



Newsletter #5 Spring 2009
www.naisections.org/INTL
Editor: Duane Fast dfast@artcft.com

IN THIS ISSUE:
Avian Conservation in the Americas
Interpretation in Germany

Think the world is becoming a small place? To birds it always has been a small world. Their migrations cross international boundaries, landmasses and oceans. Get fascinating details on page 2.

Why should a German geophysicist join the NAI? Find out on page 4!



Pico Bonito National Park, Honduras

The Avian Conservation Alliance of the Americas by Brad Jacobs

Neotropical-Nearctic migrant birds link Missouri bird conservation to Tropical America. Eight Missouri chapters of the National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation (MCHF), the St. Louis Rainforest Advocates and the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) have developed a partnership named the Avian Conservation Alliance of the Americas or the Alianza para la Conservación de Aves de las Américas (ACAA).

Neotropical-Nearctic migrant birds, including nearly sixty Partners in Flight (www.partnersinflight.org) priority species that breed in Missouri during summer months, spend eight to nine months during the year in Honduras and other Central American (CA) countries during the winter. CA is about one-eighth the area of the North American breeding range, so, the migrants and resident birds share a very small and critical piece of land. This CA region is anticipating the human population to double over the next 30 years, putting considerable pressure on natural resources. If one walked a twenty kilometer transect from the Caribbean coast through Pico Bonito National Park (Pico Bonito) into the very dry tropical forest on the rain shadow side of Pico Bonito, one could see more than 400 species of birds, approximately half the species of Honduras.

ACAA's primary objective is to collect, leverage and provide direct and matching funds for bird habitat conservation projects from eastern Mexico to Panama. The overarching target is conservation for Missouri's breeding birds on their wintering ground and the associated resident birds of our Latin American host countries. Other objectives include: providing volunteer opportunities on projects; supplying Spanish language bird books and education materials; providing monitoring, banding and optical equipment; organizing training for ecotourism guides, park guards, bird banding technicians; and operational funds and other project needs to our Latin American conservation partners.



The ACAA has developed a funding pipeline by leveraging contributions multiple times at the state level and at least once at the national level. The ACAA began with Audubon Missouri chapters pledging to raise \$10,000 by June 30, 2008. The MCHF pledged to match that 1:1 with a grant award. ACAA will seek a similar doubling of the Audubon and MCHF funds by asking for a 1:1 match by MDC, quadrupling funds within Missouri. The funds then will be contributed as cash match toward an American Bird Conservancy (ABC) Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) grant proposal, thus octupling the initial dollars raised by the Audubon chapters.

ACAA greatly exceeded its goal of \$40,000. We expect a total contribution of between about \$80,000 due to the chapters' contribution about \$17,000, an in-kind \$25,000 by TNC, and other partners' contributions including the St. Louis Rainforest Advocates and the McDaniel Charitable Foundation (Texas). Arkansas Fish and Game has contributed \$3,000 directly to the ABC for the Pico Bonito Project and Audubon Iowa and Iowa DNR has contributed \$850 to ACAA and will contribute \$5,000 directly to ABC.

The eight-fold leveraging of Missouri-raised funds means that every dollar contributed will be \$8.00 dollars when it hits the ground at the project level. For June 2009, Audubon chapters have pledged a contribution of \$15,000. With annual fund raising, the ACAA will be able to create a funding pipeline for projects in Missouri's migrant-bird-linked focus area in Central America and eastern Mexico.

The current ACAA project is in Honduras at Pico Bonito, where funds will be spent to help acquire approximately 2,400 acres of land in the next few years, and perhaps more at a later date. This land will connect a critical isolated remnant of very dry tropical forest (VDTF) with the 257,000 acre Pico Bontio. The proposed biological corridor, which connects the newly acquired remnant of VDTF to the park, will be under the park's administration. The VDTF property to be connected to the park is a former Honduran Air Force landing strip, now called the Honduran Emerald Reserve (HER). The property contains one of the last and best examples of a high-quality VDTF natural community left in the world. It is also the home of the endangered, endemic Honduran Emerald (hummingbird).

Both Pico Bonito and HER are migratory, wintering and staging areas for many U.S. priority birds of conservation concern and many of Missouri's common breeding species, including: Eastern Wood-Pewees, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Red-eyed Vireos, Wood Thrushes, Blue-winged Warblers, Golden-winged Warblers, Cerulean Warblers, Black-and-white Warblers, American Redstarts, Prothonotary Warblers, Kentucky Warblers, Hooded Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, Summer Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Blue Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, Orchard Orioles, Baltimore Orioles and more. The international partnership for bird conservation called "Partners in Flight" has as its goal "to keep common birds common." Our efforts in this core area of Central America, where Missouri's breeding birds winter, will help protect bird habitat over the long term and ensure that migrant birds return each spring to Missouri.

ACAA projects can be added or removed from pipeline funding based on need, eliminating the long delay that occurs if partners and funding are identified project by project. This Missouri model effort will streamline the process and develop a dedicated partnership with a region where 95% of Missouri's migratory birds survive the winter. The process will be refined each step of the way. Cooperators realize this is an important project, and a first step in integrated bird conservation throughout the annual cycle of bird breeding, migration and wintering needs. As part of an exploratory effort to better understand project needs, several Audubon chapter members along with MCHF and MDC staff visited the Pico Bonito site in late March, 2008, met with the park administrators, and toured the property and its facilities.



