

The **Cornell** Lab  of Ornithology

2013

**ANNUAL REPORT
TO MEMBERS**



Golden-winged Warblers (cover) have suffered one of the steepest population declines of any songbird. In December 2012 the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and partners published a conservation plan (above) that calls for restoring early successional habitat bordered by mature forest (prime golden-wing breeding grounds, pictured on back cover) on more than 1 million acres nationally. Ultimately, the plan aims to grow the current golden-wing population by 50% by the year 2050.

THIS PAGE: GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER BY LAURIE JOHNSON

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a message from **JOHN FITZPATRICK**

At the heart of science is the curiosity to ask a big question, combined with the courage, cleverness, and determination to find the answer. This is what we do at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. We are an institute of exploration, fueled by intense passion for nature and the desire to understand better how it works—in the air, in habitats around the world, even in the ocean.



GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE BY GERRIT VYN

We pursue daring lines of inquiry. Revelations about birds and nature are our most important measure of success. Seemingly every month, one of our scientists, students, or staff returns from some corner of the globe with a discovery—audio, video, or data about bird behavior never before heard, seen, or understood.

Our explorations this year took us to every continent—on the slopes of the Himalayas, in mountain forests of the Andes, on ships plying the Bering Sea. Our work is inspired by a desire to understand how humans affect natural systems, and how we can reduce our impact. And it's fueled by innovation. Discovery often requires figuring out new ways to get at a question. We invent new hardware that takes acoustic monitoring to larger scales; new web applications that grow citizen science through crowdsourcing; complex machine-learning algorithms that enable unprecedented big-data analysis.

Our scope is global, but we do not have offices in far-flung countries. Rather, we teach people around the world about birds and conservation through distance-learning and web portals. Our citizen-science networks reach into nearly every nation of the world, allowing us to monitor birds everywhere, in real time. Information is our currency, our lifeblood. But our mission begins with “interpret and conserve.” These are vital action verbs, and we are committed to real action on the ground.

One afternoon at Sapsucker Woods last summer, I reflected on what was going on within a few feet of my office. In a meeting next door, a Nature Conservancy ecologist and our eBird staff were working on an innovative, targeted conservation solution using our revolutionary bird distribution models. Down the hall, a science educator was collaborating with web designers to create a new kind of interactive, open-access biology course. Upstairs, a team of computer scientists dug into the knotty but essential problem of generating accurate abundance maps from eBird data. Downstairs, our multimedia producers met with a director

from Audubon on a project to raise public awareness about Greater Sage-Grouse and the imperiled western sagebrush ecosystem.

There are simply no other institutions like this one. We draw on a diverse arsenal of passions and talents, integrating the energies of young students with the visions of experienced professionals. Often, the Lab of Ornithology feels like an orchestra to me. Flutes and violins, drums and trumpets are all such different instruments, yet by each player working hard individually, the result comes together to produce amazing music. The Lab combines ecological scientists and computer scientists with citizen scientists, flourishes with educators and internet programmers, rings in with bioacoustic oceanographers and multimedia videographers, all of whom are united with the common mission to interpret and conserve the earth's biological diversity.

You are an integral part of this orchestra. Through your passion and generosity, your unwavering intellectual and financial support, you make everything on the pages that follow possible. Please turn the page and explore some of the questions you enabled us to ask in the past year, and the answers we discovered.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John W. Fitzpatrick". To the right of the signature is a small, stylized blue ink drawing of a bird in flight.

John W. Fitzpatrick
Louis Agassiz Fuertes Director

How Can We Save a Species?

Through research, planning, and action.

IGNITING A GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER RECOVERY



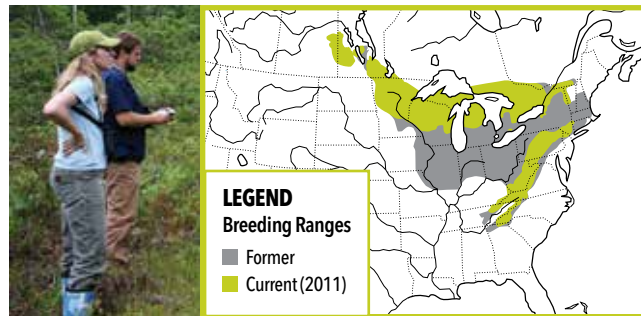
GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER BY MARTY DORCOWSKI

OPTIMIZING CONSERVATION THROUGH SCIENCE

Conservation is best—most effective, and most efficient—when it's guided by good science. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology adds authoritative knowledge and rigorous planning to conservation efforts for species in decline.

Such was the case for the Golden-winged Warbler, a species that has suffered one of the steepest population declines of any songbird over the past 45 years. In the late 1990s, the Cornell Lab and several partners convened the Golden-winged Warbler Working Group and launched a massive effort to explore what could be done to foster a recovery. This past year the group published one of the most thorough research-backed conservation strategies ever produced. And already, new pairs of breeding golden-wings are showing up in new places where the strategy has been initially implemented.

From 1999 to 2006, the Cornell Lab led an atlas project that used field surveys by citizen scientists and professional biologists (such as Cornell Lab researchers Sara Barker and Ron Rohrbaugh, at right) to create a detailed, up-to-date golden-wing range map. The project discovered that golden-wing distribution had receded to two disjunct sub-populations in the Upper Midwest and Appalachians.



