



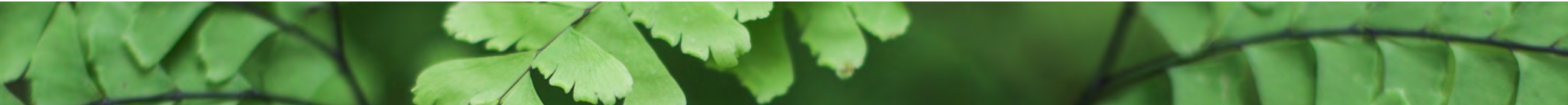
East Gulf Coastal Plain
Joint Venture
Strategic Plan

2023 - 2028



EAST GULF COASTAL PLAIN
JOINT VENTURE





A Product of the East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture (EGCPJV) Management Board

Edited by Catherine Rideout and Rob Holbrook

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On the Cover

Kentucky Warbler, Melanie Underwood and Yellow pitcher plants in wooded lot, Larry Goodman

Design

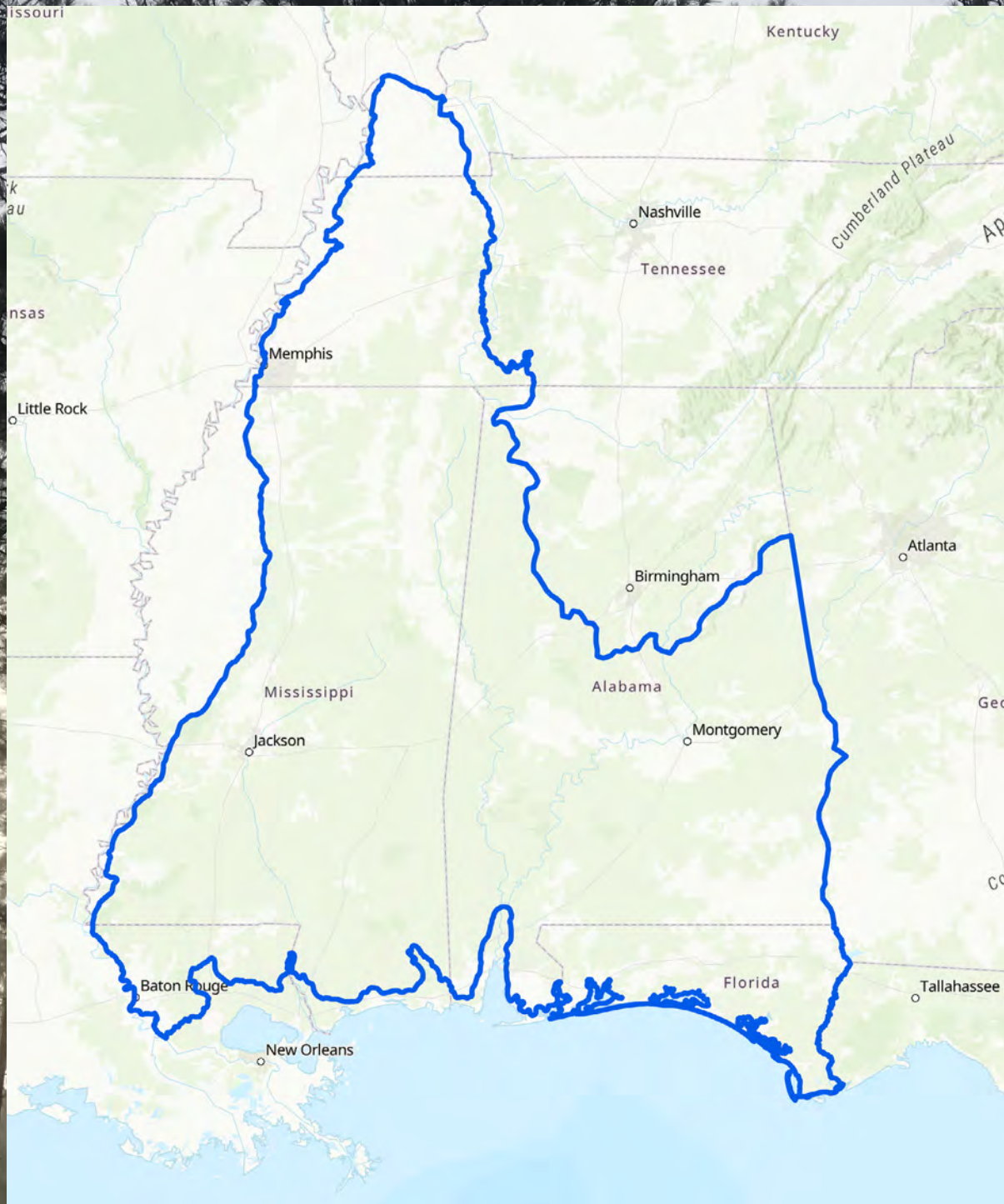
Debra Reynolds, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture



Catherine Rideout

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East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture Boundary

OUR REGION, OUR BIRDS

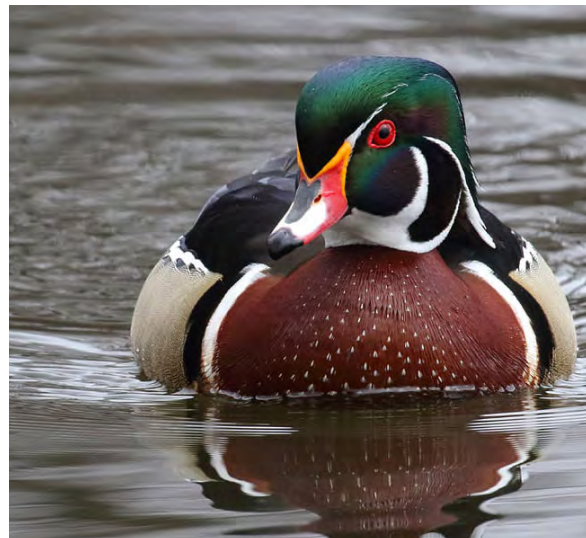
Our partnership was formed in 2006 to protect and restore bird populations in the East Gulf Coastal Plain region of the southeastern United States. The East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture (EGCPJV) covers the western portion of the Southeastern Coastal Plain Bird Conservation Region (BCR 27), including the Florida panhandle, much of Alabama and Mississippi, portions of western Tennessee and Kentucky, and eastern Louisiana.

This region is known for supporting an incredible array of species and covers 63 million acres of diverse habitats, including pine-dominated forests, deciduous forests, native prairies and grasslands, and forested and coastal wetlands. Over 300 bird species depend upon these habitats for breeding, migration, and overwintering, with at least 180 species known to breed in the region. The need to conserve these systems is urgent and clear. A recent study of North American avifauna abundance found that 2.5 billion (or 27%) of landbirds have been lost since 1970, with grassland birds incurring the highest proportional losses in abundance ([Rosenberg et al. 2019](#)). Population growth and urbanization, changes in timberland ownership and management, and potential impacts of climate change threaten habitats. These changes have reduced habitat connectivity, altered hydrology, and restricted the use of important

management tools such as prescribed fire. Successful conservation of birds and their habitats require our partnership to integrate science with on-the-ground habitat conservation work and effective communications. In the face of numerous challenges, collaborative conservation through partnerships such as ours can activate multi-faceted, holistic, and effective conservation to benefit birds and additional species of wildlife.



Indigo Bunting. James Hurt



Wood Duck. Chris Artuso



Least Tern. Ray Hennessy

OUR MISSION

The East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture is dedicated to protecting and restoring bird populations by conserving important bird habitats of the East Gulf Coastal Plain.

OUR VISION

The East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture has a shared vision of healthy, fully functioning ecosystems supporting sustainable bird populations and their ecological communities.

OUR VALUES

Our values are foundational to the East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture and serve as a touchstone for how we work collaboratively in partnership to accomplish our mission.

