

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN  
BIRD OBSERVATORY**

---

2010 ANNUAL REPORT



www.rmbo.org

## MISSION

conserving birds and their habitats

## VISION

healthy, native bird populations  
sustained in healthy,  
native ecosystems

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*RMBO staff and board members ventured to Pingree Park high in the Rockies for a strategic planning retreat in October 2010.*

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Staff members as of June 2011

#### FORMER STAFF MEMBERS

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Linda Alexander, Communications Specialist  
Loni Beyer, Biologist

Bart Bly, Nebraska Prairie Partners Coordinator  
Frank Cardone, GIS Specialist

Caleb Caton, Farm Bill Biologist

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Amanda Filipi, Nebraska Education Coordinator

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Larry and Tammy

## BIRD’S-EYE VIEW INFORMS CONSERVATION ON THE GROUND

Tammy VerCauteren, Executive Director

Migrating birds typically fly about a mile up, though they can range from 500 to 20,000 feet. Those of us working to conserve them need to have a 30,000-foot view to take in the birds and the landscape and ensure our efforts are strategic.

Operating at 30,000 feet is not for the weak. Many concerns, challenges and obstacles are seen at this level – but also many opportunities. This big-picture perspective helps us identify top priorities for bird conservation and Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory’s role in addressing them. At our strategic-planning session in October 2010, RMBO’s staff and board members identified loss of habitat and a society disconnected from the land as two significant drivers of bird population declines. We recognize that engaging people – children, students, parents, public land managers, private landowners and others – is vital to achieve truly successful conservation of birds and their habitats.

All of our work involves building relationships and inspiring and guiding people to be involved in conservation. We open new doors to nature for thousands of youth annually to foster wonder, exploration and, ultimately, understanding of the land and the importance of conserving it. We visit with rural landowners who are making grazing and other land-management decisions to share with them strategies for successfully integrating production and wildlife conservation. We collect information on birds across the West and Mexico to help public and private land managers decide where to cut for timber harvests, how to control beetle-infested areas, and how to best manage recreation and wildlife.

Obviously we spend most of our time working on the ground rather than at 30,000 feet. Both perspectives inform all of our efforts. Among the most important of those efforts are engaging and empowering people to contribute to a healthy environment for birds and all of us – today, tomorrow and centuries from now.

## IMPACT IS WHEN ACTION MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Larry Modesitt, Chairman of the Board

- **Of what value is monitoring bird population trends?** See how our Science team gathers and uses information to develop specific actions that support bird conservation on page 2.
- **What is the impact of RMBO’s Education efforts?** See how RMBO’s education methods positively impact both teachers and learners on page 4.
- **Can private landowners benefit conservation and sustain their livelihood as well?** See how RMBO’s stewardship biologists help landowners take actions that improve both land productivity and bird conservation on page 6.
- **How does RMBO’s work in faraway Mexico help “our” birds?** See how RMBO’s groundbreaking approaches in Mexico impact the health of birds we see in summer on page 8.

As campers and hikers we are asked to “leave no trace” in the environment as we go by, and we understand. If we make no impact in a threatened environment, however, our inaction—whether through ignorance or apathy—leads to further deterioration. Making a positive difference matters—it matters a lot.

Some people watch what is happening, some wonder what happened, and some—the ones who make a difference—impact the world positively with beneficial actions. We can all take steps to help conserve birds and their habitats, including lending our support to Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory’s domestic and international science, stewardship and education work. Each of us can make an impact, individually and together.



### Photo credits:

Thanks to Bill Schmoker for: Brewer’s Sparrow (p. 2), Belted Kingfisher (p.3), Indigo Bunting (p.5), Long-billed Curlew (p.6), Lark Bunting (p.7), top to bottom (p.13): Virginia Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, American Goldfinch.

Cover: Male and female Montezuma Quail by Greg Levandoski

Inside front cover: Fall 2010 retreat by Deborah Cowan.

Page 1: Executive Director and Board Chairman by Kurt VerCauteren; McGillivray’s Warbler by Tom Munson.

Page 3: Map by Rob Sparks; Profile photo courtesy of Robert Skorkosky.

Page 4-5: Left and top, Volunteer Naturalist Amber Tyler leading day camp activities; bottom, Nebraska education activity, all courtesy of RMBO Education Team.

Page 6-7: Cattle in northwest Colorado sagebrush; biologist Brandon Miller with Sage-Grouse hen, both courtesy of Brandon Miller.

Page 8: High grasslands near Durango, Mexico, and map by Greg Levandoski; Jorge Carranza and American Kestrel, Janos, Chihuahua, by Arvind Panjabi.

Page 9: Baird’s Sparrow by Jose Hugo Martinez; Paul Slingsby by Charles Hundertmark.

Page 11: Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl in Mexico by Ken Rosenberg; Profile photo courtesy of Ed Warner.

Page 12: White-faced Ibis by Jeff Birek.

