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Partners Working Together to Protect Upland Bird Habitat in Southern Ontario

Guelph, ON – The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and program partners, Wildlife Habitat Canada/Wetland Habitat Fund (WHC/WHF), the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) and the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) announced today the renewal of a habitat conservation program for upland birds. The “Landbird Habitat Program”, developed under the auspices of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) helps private landowners and conservation partners protect and restore important upland bird habitats in southern Ontario.

“Landbirds” are a diverse group of birds, ranging from raptors to sparrows, which inhabit grasslands, woodlands and other upland habitats. The Landbird Habitat Program was established in 2004 when a ground-breaking analysis of bird research revealed that action was needed to help conserve populations of several species of landbirds. Protecting landbirds is an important element of conserving biodiversity in Ontario; ‘keeping common birds common’ is the vision of the landbird group of NABCI, the Partners in Flight.

The Landbird Habitat Program provides financial and technical assistance for private landowners who are undertaking habitat stewardship projects and supports landbird habitat conservation efforts of partners such as the NCC. Through this partnership there are free site visits and funds available for landowners who are interested in protecting and enhancing significant bird habitat on their own land.

The Landbird Habitat Program is designed to improve the quality and quantity of habitat for birds on private lands around significant natural areas. The geographic focus is on seven significant bird areas in southern and central Ontario: Pelee Island, Clear Creek Forest, South Walsingham, Skunk’s Misery, Point Abino, Rice Lake Plains and the Carden Alvar. Further stewardship efforts are carried out on lands owned by conservation organizations such as NCC and its partners in those regions.

This program was modeled after and complementary to the existing wetland focused conservation and stewardship programs of the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (EHJV) in Ontario (OEHJV). As such, the OEHJV partners have expanded their activities to protect more than just wetland-dependent bird species, incorporating the vision and goals of NABCI. NABCI is an international partnership focused on cooperating to conserve native North American birds throughout their ranges and habitats [see <http://www.nabci-us.org/aboutnabci/NABCIFINALDOI.pdf>]

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“In Ontario, the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (EHJV) program has been traditionally aimed at the conservation of wetland habitats and associated birds, but we did not have an equivalent program for landbirds and their habitats” said NCC Ontario’s Stewardship and Government Programs Manager, Lisa McLaughlin. “The partners are all interested in conserving all bird groups in all habitats, and so the desire to create a program to fill this gap was born.”

Additional partners, including Bird Studies Canada have been working with the founding organizations to help implement the stewardship programs. Landowner contact and outreach programs have been initiated in identified areas and this year, the Landbird Habitat Program will continue its work in identified priority areas. The activities of the Landbird Habitat Program are aimed at implementing the conservation actions of the Southern Ontario Partners In Flight/Landbird Conservation Plan (available at: <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/PIF/PIFOntario.html>). Over the last few years, CWS and OMNR have been working together with Bird Studies Canada and Wildlife Habitat Canada to develop landbird conservation plans for the four Ontario bird conservation regions under NABCI. These regional plans identify priority landbird species and key objectives for conservation of these species and their habitats in Ontario.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is a national non-profit conservation organization that works with landowners to protect Canada’s natural habitats. Its plan of action is to build partnerships and develop creative conservation solutions with individuals, corporations, community groups, conservation groups and government bodies. Since 1962, NCC and its supporters have helped to protect more than 1.9 million acres (765,000 hectares) of ecologically significant land nationwide and over 115,000 acres in Ontario alone.

Wildlife Habitat Canada (WHC) is a national, non-profit, conservation organization established in 1984. WHC works through partnerships with communities, landowners, governments, non-government organizations, and industry to find effective solutions to complex environmental problems facing wildlife habitat. Wildlife Habitat Canada is committed to promoting and funding wildlife habitat conservation, restoration and enhancement. In Ontario, we operate the Wetland Habitat Fund in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, providing technical and financial assistance directly to landowners. Find out more about our programs as www.whc.org.

Environment Canada's mandate is to preserve and enhance the quality of the natural environment, including water, air and soil quality; conserve Canada's renewable resources, including migratory birds and other non-domestic flora and fauna; conserve and protect Canada's water resources; carry out meteorology; enforce the rules made by the Canada - United States International Joint Commission relating to boundary waters; and coordinate environmental policies and programs for the federal government ([Department of Environment Act](#)).

For more information on the Landbird Habitat Program contact Lisa McLaughlin, Nature Conservancy of Canada, at 1- 877- 343-3532.

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