ENLISTING CITIZEN SCIENTISTS IN A LARGE-SCALE SURVEY

As a first step, the working group needed to ascertain where Golden-winged Warblers still existed. How do you count birds in 17 states and Canada? Get a lot of friends to help. The Cornell Lab put out the word on citizen-science networks—such as eBird—to recruit more than 300 birders into one of the largest-scale bird surveys for a single species. Conducted from 1999 to 2006, the Golden-winged Warbler Atlas Project discovered that the golden-wing range no longer ran contiguously from the Midwest to the East, but had now receded to two isolated sub-populations centered in Minnesota/Wisconsin and along the Appalachian Mountains.

DISCOVERING A GENETIC LINK TO HABITAT

Next the working group needed to understand what kind of habitat best promoted Golden-winged Warbler reproduction. In the field, the Cornell Lab helped to lead a research initiative that discovered prime golden-wing habitat wasn't just open shrublands (as previously thought), but ideally shrublands or young forest bordered by mature forest and set in the context of a mostly forested landscape. Meanwhile back at the Cornell Lab, Fuller Postdoctoral Fellow Rachel Vallender conducted pioneering genetic analyses of bird blood samples that led to the discovery of cryptic hybrids—individual birds that look like pure golden-wings, but show genetic evidence of past hybridization in their family history. This discovery helped scientists better understand the dynamics of hybridization, and how Golden-winged Warblers, Blue-winged Warblers, and their hybrids may use slightly different habitats. As hybridization with blue-wings is a prime factor in golden-wings' disappearance as a species, this link between habitat and genetic health was a crucial find.





The Cornell Lab and partners published two regional guides with prescriptions for land managers to create golden-wing habitat (above, photo by Laurie Johnson).



A PLAN FOR RECOVERY

In December 2012, the Cornell Lab and the Golden-winged Warbler Working Group published the Golden-winged Warbler Conservation Plan, a master blueprint to create an additional 1 million acres of golden-wing habitat and grow the global population 50% by 2050. The Cornell Lab and working group partners also published a set of regional habitat management guides with specific localized prescriptions to guide land managers in fostering golden-wing habitat. “We have the science to back this up,” Cornell Lab conservation scientist Ron Rohrbaugh said. “Now it’s a matter of translating our science into habitat.”

NEW BIRDS IN NEW PLACES

The plan is working. In central Pennsylvania, the management guidelines were used to thin trees and create shrubby openings in a regenerating forest. Golden-winged Warblers showed up and started nesting the following spring. Likewise, habitat created according to the plan in Tennessee and North Carolina has resulted in new nesting golden-wings. The word is getting out among concerned birders, too. After a *Living Bird* magazine story about Golden-winged Warblers ran in the Spring 2013 issue, readers responded by offering up large acreages of private property in Ontario and Tennessee for golden-wing habitat management.

What's next?

The Cornell Lab and the working group are now working on a winter range conservation plan in partnership with the Latin American bird conservation consortium Alianza Alas Doradas (Golden-winged Alliance). This winter, Cornell PhD student Ruth Bennett is working with her advisor, Conservation Science director Amanda Rodewald, to launch a research project in Honduras on Golden-winged Warbler wintering grounds.

AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE FOR ORANGE-BREASTED FALCONS

Fewer than 30 territorial pairs of Orange-breasted Falcons are left in Central America. Research shows that the population is isolated and declining, limited to the Maya Mountains of Belize and the Mirador Cordillera of Guatemala. The population faces multiple threats, including indiscriminate shooting—two falcons have been shot in the past year. After the first shooting, Robert Berry, Cornell Lab board member and director of the Peregrine Fund’s Orange-breasted Falcon restoration program, immediately notified the Cornell Lab’s eBird leaders, who maintain a special register for the species. It was clear that the declining falcon population could not withstand additional mortality and would soon be extirpated without immediate action.

Now experts from the Cornell Lab’s Conservation Science department are assisting the Peregrine Fund with setting up research and conservation collaborations with Guatemalan partners, and Cornell PhD student Lily Briggs is travelling to Belize on behalf of the BirdSleuth education program. Briggs will lead workshops to formulate an educational strategy for teaching schoolkids about Orange-breasted Falcon conservation. As the kids bring that message home to their parents, local attitudes will begin to change.



ORANGE-BREASTED FALCON
BY ROBERT BERRY

How Can We Create Conservation Leaders?

By giving students a world of experience.

GARY LANGHAM—FROM CORNELL PhD TO AUDUBON SOCIETY CHIEF SCIENTIST

FROM BIRDER TO SCIENTIST TO LEADER

Gary Langham knew a lot about birding when he came to Cornell as a graduate student in 1996; he had years of experience working with his father leading bird tours in North, Central, and South America. But he came to the Cornell Lab to become a scientist. The Cornell Lab is unique as a conservation science institute at one of the world's premier research universities, with a speciality in turning passionate birders into trained scientists who can think critically about how natural systems work. For Langham, the opportunity to study and work alongside some of the world's top ornithologists inspired a driving urge to do more, push boundaries, and be bold in his scientific study of birds. In the process, he became a leader.