Inside back cover: Vestas volunteers working at Environmental Learning Center by Kacie Ehrenberger.

Back cover: Top left, Colorado meadow by Jean Tate; top right, South Dakota marsh by Nancy Drilling; center left and right, grasslands in Janos, Chihuahua, Mexico, by Greg Levandoski; bottom left and right, Wyoming landscapes by Jeff Birek.

## RMBO ASSESSES BREWER'S SPARROW REAL ESTATE

In human terms, investigating bird habitat at two scales is somewhat like deciding where to live, says Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory biometrician David Pavlacky. Does the local community have suitable amenities, and is the larger region stable and prosperous?

The IMBCR (see story this page) uses a new statistical model to estimate bird occupancy at both a small scale reflecting a species' occurrence in local territories and a large scale reflecting its regional occurrence. "Most studies use one scale or the other," Pavlacky said. "Our approach accounts for both simultaneously, which gives a more complete, and I think accurate, picture of a species habitat use."

The Brewer's Sparrow, a species of concern in the Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau Bird Conservation Region (BCR 16), is the first to be analyzed using this model. It only exists in an environment of sagebrush vegetation, and land-use practices that alter the vegetation's condition can impact this bird.

Findings from the analysis are useful for guiding land-management practices and habitat conservation for Brewer's Sparrows. Using the model to determine how habitat conditions influence Brewer's Sparrows in Colorado and Wyoming portions of BCR 16, RMBO has made several recommendations about grazing and forestry practices at the local scale and habitat loss and fragmentation at the regional scale.

## HUGE SURVEY REVEALING BIGGER PICTURE FOR BIRD CONSERVATION

Nearly 70 biologists and field technicians observed 290 bird species as they conducted 10,273 point counts from May 1 to July 30 in 2010. They spread out over parts of 13 states in the Rocky Mountains, Great Plains and Southwest for one of North America's biggest breeding landbird monitoring projects, the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR).

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and its partners implemented IMBCR after a two-year pilot program. They welcome its spatially balanced, random sampling design and broad survey area, which allow researchers to infer avian species occurrence and abundance at different scales – from local to Bird Conservation Regions (see map). This is a big step forward, according to RMBO Science Director David Hanni.

"In the past, monitoring programs for states and forests and other jurisdictions used different study designs that we couldn't compare to get the big picture," Hanni said. "Now, we are able to integrate all the data we gather to get good population and occupancy estimates over larger areas. It's really about partners working

together instead of each one developing their own projects."

Hanni credits the IMBCR with reducing costs and giving a clearer picture of birds' status, distribution and population trends. "If you are just looking at one forest, you may be concerned by a species decline," he said. "But if you can compare data on a larger scale, you may see that the population is stable."

RMBO and its partners surveyed 946 transects throughout the study area in 2010, obtaining sufficient numbers of observations to estimate the density of 150 species, including 59 priority species. The duration of point counts was increased from five to six minutes in 2010 to improve estimates of bird occupancy. As always, habitat composition was recorded at each point-count site.

All of this – and more – data will be analyzed, compared over years and shared so land can be managed to conserve habitat for birds and other wildlife. RMBO's online Avian Data Center is being redesigned and updated to better share the information.

"If land managers are thinning a forest, how

## 2010 SCIENCE HIGHLIGHTS



### COUNTING FLAMMULATED OWLS

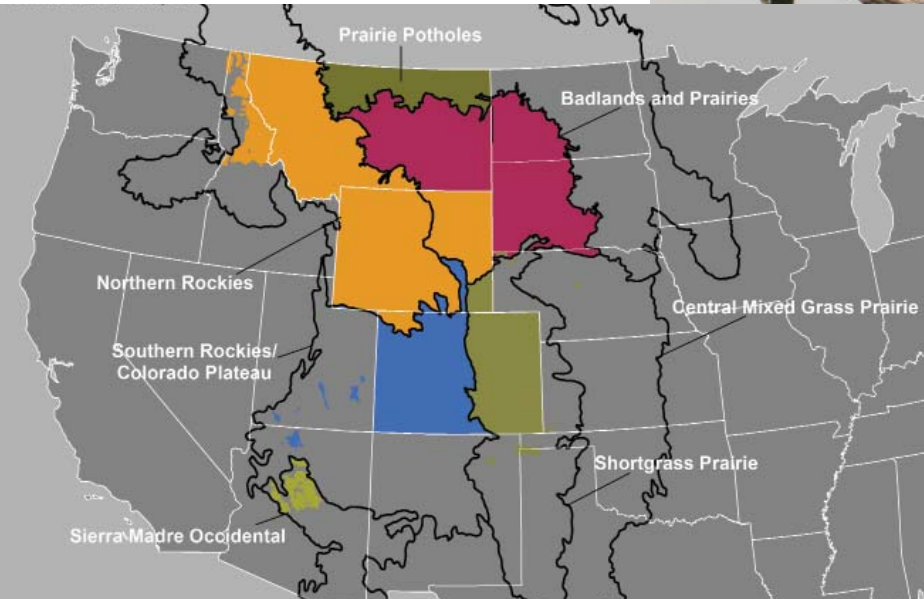
Although it is broadly distributed in North America's temperate coniferous forests, little is known about the Flammulated Owl's population size in the various forest-cover types it inhabits. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory developed and tested a sampling design in 2010 to estimate site occupancy rates of the owls on public land in California, Colorado, Idaho and Utah in collaboration with the USFWS, the USFS, Idaho Bird Observatory, HawkWatch International and PRBO Conservation Science. 2010 results helped RMBO refine the sampling design for surveys occurring in five western states in 2011.



