Title Six BirdLife Partners in the Americas, together with the global Rio Tinto-BirdLife program and local conservation groups, have successfully completed three years of conservation efforts for migratory birds along the Interior-Pacific flyways. These efforts have built on an existing initiative, ?Linking Communities?, at three key sites (complexes of IBAs) in North America, and have supported the planning and implementation of conservation and education actions at six IBAs in South America. Populations of many migratory bird species are in decline. These reductions are related to a wide range of land-use and development challenges that humanity is facing. Effective conservation of migratory birds requires actions beyond political boundaries. BirdLife International is adopting a regional approach to migratory bird conservation which includes working at critical networks of sites for priority migratory species, building linkages between the local communities whose livelihoods are directly associated with the sites. The ?Linking Communities: wetlands and migratory birds? initiative began in 1998 with three Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network sites that share several migratory shorebird and waterbird species. These sites are Chaplin Lake and associated waterbodies in Saskatchewan, Canada; Great Salt Lake in Utah, USA; and, Marismas Nacionales in Nayarit, Mexico. Linking Communities is a consortium of NGOs, universities and other institutions which developed a ?linking? model, funded in its initial stages by the trinational Commission for Environmental Cooperation. At the end of 2008, Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation, a Rio Tinto company which is directly associated with Great Salt Lake and its many stakeholders, became a partner of Linking Communities and also engaged the Rio Tinto-BirdLife program in the initiative. This strategic corporate involvement created an opportunity to build on the Linking Communities model, and extend conservation efforts for species of conservation concern to key migration stopover and wintering sites throughout the flyway. Starting in 2009 with funding from the USFWS Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act and Rio Tinto, BirdLife initiated a first phase of conservation actions at four sites in South America that are important for three of the Linking Communities focal species: Wilson?s Phalarope Steganopus tricolor, Western Sandpiper Calidris mauri and Franklin?s Gull Larus pipixcan. The four sites are: Mar Chiquita Lake, and the Rio Saladillo wetlands, Argentina; Rocuant-Andalién wetland, Chile; and the Virrilá Estuary, Peru. Subsequent funding for a second phase has now included two new sites in Paraguay: Tinfunque National Park and Sanidad lagoon, and Chaco Lodge and Teniente Rojas Silva, both important sites for Wilson?s Phalarope. BirdLife?s local conservation partner in Peru, Nature and Culture International-Peru successfully raised separate funding (from NMBCA) for the Virrila Estuary, and as such actions there are no longer directly supported through the BirdLife project. In this process of flyway-wide collaboration, six BirdLife Partners and other organizations have been involved in the conservation of these migratory species. In North America: Nature Canada, Nature Saskatchewan, Linking Communities, National Audubon Society, and Pronatura Noroeste. And in South America: Aves Argentinas, CODEFF, Nature and Culture International-Peru and Guyra Paraguay. Conservation and management plans have been developed for each site (as appropriate), the requirements for effective environmental education and outreach have been assessed, and the results used to design and implement environmental education programs. Protocols for monitoring species were developed and three years of consecutive monitoring data are now available. National partners have established agreements with local governmental and non-governmental organizations to strengthen existing initiatives. An ecotourism program at the Marismas Nacionales was developed with the local communities and implemented, building strong constituency support for the conservation of that site. Recognizing that a holistic flyway approach is important, BirdLife Partners have created a regional team of flyways conservation practitioners, sharing experiences and lessons learned along the flyway. Results from the first three years demonstrate that the project is having a very significant impact in terms of habitat conservation along the flyway, at sites recognized as being critical for the survival of migratory species of conservation concern. Specific results include: ?Ensuring the conservation of large areas of wetland at Andalien-Rocuant following the devastating earthquake and tsunami of 2010. ?Signing agreements with local and environmental authorities at Mar Chiquita to establish a proper management system of the wetland (the fifth largest saline lake in the world) as well as training programs for researchers, environmental authorities, park guards, among others, who have all participated in a variety of project activities. ?Using the results of species monitoring and bird banding to inform management decisions, conservation actions, and environmental education and outreach programs. ? Undertaking habitat restoration at Rocuant Andalien and Mar Chiquita, with new surveys being undertaken to redefine the boundaries of the Rio Saladillo IBA. The challenge is now to capitalize on the enabling environment that has been created, and fully address the critical threats to the conservation of the migratory and resident species at each site. Current project

activities will culminate at North American sites during 2012, and at South American sites in 2013, but funding sources are being sought to ensure the sustainability of conservation efforts at all sites, and, in fact, to bring other key sites into the network. The project has proved to be an invaluable learning experience for the BirdLife Partnership in terms of implementing on-the-ground flyways-scale conservation, and undoubtedly will prove to be an important model for the development of new flyways projects.