

JV Science Team Meeting Minutes **12-13 December 2007, Madison WI**

Technical Committee members: Present -- John Castrale, John Coluccy, Dave Ewert, Bob Gates, Ron Gatti, Dan Holm, Greg Soulliere, Wayne Thogmartin
Absent -- Todd Bishop, Dave Luukkonen, Mike Roell

Bird-group Subcommittee members: Present -- Melinda Knutson, Steve Lewis, Charlotte Roy, Brad Potter, Bob Russell, Tom Will
Absent -- Mike Eichholz, Mike Monfils, Mark Shieldcastle

Other Attendees: Barb Pardo (JV Coordinator), Andy Paulios (Wisconsin BCI), Josh Stafford (Illinois Natural History Survey), Ben O'Neal (Southern Illinois University), Jack Dingledine (FWS Ecological Services)

The Joint Venture Science Team (JV Technical Committee plus members from the four bird-group committees) met following the 68th Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Madison Wisconsin. We began at 1:00 PM on Wednesday in a downtown DNR facility and ended at 11:45 AM on Thursday. Following introductions, we reviewed status of the JV plan-writing effort: Landbird, Shorebird, and Waterbird Strategies are complete and the final version of the Waterfowl and All-bird plans will be complete in the next few weeks. JV plans are already being requested and used in many applications. In addition to providing state-specific bird conservation maps, some state agencies are developing all-bird plans and using JV regional population and habitat objectives stepped down to the state level. JV research and monitoring priorities listed in the bird-group strategies also were prominent in the 18 JV flex-fund grant applications received this fall.

Suggested distribution of JV planning tools from the Science Team included state DNR meetings, Bird Conservation Initiative (BCI) coordinators and meetings, Partners In Flight (PIF) and JV web sites and Midwest PIF list serve, JV Management Board members, FWS refuges (via Pat Heglund), and Al Afton's email list (primarily waterfowl scientists and managers). We discussed the need to provide a one-page "user guide" with information about the strategies and all-bird plan. This note would include a reminder that products 1) were developed for regional- and state-scale applications, 2) there were limitations in spatial and biological data used to develop decision-support maps, and 3) JV recommendations and map products will be updated periodically as new information becomes available. We also identified a need to relay to the research community information about the completed JV plan with a brief (one-page) plea for assistance completing priority research and monitoring needs identified during plan development.

Action item: During the next year Barb, Greg, Brad, and Paul Richert (Asst JV Coordinator) will attend state-level meetings to present information on new JV planning tools. We will also gather feedback on how we can help partners implement the plan and how JV products can be better integrated into State Action Plans. By 31 January, Greg and Brad will develop a guidance note for plan users, and Greg will develop and distribute a note regarding research needs to the research community.

Tom Will and Melinda Knutson discussed coordinated bird monitoring. The national coordinated bird monitoring proposal submitted to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) was not funded. Had the project been funded, it would have allowed filling a position similar to that held by Dan Lambert in the Northeast U.S., providing a means to better network current and potential monitoring efforts in our region and neighboring regions. There was discussion about submitting this proposal, rewritten with a Midwest regional focus, to another potential funding source, perhaps the Doris Duke Foundation.

Melinda received many comments on the draft monitoring protocols she developed largely for refuges. She plans to revise the drafts and have them available for the 2008 field season. She went to the NE monitoring meeting and facilitated a forest bird monitoring session. There was an emphasis at this meeting to complete more BBS routes, especially routes that are not being run. GPS coordinates have been added to BBS routes in some states, increasing data analysis possibilities. Melinda invited other Science Team members to be involved in the monitoring protocol effort. She also suggested we need to address habitat quality as well as quantity in our habitat planning and monitoring.

Updates were provided on several JV sponsored projects: GPS waterfowl survey (Greg Soulliere), nest-cavity project (Charlotte Roy), Blue-winged Teal project (Ron Gatti), Illinois River wetland change project and Illinois River migrating shorebird project (Josh Stafford), and the translating population objectives to habitat objectives project (Wayne Thogmartin). An update on the Lake Erie stopover project and associated programs was also reviewed (Dave Ewert). Ben O'Neal and Josh Stafford provided a presentation on the possibilities of using RADAR to develop duration of stay information for migrating waterfowl.