*Profile: Robert Skorkosky,  
U.S. Forest Service, Partner*

## LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP WORKS FOR BIRDS

Robert C. Skorkowsky has two parts to his job with the U.S. Forest Service. As District Wildlife Biologist he works with birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians running the wildlife program for the Hahns Peak/Bears Ears Ranger District on the Routt National Forest in northern Colorado. His other title is Avian Program Coordinator for Region 2, which includes national forests and grasslands in Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas. In that job he develops and implements regional programs, including annual songbird monitoring and special species monitoring for such birds as the Northern Goshawk and the Flammulated Owl. RMBO has worked closely with the Forest Service Region 2 for more than 14 years. "These monitoring efforts are almost always partnerships since birds don't care who owns the land," Robert said. **"I have had the pleasure of working with RMBO for the last six years. It is a wonderful organization, an essential partner in these bird conservation programs and many times is the glue that holds the partnerships together.** RMBO brings tremendous skill, capacity and flexibility to meeting the goals of the various partnership efforts."



RMBO conducted surveys in colored areas; Bird Conservation Regions are outlined in black.

will birds respond? This work will answer questions like that," Hanni said.

IMBCR serves as a model for other long-term monitoring efforts as it addresses the conservation and management needs of a wide range of stakeholders, landowners and

government entities at both local and regional levels. RMBO biologist Chris White took part in IMBCR and claims it "is the wave of the future in our opinion."

See the full 2010 IMBCR report at [www.rmbo.org](http://www.rmbo.org) in the report archives.

### RMBO STUDIES MOUNTAIN PLOVER CHICK SURVIVAL

RMBO has been active in Mountain Plover research and conservation in western Nebraska since 2001. Working with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and Nebraska Environmental Trust, RMBO has estimated plover migration dates, nesting chronology, breeding distribution, habitat preferences, and population size and has partnered with 68 private landowners to protect nests on thousands of acres. RMBO began research on chick survival in 2010 and documented 79 percent nest survival and 54 percent chick survival, which are much higher rates than found elsewhere. In 2011 RMBO will continue research on chick survival under different weather conditions.

### SCIENTISTS SOLVING BLACK SWIFT MYSTERY

RMBO's Special Monitoring Projects Coordinator Jason Beason was amazed when a geolocator from a Black Swift was recovered at Fulton Resurgence Cave in Colorado's Flat Top Wilderness on August 23, 2010. Geolocators were placed on four Black Swifts in western Colorado in 2009. One had already been recovered in July at the same cave and another at Box Canyon in Ouray in early August. Of all bird species in the mainland U.S. and Canada, only the Black Swifts' winter destination has been unknown. Scientists interpreting the geolocators' data plan to publish the results in 2011.

### FIELD TECH SPOTS RARE BIRD IN SOUTH DAKOTA

While working as an RMBO field technician in the Black Hills in summer 2010, Eric Ripma spotted an Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, a Mexican species never seen north of Texas. When RMBO's South Dakota Projects Coordinator Nancy Drilling arrived at 6 a.m. the next day, 14 birders from five states were looking at the rare songster. By the time the thrush disappeared 33 days later, an estimated 400 people had traveled to South Dakota to see it. RMBO surveyed many of the people who went to see the bird and shared the results with area businesses, tourist agencies and land managers to illuminate birding's benefits to the local economy.

# EDUCATION

## VOLUNTEERS ANSWER DAUNTING QUESTION

A single question marked the genesis of RMBO's volunteer naturalist program. When Kacie Ehrenberger started her job as education director in 2009, she looked at her staff of one and the education program's commitments in Colorado and thought, "How are two of us going to see 6,000 kids?"



She applied for and received a grant for an AmeriCorps VISTA member who came to RMBO in August 2009 and began soliciting volunteer applicants, planning training and making schedules. "Our VISTA made the naturalist program happen," Ehrenberger said. "We hope to find funds for a permanent volunteer coordinator when the VISTA's term ends."

Colorado Education Coordinator Cassy Bohnet reports that the naturalists made it possible for RMBO to reach out to 6,964 people in 2010.