Honduras and Nicaragua have 40-50 percent of their natural communities still intact; the highest percentages in CA. Hondurans are concerned about the need to protect their natural resources. Bird habitat will be under tremendous pressure in the future. Conserving Missouri's summer breeding birds and migrants is integrally linked to the wintering areas in CA. ACAA is a way to ensure the survival of Missouri's birds. This is a model that could be reproduced in other states and countries. For more information on ACAA contact brad.jacobs@mdc.mo.gov.

Brad Jacobs with Fito Steiner, well known Honduran conservationist

Wanted: Interpretation

A German view on Interpretation by Simon Schneider

In Germany, Interpretation is widely unknown. But a small number of museum education department staff, national park rangers and public relations consultants are infected by the interpretation virus. Usually, they got in contact with Tilden, Ham and other experts of cultural and natural heritage interpretation on vacations in National Parks and Museums in the US and in the UK. Now, they spread out the ideas, methods and concepts of interpretation into Germany's education and public outreach (E&PO) environment. On seminars, workshops and conferences, interpretation gets introduced to professionals and triggers a process of reconsidering visitor-communication.

In Germany, modern ideas of museum related pedagogic work are pretty close to the concepts of interpretation. Providing a sensible as well as a highly memorable experience for guests and visitors – this idea is spotlighted in museums and national parks educational programs. Nevertheless, most museums are sceptical to modern and innovative ideas in visitor-communication. They are still emphatic on the conventional, more traditional perspective, that the visitors have to be informed and educated rather than having fun and to provoke a sense of “being part of it all”. Sometimes, the interpretive concepts of creating an experience for the audience is equalized to being circus acts. The fear of losing reputation among the circle of experts is tremendous. But exactly this is the striking point: not the expert is the audience, the non-expert visitor represents the target group. The visitors' sympathy and understanding for the environment, for the object, and the theme should be the goal of all interpretive efforts.

Since a couple of years Germany's National Parks and Geo-Parks are slipping more and more into focus. The funding volume from supporting sponsors and the government is increasing. This process – independent from the more traditional museum community – allows a stronger connection to modern basics of interpretation. Maybe unconscious of the ideas of interpretation, maybe in close cooperation with interpreters from the US and UK, innovative concepts and modern ideas of cultural and natural heritage interpretation are integrated into communication concepts in Germany's Parks.

The theory, methods and concepts of interpretation are increasingly used in another area of communication as well: let it be called Science Interpretation. What was known as science communication, dealing with the same misunderstanding of information and education rather than provoking thoughts and being emotive, Science Interpretation – in the words of Freeman Tilden – aims to “reveal meanings and relationships .. rather than simply to communicate factual information.” Over the last years, there have been improvements in this respect. The “Science Years”, the “Science Ship” and the annual nomination of the “Science City” – public



Simon Schneider interpreting geosciences at the Taunus Observatory, just outside Frankfurt.

relations tools with a deep sense of interpretive demands, sponsored by various research institutions and the Federal Government of Germany, were conducted. All based on theories and concepts, originally developed for economic and marketing oriented public relations. But marketing concepts are not unconfined transferable to the needs of science communication. There is no “product”, there are no “rivals” in science communication. To communicate knowledge and research, you have to use new, innovative and modern concepts – like interpretive approaches. And not only to communicate natural science. One of the driving forces to implement Interpretation in Germany’s Parks and Museums is the “Bildungswerk interpretation” by NAI-certified Interpretive Trainer Thorsten Ludwig.

Finally, let’s take a look at cultural heritage interpretation in Germany. Over the years, the German government fostered the cultural diversity in Germany, for example, by creating special programs for the different idioms. This was just recently highlighted by the inauguration of Saxons Minister of State Stanislaw Tillich, who took the official oath in Sorbian, a language spoken by less than 60.000 Germans.

In many regions in Germany, cultural heritage is kept alive at heritage sites and in parks. Special guided tours in cities like Potsdam, Dresden or Heidelberg are conducted to show the visitors how life was led in historic times in different regions. Personal interpretation is done perfectly there. Costumes and languages from former times transfer the audience into the 16th, 17th or 18th century. Some guides even learn how to play the instruments of that time or live in tents and cottages of former centuries. The numbers of visitors are increasing, the tours are mostly booked out – all thanks to a modern interpretive approach. But: organizers and guides are not yet conscious of being interpreters. Most guides are self-taught personally highly- engaged people. Only a few workshops or classes are offered to introduce them to the concepts and methods of interpretation, mainly closely focused on really special topics.



To give these people the security and backbone of the interpretive profession, co-operations between parks, museums and all other members of the “interpretive community” and professional interpreters like NAI should be introduced. Therefore, contacts between NAI and organisations like the Deutscher Museumsbund (German Museums Association, www.museumsbund.de) or the Bundesamt für Naturschutz (Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, www.bfn.de) should be established. And furthermore, there are many more opportunities and options for international co-operations.

Living History: Charburners have been one of the most important professions in Hesse of the 15th to 17th century (Source: Hessenpark)