



As spring approaches, millions of birds will wing their way back to North America. Red Knots near Tierra del Fuego will make a remarkable journey to the arctic tundra. Swainson's Hawks leave their winter homes in Argentina, flying north for up to 22,500 kilometres. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have already begun to make landfall after crossing the Gulf of Mexico. From disappearing marshlands and unregulated hunting, to pesticides and pollution along major flyways, migrating birds face an arduous journey in search of healthy habitat. In 2007, Audubon (BirdLife Partner) issued a report revealing an alarming decline in America's best known birds. More than one third of all Neotropical species are in decline. The good news is a visionary act that triples every dollar taxpayers invest. Since its passage in 2000, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act has helped protect more than 1.2 million hectares of vital bird habitat. For our country's investment of \$35 million dollars, it has leveraged \$150 million more in private funding. "The results can be seen across our hemisphere", said Audubon President David Yarnold. "More than 300 conservation projects were brought to life by this act. I was fortunate to see this for myself last fall, meeting with our Partners Pronatura in Mexico, where a dozen ranchers set aside more than 1,200 hectares of forestlands in a narrow corridor essential for the annual migration of raptors." Yarnold joined Ambassadors from Brazil, Panama, the Bahamas and Dominican Republic among others, plus co-host Jeff Trandahl, Executive Director, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, at a special celebration to mark the tenth anniversary of the initiative. "This innovative public-private partnership energizes local, on-the-ground conservation and habitat restoration initiatives throughout the Western hemisphere", said Glenn Olson, Audubon's Donal O'Brien Chair in Bird Conservation. "It is pivotal to Audubon's Important Bird Area programme, which aims to protect 150 million hectares of essential sites for breeding, migrating and wintering along the flyways in the US and frames our work with BirdLife International and other partners in Latin America." Other leaders slated to attend the March 10 evening event at the Hall of the Americas include Secretary General of the OAS, Jose Miguel Inzula; leaders from the Department of Interior, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, the Inter-American Development Bank, plus Audubon's Director of Bird Conservation, Dr Greg Butcher, and Mike Daulton, Audubon's Vice President of Government Relations. "Congress has the opportunity to use this Act to leverage hundreds of millions of dollars in private funds, which is a great deal for the American taxpayer," Daulton said. "Birds also provide a return on our investment by helping the US economy in many ways. They contribute as pollinators, help control insects and rodents, and disperse seeds. They also attract birdwatchers, who spend on binoculars, cameras, books, mobile apps and ecotourism." According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, bird watching and other wildlife-related recreation generates \$122 billion in spending every year. Their surveys also suggest that one in five Americans watches birds. Many species of migrants also have significant cultural value such as swallows as harbingers of spring. Find out more about the BirdLife Flyways Programme by clicking [here](#)