## VOLUNTEER NATURALISTS IMPACT THOUSANDS – INCLUDING THEMSELVES

Amber Tyler was surprised when she toted up the time she donated to Rocky Mountain Observatory in her first year as a volunteer naturalist. It was more than 200 hours.

Tyler is one of the 12 graduates of RMBO's first class of volunteer naturalists who completed nearly 40 hours of training in February 2010. In return, each naturalist contributes at least 40 hours a year teaching family, school and home-school programs, designing curricula, leading camps and staffing events. They work at RMBO's new environmental learning center (see page 5) and also at schools, parks and events across the Denver metro region.

Education Director Kacie Ehrenberger is elated that the volunteers reach thousands of people with RMBO's conservation messages, but she especially enjoys the effect their work has on the volunteers themselves. "People ask me about the impact we have, besides the numbers," Ehrenberger said. "One impact I see is volunteers excited about how much they have learned."

She recalls Malinda, a volunteer who was upset about the pine beetle infestation in the West's forests. "After a training activity drawing pictures of how such a forest would look in 20, 50 and 100 years, she felt much better," Ehrenberger said. "The pictures of lush landscapes and wildlife helped her realize the forests would be OK."



Tyler, who has a degree in environmental studies, volunteers at her son's school where she had been performing routine tasks but now leads reading, science and math lessons thanks in part to her RMBO training. "I took the strategies and methods from RMBO into my son's classroom and tried out new ways of teaching data analysis even with first graders," Tyler said. "Not only do they get it, the ones who get it best tend to be the kids who rarely complete classwork."

She says the volunteer naturalists treat all the kids as "outstanding participants" in their own learning. "What they get from seeing and hearing nature is up to them," Tyler said. "Instead of telling them to sit still, pay attention, learn this and remember that, we ask them what catches your eye, your ear? What makes you curious? What do you think, wonder and care about? Why do you think this place has value? **When we ask kids to experience nature with all their senses, they connect with it.** It is every bit as relevant as traditional school subjects and offers them opportunities they rarely get otherwise."

## 2010 EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

### RMBO AMONG FIRST TO WIN COLORADO KIDS OUTDOORS GRANT

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's capacity to get kids outside and to offer on-the-job training for high school and college students got a boost in 2010 with a \$50,000 grant to hire six interns and fund scholarships for 50 kids to attend summer camps in 2011. RMBO was one of four (out of 44) applicants to receive the new funding from Colorado Kids Outdoors (CKO) and the Department of Natural Resources. Some interns will help biologists conduct bird surveys in national forests, grasslands, parks and monuments. Others will develop curricula to engage kids in nature exploration and field investigations. The college-aged education interns will serve as directors and mentors at summer camps. Through such intern programs, RMBO helps cultivate a new generation of education and natural resource professionals with the ability to nurture connections between children and nature, develop rigorous scientific information on birds and engage the public in conservation.





## Looking ahead

Here are a few of the myriad activities Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's education team has in the works for 2011.

- **Bird Banding:** Spring banding stations operate at two Colorado locations in April and May. Fall banding stations operate at four locations in Colorado and two in Nebraska on various dates from August into October.
- **Summer Camps:** Several entertaining, educational summer day camps for youths ages 4 to 13 will be at RMBO's Old Stone House at Barr Lake State Park near Brighton, Colo. On the Wing, a weeklong camp for ages 13 to 15, will be at Camp Chief Ouray near Granby, Colo., in July.
- **Environmental Learning Center Ribbon-cutting at the BBQ for the Birds.** See inset. →
- **Walk on the Wild Side - Take Steps for a Healthy Community:** RMBO's first-ever walkathon will be October 1 at our Old Stone House Environmental Learning Center at Barr Lake State Park near Brighton, Colo. Everyone is welcome to participate as a team or individually in the 1K, 5K or 10K walk. Participants will be rewarded with enjoyable exercise, healthy snacks and great birding. All proceeds will benefit RMBO's environmental education program.

## CELEBRATE NEW LEARNING CENTER AT BBQ FOR THE BIRDS

The annual BBQ for the Birds on August 27, 2011, will also be the grand opening of the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) at RMBO's Old Stone House headquarters at Barr Lake State Park near Brighton, Colo. The governor, the mayor and other officials will be there to cut the ribbon, and "The Big Year" author Mark Obmascik will give the keynote talk following lunch.

Activities for children and adults, vendor workshops, live music, a silent auction, a tasty picnic, and much more are on the agenda, beginning at 7 a.m. with bird walks and bird banding. Guests can see the new ELC classroom, outdoor amphitheater, trails and interpretive signage. Demonstration native gardens will be planted in the fall.