AN AMBITIOUS DISSERTATION

Langham knew he wanted to do something big for his doctoral dissertation. "The Cornell Lab is the gold standard in ornithological training," Langham says. "Being at Cornell gave me the courage to tackle something difficult, something never done before." And indeed, his PhD research broke new ground, as he sought scientific verification that birds are a driver in butterfly evolution. It wasn't easy—five grueling years in South America on a shoestring research budget in field camps with no electricity, where jeep breakdowns in the Andes were common, and his research quarry, jacamars, were difficult to find and study. Nevertheless, he prevailed, publishing the first direct evidence that birds indeed can be responsible for the evolution of patterns on non-poisonous butterflies that mimic the look of poisonous butterflies.

THINKING BIGGER, BEYOND A DEGREE

At the Cornell Lab, students often don't stay within the lines of a typical degree program. That's partly because they're exposed to an array of experiences and mentors who broaden how they look at the world. During his field work in Bolivia, Venezuela, and Peru, Langham couldn't help but notice the dearth of support for his counterparts there, local ornithologists who were abandoning biology due to lack of resources and going into agriculture instead. So he took the very unconventional step as a student of founding a nonprofit group—the Neotropical Grassland Conservancy—that funnels used research equipment and grants from donors in the U.S. to biologists in South America. "The Lab gives you the confidence to try things that a graduate student wouldn't normally do," says Langham. Over the past 10 years, Langham's nonprofit has helped more than 100 South American researchers and is still funding projects today.

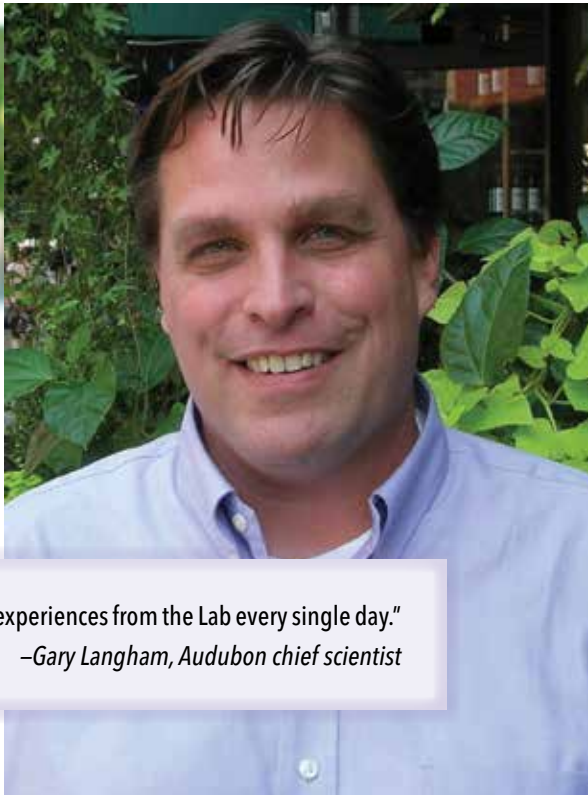
As a graduate researcher, Gary Langham labored for years in rainforest field camps (photo above by Stephen Williams). Langham's research as a Cornell PhD student showed how predatory pressure by the Rufous-tailed Jacamar (photo by Kenneth Rosenberg) impacts butterfly evolution. Today Langham is Audubon's chief scientist (photo at right courtesy of Audubon).



DIVERSE EXPERIENCES MAKE LEADERS

Today Langham is at the top of his field, the chief scientist at the National Audubon Society. “My job is not just science, but policy, marketing, fundraising, management,” says Langham. “I draw on my experiences from the Lab every single day.”

And likewise, the Cornell Lab continues to benefit from the leaders it develops. Langham is a key partner in Cornell Lab–Audubon joint initiatives, such as the Great Backyard Bird Count, which achieved an historic milestone in February. Powered by eBird (another Cornell Lab–Audubon partnership), the count opened up to citizen scientists worldwide for the first time, resulting in 3,144 species tallied (nearly a third of the world’s total species) in just four days. “This year’s historic Great Backyard Bird Count shows the strength of these two great conservation organizations working together,” Langham says.



“I draw on my experiences from the Lab every single day.”
—Gary Langham, Audubon chief scientist

PHOTO COURTESY OF LEILA HATCH



TURNING SCIENCE INTO POLICY

Leila Hatch has one foot in the world of science and the other in environmental policy. It’s a balancing act she learned as a graduate student at Cornell, where she studied with former Cornell Lab Bioacoustics Research Program director Christopher W. Clark as one of her advisors. Working with BRP, Hatch studied the song dialects of whale populations, but she got much more than the typical graduate student experience as she accompanied Clark to meetings held by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the International Whaling Commission. Today she’s a marine ecologist at the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary off the coast of Massachusetts, where she leads research on the impacts of shipping noise on whales, and then uses her findings to advise U.S. policy on how best to protect marine wildlife from noise impacts. In August 2012 Hatch and colleagues at NOAA and BRP made newspaper headlines with a study that showed shipping traffic in Stellwagen Sanctuary is significantly affecting whales’ ability to communicate due to chronic periods of high noise.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SARA KAISER



A NEW WAY TO STUDY CLIMATE CHANGE

Are birds flexible enough to deal with a changing climate? That’s the intriguing, and challenging, question Cornell graduate student Sara Kaiser tackled in her PhD dissertation published in July. And she studied it in a novel way—by examining the birds’ blood. Over the course of six breeding seasons, Kaiser took blood samples from almost 1,000 Black-throated Blue Warblers in New Hampshire’s White Mountains. She analyzed the blood to look for signs of adaptation along the natural climatic changes up and down the mountain slopes. Kaiser found that black-throated blues’ hormone levels responded rapidly to experimental increases in food availability and was associated with adaptive changes in their mating and parental behavior. Kaiser’s innovative physiological approach may open up a new avenue of studying how birds respond to climate-induced environmental change.

