

Department of Defense Partners in Flight

**Conserving birds and their habitats
on Department of Defense lands**

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**DoD Conservation Conference
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Report Documentation Page

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DoD and Migratory Birds

Why is DoD
Important to
Migratory Birds?



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

PARTNERS IN *Flight*

STRATEGIC
PLAN

THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT
OF MIGRATORY AND RESIDENT LANDBIRDS
AND THEIR HABITATS ON
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE LANDS



Conservation Priorities

DoD Partners in Flight

- **Monitoring**
 - Radar ornithology
 - MAPS
 - Satellite and remote tracking
 - Remote acoustic monitoring
- **BASH**
- **Grasslands**
- **Invasive & nuisance species**
- **International conservation**





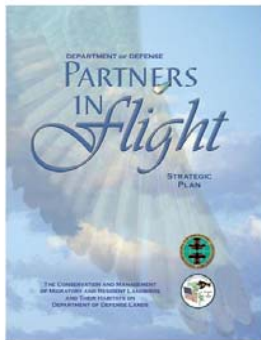
Department of Defense
Partners in Flight

Fact Sheet #1
November 2003

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 can be found at
www.dodpif.org, or through the
contact information on next page.

Important Bird Areas

DoD lands benefit priority bird species

What is an Important Bird Area?

Some places are exceptionally important - even essential - for bird conservation. Directing protection and management efforts towards these sites is crucial if viable populations of many species are to persist in the long-term. Conservationists have long understood this fact, but only in recent years has a program emerged to identify and formally recognize these sites.

Important Bird Areas (IBA) are sites that are significant because they hold large concentrations or an exceptional diversity of birds, harbor rare or endangered species, or contain unique or threatened habitat. The IBA program is founded on the premise that identifying and conserving key habitat areas for bird populations is essential to bird conservation efforts. The program's goal is to identify and protect a network of sites around the world to help maintain naturally occurring bird populations. Specifically, IBA recognition means that a site provides essential habitat to breeding or non-breeding birds. While IBA sites vary in size, most are discrete and distinguishable from surrounding areas in character, habitat, or ornithological importance. It is important to note that there are *no* legal or management requirements imposed on sites identified as Important Bird Areas.

History of the IBA Program in the US
From its start in Europe in the 1980s by BirdLife International, the IBA concept has led to the recognition of more than 7,000 sites worldwide. The IBA Program was launched in the U.S. in 1995 by BirdLife partner designate American Bird Conservancy (ABC), which has identified and documented those sites of significance on a global level throughout all 50 states. The National Audubon Society (Audubon) initiated a state-based IBA program that

same year in partnership with ABC, and has been building programs state by state. As of 2004, Audubon was operating IBA programs in 46 states. Today, ABC continues its IBA program for sites of global significance, but Audubon is now the BirdLife partner designate in the U.S., and is expanding its IBA program to include sites of global and continental significance.



Fort Riley's (KS) 50,000 acres of native tallgrass prairie is the largest remaining contiguous habitat of this type in North America. Photo: Chris Eberly

Criteria

Generally, for a site to qualify as a global or continental IBA, it must, during at least some part of the year, contain habitat that supports: (1) significant numbers of a species of global conservation concern, such as Piping Plover, Kirtland's Warbler or Red-cockaded Woodpecker; (2) a species with a restricted range, such as Yellow-billed Magpie, Tricolored Blackbird or Brown-capped Rosy-Finch; (3) a species that is vulnerable because its populations are concentrated in one general habitat type or biome, such as Pinyon Jay, Brewer's Sparrow, or Oak Titmouse; or (4) a significantly large concentration of breeding, migrating or wintering birds, including waterfowl, seabirds, wading birds, raptors or landbirds. Continental and state level criteria scale down from the global criteria.