Bird-group Committees and Monitoring

JV bird-group committees temporarily met in break-out sessions to discuss research priorities and steps for completion. When we reconvened, Chairs provided the following highlights: Landbirds – there is a need to refine population and density estimates for focal species, planning should better focus on source populations particularly in landscapes of intermediate size, we must evaluate connectivity across JV(s), and stopover locations remain a high research priority especially in the most altered landscapes and where towers may disrupt bird movement. Andy Paulios (WI DNR) and Frank Thompson (U.S. Forest Service) were suggested (after the meeting) as potential additions to the JV Landbird Committee.

Shorebird and Waterbird Committees met together. They expressed concern over the 2012 target for completing priority research and monitoring need in both bird-group strategies. However, research and monitoring needs were listed in roughly the desired order of priority for each plan. Both committees suggested need for sensitivity analyses of focal species models (vs. model validation) to better focus priority research. Francie

Cuthbert and Linda Wires (both U of MN) were identified as potential Waterbird and Shorebird Committee members.

Waterfowl – members were comfortable with the current order of research and monitoring priorities in the strategy, but they also suggested some minor refinement. Several of the needs are being addressed with current and proposed projects. However, we discussed the desire for better information on forest breeding species – Ring-necked Duck and Wood Duck. Todd Arnold (U of MN) and Dave Graber and Andy Radaeke (both MO DOC) were identified as potential additions to the JV Waterfowl Committee. Pat Brown (MI NFI) was removed as he has taken a position in Alaska.

Action item: Using the compiled inventory of research and monitoring needs provided for the meeting, Committee Chairs (Dan Holm, Bob Gates, Dave Ewert, and John Coluccy) will provide Greg Soulliere with any refinements for their bird groups, making the list more “user friendly” for the JV web site. Adjustments will be provided to Greg by 10 January and Greg will add the new list of JV research and monitoring priorities to the web site by 18 January. Chairs will also provide Greg any adjustments to their bird-group membership by 10 January and Greg will relay new bird-group committee membership to Barb Pardo.

We discussed the need to track change in cover types across the JV for improved planning and to better assess the relative importance of JV conservation efforts. However, trend monitoring should be coordinated at the national level (e.g., NLCD, NWI / trends monitoring) rather than pieced together at the regional or state level. We need to articulate the level of resolution needed to evaluate change in the region (and potentially other JV regions). Because this effort can be tied to global climate change there may be a funding source available for change analysis. In addition, a national FWS climate change group has been formed and Rex Johnson (FWS Region 3 HAP~~A~~ET Office) is a committee member.

Action item: By 31 January Brad Potter will develop a list of JV needs for landscape change analysis plus determine what useful information is already available. He will also determine the appropriate contact(s) in other agencies (e.g., USGS) to send recommendations or requests for assistance.

JV Technical Committee / Grant Proposal Review Meeting

The JV Office received 18 flex-fund grant applications that met criteria listed in the 2008 request for proposals (RFP). In mid November Technical Committee members were mailed the following: 1) hard copies of each flex-fund grant application, 2) a spreadsheet listing the titles, cost, and duration of each project, and 3) a copy of the 2008 flex fund RFP. TC members were asked to refer to the RFP for application criteria and stated JV priorities before ranking projects high (1), medium (2), and low (3). They were also sent an electronic copy of the spreadsheet and asked to fill in their project scores and return the spreadsheet to Greg Soulliere by 3 December. Individual scores were pooled

to generate a mean score for each project, which was used to identify a “top tier” of projects for discussion at the 13 December meeting.

Participants at the meeting (7 of 11 TC members) were informed of the approximate amount of JV funding likely to be available (~\$50,000). After extensive discussion by the committee, with guidance from Barb Pardo, a final ranking of projects was completed (spreadsheet attached). Barb will collaborate with coordinators of other funding sources (e.g., Non-game Bird Fund) to support as many of these projects as feasible. Committee members repeatedly commented on the scientific quality and potential value of proposed projects including several in addition to the eight discussed in detail.

Next Meeting

Considering the various JV bird plans are complete or nearly complete and many of the research and monitoring needs are in the process of being addressed, we decided not to plan a spring meeting. However, members proposed an expanded December meeting in 2008 with a JV symposium held during the 69th Midwest Conference in Columbus OH. Current JV research, monitoring, planning, and general conservation information can be shared between science partners. We should include adjoining JVs and even those in the lower Mississippi River regions to emphasize connectivity for migratory birds.

Action Item: Bob Gates (member of Midwest Conference committee) and Greg Soulliere will investigate symposium opportunities. As soon as information is available we can determine feasibility of this type of meeting, and share information with the Science Team.

Meeting adjourned