

❖ Standard 7: Select terrestrial, freshwater and marine conservation targets/biodiversity elements across multiple biological and spatial scales.

Case Study: Selecting Bird Targets in the East Gulf Coastal Plain Ecoregion

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Criteria/Methods

Bird conservation targets were selected in the East Gulf Coastal Plain ecoregion following the procedure outlined in *Geography of Hope Update # 7*. This ecoregion overlaps two Partners in Flight (PiF) physiographic areas, East Gulf Coastal Plain (#4) and South Atlantic Coastal Plain (#3). To assemble the draft target list, we first put together a list of all species that occurred in either of the two PiF areas that met one or more of the criteria listed in *Geography of Hope Update #7*, Target List Development section. This resulted in the list of species shown below, along with the appropriate information needed to place the species on the list.

Species	Global PiF Score	PiF WatchList	Area 3		Area 4	
			Abundance	Trend	Abundance	Trend
Reddish Egret	22	Yes			3	3
Swallow-tailed Kite	21	Yes	2	2	2	3
Black Rail	24	Yes	4	3		
Snowy Plover	19	Yes	3	3		
Wilson's Plover	19	No	5	3	3	3
Piping Plover	24	No	3	3		
Willet	18	Yes	5	3	3	3
Chuck-will's-widow	19	Yes	5	2	5	5
Red-headed Woodpecker	18	Yes	3	2	3	2
Red-cockaded Woodpecker	28	No	5	2	3	3
Ivory-billed Woodpecker	30	No	5	3		
Gray Kingbird	19	No	2	3	2	3
Florida Scrub-Jay	30	No	2	3		
Brown-headed Nuthatch	21	Yes	5	5	5	4
Wood Thrush	20	Yes	4	5	4	2
Bell's Vireo	23	Yes			2	3
Bachman's Warbler	30	No	5	3	2	3
Blue-winged Warbler	19	No	2	3		
Black-throated Blue Warbler	20	Yes			2	3
Prairie Warbler	20	Yes	4	4	4	5
Cerulean Warbler	25	Yes	2	3	3	3
Prothonotary Warbler	21	Yes	5	1	3	5
Worm-eating Warbler	21	Yes	3	2	2	3
Swainson's Warbler	24	Yes	5	1	4	3
Louisiana Waterthrush	19	No	3	2	3	1
Kentucky Warbler	19	Yes	3	1	4	2

Painted Bunting	21	Yes	2	5	2	3
Dickcissel	20	Yes	2	3	2	2
Bachman's Sparrow	24	Yes	5	5	5	5
Henslow's Sparrow	24	Yes	3	3		
Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow	25	Yes	2	3		
Seaside Sparrow	21	Yes	5	3	4	3

In the table, *Global PiF* score is the overall measure of conservation threat and concern developed by Partners in Flight (a higher number equals greater concern, with a maximum of 30); *Abundance* is a number from 1 to 5 indicating lesser or greater importance of that physiographic area within the overall distribution of abundance of the species; and *Trend* indicates the known population trend in the physiographic area, with 1 indicating a demonstrable increase, 3 no known change, and 5 a demonstrable decrease.

The critical next step was to determine which species on this list were not valid ecoregional planning targets. This led to the deletion of several species from the list, for the following reasons:

- Florida Scrub-Jay, Bell’s Vireo, and Cerulean Warbler since they do not occur in the ecoregion, despite occurring in one or more of the overlapping PiF physiographic areas;
- Black-throated Blue Warbler, Painted Bunting, and Dickcissel since this ecoregion is not one in which they occur in sufficient abundance to be conservation targets;
- Reddish Egret and Worm-eating Warbler since they are peripheral breeding species in the ecoregion;
- Gray Kingbird, Blue-winged Warbler, and Louisiana Waterthrush since they are not on the Partners in Flight WatchList, despite their relatively high global scores; and
- Ivory-billed Woodpecker and Bachman’s Warbler since they are effectively no longer conservation targets in the ecoregion.

Products/Outcomes

This resulted in a draft list of 19 bird species to be used by the ecoregional planning team as targets, which would be supplemented by G1-G3, T1-T3 species data to be obtained from appropriate heritage programs.

As a final step in the bird target identification process, Swallow-tailed Kite and Black Rail were flagged as occurring mostly in small and/or localized populations. Therefore, the standard conservation goal guidelines should not apply to these species. It was also noted that Piping Plover, Henslow’s Sparrow, and Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow occur in the ecoregion only in the non-breeding season, which would affect the kinds of sites and/or occurrences to be part of the portfolio. For all other species, breeding season sites/occurrences pertain.