Synergistic - We engage in the partnership through cooperation and collaboration to build 'a whole' greater than the sum of its parts

Results Driven - We practice accountability and commitment with a focus on delivering impactful conservation outcomes

Courageous - We act boldly and whole-heartedly in meeting our bird conservation mission

Adaptive - We embrace change, challenges, and opportunities successfully with flexibility and nimbleness to achieve positive change for bird conservation

Dedicated - We serve the partnership with patience, persistence, and perseverance

Passionate - We act with passion and appreciation for the conservation of birds



Prairie Warbler. William Majoros

OUR PARTNERSHIP

The EGCPJV is one of a network of cooperative, regional partnerships conserving habitat for birds, wildlife and people. In 1986, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan instigated the establishment of Joint Ventures, and today a network of 22 habitat Joint Ventures work to provide healthy landscapes supporting bird and wildlife populations. The EGCPJV steps down the conservation priorities and objectives identified by national and international bird plans to our geography and implements science-based conservation.



Northern Bobwhite. Larry Goodman

Our self-directed partnership is comprised of 13 state, federal, and non-governmental conservation organizations and is led by a diverse and dedicated Management Board and staff. The synergy of the partnership allows the EGCPJV to achieve greater success collaboratively than could be attained through the work of individual agencies and organizations. Key to our success is the development and implementation of scientific plans through maintained networks of scientists, land managers, and conservationists whose work improves the quality and quantity of bird habitats. Birds are central to the Joint Venture's work, and our focus on improving habitats also positively impacts populations of many wildlife species and meets the broader conservation missions of many of our partners.



Yellow pitcher plants. Julie Tew

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Helped development America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, a public and private collaborative supporting restoration of longleaf pine ecosystems



Assisted partners to secure funding for priority conservation projects



Developed a report detailing 'desired forest conditions' for wildlife dependent on longleaf and other open pine habitats



Produced the East Gulf Coastal Plain Landbird Conservation Plan that identifies priority bird species, numerical population objectives, and habitat targets for five priority habitats



Produced a communications strategy presenting prescribed fire issues, messages for key audiences, and actions used by prescribed fire proponents throughout southeastern U.S.



Prepared the next generation of conservation scientists and managers by engaging students from University of West Florida and Mississippi State University to develop priority science products



Growing strong. Catherine Rideout

LOOKING BACK WITH AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

The EGCPJV was formalized in 2009 and serves a central role in the bird conservation community in our geography. In recent years, much of the partnership's emphasis has been on the conservation of priority birds associated with open pine systems, particularly longleaf pine. We have developed a suite of scientific products, represented bird conservation needs in wider conservation arenas, and supported large-scale initiatives and programs to benefit bird populations. Additionally, our communications products promote prescribed fire, a critical management tool, and are used by many partners in the EGCP. As we celebrate our accomplishments, an exciting future awaits us.

Here in 2023, we have an [ambitious landbird conservation plan](#), the availability of significant conservation funding, and new landscape-scale initiatives and external partnerships with an avid interest in bird and habitat conservation. There are exciting opportunities we have not seen before. These variables contributed to the timeliness of an effort and investment in refining our strategic direction. In 2022, the Management Board re-evaluated priorities and opportunities to develop the strategic direction for the next five years. In the face of numerous conservation challenges, the EGCPJV's bird conservation mission continues to be critically important.

OUR NEXT FIVE YEARS

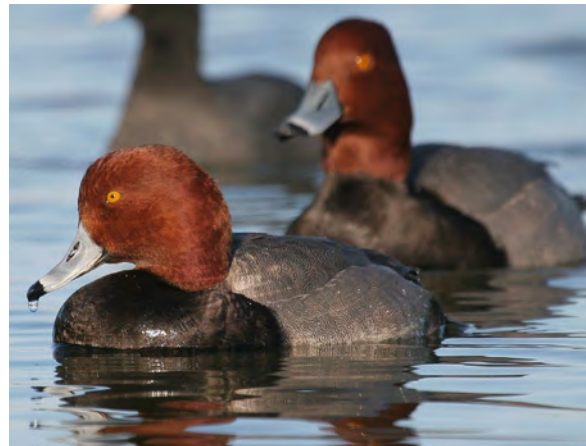
We have vital work to do in the coming years, and the EGCPJV has made decisions about goals and approaches to achieving them. The following goals represent key aspects of the EGCPJV's conservation efforts:

1. **Catalyzing and activating bird conservation** in the region through coalition building, impactful growth, accountability, and commitment
2. Using **scientific products** to maximize conservation benefits with development of additional products
3. Shifting our conservation emphasis to new **habitat priorities**
4. Continuing bird conservation work through **engagement in complementary partnerships and efforts**
5. Acting boldly in the arenas of **advocacy and policy**
6. Effectively employing **communications, education, and outreach**

The East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture is a self-directed partnership of 13 state, federal, private, and academic organizations working together to coordinate bird conservation efforts in the coastal plain of six southeastern states.