Military Lands as IBAs

Some Department of Defense (DoD) lands, including military installations and Army Corps of Engineers projects, have been identified as IBAs. In general, an IBA should exist as an actual or potential protected area, or should have the potential to be managed in some way for birds and general nature conservation. Military installations, through their Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans (INRMP) and Sikes Act compliance, manage their lands in ways that benefit native bird populations. Many Corps project sites also implement comprehensive management plans that enhance bird habitat. While IBAs have no minimum or maximum size, they should be large enough to supply all or most of the requirements of the bird(s) during the season for which they are important. DoD lands identified as IBAs also satisfy this need. To that end, the DoD PIF program endorses IBAs on military and Corps of Engineers lands, where appropriate.

Why are IBAs on DoD Lands Good?

Ultimately, by identifying high quality habitats and recognizing them as being important for birds, the IBA Program seeks to mobilize the resources needed to protect these areas by raising public awareness of their significance. With over 71 million Americans who watch and/or feed birds, the public is a powerful constituency for bird conservation. An important distinction should also be made that an IBA is not necessarily an important *birding* area. An IBA exists for birds, not for bird watchers. IBAs can include Watchable Wildlife opportunities, but only if such



Henslow's Sparrow, a Watch List species, thrives on U.S. military installations. Photo: Teresa Vancoski

opportunities do not compromise the military mission or continued conservation actions. On military lands, IBAs can be an effective tool to engage adjoining landowners in landscape level conservation planning. Sometimes, it is the training mission itself that creates and sustains quality habitat. IBA recognition is thus an important tool to educate the public that while DoD lands are managed to support the military's training mission, they also provide significant habitat for the conservation of natural resources, including birds. When a conservation plan is desired for a network of IBAs, INRMPs and Corps comprehensive management plans already provide the necessary information; no additional management planning is required.



Vandenberg Air Force Base provides undisturbed beaches for nesting, wintering, and migrating shorebirds and waterbirds. Photo: Chris Eberly

Nomination Process

Any military installation or Army Corps of Engineers project is eligible to be nominated as an IBA if it potentially meets IBA criteria. Once a site is nominated, the appropriate organization reviews the nomination. If it meets the criteria, the site is identified as an IBA. Once a site has been identified, official recognition as an IBA via a ceremony or other public outreach method may take place at the discretion of the installation. A Memorandum of Understanding with American Bird Conservancy and National Audubon Society outlines the expected procedures to be followed for the IBA process on DoD lands. DoD sites recognized as IBAs may receive a certificate and sign.



Western Snowy Plovers breed and winter on military lands in coastal California. Photo: Michael Stubblefield

Conclusion

Identification of DoD lands as Important Bird Areas is recognition from an outside organization (American Bird Conservancy, National Audubon Society, or both) of the excellent stewardship that benefits resident and migratory birds and their habitats. Identification and/or recognition as an IBA entails *no* legal or management requirements. In addition, public access is not linked in any way to IBA status. Public bird watching opportunities exist independently; some IBAs will not be open for public access, and many sites with public birding will not qualify as IBAs. Regardless of public access, IBA status is public recognition of which to be proud.



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Department of Defense
Partners in Flight

Steppingstones of Migration

Some neotropical migratory birds fly nonstop to their wintering homes in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Others proceed step-by-step, using patches of forests, meadows, shores and lakes to feed and rest along the way. These steppingstones of habitat are critical to the birds' survival. The Department of Defense (DoD) helps conserve habitat that provides these steppingstones. DoD natural resources managers incorporate bird habitat conservation objectives into installation Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans, which act as blueprints for resources management. Working with its public and private partners through Partners in Flight (PIF) and the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, DoD is ensuring that these steppingstones of migration are always available to neotropical migratory birds as they travel each spring and fall.



LEGEND
 • Core Migration Area
 • Steppingstone Area
 • Migration Routes
 • Wetlands, Shores and Lakes
 • Urban and Working Lands
 • Large Birds and Stop of PIF



Crossland Habitats

Adapted from any other suite of birds, those that depend upon wetland grasslands for nesting habitat as springing the grasslands declines. Some of the best remaining grassland habitats exist on military bases. First, other protected areas such as those that stem from military training exercises, some the historic National Park system, include the most diverse grasslands. DoD is studying the health and productivity of grasslands to better understand regional differences in grassland type and composition, and their significance to birds.