How Can We Make
Conservation Go Further?

Through partnerships.

BUILDING A BIRD AUDIO ARCHIVE FOR SOUTH AMERICA'S SOUTHERN CONE

EXTENDING OUR REACH, NOT OUR OVERHEAD

For every amazing bird species around the globe, there are people who live near it, know it, admire it, and want it to live on for the future. The Cornell Lab supports the people and groups around the world who are already in the best position to help their local birds, by supplying them with knowledge, resources, and training.

In South America, the continent blessed with the highest bird diversity in the world, many birds from the tropical rain forests to the grassy steppes of the Pampas still aren't documented well enough for effective conservation. Sound recordings of many birds are needed in order to conduct acoustics-based bird population monitoring (estimating population sizes by counting the number of calls and songs heard).

But deploying teams of Cornell Lab audio recordists into the field is cost-prohibitive. Instead, the Macaulay Library has fostered a capacity-building partnership that is blossoming into a much larger homegrown South American bird-recording enterprise.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MACAULAY LIBRARY

TRAINING NEW RECORDISTS

Every year, the Cornell Lab's Macaulay Library holds workshops across the country and around the world to train professional biologists and citizen scientists in the science of monitoring with sound. In 2007, Argentine ornithologist Nacho Areta attended a workshop in California on a scholarship from the Ted Parker Memorial Fund. In Areta, Macaulay Library audio curator Greg Budney saw a talented young biologist with a passion for bioacoustics and conservation. Months later, Areta wrote to Budney with a proposal to compile the first-ever high-quality bird recording library from the Southern Cone of South America. Areta had the knowledge to do it, but he needed the tools, technology, and archival support.

In 2013 the Macaulay Library commemorated the sad 20th anniversary of the death of renowned ornithologist and bird audio recording pioneer Ted Parker. Parker contributed more than 10,000 recordings to the Macaulay Library, including a rich collection of bird sounds from Central and South America. In honor of Ted, this year the Cornell Lab will ship bird sound guides featuring his recordings to schoolchildren and conservationists in Latin America.

Macaulay Library audio curator Greg Budney provides in-the-field instruction at an audio monitoring workshop in South America (photo courtesy of Macaulay Library).





Argentine ornithologist Nacho Areta (above) has added thousands of bird audio recordings from the Southern Cone to the Macaulay Library (photo courtesy of Macaulay Library). Macaulay Library audio workshops throughout South America are spreading the Cornell Lab's expertise and advanced technology in acoustics-based bird monitoring to the continent with the highest bird diversity on earth.

OUTFITTING AND SUPPORT

At the time, Areta and his colleagues in Grupo Falco—a team of 16 Argentine ornithologists dedicated to recording birds of the Southern Cone—were using outdated analog equipment. The Macaulay Library responded to Areta's request with a loaner fleet of digital audio recording equipment, along with copies of the Cornell Lab's Raven software, which enables fast, computerized analysis of hours of recordings. Now outfitted with the tools for fast and efficient digital audio collection, Areta and Grupo Falco stepped up their bird recording efforts.

12,000 RECORDINGS AND COUNTING

Altogether, Areta and Grupo Falco have added 12,000 bird recordings to the Macaulay Library. In December they added the melodic whistles of the endangered Hooded Grebe, a first for the Macaulay archives. Areta has also used the Raven software to tease apart sound recordings of earthcreepers, thus discovering a new species—the Patagonian Forest Earthcreeper. More discoveries are sure to come as Areta and Grupo Falco continue to contribute digital recordings to the Macaulay Library, where they are available online to ornithologists everywhere, thus adding to the world's scientific understanding of South America's birdlife.

eBIRD AND THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

A Cornell Lab partnership with the U.S. Forest Service is leading to better management of our national forests for birds. A USFS analysis of eBird data found that one-third of America's bird species of conservation concern rely on federal forestland for habitat.

Now USFS biologists are using eBird species distribution models to guide forest management. For example, in the Green Mountain and White Mountain National Forests, USFS land leases for ski resorts where Bicknell's Thrushes occur were updated to ensure that thrush habitat is managed properly.



BICKNELL'S THRUSH BY LAURA ERICKSON



HOODED GREBE BY SANTIAGO IMBERTI

How Can We Adapt a Modern Economy to Conserve Wildlife?

By being thoughtful, and using science.

DEVELOPING OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY THAT'S FRIENDLIER TO WHALES

ECONOMICS AND WILDLIFE CAN BE COMPATIBLE

The Cornell Lab strives toward a vision where people live side-by-side with healthy natural systems, but that vision doesn't mean stopping economic growth. Rather, it means growing in new ways. For example, the renewable energy potential that blows off the Atlantic coastline is tremendous—enough pollution-free, wind-generated electricity to power about 14 million homes in the United States, creating more than \$200 billion in new economic activity in the process. But for the whales of the North Atlantic Ocean, the construction of wind farms anchored to the ocean floor may be a massive disruption. The Cornell Lab's Bioacoustics Research Program, a leader in marine wildlife research, is playing a critical role in crafting a solution for developing this source of offshore wind energy while minimizing impacts to whales.