*Make a reservation by August 22 at [kelly.thompson@rmbo.org](mailto:kelly.thompson@rmbo.org) or 303-659-4348 ext. 12.*

## RMBO EDUCATION STAFF CONNECTS FOR CONSERVATION IN TWO STATES

In 2010 Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory engaged thousands of citizens in conservation via school programs, workshops and public events throughout Colorado and Nebraska where we currently have education staff. More than 16,000 of these participants were students. In Nebraska's rural western panhandle, RMBO interacts with nearly one-third of the K-12 students every year. Our Colorado education programs focus on the Denver metro area, but through our bird banding stations we reach students from north-eastern Colorado to Colorado Springs and Grand Junction.

## THREE GROUPS GIVE ONGOING SUPPORT TO EDUCATION

The Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's education program received funding in 2010 from three long-standing partners. Thank you to the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, Adams County Open Space and Nebraska Environmental Trust.



# STEWARDSHIP

## Looking ahead

In 2011 the Stewardship Program is adding four partnership positions in Colorado: a wildlife biologist in Gunnison, a wetlands biologist in Greeley and range ecologists in Lamar and Kremmling. By increasing Stewardship's outreach capabilities, these positions will help build a coalition of landowners and land managers who are actively involved in the conservation of lands important to birds, especially Gunnison Sage-Grouse, shorebirds and waterfowl, Lesser Prairie-Chicken, and Greater Sage-Grouse, respectively.

Stewardship biologists will continue building relationships with landowners and managers, learning about their land-management needs while raising awareness about birds and their habitat needs, with a goal of finding common ground for implementing effective habitat enhancement projects. The biologists will offer technical advice and continue to find funding for projects through sources such as Farm Bill conservation programs, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, and North American Wetlands Conservation Act.

## BIOLOGISTS STRIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE RANCHES AND SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT

Brandon Miller was riding shotgun in a Moffat County rancher's pickup in late spring of 2010, bouncing down a two-track across a ranch that is home to 10,000 acres of Greater Sage-Grouse core-area habitat near Great Divide in northwestern Colorado.

"You know, I think of sagebrush like I do any other crop – it needs to be rotated," the rancher said.

They gazed across the expanse of sagebrush largely mowed into strips or chemically sprayed to allow for increased grass production. **Considering Sage-Grouse survival depends on sagebrush, which takes 30 years to mature, Brandon, a private lands wildlife biologist with Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, knew he had to find common ground with this rancher and his neighbors.**

The path to that common ground is the Sage Grouse Initiative launched by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 2010 with the goals of Sage-Grouse conservation and sustainability of working ranches. Willing participants are drawn to the effort because it benefits both ranches and the grouse.

The Greater Sage-Grouse is a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. It is in the interest of all parties – and the bird – to keep the species viable and off of the endangered species list. Through the Initiative and with the assistance of partners including the NRCS, USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Brandon has laid out a strategy for conserving sage-grouse habitat in the Great Divide core-area.

An important limiting factor for the region's Sage-Grouse is their brood-rearing summer habitat, typically springs, wet meadows or riparian areas adjacent to sagebrush, which offers protein-rich insects and forbs to eat. Springs and wet meadows were once plentiful across this landscape according to stories Brandon hears while visiting with long-time ranchers whose families homesteaded here. Such habitat is no longer abundant where outdated grazing



practices have contributed to water tables dropping and gullies appearing. Other wet-habitat features have been lost to drought or dammed for livestock ponds.

Brandon provides technical assistance and helps land owners access funds for infrastructure to improve the management and viability of their ranches and restore a healthy home for Greater Sage-Grouse. He collaborates with ranchers on strategies to improve springs, wet meadows and riparian areas, or, in some cases, artificially re-create what once existed. For example, excess overflow from wells higher up on the landscape is creating new springs. Rotational grazing systems are reducing the overuse of





# 2010 STEWARDSHIP HIGHLIGHTS



## GUIDE FOCUSES ON IMPORTANCE OF SAGEBRUSH HABITAT

One of the largest yet most underappreciated ecosystems in North America, sagebrush lands are undergoing vast alterations through energy development, urban sprawl, exotic species invasion and outdated grazing practices. Sagebrush is ranked one of the most threatened bird habitats, and alterations are causing population declines for species such as Sage-Grouse, Brewer's Sparrow and Sage Thrasher, making them high priorities for conservation. Recognizing that birds are indicators of ecosystem health, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory partnered with PRBO Conservation Science to develop the *Pocket Guide to Sagebrush Birds*. The guide emphasizes 40 species and includes tips on identification, biology, and conservation. Raising awareness for these birds with landowners and land managers is a critical step in conserving this important habitat and the wildlife that depend on it.