Panama's Canal Area

For most of the 20th Century, DoD was an influential presence in the Republic of Panama. All DoD controlled lands across the Panama Canal were transferred to Panama by the end of 1998, under the provisions of the Panama Canal Treaty. Only a small percentage of the 80,000 acres of land that was under DoD care is developed. The 63,000 acres of tropical forest include some of the best examples of semi-deciduous forested habitat remaining along the Pacific Coast of Central America. These lands act as a travel corridor to millions of neotropical migratory birds during their seasonal migrations. DoD has actively promoted conservation protection for the former DoD lands in the years leading up to their return to Panama. Thanks, in part, to these efforts, much of the land has been set aside as protected areas or incorporated into the existing Parque Nacional Serrano.

BASH

The DoD/PF Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) Working Group is dedicated to ensuring communications and information exchange between DoD natural resource professionals, military aviation, and safety personnel. The primary goals of the Working Group include promoting the reporting of bird and animal strikes, providing timely and accurate identification of remains, and reducing the attractiveness of airfields to avian species.



Partnerships - Fort Hood

PIF efforts at Fort Hood, Texas, offer a good example of how partnerships enhance bird conservation efforts. The Nature Conservancy oversees programs for managing two endangered species: the Golden-crowned Kinglet and Black-capped Vireo. Through habitat conservation measures and an aggressive controlled logging program, vireo populations have steadily increased in the past decade, and some nest success increased to 50% with careful jurisdiction dropped from 90% to less than 50%. These efforts are augmented by partnerships with state and private groups, which provide additional controlled logging stations on private lands adjoining the Fort. A biologist exchange partnership provides habitat expertise for Central American biologists to gain knowledge of habitat issues on the breeding grounds, which helps them better manage habitat for overwintering Golden-crowned Kinglets.

MAPS Program

The Migration Area Productivity and Serviceability (MAPS) program is a continent-wide bird monitoring program organized by The Institute for Bird Populations. The MAPS' primary effort is to collect and analyze population trend and demographic data on breeding birds, providing valuable insight into breeding productivity and annual survivorship. By analyzing this information with GIS-based habitat data, we can identify habitat characteristics that negatively affect breeding success. Management activities can then be directed toward producing habitat characteristics that are associated with successful breeding birds. DoD supports close to 100 MAPS datasets, nearly 20% of the MAPS network.



Satellite

The Center for Conservation Research and Technology (CCRT) has been instrumental in advancing the development of satellite telemetry to track wildlife movements. Working with DoD PFC CGSE has tracked bird species that breed on migratory routes or winter on military lands. The first year of satellite telemetry data revealed precise locations of poorly known wintering areas for the Peregrine Falcon, which 20 years of traditional band return could not produce. Satellite tracking also uncovered the exact location of DoD-owned forest patches in South America, and provides invaluable input into bird strike avoidance maps.

Caribbean

Habitat quality of overwintering sites affects productivity of migrants on the breeding grounds. Research on Puerto Rican Parrots in Puerto Rico and Cuba is quantifying the value of tropical wetland, mangrove, and mangrove and tropical dry forest habitats, which provide critical dispersal and overwintering habitat for neotropical migrants and support numerous island endemics. Studies by the Institute for Bird Populations, The Nature Conservancy, and the Bird England Institute for Landscape Ecology are providing insight into the impacts of weather and climate on migration patterns and factors that affect overwintering success of migrants, as well as productivity of resident bird species in these critical habitats.

Radar Ornithology

Radar has been used since the early 1960s to monitor bird migration. In the last decade, Clemson University Radar Ornithology Laboratory (CROLO) has used the network of National Weather Service Doppler radars to map bird migration patterns over the entire U.S. These efforts have helped scientists and resource managers discover significant migratory populations, assess where birds exit and re-enter during migration. These data also help guide forest and wetland restoration by allowing them to see where flocks of migrating birds are flying, so plans can avoid flying into these areas. CROLO tracks seasonal, regional, and global bird migration to monitor the long-term health of the North American migration system.



