



The
Ornithological
Council

Association of Field Ornithologists

Birds Caribbean

CIPAMEX: Sociedad para el Estudio y
Conservación de las Aves en México

Neotropical Ornithological Society

North American Crane Working Group

Pacific Seabird Group

Raptor Research Foundation

Waterbird Society

Wilson Ornithological Society

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Outside Witness Testimony from the Ornithological
Council

Submitted via email to: IN.Approp@mail.house.gov

24 April, 2026

The Ornithological Council appreciates this opportunity to offer our input into the Fiscal Year 2027 budget for the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies. In particular, we are writing to express our strong support for the **U.S. Geological Survey's Ecosystems Mission Area**.

We ask that you fully fund the USGS Ecosystems Mission Area in the FY27 federal budget, enabling it to continue its critical work of maintaining our nation's natural resources, ensuring environmental health, and protecting public health.

The Ornithological Council is a consortium of scientific societies whose members study birds. The research conducted by their members spans the globe and their cumulative expertise comprises the knowledge that is fundamental and essential to science-based bird conservation and management. The members of these scientific societies are scientists and researchers working for academic institutions, museums, agencies or non-profit organizations. Their work runs the gamut from field research, to teaching, to curating museum collections. Many collaborate with or rely on data generated by programs within the USGS Ecosystems Mission Area.

The USGS plays a key role within the Department of the Interior, conducting research across a broad array of scientific disciplines, providing data that informs responses to many of the nation's greatest challenges. The Ecosystem Mission Area provides pragmatic, practical scientific research that is used by various stakeholders to inform commercially and recreationally important wildlife and land management actions. The data it provides also helps partners assess and mitigate risks in areas such as crop damage, harmful invasive species, wildlife diseases (e.g., bird flu), and contaminants.

For example, USGS has been researching avian influenza (also called bird flu) since 2006. In collaboration with partners, the USGS developed a national science strategy for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza for 2016-2020, which augments on-going research to forecast disease spread by wild birds, detect novel strains, characterize factors that control persistence of avian influenza in the environment, and develop risk assessments for livestock, natural resources, and human health.

Two programs within the Ecosystem Mission Area are of special interest to the Ornithological Council. **The Bird Banding Laboratory**, housed at the Eastern Ecological Science Center, plays a crucial role in bird conservation and management in the U.S. and throughout North America. The Bird Banding Laboratory, in collaboration with the Canadian Wildlife Service Bird Banding Office, administers the North American Bird Banding Program. It supports the collection, curation, archiving, and dissemination of data from banded and marked birds, allowing for the development of effective bird science, management, and conservation.

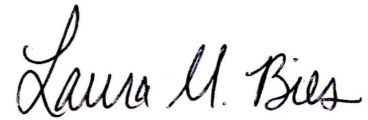
For example, data from the BBL is used to calculate waterfowl harvest rates each year. The banding data from bird banders and encounter data from hunters help to improve scientific understanding of waterfowl populations and allow sustainable harvest of migratory game birds. Bird banding also provides scientists and policy makers with valuable information about birds and bird populations, such as habitat needs and preferences, trends in health and life span, and population declines.

The Bird Breeding Survey relies on thousands of citizen scientists skilled in avian identification, who collect bird presence and abundance data throughout North America. Jointly coordinated by the USGS Eastern Ecological Science Center, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and the Mexican National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity, the Breeding Bird Survey is the primary source for critical quantitative data to evaluate the status of continental bird species, keeping common birds common and helping fuel a \$75 billion wildlife watching industry.

Long-standing USGS Ecosystems Mission Area initiatives such as the Bird Banding Laboratory and the Breeding Bird Survey provide the primary long-term data on the abundance and distribution of avian species in North America, which help resource managers meet their mandates to reduce conflicts between birds and people, identify species of greatest conservation need, and set healthy harvest levels. If funding for the Bird Banding Laboratory and at the Bird Breeding Survey decreases or is eliminated, the various stakeholders who use the data generated by these programs to reach effective management decisions and achieve collaborative outcomes for bird-related challenges will be severely impacted

Respectfully, the Ornithological Council requests that the Ecosystems Mission Area in the FY27 federal budget remains fully funded at the FY26 federal budget level. Please feel free to contact me at laurambiesoc@gmail.com if you have any questions or need any more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura M. Bies". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laura M. Bies
Executive Director