct or indirect take permits.
- BLM is working on management plan. Jen McMillen is the bird contact for that. Priority species include golden eagle, OSFL, SEOW. Colleen Handel noted that while it has been relatively easy to identify areas important for avian conservation, it's been difficult to identify

IBAs for landbirds in interior habitats. BLM has some mechanism to do this (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern). The public can propose specific sites and BLM identifies them internally. **Action Item:** BPIF should suggest important areas for landbird conservation in the BLM planning effort. Julie will contact Jen McMillen and ask her what kind of info they need from BPIF.

- Good work has been done in Canada on the Boreal Avian Modelling project (BAM; University of Alberta). BAM includes ALMS data. Melanie Smith (Audubon) wants to use similar tools to make predictions for Alaska landbirds. If we can create an information baseline and make predictions, it can give partners a better idea of where to look for conservation targets. It was noted that Alaska has a pronounced east to west gradient for some variables and species, which lends itself well to this modelling process; it would be great to do for Alaska.

BCR 5/NW Pacific Rainforest

- New Tongass Forest Plan amendment - BPIF wrote a letter regarding some concerns with second growth management, re-entry of beach and riparian buffers. Also some concerns about goshawk management. Now this is under the new planning rule. The “indicator species” language has changed to “species of concern” and “focal species.” Tongass has not identified focal species yet, but that will be coming in the next year or so. The bar is much higher to get on those lists, but there will be continued opportunity for BPIF to nominate species for concern and focal species. Alaska Raptor Group would like to comment and has compiled comments for the state wildlife action plan by species and region that would also be applicable for the identification of special species
- Chugach is going through a Plan revision
- ALMS continues on the Tongass and Chugach. The Tongass is focusing on second-growth habitat.
- Yellow Cedar has been petitioned for listing; we don’t really know much about bird communities in Yellow Cedar habitat.
- Olive-sided Flycatcher in the Tongass - do areas with OSFL get any kind of special management? It might be worthwhile to pull together whatever data we have on them for ALMS and BBS.
- Alison Nelson was working on Hermit Thrushes in SE Alaska. She could not call in. She deployed geolocators as part of her MS work with Point Blue. Birds from south of the Bay area migrated to southeast Alaska. There are questions about subspeciation and genetic divergence associated with the island biogeography of SEAK. Get in touch with her if you are interested.

APPENDIX 1. MEETING AGENDA

Time	Activity	Lead(s)
08:30-08:45	Welcome and Introductions	Gwen Baluss/Garrett Savory
08:45-09:30	Alaska Raptor Group	ARG
09:30-10:15	BCR Breakouts BCR 1: Aleutian/Bering Sea Islands BCR 2: Western Alaska BCR 3: Arctic Plains and Mountains BCR 4: Northwestern Interior Forest BCR 5: Northern Pacific Rainforest	BCR Coordinators or designee Jim Johnson/Steve Matsuoka Kristine Sowl TBD Julie Hagelin Matt Moran
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:30	Announcements and Updates Alaska Hermit Thrush work in Southeast Alaska BCR 5 ALMS Alaska Landbird Conservation Plan Canada Western Working Group PIF	Garrett Savory BCR Coordinators or designee Alison Nelson Collen Handel Collen Handel Wendy Easton Barbara Bresson
11:30-12:00	BPIF Business Vote to approve minutes from 2015 Annual Meeting Old Business Elections, Housekeeping Elections: New Co-chair BCR appointments Next Annual Report	Garrett Savory/Gwen Baluss
12:00-13:00	2017 BPIF meeting Adjourn/Lunch	

APPENDIX 2. MEETING ATTENDEES (INCLUDES DIAL-UP PARTICIPANTS)

Name	Affiliation
Gwen Baluss	USDA Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, Juneau
Garrett Savory	CSU, CEMML, USAG Fort Wainright
Jeff Smith	
Jeff Mason	NRCS, Delta Junction
Marian Snively	ADFG, Anchorage
Emily Williams	
Kim Jochum	CSU, CEMML, USAG, Donnelly/Fort Wainright
Melissa Burns	USFWS, Anchorage
Casey Burns	BLM, Anchorage
Benjamin Sullender	Audubon Alaska, Anchorage
John Shook	ABR Inc., Fairbanks
Kristine Sowl	Kristine Sowl
Melissa Gabrielson	USDA Forest Service, Chugach National Forest, Cordova
Colleen Handel	USGS Alaska Science Center, Anchorage
Brett Christianson	USDA Forest Service, Chugach National Forest, Anchorage
Maureen DeZeeuw	BOEM, Anchorage
Pete Mickelson	Cordova Resident
Jessica Ilse	USDA Forest Service, Chugach National Forest, Anchorage
Erin Cooper	USDA Forest Service, Chugach National Forest, Cordova
Jim Chu	USDA Forest Service, International Programs, Sedro Woolley,
Bradley Bales	Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture, Portland, Oregon
Tom Rothe	Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture, Eagle River
Cheryl Carrothers	USDA Forest Service, Region 10, Juneau
Nora Rojek	USFWS, Alaska Maritime NWR, Homer
Julie Hagelin	ADFG, Fairbanks
Chris Harwood	USFWS, Kanuti NWR, Fairbanks
Bonnie Bennetson	USDA Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, Juneau

Susan Oehlers	USDA Forest Service, Tongass National Forest, Yakutat
Chris Barger	ADFG, Fairbanks
Deb Nigro	BLM, Fairbanks
Melanie Smith	Audubon Alaska, Anchorage
Chris Krenz	ADFG, Juneau
Caroline Van Hemert	USGS Alaska Science Center, Anchorage
Joe Eisaguirre	UAF, Fairbanks
Deyna Kuntzsch	USDA Forest Service, Chugach National Forest, Anchorage
Nicolas Docken	USDA Forest Service, Chugach National Forest, Cordova
Tricia Blake	Alaska Songbird Institute, Fairbanks
Travis Booms (call in)	ADFG Fairbanks
Lynn Fuller (call in)	
Barbara Bresson (call in)	Region 6 Western Working Group Chair