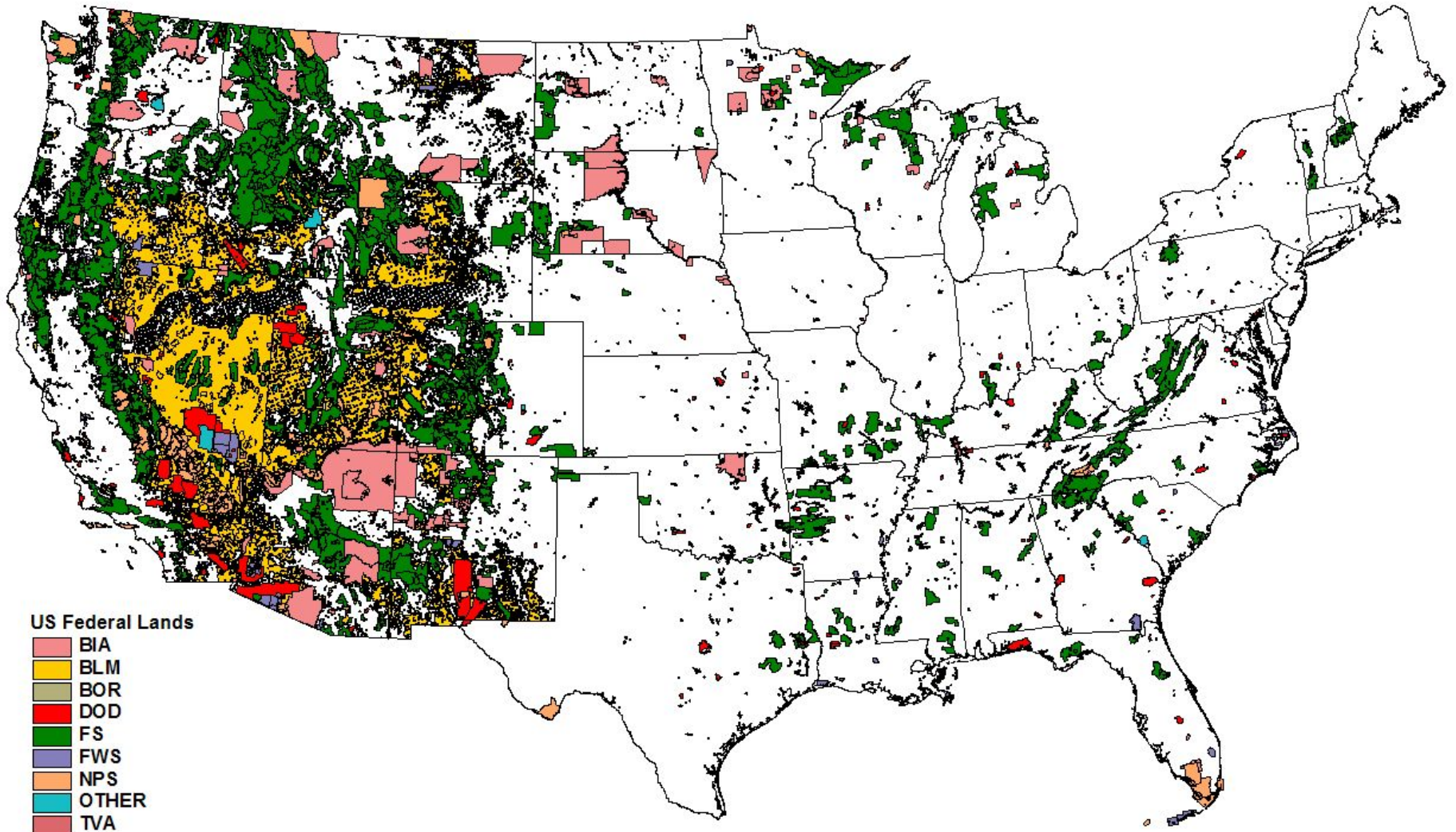
Partnerships

Partners in Flight

- **Federal Agencies**
 - *USFWS, USFS, NPS, BLM, BOR*
- **Non-governmental Organizations**
 - TNC, American Bird Conservancy, Audubon



