

Statement of Chairwoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Oversight Hearing Regarding H.R. 1916, The Migratory Bird Habitat Investment and
Enhancement Act; H.R. 2062, The Migratory Bird Treaty Act Penalty and Enforcement
Act of 2009; and H.R. 2188, The Joint Ventures for Bird Habitat Conservation Act
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Wildlife and Oceans
Wednesday, May 13, 2009

This past Saturday, May 9th, bird conservationists living in North America, Latin America and the Caribbean Region celebrated International Migratory Bird Day. First established in 1993, this annual celebration which is enjoyed by millions of people reminds us of two important truths.

First, we are reminded of the beauty, diversity and ecological importance of birds. Second, we are reminded that because of the far-flung distribution and migratory behaviors of many birds, the only way we can maintain this resource is to work cooperatively, creatively, and purposefully with other nations and with all stakeholders to conserve migratory bird habitat.

With the passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918, the Congress first recognized that the long-term conservation and management of migratory birds was a Federal responsibility. Since that time, the Congress has also recognized, and in fact encouraged, the Federal Government to work with the States, Flyway Councils, conservation organizations and other stakeholders, to develop effective long-term strategies to conserve our common migratory bird resource for the mutual benefit of all.

This collaborative strategy has produced unquestionably some of our most significant innovations in wildlife conservation. For example, the Federal Duck Stamp, first issued in 1934, has generated hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue to fund the acquisition of millions of acres of bird habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, implementation of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan led to the voluntary establishment of migratory bird Joint Ventures that have built durable partnerships to conserve bird habitat over entire geographic regions.

Yet, no one should assume that Federal migratory bird management is without flaw. Nor should anyone assume that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act is perfect. Sadly, arrests made in 2007 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that exposed the cruel and wanton killing of eagles, falcons and hawks by Roller Pigeon enthusiasts, reminds us that migratory birds remain at risk regardless of their Federally-protected status, and despite our best efforts to conserve bird habitat.

Perhaps most important, we also are reminded that we must remain constantly vigilant to protect this cherished wildlife resource. And with that thought in mind, I will look forward to hearing from this afternoon's witnesses.