LISTENING UNDERWATER

In 2011, the New England Aquarium and the Cornell Lab began a joint project to assess the presence of whales in an area proposed for wind energy development off the coast of Massachusetts. Cornell Lab BRP biologists deployed six of the Lab's custom-designed marine autonomous recording units in the waters of the Massachusetts Wind Energy Area to listen for whale songs and calls.



NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE BY NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

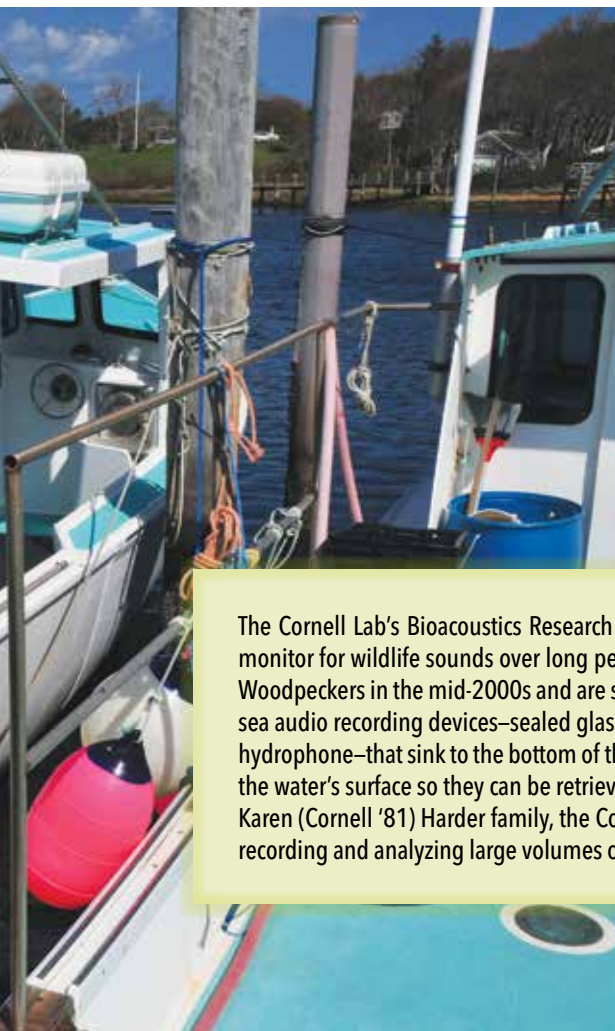




RENDERING OF PROPOSED WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT OFF THE ATLANTIC COAST
COURTESY OF DEEPWATER WIND

AN INTERSTATE HIGHWAY FOR WHALES

Early results from the project showed that whales occur more often near the proposed wind energy area than previously thought. All seven great whale species of the western North Atlantic were documented, including three (humpback, fin, and minke) that appeared to be present almost year-round. Most notably, endangered North Atlantic right whales were recorded from fall to spring. It turns out that Massachusetts' coastal waters could be a migratory stopover hotspot for right whales, similar to the wetlands that ducks use as they hopscotch along their flyways. This finding is important for conservation efforts since fewer than 400 North Atlantic right whales are estimated to remain.



AN HISTORIC AGREEMENT WITH THE WIND INDUSTRY

The research findings contributed to an agreement last year between federal regulators and wind energy companies on a set of protective measures to be voluntarily implemented. For example, wind energy companies will incorporate the report's findings into their work plans, such as focusing their development activities during the summer months when right whales are not present. "Deepwater Wind is proud to sign this historic agreement to help protect the North Atlantic right whale," said Jeffrey Grybowski, CEO of Deepwater Wind.

The Cornell Lab's Bioacoustics Research Program has pioneered the use of autonomous audio recording units that can be left in the field to monitor for wildlife sounds over long periods of time. Terrestrial audio recording units invented by BRP were used in the search for Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in the mid-2000s and are still used extensively today for bird and elephant audio surveys. BRP has also invented proprietary deep-sea audio recording devices—sealed glass spheres containing a microprocessor, data storage, circuitry, and batteries, all connected to an external hydrophone—that sink to the bottom of the ocean. Also known as "pop-ups," these marine audio recording units release on command and float to the water's surface so they can be retrieved for data downloading. Now thanks to a generous gift from the Kenneth L. Harder Trust and Scott and Karen (Cornell '81) Harder family, the Cornell Lab's Acoustic Monitoring Project is developing the next generation of hardware and software for recording and analyzing large volumes of natural sounds data. (Photos of pop-up recorders on back of boat courtesy of BRP.)



BIRD-FRIENDLY FARMING

In July, the Cornell Lab and partners published a State of the Birds report (www.stateofthebirds.org) that focused on private lands, particularly on the need for America's farmers, ranchers, and foresters to be good stewards of bird habitat. According to the report (which was based on eBird distribution models), some of America's most threatened birds rely on habitat found on private lands, particularly in agricultural areas. More than 80 percent of grassland bird populations (which have experienced drastic declines) are on private lands. But more than just ringing the alarm, the report spotlighted efforts that are providing crucial bird habitat on farms and ranches, in rice fields and timber plantations. "Working lands and habitat conservation can complement, even strengthen, each other," the report emphasized. As a follow-up, Cornell Lab director John Fitzpatrick wrote editorials in the *Washington Post* and *Denver Post* that called for passage of a conservation-friendly Farm Bill that supports America's farmers and ranchers who grow good food while providing good habitat for birds.

