



**ONTARIO PARTNERS IN FLIGHT  
BCR 13 WORKSHOP II  
Technical Advisory Committee  
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**MNR offices, 300 Water Street, Peterborough, ON  
15-16 April 2004**

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Copies of the background materials, presentations and summary notes from the workshop are posted on the Ontario Partners In Flight (PIF) website, <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/PIF/PIFOntario.html>.

### **Species Assessment Discussion**

#### *Changes to priority species list for BCR 13*

- **Action:** Drop Bay-breasted Warbler, Rusty Blackbird, Golden Eagle and Great Gray Owl.
- **Action:** Keep Prairie Warbler and breeding Short-eared Owl.
- If possible, include a comprehensive list of habitat needs (forest edge/interior, area sensitivity and matrix considerations) in the appendix that could be used by land managers in southern Ontario, e.g., based on Freemark & Collins and other work.
- **Action:** Incorporate interior/edge, area sensitivity and matrix considerations in the habitat objectives.

#### *Review of Habitat Guild Assignments for Priority Species*

- **Action:** Use a single forest bird guild, i.e., don't break out into closed mature, open and riparian (difficult to accurately assign species) but do cover off the various habitat structure/type needs of individual priority forest birds in text and/or appendix.
- **Action:** Move Kirtland's Warbler – it is a successional species found in jack pine stands and occurs with Eastern Towhee and Brown Thrasher.
- **Recommendation:** Indicate those species that are habitat obligate or have conservative requirements by using boldface in the table.
- **Action:** Circulate preliminary list of habitat obligates species to the TAC for review.
- Keep Aerial Insectivores – not a habitat suite, but useful to have it broken out to draw attention to declines.
- **Action:** Drop the “Wintering Raptors” category but reflect wintering concentrations within other habitat suites, e.g. Short-eared Owl in grassland, Bald Eagle in ‘shoreline’ habitat.
- If further analyses of habitat use show we have incorrectly grouped species, we will modify groupings accordingly.

#### *Review of Wetland-associated Priority Landbirds for BCR 13 table*

##### **Actions items:**

- Keep the Wetland-associated priority species table. It will need updating so decide how it will be presented (in appendix or on website, not in body of the plan).
- Assign birds to wetland habitat types (marsh, swamp, etc.) and use boldface for wetland obligate species.
- Consider similar tables for other non-wetland species as well.
- Change wording in table to post-breeding passerine concentrations (rather than roosts.)

## BCR 13 Landbird Plan Goals and Objectives

### Overall Conservation Goal

- *Sustain the distribution, diversity, and abundance of native landbird populations and their habitats in Ontario's portion of Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 13.*

### Objectives of the BCR 13 Plan

- *Reverse Declines of most Priority Species*
- *Stop Declines of Priority Grassland Species & Guild*
- *Recover Endangered and Threatened Species*
- *Maintain Distribution of Priority Species in BCR 13*
- *Ensure Habitat of sufficient Quality and Quantity to meet Population and Distribution Objectives*
- *Monitor Trends and Distribution of all Landbirds, and their Habitats*
- *Research reasons for Declines, Landbird Needs, Impacts and Success of Actions*

### Specific Population Objectives

#### *Population Trend and Size Objective*

- *In general, it appears that many/most landbirds in the ON portion of BCR 13 are well sampled by the BBS. **Action:** If better trend or population estimates are available (i.e. Species at Risk) then we will use those (send to Pete).*
- *Include accuracy and precisions ratings with population estimates and targets.*

