

Birdfair beefs up conservation for grassland migrants in the Americas

Title

For the third year in succession, the British Birdwatching Fair is providing support for BirdLife's Global Flyways Programme. After the African-Eurasian Flyway in 2011, and the coastal wetlands of East Asia in 2012, this year's focus is on the Americas. Many long distance migrants in the Americas are in trouble. But grassland-dependent species have shown the most sustained declines of any bird group. Reversing these declines requires joined-up conservation throughout the flyway, and BirdLife's network of Partners in the Americas is coordinating actions from the Pampas of Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil, via the savannas of Colombia and Bolivia and the arid grasslands of Mexico, to the Prairies of Canada and the USA. Birdfair will support trials of bird-friendly cattle-rearing and other grassland management regimes at sites in Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia and Argentina which are used for wintering and stopover by long-distance migrants including four flagship species: Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*, Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni*, and Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*. These pilot sites will be used to demonstrate and share management and conservation techniques more widely within grassland communities and among policy-makers in the project countries. The work will benefit other long-distance migrants that use the sites, and short-distance migrants and residents too. The BirdLife Americas Partnership will build links between grassland IBAs in Latin America and North America which share migrants. Already, techniques developed by the four Birdlife Partners in the Pampas are influencing bird-friendly beef-rearing in the Prairies. "There is a clear need for hemispheric cooperation on grassland bird conservation, and BirdLife is ideally placed to make a difference, both locally and across the hemisphere", said Birdfair co-founder and co-organiser Martin Davies of the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK). This year's Birdfair, running from Friday 16th – Sunday 18th August, is the 25th to be held at the Egleton Nature Reserve and the fair's co-organisers are expecting this year's event to be the biggest yet. The Fair has a long history of funding global conservation projects. Since its launch in 1989, the fair has raised well over £3 million and has funded a range of conservation projects from albatrosses in the southern Ocean to the rainforests of Ecuador and Indonesia.