How Can We Do More
Than Just Inform People,
But Inspire Them?

By sharing the experience.

A MULTIMEDIA EXPEDITION INTO THE YUKON DELTA



COASTAL TUNDRA POND IN THE YUKON DELTA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE BY GERRIT VYN

SHARING THE WORLD'S BIRDS WITH THE WORLD

The Cornell Lab's mission to conserve the earth's biodiversity means helping people realize they're connected to birds throughout the world. The migratory birds that alight in our yards and ponds one day fly off to faraway places where they mingle with other birds from other continents. Every time we lose a species or a special place in those great crisscrossing flyways, that fabric of interconnectedness unravels a little bit more. For the Cornell Lab, it's important to inspire people to protect all birds, even birds they'll never see in places they'll never visit. The Cornell Lab's multimedia team virtually transports viewers to the world's wildest places and portrays visceral encounters with wildlife that make people care.

IN A VAST UNKNOWN, AN OPPORTUNITY TO INSPIRE

Alaska's Yukon Delta was the perfect subject for a Cornell Lab multimedia project. At 19 million acres, it's one of the world's largest waterfowl breeding areas. But most people, even most birders, don't know anything about it. Cornell Lab multimedia producers Eric Liner and Gerrit Vyn partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to travel to the Yukon Delta and capture footage of breeding and migration over the course of two years.

"If we don't protect an area like this, it's like turning off the faucet ... and suddenly at the other end of the flyways people won't have the opportunity to see and appreciate and find wonder in the organisms that make up this planet."

—Brian McCaffrey, USFWS biologist



LONG-TAILED JAEGER BY GERRIT VYN



WILLOW PTARMIGAN AND NEST BY GERRIT VYN

CONJURING THE GRANDEUR OF THE YUKON DELTA

The resulting film, narrated by USFWS biologist Brian McCaffrey, offers a unique perspective on the Yukon Delta from a biologist who has worked there for 20 years. As the camera sweeps across the waterlogged Alaskan plains, panning above a V of migrating geese, then landing softly in an egg-laden nest, the film transports viewers into a magical land of tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes, and millions of ducks, loons, and shorebirds. McCaffrey's words bring understanding to the avian spectacle, as he explains how birds come to the Yukon Delta from as far away as New Zealand, Thailand, even Africa. The Yukon Delta, he explains, is connected to nearly every flyway in the world. (The film is posted online at birds.cornell.edu/yukondelta.)

REVERBERATIONS THROUGHOUT THE FLYWAY

In June the USFWS debuted the film at a meeting of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership, attended by members of 15 nations along a flyway that contains more than 50 million migratory waterbirds.

Now the State Department is showing the film at U.S. embassies in Korea, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, Australia, and New Zealand to promote international conservation for the birds of this flyway.

“Everyone who has seen this film through the State Department, domestically and abroad, has been wowed by the beauty and quality of the film itself, and affected by the new knowledge of our shared environmental resource with East Asia and the Pacific,” said Antoinette Condo, who works for the Biodiversity Team at the U.S. Department of State. “Our economic officer in Seoul was very excited to use the film and additional information about the birds we share with Korea in talks with students about the mission of the State Department and our mutual interests.”



CORNELL LAB MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER ERIC LINER SCANS FOR SHOREBIRDS ACROSS THE VAST TIDAL FLATS OF THE YUKON DELTA. PHOTO BY GERRIT VYN.

INSPIRING TEACHERS, INSPIRED STUDENTS



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAMELA EVANS

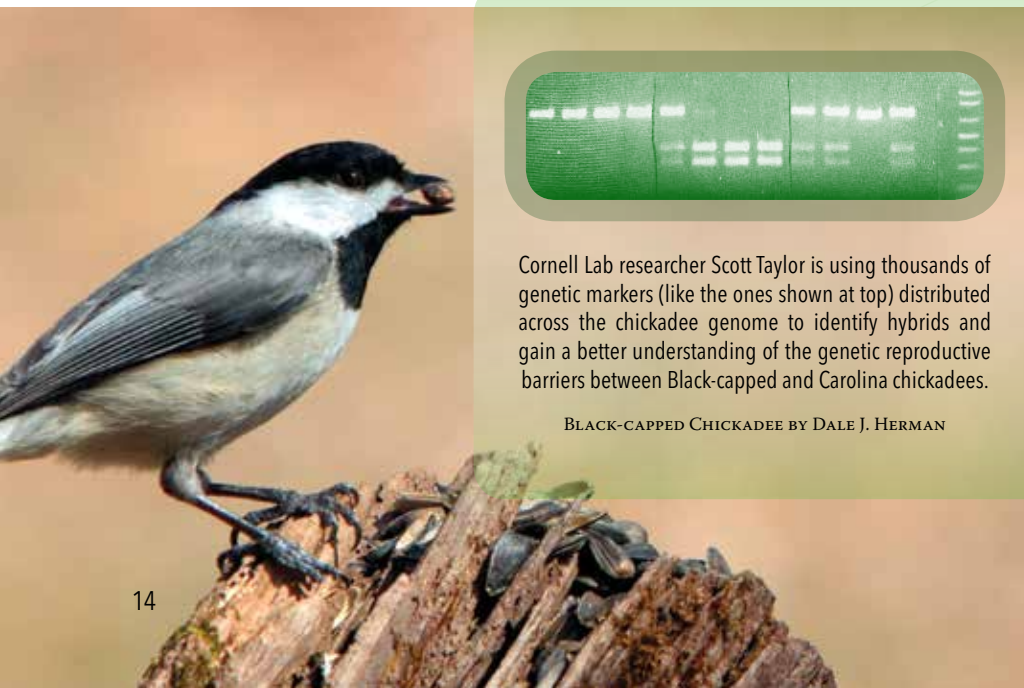
Enthusiasm in the classroom flows from teacher to students. BirdSleuth, the Cornell Lab's K-12 science education curriculum, gets teachers excited to teach about birds. For Pamela Evans, a 6th-grade teacher in Charleston, Illinois, BirdSleuth's classroom resources are a great way to get kids using the scientific process to answer their own questions about nature. Evans used the Bird Bingo unit to get her students outside practicing observation skills. She also engaged her class in a unit about evolution where students were challenged to design their own bird and then write a report explaining its unique adaptations to a real environment. “My favorite part about BirdSleuth is when my students acquire a love of birds,” Evans says. One boy in her class was so inspired he added a birdbath and several birdhouses to his family's backyard so he could attract more birds to identify and watch at home.