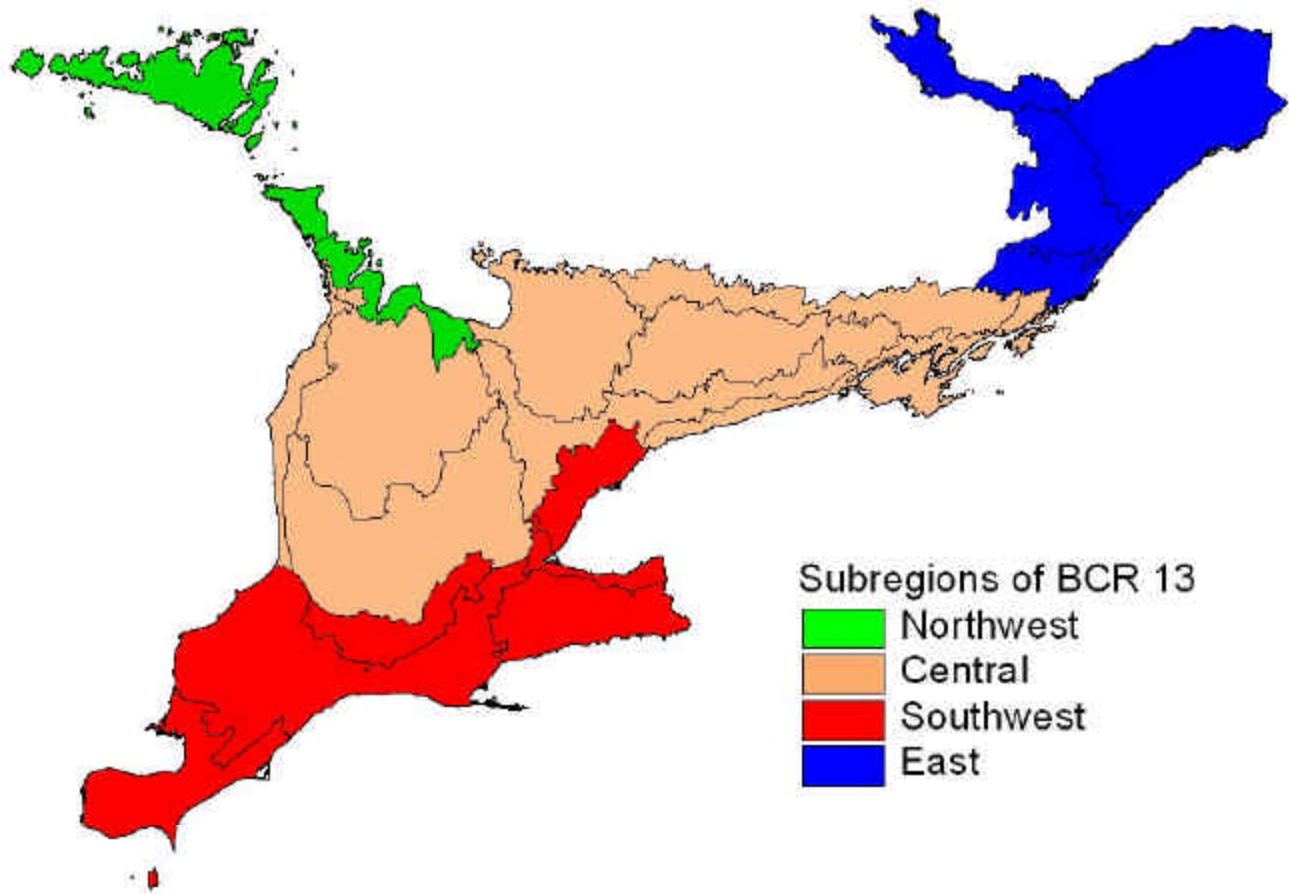
#### *Guild Objectives*

See discussion on p. 4 of these notes.