Federal Agency Lands



Partnerships

Legacy 2005 Areas of Emphasis

- Program Management
- National and International Initiatives
- Monitoring & Predicting Migratory Patterns of Birds & Animals
- Integrated Natural Resources Management



Partnerships

SERDP FY2005 Statements of Need

- “Development of an Advanced Monitoring Strategy for Migratory Birds on Military Lands”
- “Improved Remote Sensing Technologies for Detection of Threatened and Endangered Species and their Habitat”





NALF Orange Grove, TX





Partnerships

Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit

- **Burrowing Owls**

- Breeding, wintering, movements
- TX, NM, AZ, CA
- Other CESUs, Mexico, Canada



- **Hummingbird Monitoring Network**

- Breeding, migratory routes
- AZ, CA, NM, BC

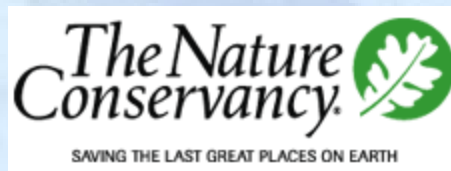
*Desert Southwest
Cooperative Ecosystem
Studies Unit*



Partnerships

The Nature Conservancy

- **Conservation easements**
 - Protect the mission
 - Protect biodiversity
 - Protect adjacent landowners
- **Ecoregional planning**
 - Priority species assessment
 - Identify important habitats



Bird Species of Concern

- **INRMP**
 - *Integrated* management document
- **USFWS**
 - **Birds of Conservation Concern 2002**
 - **Species for DoD management action**
 - **MOU (EO 13186) - non-readiness**
 - **Migratory Bird Rule - readiness**



