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Rare Bird Monitoring and Stewardship

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Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
PERFORMANCE REPORT (July 1, 1992 - June 30, 1993)

Project:	Nongame & Endangered Species Investigations	No:	WE99R-2
Study:	Bird Conservation	No:	IV-9
Job:	Rare Bird Monitoring & Stewardship	No.	A,B, C
Personnel:	Dana Bradshaw, Rick Reynolds, Karen Terwilliger	<u>Costs</u>	
		Total:	\$9,000
		State:	\$2,250
		Fed'l:	\$6,750

Status/Recommendations: On schedule, continue study

Summary

The Rare Bird Monitoring and Stewardship Program (RBMSPP) was introduced to the birding public through a series of staff presentations and articles published in prominent state ornithological newsletters. Data forms and information packages were provided to volunteers and data was compiled in a newly developed database for the program. This program appears to be a promising method of capturing information on rare breeders by utilizing an effective volunteer manpower source.

VDGIF also began work as the state coordinating agency for the national Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program. Two regional meetings were held with local, state, and federal cooperators to establish goals and objectives for implementation of the migratory bird program in Virginia. For monitoring initiatives, the Game Department set up 20 additional Breeding Bird Survey routes across the state, in addition to several smaller scale routes. DGIF also continued its efforts under the Rare Bird Monitoring Program, first established in 1990. Project personnel prepared guidelines for migratory bird habitat management to be incorporated into the Forestry Stewardship program, and as well as information for in-house use. For educational purposes, nongame staff prepared a 16-page color brochure on the plight of neotropical migratory birds for publication in Virginia Wildlife magazine and then later, under separate cover.

A. Objective: To develop and implement an effective volunteer program for monitoring and protecting Virginia rarest breeding birds.

Findings:

Responses from atlasers on the Rare Bird Monitoring and Stewardship Program are still being received and processed.

Activities of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program include:

Coordination: Two physiographic meetings were held to address implementation of Partners in Flight (PIF) and rank species and habitats. The first meeting was held in Richmond to address issues pertinent to the Coastal Plain and Piedmont physiographic regions. Presentations and discussions centered on an overview of PIF and highlights of research activities being conducted on neotropical migratory birds. The second meeting was held in Blacksburg to address issues pertinent to the Ridge and Valley physiographic region. Presentations and discussions centered on an overview of PIF, highlights of research and monitoring in the Ridge and Valley, and prioritization of species and habitats.

Future meetings will address development of working groups in each physiographic area to assist in guiding efforts in monitoring, management, research, and education.

Monitoring: One additional Breeding Bird Survey route was added to southwest Virginia. The existing routes were conducted as per USFWS protocol. The Jefferson National Forest expanded off-road transects in the Mt. Rogers Ranger District. The George Washington National Forest, in cooperation with VDGIF biologist, initiated development of a bird monitoring program. In addition, off-road monitoring continued this year in the Warm Springs Ranger District. Shenandoah National Park continued the monitoring of six MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) stations as well as four BBS routes. A VDGIF staff representative currently serves on the monitoring committee of the Southeast Working Group of the Partners in Flight Program.

Management: VDGIF biologists worked closely with the Forest Stewardship Program in developing guidelines for management of neotropical migratory birds on private lands. On the National Forest, neotropical migratory bird issues are conveyed to the Forest Service in the review of scoping notices and environmental reviews. Funds from the Nongame Program purchased Paul Hamel's "Land Manager's Guide to Birds of the Southeast" for distribution to agency biologists.

Education: Distribution of "Birds in Peril", a 16 page color brochure on the plight of neotropical migratory birds in Virginia, continued this year. This brochure is handed out at most talks given by VDGIF biologists.

Objective B: To complete a draft recovery plan for the Bewick's wren in Virginia.

Summary

The draft recovery plan has been developed and reviewed by the recovery team. Currently, the plan is being revised to incorporate the recovery team's comments. A network of volunteers has been established to identify bewick's wren nests and verify accuracy. In addition, mini-Breeding Bird Survey routes are being established in potential wren habitat. These routes will be conducted in the spring of 1994. Historic breeding sites were surveyed and no bewick's wrens were identified. Additional surveys were conducted at quarry sites in southwest Virginia and no

bewick's wrens were identified. Two bewick's wrens were reported in late July 1993. Currently, these sitings are being verified for accuracy.

Findings:

The draft recovery plan has been developed and reviewed by the recovery team. The plan is currently being revised to reflect the comments and suggestions of the reviewers. Final review will follow incorporation of the recovery teams comments.

Objective C: To survey and monitor Bewick's wren nests and describe the status of this species in Virginia.

Procedure:

A two year effort to determine the status and distribution of the bewick's wren in Virginia began this year. A literature review was conducted to compile all recent records of bewick's wren nests in Virginia. Due to the habitat around abandoned quarry sites and a recent breeding record at a quarry site, additional surveys will be conducted at these sites. All historic breeding sites will be surveyed. A network of volunteers, established through the Virginia Society of Ornithology, will report sitings of bewick's wrens. These sitings will be verified and further surveys will be conducted in those areas. In addition, mini-Breeding Bird Survey routes are being established in potential wren habitat. These routes will be conducted in the spring of 1994.

Findings:

No Bewick's wrens were located at historic breeding sites. Additional quarry sites were checked and no bewick's wrens were identified. Two bewick's wrens were reported in late July 1993. At present these sites are being visited to verify accuracy of sitings. This area will be marked for intensive survey next spring. Both mini-BBS routes and the volunteer network will continue through the 1993-94 field season.