### Distribution Objectives

- ***Action:** Adjust the four sub-region boundaries to coincide with MNR Eco-region/Eco-district boundaries as much as possible. [See map of new sub-region boundaries below].*
- ***Action:** Obtain map/GIS layer with eco-district boundaries [done] and re-assign atlas squares to new sub-region boundaries.*
- ***Action:** Pete to follow up as to whether to change BCR boundary to include Cockburn Island [also St. Joseph Island].*

## New Sub-region Boundaries for ON BCR 13



### Habitat Objectives

- *Obtain more information on existing habitat layers (e.g. look at Blueprint ecosystem layer).*
- *Tie habitat information to other, existing initiatives to enhance linkages.*

### Examples of Conservation Actions

#### Species at Risk and Recovery Plans

Lyle Friesen (CWS) gave a presentation (on website) that focused on working towards the recovery of multiple species in a site or region.

#### Conservation Blueprint Update and Application in BCR 13

Dan Kraus (NCC) presented an overview of the Conservation Blueprint (see website).

### Workshop Session I: Population and Habitat Objectives

## Discussion of Conservation Objectives

- *“Ensuring sufficient habitat” is an action rather than an objective.*
- *Last 2 points are for evaluating degree to which objectives are being met (rather than being objectives).*
- *Need to change wording to say “reverse and recover to target level”.*
- *Need to have a time frame as part of the objective, e.g., use 20 years as the target?*
- *Need to identify short-term measures as well as long-term objective.*

## Discussion of Population Objectives

### *Species Population Objectives*

- *Change wording from “population target” to an “estimate of current OR target population” (appropriate figure to be determined).*
- *Include % change in population in table in the plan to communicate change between past and present (or present and target).*
- *Include population estimate (either current or target) in the table in body of plan to show magnitude of change.*
- *Include accuracy and precision ratings with current population estimates in an appendix.*

### *Guild Trends Objectives*

- *Pete to check to see if forest bird BBS stop index is block-weighted.*
- *For forest guild in particular, look at trends for sub-set that are area-sensitive and obligate forest species. Also, could re-consider if using the first decade of BBS (1968-1977) as the base is reasonable.*

Depending on the results of these new analyses, options are to consider include dropping the guild analyses, changing how it is presented, or looking at trends by sub-region (if adequate sample size).

## Discussion of Distribution Objectives

### *Priority Species Distribution*

- *Continue the species distribution analysis as long-term objective but measurable short-term objective should use trend data by sub-region, e.g. BBS trends and/or other survey trends.*
- *Compare frequency at BBS stops versus % of atlas point counts — good agreement would boost confidence in using BBS frequency within sub-regions as a short-term surrogate for atlas distribution.*

### *Guild Distribution*

- *Include guild distribution analysis in plan but focus on trend in abundance by sub-region rather than distribution.*

## Discussion of Habitat Objectives

### *Options for Habitat Objectives*

- *Need to include consideration of configuration and matrix (instead of buffer).*
- *Define Patch Proximity separate from Patch Size.*

### *Amount of habitat*

- *Use same sub-regions as for other objectives.*
- *Set objective as proportion of land we need to conserve overall and scale it over time (link time interval to habitat monitoring frequency).*
- *Set the objective based on species needs even if unrealistic to achieve in the short-term (i.e. 30% forest cover in SW sub-region), but may need to set interim goals that are more realistic and achievable to motivate action.*
- *30% forest cover as minimum threshold for each sub-region (enough to cover off needs of most species, mitigates/negates most fragmentation effects for birds). Only need to highlight 30% if below threshold (i.e. in SW sub-region).*
- *For areas where less than 30% forest cover then provide additional objectives on patch size, proximity, surrounding land use, etc.)*

### *Where in BCR 13?*

- *Additional analyses are needed to model habitat needs of priority species in BCR 13. If additional more detailed habitat layers exist, then could look at which habitats are most closely associated with priority species (e.g. using atlas point count data). Results of this analysis would enable us to better define habitat needs, identify areas of current importance, and improve knowledge for those wishing to create habitat for priority species. It is not known whether suitable habitat layers are presently available or how long this habitat analysis will take to complete. Depending on timing, the results could be included in this Plan or as a follow-up action (as in Great Basin and Prairie plans).*
- *Need to understand why certain Atlas squares (especially along northeastern edge of BCR 13) stand out re number of priority shrubland, grassland, and/or wetland species. Suggestion: produce map of all the priority score squares for all the different priority guilds so can determine best squares for combination of guilds.*
- *Grassland and shrubland/successional habitat strategies need to be linked. In some areas, low-intensity land use may be the key factor for the abundance of grassland and shrub guilds rather than amount of habitat.*