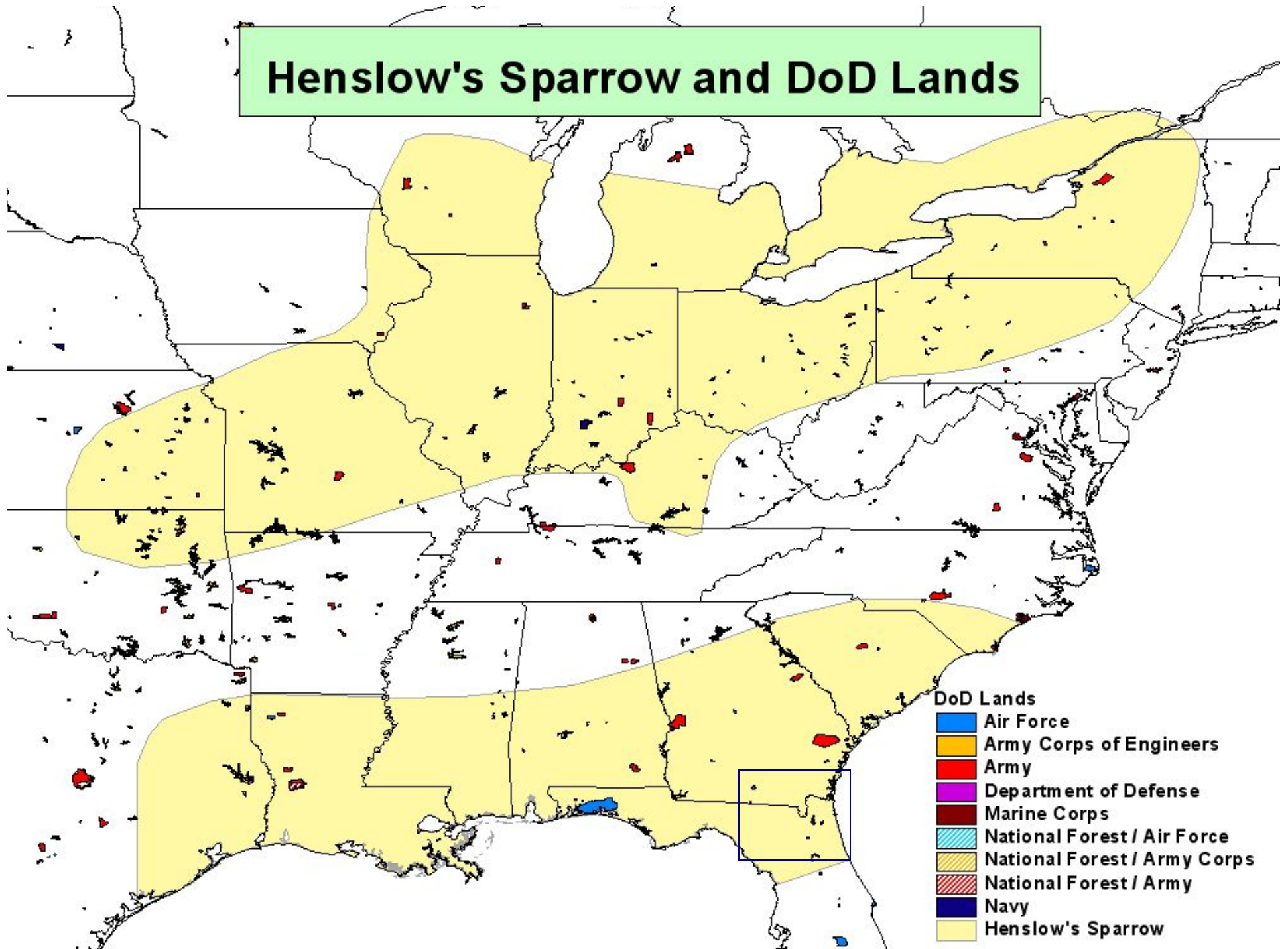
Partnerships

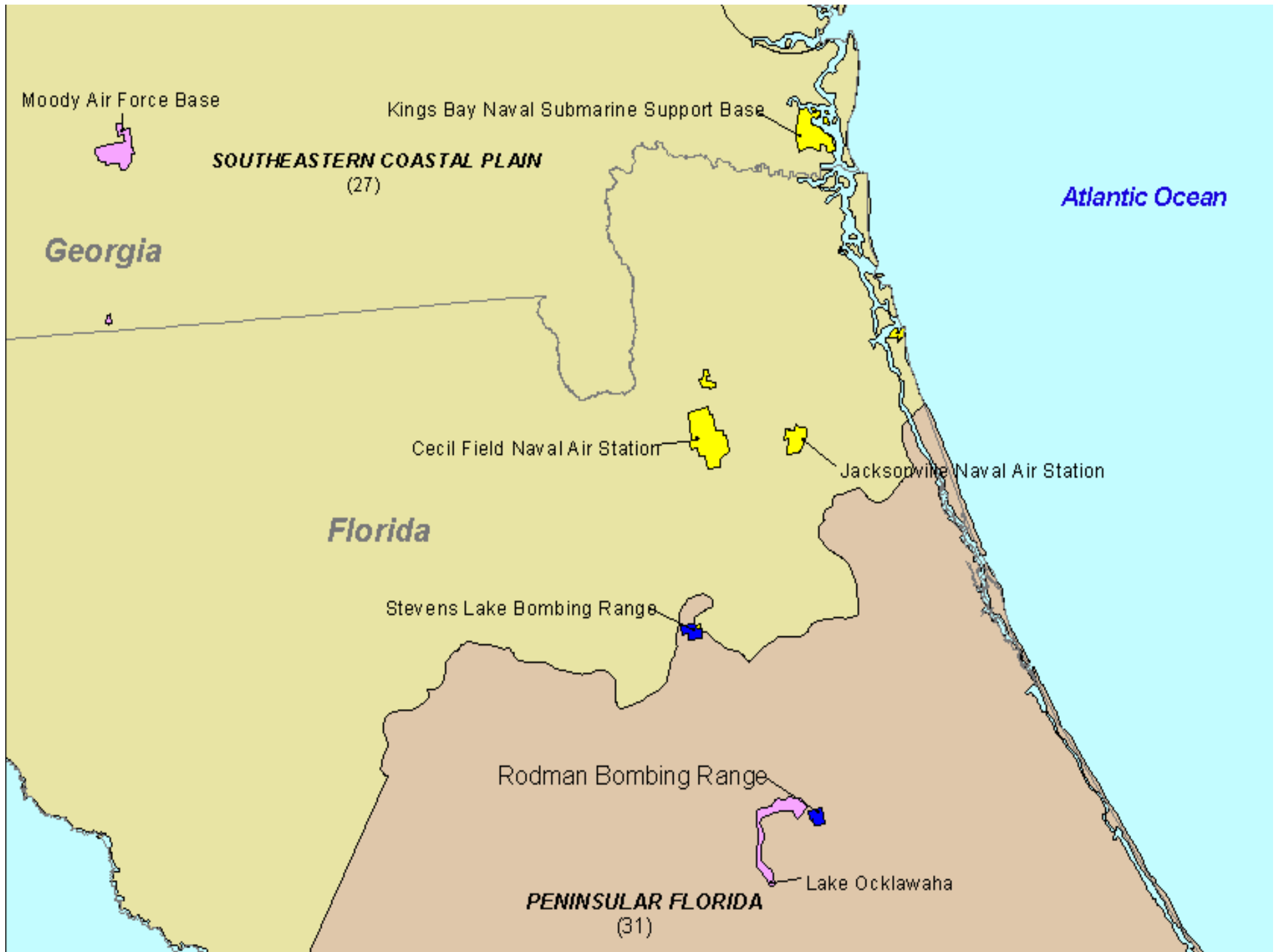
US Fish & Wildlife Service

- **DoD species of concern matrix**
 - **Birds of Conservation Concern 2002**
 - **Bird initiative priority species**
 - **Landbirds, waterbirds, shorebirds, waterfowl**
 - **Game birds**
 - **T&E**
- **AEC, States, TNC**



Henslow's Sparrow and DoD Lands





Partnerships

DoD Services and Installations

- **INRMP process**
 - USFWS, States
 - Compliance and Stewardship
 - Game birds, T&E, species of concern
- **Funding**
 - Coordinated monitoring
 - Regional assessment



Important Bird Areas

4th IBA Conference, Sierra Vista AZ

- **Partnering with Federal Agencies**
 - ❖ **Joint presentation**
 - ❖ **Discussion groups**
 - ❖ **Guidance document**



“Fort Huachuca is a very good example of an agency that has a mission, but it’s allowing for multiple uses by engaging the birding public, while focusing attention on bird conservation.”

- John Cecil, IBA Program Director, Audubon



TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

MONITORING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Avian monitoring projects on DoD lands typically occur on an as-needed basis. To facilitate sharing of data among our partners, we use existing protocols appropriate for the intended objective of the monitoring project. The Integrated Training Area Management program includes a protocol, Land Condition Trend Analysis (LCTA), which currently provides non-standardized avian monitoring data. DoD PIF will work with the Army to incorporate standard monitoring protocols into LCTA, making Army data