Black Skimmers. Larry Goodman



Redheads. USFWS



Prothonotary Warbler. William Majoros



Goal #1: Serving As A Catalyst For Bird Conservation

The EGCPJV catalyzes bird conservation in the region through several key actions and approaches. To pursue healthy ecosystems and sustainable bird populations, insuring a strong and diverse coalitions is key. Where there is a need, building coalitions provides access to expertise and perspectives of constituencies including private landowners, industrial landowners, corporations, and conservation organizations. Additionally, we are leveraging efforts of established, successful initiatives by representing the needs of birds in these groups. Leveraging efforts of complementary groups is important to multiple aspects of our work and achieving all goals in this plan. We commit to focus on outcomes and accountability. Additionally, we commit to “impactful growth” through thoughtful expansion of the EGCPJV’s partner network and increased staff capacity to deliver priority projects and programs. Strategic growth is key to addressing conservation challenges in the region. As we look to the future, we tackle these five-year goals and remain nimble to respond to new challenges and threats and pursue new opportunities aligned with our goals.



Red-cockaded Woodpecker. USDA

Goal #2: Using Science-Based Products To Maximize Conservation Benefits

Science continues to serve a central role in maximizing conservation benefits to birds. The EGCPJV Landbird Conservation Plan (LCP) is a driving force behind our work. The Plan outlines priority bird species, bird population objectives, and objectives for five priority habitats. At this time, implementing LCP goals is central to delivering science-based conservation. Partner organizations contribute habitat acres towards meeting goals, and rolling up accomplishments allows us to track our collective progress. During this time frame, additional taxonomic plans (Waterbird, Waterfowl) will be developed and implemented by our partnership. Other scientific work includes identification of research and monitoring programs to improve understanding of bird ecology, response to management, and population trends. Developing monitoring, evaluation, and research needs and implementing programs to improve scientific planning and design underlies improving science and delivering effective conservation.

(need photo credit)

Partnering with universities to support monitoring programs provides the EGCPJV with valuable data while providing training and experience for the next generation of scientists and managers (photo by Brenda Callaway).



Goal #3: Shifting Our Conservation Emphasis To New Habitat Priorities

The LCP is the EGCPJV's central scientific product, and it indicates that two habitats require the greatest increase in habitat acreages in the EGCP. These are grasslands and upland-hardwood and pine-hardwood woodlands and forests. This shift from a previous focus on longleaf pine is appropriate and timely, as much work is accomplished in longleaf by engaging through an established initiative. Activities associated with these shifting priorities include scoping conservation threats, forming teams as needed, and determining conservation actions to deliver conservation for birds dependent upon these habitats.

Goal #4: Continuing Bird Conservation Work Through Engagement In Complementary Partnerships And Efforts

Our partnership recognizes the need to focus on a subset of habitat priorities while continuing ongoing efforts and responding to new opportunities. Engaging with initiatives, working groups, and individual partners with overlapping conservation objectives provides a platform to represent bird conservation, share and use others' science planning tools, collaborate on habitat delivery, or work together on advocacy, policy, and communications efforts. Plugging into partnerships allows us to prevent unnecessary or confusing duplication and find synergy with others. A few examples include America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, the National Estuary Program, and prescribed fire councils. These groups can provide us needed products and can serve as a platform for delivering our conservation objectives.

Red Knot. Ray Hennessy



Goal #5: Acting Boldly in Support of Advocacy and Policy

The Management Board has committed to act boldly in support of advocacy and policy. All partner organizations will continue to promote the EGCPJV by communicating opportunities for collaboration and conveying success stories internally and to other organizations. The EGCPJV will continue to have a representative to serve on the Association of Joint Venture Management Boards, a collective of Joint Venture partners who work together to secure funding and support on behalf of Joint Ventures. Advocating to maintain and increase conservation funding and to support local, regional, and national policies and legislation to positively impact bird and wildlife conservation will be central to our efforts. While all partners should advocate on behalf of the EGCPJV's conservation, a subset of partners are better positioned to serve in the roles of advocacy and policy support. We will identify established groups working on related advocacy and policy issues and will align our efforts accordingly.