HOW CAN WE...

...open new doors for scientific exploration?

BY EXPLORING IN NEW WAYS.

The Cornell Lab's Fuller Evolutionary Biology Program uses the emerging powerful technologies in molecular biology to delve into the processes that drive evolution and generate the earth's biodiversity. This past year Fuller Postdoctoral Fellow Scott Taylor turned these research tools toward the field of climate change science, as he joined a collaborative study examining how changing climatic conditions are affecting the hybridization of Black-capped Chickadees and Carolina Chickadees. Taylor's research opens a new door, studying how climate change influences species interactions at the level of the genome. Ultimately, Taylor's research aims to improve our understanding of the influences of a changing climate on species' interactions.



Cornell Lab researcher Scott Taylor is using thousands of genetic markers (like the ones shown at top) distributed across the chickadee genome to identify hybrids and gain a better understanding of the genetic reproductive barriers between Black-capped and Carolina chickadees.

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE BY DALE J. HERMAN

...connect people to nature in their own backyard?

BY MAKING IT FUN TO WATCH BIRDS.

The Cornell Lab's citizen-science programs make bird watching fun and purposeful. In 2013 the programs had a record-breaking year for getting people engaged in watching what's going on in their backyards. Nest-Watch participants monitored more than 17,000 nesting attempts in all 50 states, the most ever recorded in the history of the program. Project FeederWatch recruited a record number of participants (more than 20,000) to submit a record number of bird observations (7.3 million), with a big boost from a partnership with Bob's Red Mill Natural Foods. The Bob's Red Mill BirdSpotter Photo Contest encouraged FeederWatchers to submit photos of birds in their backyard to the program's Facebook page, with weekly winners awarded prizes from Bob's Red Mill. Over the course of the contest the FeederWatch Facebook page grew from 2,500 to more than 11,000 *Likes*, building social-media momentum for recruiting even more FeederWatchers this winter.



PINE GROSBEAK BY BIRDSPOTTER
PHOTO CONTEST WINNER
CATHERINE M. DIEHL-ROBBINS

...make the world's biggest biodiversity media archive even better?

BY MAKING IT ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE.

Last October the Cornell Lab's Macaulay Library completed a 12-year-long project to digitize the more than 150,000 analog wildlife audio recordings in its archives. "In terms of speed and the breadth of material now accessible to anyone in the world, this is really revolutionary," said Macaulay Library audio curator Greg Budney. "This is one of the greatest research and conservation resources at the Cornell Lab, and through its digitization we've swung the doors open on it in a way that wasn't possible 10 or 20 years ago." As a prime example, in May the Macaulay Library released *The Cornell Guide to Bird Sounds: Master Set for North America*, a comprehensive audio download package of nearly 5,000 MP3 files from 735 species that is the most complete vocal repertoire of North American birds ever released.





FOREST ELEPHANT BY ANDREA TURKALO

...study an animal that hides in the forest?

BY LISTENING CLOSELY.

For 14 years, the Elephant Listening Project within the Cornell Lab's Bioacoustics Research Program has conducted acoustic monitoring of forest elephants roaming and rumbling through some of the world's largest rainforests in Africa. Forest elephants are a distinct species from their larger cousins on the savannah. They mostly stay within the forests to browse vegetation and eat tree fruits, making them more often heard than seen, and very difficult to study. But scientific research on forest elephants is critical because their population has declined by 60% over the past decade. This past summer the ELP team released the first-ever measurement of how far a forest elephant's rumbles can travel through dense rainforest—from 3 to 4 miles, as calculated by comparing the energy loss on more than 200 recorded calls. This distance is similar to how far elephant calls carry on the open savannah, meaning the forest elephant's calls carry through the trees as if they weren't there.

...grow global awareness about birds?

BY TEACHING MORE PEOPLE, AND REACHING OUT TO NEW AUDIENCES.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology scientists are also core Cornell faculty members, and in 2013 they taught more students enrolled in Cornell courses than ever before—about 1,500 undergraduates and postgraduates. But that's just a fraction of the total number of people around the world who are learning about birds through the Cornell Lab. More than 600 people logged on to the Cornell Lab's new bird identification webinars, some from as far away as Australia, Chile, and the Netherlands. The Lab's Celebrate Urban Birds program offered up bird-related science, cultural, and community activities in two languages, English and Spanish, to more than 128,000 students, from American inner-city schools to rural Mexican villages. The Cornell Lab's broadest reach of all happens every day on the preeminent online information source about birds—AllAboutBirds.org, visited by more than 10 million people in the past 12 months, with annual web traffic up 66%.

