



NEWS RELEASE

August 8, 2018 - For Immediate Release

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Bird Conservancy of the Rockies awarded Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act grant to conserve declining grassland birds

FORT COLLINS, Colo. – The sight and sound of migrating songbirds brings joy to millions of Americans each year. Unfortunately, many birds we love are disappearing due to habitat loss, threats from invasive species, and other factors. They face challenges on the wintering grounds in Latin America, as well as on the summer breeding grounds in the U.S. and Canada. The Lark Bunting, Colorado’s State Bird, has seen population declines of almost 90% over the last 45 years.

For the 12th consecutive year, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies has been awarded a highly competitive [Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act](#) (NMBCA) grant to support migratory bird conservation efforts in the U.S. and Mexico that enables Bird Conservancy to continue critical research, monitoring, education, public engagement and land conservation efforts aimed at stabilizing and reversing bird population declines.

In 2017, the NMBCA program (administered by the [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#)) provided \$3.8 million in federal funds to support projects that conserve migratory bird habitat, engage local communities in bird habitat protection and strengthen international relations, while raising awareness of the importance of bird conservation. The majority of funds go toward work in Latin America, where habitat loss and other threats to migratory birds are significant and conservation funding is scarce. NMBCA funds awarded in 2018 will leverage an additional \$14.2 million in non-federal matching funds from conservation partners such as Bird Conservancy of the Rockies and the City of Fort Collins that expand the impact of the funds through collaborative public-private partnerships. The NMBCA program is a critical resource for bird conservation within and beyond our borders. It is part of the Department of Interior’s USFWS Migratory Bird Program and is essential for supporting our shared migratory birds.

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Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Connecting People, Birds and Land

There are 386 species of neotropical migratory birds that migrate to and from the United States each year, including songbirds, shorebirds and birds of prey. These birds provide critical functions such as pollinating and dispersing seeds of economically and ecologically important plants, keeping insect and rodent populations in balance, and providing early warnings of environmental degradation. Our national passion for birdwatching also puts billions of dollars into the economy through purchases of bird food, binoculars and travel to see our favorite birds.

Since 2002, with support from NMBCA grant funding, Bird Conservancy has pioneered conservation on the Chihuahuan Desert grasslands and shrublands of northern Mexico, working to conserve at-risk grassland bird species like Baird's Sparrow, Sprague's Pipit and Lark Bunting. Over 28 different grassland bird species benefit from these efforts, including locally endangered species like the Aplomado Falcon and Golden Eagle.

Bird Conservancy uses a multidisciplinary approach to bird and habitat conservation involving science, education and land stewardship. Science informs conservation to achieve maximum impact and identify challenges facing birds. Bird Conservancy collaborates with partners and landowners to implement best management practices on private ranch lands. Over 250,000 acres have enrolled in Bird Conservancy's voluntary range management and wildlife habitat programs in Mexico. Using birds as indicators of a healthy landscape, Bird Conservancy shares techniques for managing livestock, water, and other natural resources to increase productivity and enhance habitat for birds. The result is a win-win for people, birds and business—many of which are family owned operations.

Bird Conservancy's efforts focus on the full annual cycle of birds' lives, which includes the breeding grounds and habitat conservation in Northern Colorado. Since 2006, we have partnered with City of Fort Collins on the [Mountains to Plains](#) program to inventory and monitor grassland birds on city-owned properties in Larimer and Weld counties. Through this effort, roughly 3,800 acres of prime grassland bird habitat within Soapstone Prairie Natural Area will be protected for a 20-year period. The NMBCA has been a critical partner in informing the City's management of grasslands in the Mountains to Plains area through its support of Bird Conservancy's long-term monitoring of grassland birds on their properties, which began in 2006 and has in turn allowed the City to respond to management challenges in real-time and take actions to restore declining populations.

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Accompanying Photos with captions:



Chestnut-collared Longspurs on the wintering grounds in the Chihuahuan Desert grasslands face habitat loss by conversion of grasslands to agriculture, grazing mismanagement, shrub encroachment, and drought.

Photo by José Hugo Martínez

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A Grasshopper Sparrow outfitted with a tiny radio transmitter is released. NMBCA funds help support bird monitoring programs that give insight into causes of this species' decline.

Photo by Isaac Morales

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Soapstone natural area north of Fort Collins is a haven for grassland birds. Photo by Denis Perez

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Stock tank escape ladders installed on partner ranches in Chihuahua, Mexico help reduce the risk of birds such as Aplomado Falcons from accidental drowning. Photo by

Erin Strasser

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