

PREFACE TO THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS IN FLIGHT CONFERENCE

The 4th International Partners in Flight (PIF) Conference was held at the McAllen Convention Center, in McAllen, Texas, on 13-16 February 2008. The theme of the conference—*Tundra to Tropics: Connecting Bird, Habitats and People*—was also the theme of International Migratory Bird Day (www.birdday.org) for 2008. Nearly 700 people attended the conference, with over 100 participants representing countries other than the U.S. There were nearly 500 oral and poster presentations among the conference's 39 pre-planned sessions. The conference program is available on the PIF web site (www.PartnersInFlight.org).

CONTENT OF PROCEEDINGS

This proceedings comprises two principal sections: a Needs Assessment (see below), and papers contributed from those authors who wished to further develop their content for inclusion in this proceedings. We included both full papers and "extended abstracts," the latter allowing authors to provide a shorter paper capturing information that may not otherwise appear in print. The editors view proceedings as a unique tool for sharing information that may not always lend itself to publication in the traditional ornithological literature. Thus, it was our policy to accept, not reject, papers to the extent possible. Nonetheless, all papers were reviewed by at least one editor and by at least one other peer to ensure quality. Because not all aspects of the original program are represented by written contributions to this proceedings, logical organization of contributed papers herein differs somewhat from that of the conference.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Organizers wanted the 4th International PIF Conference to result in something more than a contribution of talks and papers—something that spoke more directly to the nagging question, "so now what?"

Thus, the Steering Committee asked each Session Chair to facilitate a discussion wherein participants, within the context of the session topic, would identify priority needs that must be addressed in order to advance the conservation of birds. We asked that both short- (<2

years) and long-term needs be identified relative to five general categories:

- Education/Communication/Outreach
- Research
- Inventory/Monitoring
- Capacity Building
- Public Policy

We acknowledged this as an ambitious request, and recognized that not all sessions would lend themselves to defining needs for each of the five topics and for both time frames. Nonetheless, 465 individual needs were identified, compiled and reported on the PIF web site (www.PartnersInFlight.org). These were organized by session so that those particularly interested in one topic (e.g., Anthropogenic Causes of Bird Mortality) could quickly find specific needs identified in that session.

After reviewing and discussing these results, the PIF Implementation Committee determined that it would also be useful to create a synthesis of needs within each of the above categories and across all sessions. These syntheses would seek to identify major themes and priorities. In the end, we found that the last two topics—Capacity Building and Public Policy—were too complex to deal with given the geographic scope of the conference—the Western Hemisphere. Thus, the Needs Assessment presented herein includes summary analyses for only the topics of Education/Communication/Outreach, Research, and Inventory/Monitoring.

It is our intent that each partner in the PIF network examine these needs and determine where they or their organization possess the capacities to best contribute. Various PIF committees and working groups also will remain vigilant for, or otherwise initiate, opportunities to attract resources to particular needs through ongoing strategic planning and budgeting activities.

BRIEF HISTORY OF PARTNERS IN FLIGHT

Partners in Flight was formed in 1990 to address long-term population declines among bird species that breed in the U.S. and Canada and winter in the Neotropics. With the advent of other national and international bird conservation initiatives addressing shorebirds and waterbirds, the primary activities of PIF increasingly

emphasized landbirds. The partnership's landbird interests quickly expanded to include all landbirds that regularly breed in the U.S. and Canada (448 species) and now addresses all landbirds that regularly breed in Canada, the U.S., and Mexico (898 species). In addition, PIF is now represented in Mesoamerica and Canada where activities may include taxa other than the landbirds. The mission and goals of PIF can be found on the back cover.

Partners in Flight holds international conferences only periodically, when developments in bird conservation or a need to rekindle international cooperation warrant a convening to share the latest information and plan for the future. Three major international PIF conferences were held prior to McAllen:

Estes Park, Colorado
21–25 September 1992

Cape May, New Jersey
1–5 October 1995

Asilomar, California
20–24 March 2002

While each conference has had a diverse content, as evidenced by the respective conference programs and proceedings, there typically has been a focus in each one. For this conference, we not only addressed the hemispheric theme of *Tundra to Tropics*, we also included an unprecedented number of sessions on education and outreach. The education and outreach emphasis was an explicit acknowledgement regarding the third component in our title, “connecting birds habitats and people.” Indeed, if we don't connect people—to each other, to the habitats, and to the birds—we cannot succeed, no matter how compelling our research, monitoring, and other scientific accomplishments.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

Partners in Flight greatly appreciates the considerable time put in by members of the conference Steering Committee and Program Committee.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Terrell D. Rich, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Partners in Flight, Chair
Mary Gustafson, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Rio Grande Joint Venture, Chair of the Local Committee

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Joni Ellis, Optics for the Tropics
Rich Fischer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
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Rebecca M. Olaguibel, McAllen Convention Center
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Cecilia Riley, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
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Janet Ruth, U.S. Geological Survey
Sandy Scoggin, San Francisco Bay Joint Venture
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gmail.com) translated numerous abstracts from English to Spanish.

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We greatly appreciate the assistance of Mark Penrose in the tracking, organizing, layout, design and production of the final document. The editors simply could not have done it without Mark's considerable experience and skill.

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