...inspire people to care about a bird on the other side of the world?

BY BRINGING THE READER TO THE BIRD.



Last winter, the Cornell Lab's award-winning magazine *Living Bird* ran a feature story by Lab multimedia producer Gerrit Vyn about his expedition into Russia's remote Siberian tundra to document the demise of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, one of the world's most endangered birds. Vyn's vivid first-person account of interactions with this special species struck a deep chord with the magazine's readers. "Gerrit Vyn's magnificent piece about the Spoon-billed Sandpiper was one of the best conservation articles I've ever read," wrote one reader. Another asked: "I was immensely moved by Gerrit Vyn's article on the Spoon-billed Sandpiper ...How can I help this bird?"



MICHELLE AND PETER WONG

The male Spoon-billed Sandpiper featured in a *Living Bird* story last year was re-spotted in August along the coast of China, a hopeful sign of survival for one of the world's most endangered species.



a letter to **OUR DONORS**

THE DISCOVER CAMPAIGN—Looking Ahead to the Next Century of Conservation

As one of our best supporters, you already know what the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is, and what we do. This annual report is full of the successes in research and conservation made possible thanks to your generosity.

DISCOVER
The **Cornell Lab** 
CENTENNIAL
CAMPAIGN

Over the next two years, we're going to ask you to Discover the Cornell Lab again—to look a little more deeply at us, and to look ahead to the future as we approach our 100th anniversary in 2015. With birds and other wildlife facing more intense pressures than ever before, it's an urgent time to think about what we must do in the next century.

The Discover Campaign is a centennial effort to grow and strengthen the Cornell Lab's capacity and long-term stability. The campaign is the product of a series of thoughtful and productive strategic planning sessions by the Cornell Lab's leadership and administrative board over the past few years. From these sessions emerged a vision for the Cornell Lab of the next 100 years, a vision focused on discovery—new science, new scientists, new technologies, and new knowledge.

In the coming months we will be sharing this vision with you through the Discover Campaign, and we'll be taking this vision out to new audiences. Despite our more than 70,000 donors—and the tens of millions of people we reach through AllAboutBirds.org, *Living Bird* magazine, and all our communications and educational efforts devoted to birds—the Cornell Lab is still not a household name. We will need all the friends we can make and all the resources we can muster as we strive toward a world where people live side-by-side with wildlife and stable, healthy natural systems.

That's an ambitious vision, and our campaign goal is accordingly ambitious: Our goal is to raise \$125 million, with significant investments by our principal benefactors and thousands of gifts from our annual supporters. This is our rallying moment. The next 100 years will be a better century for birds.

Please keep an eye out for mailings and announcements as our Discover Campaign takes flight in 2014. And as always, deep thanks for your generosity and commitment.

Sincerely,



Sean Scanlon
Senior Director, Development and Philanthropy
(607) 254-1105; scanlon@cornell.edu

MAKE BIRDS YOUR LEGACY

It's easy to include the Cornell Lab in your estate plans and participate in the Discover Campaign's vision to sustain the study and conservation of birds for generations to come. To make a bequest through your will, simply include the language: "I give and bequeath the sum of \$_____ (or ____% of my residuary estate) to Cornell University, an educational institution in Ithaca, N.Y., for the Lab of Ornithology to be used in support of its charitable purposes." To learn more about estate planning opportunities that benefit you and the Cornell Lab, please contact Scott Sutcliffe ([607-254-2424](tel:607-254-2424); sutcliffe@cornell.edu).

The Cornell Lab is pleased to acknowledge such friends in perpetuity as members of the Sapsucker Woods Society.



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Financial Report

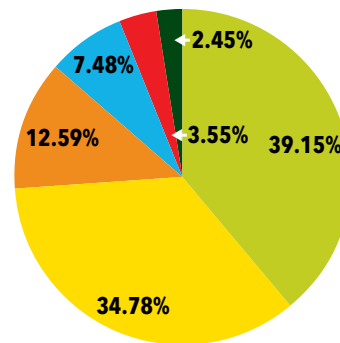
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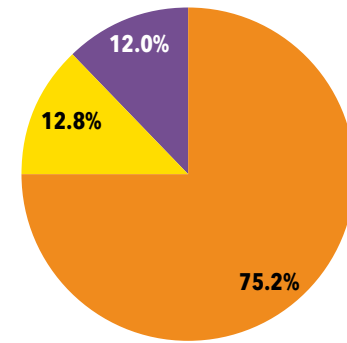
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FY13 REVENUES



Membership and Gifts	\$8,830,528
Grants and Contracts	\$7,845,184
Program Income	\$2,839,594
Invested Funds Income	\$1,686,391
Gifts Directed to Investment Funds	\$800,000
Other	\$552,432
Total Revenue	\$22,554,129

FY13 EXPENDITURES



Program	\$17,390,032
Administration	\$2,964,426
Development	\$2,769,612
Total Expenditures	\$23,124,070

Annual Operating Revenue and Expense, 2005-2013

