

DoD Bird Conservation Focus Area: Encroachment Minimization

Bird Conservation on Military Lands



Mission

To conserve migratory and resident birds and their habitats on Department of Defense lands.

DoD Bird Conservation — “Partners in Flight”

The Department of Defense (DoD) engages in a wide array of bird and habitat conservation activities. Collectively, these activities are known as Partners in Flight, to mirror related activities being implemented at the national and international levels. Through these efforts, DoD identifies strategies, goals, and priorities for key areas that support and enhance the military mission: stewardship, partnerships/cooperation, communication and education, habitat and species management, bird/animal aircraft strike hazard, monitoring, research, **encroachment minimization**, and quality of life. These goals and priorities outline DoD’s vision for developing and implementing conservation actions that support the mission while minimizing impacts to bird species and their habitats. These key focus areas enable DoD to better integrate programs for migratory and resident birds into existing natural resources and land management programs.

Goal: Encroachment Minimization

Help preserve buffer areas around installations to maintain critical testing and training capabilities.

Background

Maintaining qualified staff and ensuring proper stewardship in a time of unprecedented population growth and urban development is challenging, but vital. Encroachment is the cumulative result of any and all outside influences that inhibit normal military training, testing, and operations. Encroachment can result from urban growth near installations, increased need for endangered species habitat, competition for radio frequencies and airspace, air and noise



Construction of luxury housing immediately adjacent to Camp Bullis, Texas, has the potential to create conflicts with the Army's training activities. (Photo: Douglas Ripley)

pollution legislation protecting habitat, airspace use, regional habitat fragmentation, and stakeholder group issues.

Remoteness and isolation from population centers have historically been valued when choosing sites for military installations. However, once established, military posts often become surrounded by development. Wildlife habitat that was once expansive and whole then becomes fragmented and degraded. The result is that once-common species begin to become more rare, and available habitat in some cases occurs primarily on military lands. State- and federally-listed species create restrictions for training and testing, and force DoD to expend additional human and financial resources on compliance activities.

The U.S. population is likely to continue to grow and require greater land area. Weapon systems will become more sophisticated and also require larger training areas. Land use conflicts will inevitably become more common. Influencing land use decisions outside military property must consider what drives those decisions, identify who cares, and determine why. Conservation groups realized several decades ago that fences and hard boundaries do not work when protecting a resource. Buffers can provide a mechanism for ensuring compatibility of interests among all stakeholders. A buffer can't be viewed simply as a measure to force separation between communities and military installations. Buffers need to be created and managed as zones of transition and cooperation, and must take into account activities on both sides of the boundaries.

Priorities

DoD developed the following priorities to help achieve its encroachment minimization goals:

- Help identify and prioritize habitats for potential buffers.
- Collaborate with DoD programs, such as the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program (REPI), to identify the best military installations for buffer project funding.
- Use existing partner networks to identify potential partners for buffer planning and management actions.

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Enabling the Mission, Defending the Resources
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