### Pocket Guide to Sagebrush Birds



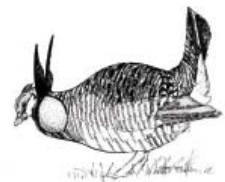
Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory and PRBO Conservation Science



## FENCE MARKERS SAVE PRAIRIE CHICKENS

Collisions with barbed-wire fences account for more than 40 percent of Lesser Prairie-Chicken mortality according to a long-term study by George Miksch Sutton Avian Research Center in Oklahoma. Fences

### Prairie Chicken Fence Marking Kits

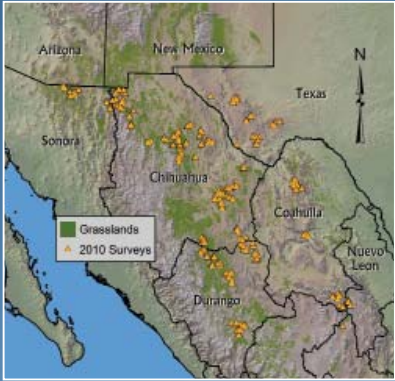


marked with tags reduce this problem. Funded by a National Fish & Wildlife Foundation/ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Migratory Birds grant, RMBO and its partners made enough kits to mark 26 miles of fences with tags and have been working with landowners to install them. The markers are required on parcels in proximity to prairie-chicken leks when the landowner enrolls in habitat enhancement efforts with partner organizations. The fence-marking kits are an effective outreach tool to heighten awareness for prairie-chicken conservation.

these areas with cross fences and wells for off-site water storage to draw livestock away and help them access a wider array of forage across the landscape. This also improves residual grass and forb cover, which the grouse use for food, hiding and thermoregulation. Grazed every three to five years, riparian pastures rejuvenate their vegetation and are healthier for wildlife.

The rancher Brandon first visited with in the pickup truck is no longer eradicating sagebrush, and he plans to drill three wells piped to 13 tanks, create several artificial seeps and enhance 2.5 miles of riparian and wet meadow habitat.





## CHIHUAHUAN DESERT GRASSLANDS GET OVERDUE ATTENTION

Where do North America's grassland birds concentrate in winter, and what happens to them while they are there? Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's International Program is supplying answers to these questions, which are key to conserving critical habitat for declining grassland species.

Among our findings is that more small grassland birds, such as Vesper Sparrows, survive the winter when the grass in their habitat is at least eight inches (20 cm) tall, affording them better cover to elude predators. However, tall grass is getting harder to find in northern Mexico.

More than 80 percent of western North America's grassland bird species over-winter in the Chihuahuan Desert, where grasslands are rapidly disappearing through agricultural conversion and inadequate management. Prior to RMBO's efforts, little information on wintering grassland bird populations and their habitats was available to guide conservation.

"There was this black hole in the life cycle of migratory grassland birds," said RMBO's International Programs Director Arvind Panjabi. "That began to change when we launched the Chihuahuan Desert Wintering Grassland Bird Conservation Project. Now we know the types and locations of the most important habitats for high priority species and what management actions are needed to sustain their populations."

In January 2007, RMBO and Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León initiated a first-ever, region-wide survey to inventory, research and monitor wintering birds and their habitats at 468 randomly selected sites in seven Chihua-

huan Desert Grassland Priority Conservation Areas (GPCAs) in northern Mexico. By 2010, the project had grown to 735 sites in 11 GPCAs in northern Mexico and western Texas.

"Our work in Mexico benefits at least 30 species of grassland birds that nest in the Great Plains," Panjabi said. "Most of our migratory grassland birds depend heavily on the Chihuahuan Desert's limited grasslands for their survival, so continued loss and degradation of this habitat will only exacerbate ongoing population declines. The information we are gathering is needed to justify bold and immediate action to keep this continentally important ecosystem from disappearing."



### Key Partner: USFS International Programs

The U.S. Forest Service International Programs, a key RMBO partner, helps fund the science and develop the education and outreach tools to advance bird conservation in Mexico's Chihuahuan Desert grasslands. The USFS manages 3 million acres of U.S. national grasslands and the migratory birds that breed there, which makes conservation of wintering habitat a natural extension of its work.

## Looking ahead

RMBO's scientific work to advance grassland bird conservation in the Chihuahuan Desert will continue along with new initiatives to increase and enhance conservation efforts by government, NGOs, local communities and private individuals. RMBO aims to increase outreach, education, habitat protection and management, and strengthen alliances with new and longstanding partners. **RMBO remains the only U.S.-based NGO addressing the spiraling loss of habitat for North America's migratory grassland birds in northern Mexico.**

