



## *Migratory Species Program*

Ensuring the preservation, restoration and stewardship of the phenomenon of species migration and abundance.



### Background

The National Park Service (NPS) is the manager of over 83 million acres of terrestrial and aquatic habitat, much of which is important to migratory species. The variety of migratory species found in national parks is impressive. While many people are familiar with the phenomenon of bird migration, fewer realize that a much greater diversity of animal species also migrates regularly. Habitats found within the national park system important to migratory species include sea turtle breeding beaches, cetacean and pinniped breeding and calving habitats, pronghorn corridors, salmon spawning areas, breeding and hibernation caves for migratory bats, calving areas and migration corridors for caribou, and numerous sites important to migratory insects.

Even today, when “external threats” to the national parks are discussed, they typically refer to threats occurring in the immediate proximity to a particular park or threats with a more immediately recognizable impact on a park—encroaching development, water and air pollution, and invasive plants and animals. Rarely are threats that migratory species face hundreds or thousands of miles from a national park acknowledged as impacting the park’s ecology.

Threats to migratory species inside and outside national parks are well documented: habitat loss and fragmentation (roads, energy development, pesticides, overharvesting, invasive species, collisions with ships, buildings, transmission lines and communication towers). These threats to migratory species pose an ever-increasing challenge to the ability of the NPS to carry out its mission to preserve park resources, in addition to being a leader in the global conservation community. Managing even “resident” species has proven to be difficult in many national parks where the NPS has nearly complete control over the species’ habitat. Preserving migratory species in the national parks is significantly more complicated because this requires NPS collaboration with other agencies, organizations and even countries. Coordination with adjacent landowners is essential, but truly effective action to preserve migratory species requires collaboration at all levels and partnerships between government agencies and non-governmental organizations, including international partnerships.

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## Status

The NPS stands to gain much from increasing its involvement in efforts to preserve migratory species. During the decade, a variety of partnerships and other institutional arrangements have been developed to better coordinate efforts to preserve and manage migratory species. These include Partners in Flight, the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, Fishery Management Councils, the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign, and others. However, NPS participation in these partnerships has generally been uncoordinated and sporadic, making it difficult to incorporate its concerns into on-the-ground restoration or stewardship activities. **For the NPS to have a greater role in protecting the parks' migratory species, it will become engaged on a programmatic and Servicewide level.**

## Future Direction

- NPS is engaging with scientists from across the world to assess the status of migratory species that utilize park and adjacent lands.
- NPS recently hired a Servicewide ornithologist that will engage with private, federal and international partners in the preservation of migratory birds and their habitats in addition to overseeing the NPS Park Flight Program.

- A principal objective of the NPS Migratory Species Program is to develop a strategy designed to provide the NPS with a long-term approach to addressing many of the issues facing migratory species. NPS will provide a strategic approach to assessing the number of species and critical habitat and linkages for wildlife that spend short and long periods of time within the boundaries of our parks.
- It is critical that NPS collaborate with the scientific community in order to identify the appropriate areas of focus for stewardship of migratory species.