### **Ontario Wetland Habitat Fund Program**

Mark Stabb, Program Manager of the Ontario Wetland Habitat Fund (OWHF), made a brief presentation on the OWHF program.

### **Monitoring Objectives**

#### *Population Trends*

- *Could look at how many additional BBS routes are needed to increase power.*
- *Could consider other surveys to fill gaps.*

#### *Distribution Trends*

TAC was comfortable with the proposed approach using atlas data.

#### *Demographic Objective*

- *Use/expand existing schemes.*

- *Could use Baillie Fund or IBA Community Action Fund to direct activities to provide a specific focus (potential action).*
- *Pull together information on what everyone is presently doing (do this or at least include in the plan as an action).*
- *Could monitor demographics of surrogate or focal species to monitor status of broader group of species.*

### *Habitat Monitoring*

- *Need to explore what habitat information is available.*
- *Leave as general objective with idea of having one habitat layer that is updated every 5 years, and can be compared with previous results.*

## **Workshop Session 2: Conservation Actions**

### **Summary of Conservation Actions Brain-storming Session**

#### Research & Evaluation

1. Compile an inventory of what we have in the way of information, what studies are going on in Ontario and elsewhere.
2. Make use of existing research to develop a better understanding of the ecology, demography, etc of non-priority species that could act as potential surrogates for priority species.
3. Identify priority areas for research:
  - a. Species/suites/guilds or habitats to focus effort
  - b. Identify reasons for decline/increase of priority species
  - c. Identify how patterns of occurrence and demographics are affected by landscape variables, land-use activities and management
  - d. Encourage long-term studies
4. Promote funding for research priorities.
5. Support research on our general understanding of birds and impact.

In many cases we can take USGS habitat management documents and then see if they apply in ON BCR 13. There is also a PIF summary of research and monitoring needs extracted from U.S. landbird plans (<http://www.partnersinflight.org/pifneeds/searchform.cfm>). Examples of detailed species accounts, including several BCR 13 priority species, are available at (<http://www.partnersinflight.org/birdacct.htm>).

#### Monitoring

1. Maintain/strengthen existing monitoring programs (BBS, Atlas, migration monitoring, FBMP, MMP, etc).
2. Identify gaps in existing programs, priority monitoring needs within BCR 13 and potential programs to address these gaps and needs (in-atlas owl surveys, checklist program for breeding, migration and winter seasons, hunter surveys).
3. Develop/expand programs to provide information to evaluate demographic objectives (various options).
4. Develop/expand programs to provide information on habitat and land use trends and links to birds (e.g. remote monitoring of land use and natural cover, trends in low-intensity agricultural land use, impact of removal of exotics/invasive species on birds).
5. Maintain and develop Citizen Science volunteer corps.

### Policy & Legislation

1. Summarize and evaluate existing policy tools' contribution to PIF Ontario objectives and identify gaps:
  - a. Managed growth (provincial)
  - b. Municipal smart growth policies
  - c. Provincial Parks Act
2. Incentive programs
  - a. Develop more
  - b. Better implementation (avoid disincentives)
  - c. Better coordination
3. Update/revise Provincial Policy Statement under Planning Act (Natural Heritage Policy) to reflect value of bird habitat based on new information
4. Specific recommendations around the following topics:
  - a. MBCA incidental take
  - b. Tree cutting bylaws
  - c. Fish & Wildlife Conservation Act (re unoccupied raptor nests)
  - d. Innovative use of Drainage Act (wetland restoration)
  - e. Update Provincial Parks Act
  - f. Influencing municipal policies e.g. Managed Growth Initiative, Smart growth policies, GTA greenbelt (outreach action?)
5. Future policy formulation should incorporate all-bird values.

