

Department of Defense Partners in Flight

2018 ANNUAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Our Mission

Providing expertise on the management and conservation of birds and their habitats to sustain and enhance the military mission

Mission Support through Focused Conservation!

The primary goal of the Department of Defense Natural Resources Program is to facilitate optimal access to and use of our ranges and training areas to support military readiness. Federal legislation, such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Executive Order 13186 (*Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*), and the National Environmental Policy Act, require impact analysis of military readiness and non-readiness activities on migratory birds. While sound natural resource management often directly supports mission objectives, balancing the conservation of sensitive and protected resources with military testing, training and operations can be challenging.

DoD manages its lands, which provide a critical network of natural ecosystems and habitats for migratory birds, by implementing Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs). INRMPs guide natural resources management activities in ways that help ensure “no net loss” of mission capability, while also providing for conservation, rehabilitation, and sustained multipurpose use of installation lands.

DoD Partners in Flight (PIF), comprised of a network of DoD natural resources professionals and subject matter experts, facilitates actions to conserve and enhance migratory birds and their habitats in direct support of the military mission. The DoD PIF network works with range and other DoD personnel, state and regional PIF working groups, non-government organizations, academic researchers, and natural resources consultants to collectively promote and coordinate bird conservation across DoD lands.

DoD PIF website

<https://denix.osd.mil/dodpif>

2018 DoD PIF Accomplishments and Future Priorities

Accomplishments

- ◆ Provided guidance to DoD leadership and resource managers on the implementation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and related Executive Orders following the release of the Department of the Interior Solicitor's M-Opinion which reinterpreted the relevancy of incidental take under the MBTA. Worked with OSD to release guidance directing installations "stay the course" for migratory bird conservation.
- ◆ Supported DoD's engagement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on policy, guidance, and other issues relevant to managing and monitoring migratory birds on military lands.
- ◆ Provided instruction on the MBTA for the U.S. Naval Civil Engineer Corps Officers School (CECOS) and as part of an expert panel at the DoD Sustaining Military Readiness Conference.
- ◆ Using Navy and Air Force data, completed an assessment of the most hazardous species to a safe military flight environment. Helped complete a study that recommends regional vegetation heights designed to be used in the airfield environment to decrease the threat of Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH).
- ◆ Worked with OSD to successfully migrate the DoD PIF website to the DoD Environment, Safety and Occupational Health Network and Information Exchange (DENIX) website.
- ◆ Created master DoD PIF subject matter experts (SME) list, identifying DoD contacts for a wide array of subjects (e.g., avian taxa, specific geographies, avian management topics).
- ◆ Worked with federal partners to create the Federal Avian Data Center node of the Avian Knowledge Network to support required NEPA and impact analysis of DoD activities on migratory birds and combine and archive avian data.

Priorities and Goals

- ◆ Provide technical assistance to installation biologists to support overall management of migratory bird populations in support of federal statutes, and to ensure migratory birds are sufficiently addressed in INRMPS and that management enhances mission flexibility.
- ◆ Improve communication, coordination, and cooperation between Air Operations and Natural Resource programs including integrating BASH plans into INRMPS to mitigate and reduce strike hazards.
- ◆ Develop a summary and guidance document for the recently finalized DoD list of Mission-Sensitive species, which are at-risk species that, if listed, would have the greatest impacts to mission implementation. The list helps installations prioritize monitoring programs and NEPA documents, and guides the development and prioritization of conservation actions.
- ◆ Identify emerging issues related to migratory bird management and mission requirements.



Tufted Titmouse — Paul Block