Prescribed fire. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

and implementation of a communications strategy. Additionally, we continue to seek opportunities to address priorities in the EGCPJV Prescribed Fire Communications Strategy through internal and external partners and stakeholders.

Goal #6: Effectively Employing Communications, Education, And Outreach

The EGCPJV acknowledges the importance of communications, education, and outreach in much of our conservation work. Partners and staff have not previously addressed work in this arena in a strategic manner. Moving forward, we will strive to use effective communications, education, and outreach tools to address aforementioned goals. We will promote the EGCPJV and communicate our role in bird conservation to ensure continued support and engagement by current and new partners. We identify this as an area of future growth requiring attention and expertise through the development

Prescribed fire is a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health, and reduce wildfire risk.

Species like American beautyberry (pictured below by Catherine Rideout) thrive in habitat managed with fire.



OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

These tables present the EGCPJV’s five goals with associated objectives and anticipated outcomes or measurables. Annual work plans will prioritize and add detail to objectives and outline specific actions, benchmarks, and staff and partner commitments. As the partnership implements this work, we strive to adhere to our values and work towards synergistic, results driven, and adaptive collaborative.

Goal #1: Serving as a catalyst for bird conservation	
Objective	Measurable/Outcome
Develop and maintain a diverse coalition by broadening constituencies of the board and partnership	Management Board composition reflects board priorities and needs
	Accounting of new and engaged partners across the region
Develop new coalitions as needed by energizing and convening partners around priority issues	Accounting of new coalitions addressing priority bird conservation
Work through established initiatives to address priority issues	Assessment of board member and partner effectiveness in representing JV priorities in established initiatives
Optimize capacity of partnership through staffing growth	Evaluation of staff time spent on priorities versus administration
	Development of staffing plan linked to five-year priorities
Maintain stable or increasing budget to support JV staff, projects, and contracts	Board member engagement in Association of Joint Venture Management Boards and pursuit of legislative support for JV funding
	Accounting of funding awarded to JV partners via funding programs (e.g., North American Wetlands Conservation Act, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 2023 Farm Bill)
	Annual US Fish & Wildlife Service budgets
Board and staff serve in alignment with values of commitment and accountability	Assessment by board and staff of participation in JV projects, proposals, and/or committees
	Evaluation of annual work plan implementation



Goal #2: Using science-based products to maximize conservation benefits

Objective	Measurable/ Outcome
Develop conservation design products for the Landbird Conservation Plan	Products/metrics To Be Determined (TBD) by appropriate groups
EGCPJV Waterbird Planning (V 1.0) stepped down from national bird plan and additional conservation design products (V 2.0)	Completed Waterbird Conservation Plan; products/metrics TBD by appropriate group(s)
EGCPJV Waterfowl Planning (V 1.0) stepped down from international bird plan and additional conservation design products (V2.0)	Completed Waterfowl Conservation Plan; products/metrics TBD by appropriate group(s)
Identify JV research needs	Priority research needs document
Identify habitat and population monitoring needs	Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

Goal #3: Shifting our conservation emphasis to new habitat priorities

Objective	Measurable/ Outcome
Develop and implement bird-specific conservation actions for upland hardwoods and pine hardwoods	Specific habitat actions developed to deliver LCP objectives by appropriate team(s)
	Development of upland-hardwood and pine-hardwood conservation delivery team
	Report outlining opportunities and potential pilot projects
Implement pilot habitat projects for upland hardwood and pine hardwoods	Number of pilot projects developed; acres of habitat protected, restored, or enhanced
Advance conservation of priority bird species using agricultural grasslands	Specific habitat actions developed to deliver LCP objectives by appropriate team(s)
Work with state / federal agencies to incorporate bird-friendly practices into programs for agricultural grasslands	Programs are incorporating bird friendly conservation practices
Implement pilot habitat projects for agricultural grasslands	Number of pilot projects developed; acres of habitat protected, restored, or enhanced
Advance conservation of priority bird species using prairie	Specific habitat actions developed to deliver LCP objectives by appropriate team(s)
Implement pilot habitat projects for prairie	Number of pilot projects developed; acres of habitat protected, restored, or enhanced



