



# Audubon and Multilateral Investment Fund announce regional bird tourism and conservation programme

## Title

National Audubon Society (BirdLife in the USA) and the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF), a member of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Group, are working together on a high-value sustainable birding tourism programme in the Americas.

David Yarnold, president and CEO of the National Audubon Society, explained: "The MIF's deep expertise in ecotourism and our extensive network and reach will help us engage local communities to create much-needed jobs in bird-rich areas. At the same time, the partnership will provide a sustainable way to conserve natural habitats for threatened migrating and resident birds and other wildlife."

Project locations in Belize, Guatemala, Paraguay and The Bahamas were selected by 'layering' **Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas** over economic maps, with priority given to sites with basic tourism infrastructure and potential for growth. Audubon will build on partnerships with local organisations, including BirdLife Partners the Belize Audubon Society, Guyra Paraguay and the Bahamas National Trust.

The total cost of the 36-month programme is \$2.6 million, with the MIF providing more than \$1.7 million, Audubon \$629,000 and Audubon partners \$225,000. The project will improve the structure and capacity of bird-based tourism business, create bird trails and train guides, develop marketing to attract national and international tour operators, raise awareness of the value of the local natural environment, and promote local citizen science. The aim is to develop a scalable, bird-based community tourism model that can be applied to other locations and countries.

"We are very pleased to partner with the National Audubon Society on this programme", said Carrie McKellogg, chief of the MIF's Access to Basic Services and Green Growth unit. "Audubon's powerful network and expertise in birding and conservation, the MIF's innovative approaches to capacity building of micro and small businesses, and our shared interest in the

sustainable management of natural capital, all combine to create to build what we believe will become a powerful model for conservation-minded community development."