## 2010 INTERNATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



### PEOPLE, PARTNERS, PLANS, PUBLICATIONS & PRIORITY AREAS

- Dr. Duane Pool, landscape ecologist, Dr. Alberto Macias-Duarte, research ecologist, and Erin Youngberg, wildlife biologist, joined Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's International Program in 2010. Their expertise and cutting-edge skills augment RMBO's capacity to deliver guidance to land managers, policy makers and conservation practitioners.
- RMBO analyses revealed strong annual variation in distribution and abundance of wintering grassland birds, highlighting the need for long-term studies. Preliminary analyses of habitat use reveal the importance of grass cover and the negative effects of shrub encroachment. RMBO is racing to complete analyses, publish findings, disseminate best management practices and write conservation plans for species of concern.
- RMBO supported Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León research on agricultural habitat use by wintering grassland birds. Findings reveal a few species utilize agricultural lands extensively, although some suffer from reduced health.
- Using our data and input from diverse partners, RMBO redrew the map of North American Grassland Priority Conservation Areas to better encompass the most extensive and highest quality grasslands, particularly in the Chihuahuan Desert.
- RMBO played a key role in producing "*Saving our Shared Birds: The Partners in Flight Tri-National Vision*." This call to action emphasizes the need for international cooperation to save the continent's most vulnerable birds. RMBO helped develop the scientific foundation for the document, including the assessment of more than 800 Mexican species.
- RMBO helped launch the Chihuahuan Desert Grassland Regional Conservation Alliance, a Mexican-led initiative to increase communication, cooperation and synergy among stakeholders in the rapidly disappearing grasslands of northern Mexico.

RMBO will also branch out in Mexico in 2011, working with partners in Jalisco to identify and protect key habitats for migratory and resident birds. The diverse forests of western Mexico are the primary wintering grounds for most migrant birds breeding in western North America. This new project will unite partners from the Universidad de Guadalajara, the state of Jalisco and CONAFOR, Mexico's National Forestry Commission, to integrate birds into forest management and help direct millions of dollars in conservation funds toward key bird habitats.

### Profile: Paul Slingsby, Volunteer

#### VOLUNTEER WIELDS GAVEL, BRUSH & BINOCULARS

For nearly two decades, Paul Slingsby's volunteer roles at RMBO have ranged from board chairman to citizen scientist to handyman. He recalls service on the board as the most demanding challenge, but "my most memorable job was restoration of the Old Stone House," Paul said. He helped demolish old plaster and paint new walls and tried to keep mice out of the trailer, "but that was futile." He still works on the house, recently constructing a storage room for education materials. An avid birder, skier and hiker, Paul enjoys participating in Colony-Watch in North Park and in HawkWatch at Dinosaur Ridge. In 2010 he became the first recipient of RMBO's Nelda Gamble Volunteer Award.



## 2010 VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to these people who donated their time and talent to help RMBO conserve birds and their habitats and to RMBO staff members who donated more than 4,400 unpaid hours.

Meredith Anderson	Dave Fletcher	Michael Kiessig	Todd Patrick
Jocie Baker	Kate Frost	David Klute	Richard Peterson
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Jennifer Bohn	Lisa Haack	Debra Mallory	Jan Sailer
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Drew Cashman	Dona Hilkey	Brock McCormick	Pauli Smith
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Coen Dexter	Terry Hunter	Scott Miller	Margaret Turco
Eileen Dowd-Stukel	Bill Huser	Larry Modesitt	Jenyva Turner
Kathy Doyle	Jennifer Hyypio	Glenn Moravek	Amber Tyler
Rosemary Draeger	Joseph Jacques	Amanda Morrison	Ron Van Ommeren
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Paula Fischer	Cindi Kelly	Ken Pals	Kathryn Zlomke
Ellen Fisher	Silka Kempema	Tom Parchman	

# 2010 MEMBERS & DONORS

Thank you to the following people who supported Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's bird and habitat conservation work in 2010. Basic one-year memberships are \$35 for individuals and \$60 for families. RMBO welcomes and appreciates contributions in any amount. Please visit [rmbo.org](http://rmbo.org) or call 303-659-4348 ext. 12 for information.

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### Profile: Ed Warner & Jackie Erickson, Friends

#### RMBO FRIENDS SUPPORT GETTING KIDS OUTDOORS

My wife, Jackie, and I support Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's education programs because they are experiential. The classroom is important, but the smell and feel of the out-of-doors is the critical linkage RMBO understands and delivers to the kids. Back in 2007, I met RMBO's Executive Director

Tammy VerCauteren at a shortgrass prairie meeting and then again at a conference at Colorado State University. I recognized kindred spirits in Tammy personally and RMBO as an organization. As a volunteer with the Denver Museum of Nature and Science and adjunct professor at CSU, I had worked for years with young people – from kindergarten kids to doctoral candidates – conveying my love of science and nature. I know that the critical issue is exposing kids to nature, capturing their imagination and giving them a basis for a non-urban world view.