compatible with the National Point Count Database and other sources. DoD PIF also supports the process of developing standardized regional and national monitoring strategies for various bird taxa and contributes DoD survey data to existing databases.



Photo by Chris Deery

Proper management of natural resources cannot be accomplished without baseline knowledge of the habitats managed by DoD. We help identify DoD lands that lack baseline surveys of bird populations and document sites that satisfy criteria for identification as Important Bird Areas or potential core bird conservation areas. A key monitoring program used on DoD lands is Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS; see page 31), which provides specific habitat based management recommendations.

DoD PRIORITIES

- Identify installations lacking baseline avian surveys, and other monitoring needs
- Review and revise LCTA to include use of standard avian survey protocols
- Support MAPS program on DoD lands
- Contribute data to and utilize resources in the National Point Count Database
- Communicate and coordinate with adjoining landowner partners to coordinate monitoring efforts, where appropriate



Yellow-headed Blackbird
Photo by Mike Ryan

Monitoring

DoD PIF Priorities

- **Baseline avian surveys**
- **LCTA**
- **Support MAPS stations**
- **National Point Count DB**
- **Coordinated bird monitoring**



Monitoring Strategy

- **Coordinated bird monitoring**
 - Current status / Mgmt questions
 - Tools and protocols
 - Partnerships
- **Funding**
 - SERDP
 - Legacy
 - Services, Installations





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