### Outreach & Education

1. Key audiences include:
  - a. Funders
  - b. Private landowners
  - c. Public land managers
  - d. Various levels of government especially municipal government.
  - e. Future volunteer monitors (youth, naturalists community).
  - f. General public
2. Key communication message/information needs:
  - a. Keeping common birds common strategy.
  - b. Need for better *quality* habitat.
  - c. Best management practices.
  - d. Links between breeding and wintering areas.
  - e. Land use messages eg. smart urban growth strategies.
3. Education materials and programs:
  - a. Develop/expand bird education initiatives attached to existing programs
  - b. Inventory and assess existing PIF educational materials and build on this base.
4. Develop new communication tools such as:
  - a. Electronic newsletter
  - b. Website (especially so can easily update information)
  - c. Fact sheets
  - d. Look at PIF resource list and research needs database on US PIF website.
  - e. Could develop Hinterland Who's Who topic focused on PIF.
5. Look at all of Ontario not just BCR 13 specifically.

### Habitat Management

1. Strategic Directions:
  - a. Link Canadian and US BCR 13 priorities

- b. Coordinate with SAR Recovery Plans
    - i. Implement habitat actions of SAR Recovery Plans and integrate these actions with PIF priority species habitat conservation needs in each sub-region
  - c. Use GIS to identify management & restoration priorities
  - d. Identify securement priorities by habitat type
2. Landscape Management:
- a. Consider the landscape matrix and its management
  - b. Allow natural forms of disturbance where possible,
  - c. Use existing protected areas as "source habitats"
  - d. Take into consideration existing or potential natural heritage systems at local & regional scale.
3. Grassland/Shrubland Management:
- a. Restore native tallgrass & alvar habitats
  - b. Manage hydro corridors for grassland and shrubland species
  - c. Manage public lands for grassland birds
  - d. Control woody growth in grasslands
  - e. Adjust timing of haying
  - f. Reduce chemical pesticides
4. Forest Habitat Management:
- a. Identify, map and maintain areas of old growth forest and core forests
  - b. Increase forest size and improve shape where possible:
    - i. Prevent fragmentation of existing forests
    - ii. Join wooded areas to create larger forest; increase connectivity.
  - c. Forestry practices... "the good ones"
    - i. Preserve tallest trees, encourage maturing of canopy
    - ii. Retain large trees & snags
    - iii. Manage to maintain cavity trees
    - iv. Control exotic species
    - v. Control human activities that damage sensitive ground vegetation
    - vi. Discourage cattle grazing in woodlands
    - vii. Work to regenerate disturbed habitats
    - viii. Control access of ATVs to public lands
5. Wetland Habitat Management:
- a. Implement wetland drain restoration program to restore flooded swamp habitat.
  - b. Adapt existing wetland securement/enhancement/management programs/practices to benefit priority wetland landbirds.

## 8. Next Steps in the Ontario BCR Planning Process

- *Targeting a September workshop for BCRs 12 & 8 (combining the workshops but will prepare two separate plans)*
- *OC will keep present TAC members in the loop regarding developing other BCR plans even if not active participants in the workshop.*
- *TAC will be involved in review of the draft plan for BCR 13.*
- *OC will be meeting with GIS folks to discuss linking habitat information and bird point count information.*
- *Need to expand TAC and review team membership for next BCRs.*
  - *ON Crop and Soil Improvement Association has agreed to review plan.*
  - *MNR may be able to facilitate First Nation involvement.*
- *Will updated PIF Ontario website with information from this workshop including presentations.*
- *Will also post links to completed or draft plans for other BCRs (i.e. BC/YK Great Basin plan) on this website.*