*RMBO makes every effort to maintain accurate and up-to-date records. If you were a member or donor in 2010 and your name does not appear on this list, please accept our apologies and let us know by emailing james.pauley@rmbo.org or calling 303-659-4348 ext. 14.*



# PARTNERS

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIRD OBSERVATORY FINANCIAL SUMMARY | FY 2010

### REVENUES

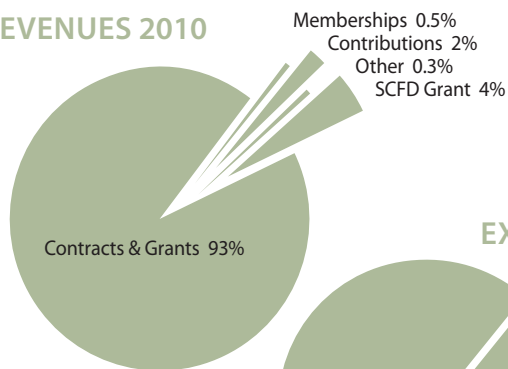
Contributions	\$65,878
Memberships	\$16,176
SCFD Grant	\$132,041
Contracts and Grants	\$2,848,426
Other	\$8,959
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$3,071,480</b>

### EXPENSES

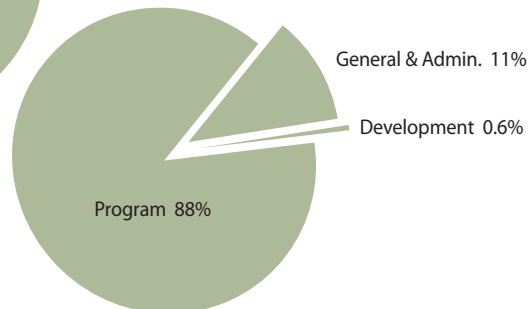
Program	\$2,659,271
General & Admin.	\$347,057
Development	\$17,232
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$3,023,560</b>

Change in Net Assets \$47,920

### REVENUES 2010



### EXPENSES 2010



Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding. The financial information presented here is based on the audited financial statements of Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. Please see [rmb.o.org](http://rmb.o.org) for the full audit report including note disclosures.

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

- Adams County Open Space
- Aiken Audubon
- American Bird Conservancy
- Audubon Society of Greater Denver
- Audubon Wyoming
- Avian Knowledge Alliance
- Barr Lake State Park
- The Binky Foundation
- Bird Studies Canada
- Biodiversidad y Desarrollo Armónico (BIDA)
- Black Canyon Audubon Society
- Branson Trinchera Conservation District
- Bureau of Land Management
- Butterfly Pavilion
- Canadian Wildlife Service
- Chadron State Park
- Chatfield State Park
- Chico Basin Ranch
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- City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program
- City of Fort Collins Utilities Department
- Colorado Association of Conservation Districts
- Colorado Chautauqua Association
- Colorado Department of Natural Resources
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Colorado Field Ornithologists
- Colorado Mountain Club
- Colorado Natural Heritage Program
- Colorado State Parks
- Colorado State University
- Commission for Environmental Cooperation
- CONABIO
- Confluent Design
- ConocoPhillips
- Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- Denver Field Ornithologists
- Friends of Dinosaur Ridge
- Ducks Unlimited
- Eagle Optics
- Educational Service Unit 13
- Environment for the Americas
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Farm Service Agency
- Friends of Barr Lake
- Front Range Birding Company
- Grand Valley Audubon Society
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- HawkWatch International
- Hudson Gardens and Event Center
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- Intermountain West Joint Venture
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- Jones and Jones Architects
- Karval Community Alliance
- Klamath Bird Observatory
- Kimball County Conservation Collaborative
- Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
- Montana Natural Heritage Program

# & FUNDERS

Thank you to the following agencies, organizations and businesses who supported Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's bird and habitat conservation work in 2010.

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Nebraska Forest Service  
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Nebraska National Forest  
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North Platte Natural Resources District  
Northern Great Plains Joint Venture  
Partners in Flight  
Pheasants Forever  
Playa Lakes Joint Venture  
PRBO Conservation Science  
Profauna Coahuila  
Pronatura Noreste  
Pronatura Sur  
Ranchlands Learning & Research Center  
Ridgway State Park  
Rio Grande Joint Venture  
Riverside Zoo  
S & S Optika  
Sandhills Task Force  
Scientific and Cultural Collaborative  
The Shortgrass Prairie Partnership  
Sonoran Joint Venture  
South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks

South Platte Natural Resources District  
Sul Ross State University  
The Tamarisk Coalition  
Three Rivers Alliance  
Upper Niobrara-White Natural Resources District  
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Wirestone, INC  
World Wildlife Fund  
Wyoming Bird Habitat Conservation Partnership  
Wyoming Game & Fish Department  
Wyoming Natural Diversity Database



## *Profile: Vestas Nacelles America, Inc., Partner/Funder*

### **WIND-POWER COMPANY GIVES RMBO A LIFT**

Vestas Nacelles America, Inc., a wind power company with a factory in Brighton, Colo., is a corporate Friend of Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. Vestas funded camp scholarships and t-shirts for 2010 day campers and opened its doors to let some of our older campers and their parents visit the facility in June to learn about wind power and how the factory operates. In addition, Vestas sent 45 of their staff members in November to help create our new Environmental Learning Center, working on the prairie trail, removing old fence, painting the shed and removing mullein from around RMBO's Old Stone House. We appreciate the investment Vestas is making in RMBO and how the company is becoming part of the community by supporting Brighton's youth and families.





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