EGCPJV looks towards a future working in new habitats. BLM

Goal #4: Continuing bird conservation work through engagement in complementary partnerships and efforts

Objective	Measurable/ Outcome
Engage in established initiatives with overlapping work and/or objectives in multiple arenas (longleaf outlined below)	List of important initiatives and partner commitment to engage with regular assessment of efforts
Promote, advocate, and advance the effective use of prescribed fire across EGCP	Assessment of EGCPJV’s engagement and effectiveness in engagement
Advance conservation for longleaf habitats including support to America’s Longleaf Restoration Initiative	Assessment of EGCPJV’s niche in longleaf pine conservation and subjective assessment of effectiveness in engagement
	Partners are using open pine metrics and other science support tools
Advance bird habitat conservation in the coastal region by engaging with established partners and initiatives	Assessment of effectiveness of engagement in national estuary programs
	Partners are using use EGCPJV bird conservation plans and other science products

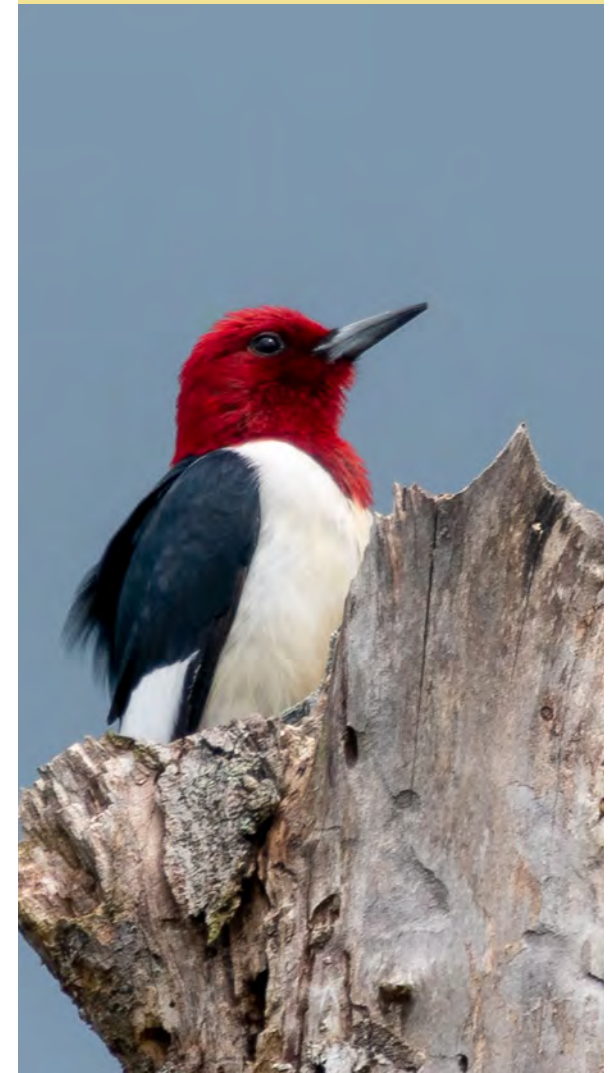
Goal #5: Acting boldly in the areas of advocacy and policy

Objective	Measurable/ Outcome
Increase support for national JV program	Board member engagement in Association of Joint Venture Management Boards and pursuit of legislative support for JV funding
	Assessment of quality and quantity of efforts (letters of support, contact with legislators, etc.)
Increase support of national JV program by key federal, state, NGO, and other organizations	Assessment of quality and number of communications to insure support of JVs with leadership of conservation agencies
Influence state, regional, national and international policies impacting birds and bird habitat	Assessment of JV efforts to engage on state, national, and international policy

Goal #6: Effectively employing communications, education, and outreach

Objective	Measurable/ Outcome
Develop and implement communications strategy	Communications strategy and assessment of implementation
Implement priorities in JV’s Prescribed Fire Communication Strategy through partners and stakeholders	Assessment of implementation of strategies

The Red-headed Woodpecker (pictured below by Miki Jourdan, Creative Commons) is an EGCPJV priority bird species and benefits from conservation of habitats including uplands-hardwood and pine-hardwood forests and woodlands.





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