ECOSTUDIES INSTITUTE
2011 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends,

In 2011, Ecostudies Institute celebrated its 10th year of conducting sound science and implementing on-the-ground actions that promote the restoration and conservation of wildlife and their habitats. Although we completed several long-term projects and began new initiatives, we also began thinking about ways to guide and sustain the organization through the future. To that end, Ecostudies’ staff and board members developed a 5-year strategic plan to outline our vision, improve our organizational efficiencies, and build upon the foundation laid a decade ago. That document will be approved annually and places us in a better position to perform our mission and realize our vision of Ecostudies Institute as a leader in the field of conservation.

At the conservation level, one of the outcomes of the strategic plan was to distill our existing programs into individual themes or core conservation programs. We did this to sharpen our focus and our conservation message, acknowledging that over time we also will add new conservation programs as we pursue new directions and challenges. At this time, however, we identified three conservation programs where we have strong expertise and where we can make immediate impacts towards solving conservation problems. Those three programs are: Conservation of South Florida Forest Bird Communities, Avian Reintroductions, and Conservation of Waterbirds. In this report, we highlight major accomplishments made in these areas over the last year and provide a glimpse of our activities in 2012.

Sincerely,

Gary Slater
Executive Director

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**OUR MISSION:** Ecostudies Institute is dedicated to understanding and conserving native populations of birds and other wildlife and their habitats.

**OUR CORE BELIEFS:**
- Objective science should guide conservation, management, and restoration of native birds and wildlife.
- Biodiversity, intact habitats, and functioning ecosystems are important to the well-being of humans.
- Disseminating the results of scientific research promotes informed decision-making and public involvement in conservation.
CONFERENCE OF SOUTH FLORIDA FOREST BIRD COMMUNITIES

Mangrove Forests

Florida’s mangroves are home to 6 bird species that occur nowhere else in North America, 5 of which are listed as Species of Conservation Concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In 2007, we began a study, with funding from numerous partners, to develop a better understanding of the assemblage of birds breeding in the mangroves. Prior to this study, little was known about any of these species, including even basic patterns of abundance and distribution or habitat associations.

This year we completed the final season of data collection, marking the completion of the first large-scale study of mangrove landbirds in Florida. The results reveal previously unknown patterns of distribution and abundance that will prove useful in formulating and testing hypotheses related to the assemblage of biological communities. From a conservation perspective, this study provides an important baseline to measure future changes in population size, such as from climate change or hydrologic restoration, and provides natural-areas managers with information needed to help create conservation plans for mangrove landbirds. The final report will be available in 2012, and we anticipate publishing the results as a monograph through the Florida Ornithological Society.

Key results and accomplishments

- Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Cardinal, Florida Prairie Warbler, and White-eyed Vireo numerically dominate the community. Only Florida Prairie Warbler is restricted to mangroves.
- Of the species unique to mangroves, Black-whiskered Vireo was widespread but less abundant than Florida Prairie Warbler; White-crowned Pigeon, Gray Kingbird, and Cuban Yellow Warbler were detected only in the Florida Keys and on the islands of Florida Bay, but were found in high densities where present; and Mangrove Cuckoo was found throughout the mangroves but occurred at very low density and at only a small percentage of survey points.
- The use of recorded vocalizations significantly increased the rate of detection for Mangrove Cuckoos, suggesting that playbacks should be incorporated into future monitoring efforts for this species.
- In the 10,000 Islands region, populations of Mangrove Cuckoos and Black-whiskered Vireos have declined by 87% and 64%, respectively, between 2000 and 2008. This work was published in the Journal of Field Ornithology.
- We designed a framework for a long-term program to monitor populations of breeding birds in mangrove forest of Florida.
Ecology and seasonal movements of the Mangrove Cuckoo

Results from the large-scale mangrove project prompted a new study on the ecology of the Mangrove Cuckoo. The cuckoo is the most enigmatic species inhabiting mangroves. Populations have shrunk by up to 87% in recent years, but our lack of knowledge of the natural history and habits of this species have hindered our ability to identify causes of the decline. For example, it remains unknown whether the species winters in Florida or migrates to more tropical locales.

Ecostudies Institute, with the support of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Disney’s Wildlife Conservation Fund, has begun a radio-telemetry project that will address fundamental gaps in our understanding of the cuckoo, and that will simultaneously use the allure of this mysterious species to educate the public about mangrove conservation and the role of science. South Florida Audubon Society will assist Ecostudies Institute in the preparation and delivery of educational programs targeted at students in primary, secondary, and higher education. Field work will begin in February 2012 on Sanibel Island at JN “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

Employee Highlight

Rachel Frieze has been with Ecostudies since 2010, when she first began working on the Mangrove Landbird Monitoring Project. It was during the two years of working on this project that Rachel developed a growing interest in mangrove ecology and the conservation of the Mangrove Cuckoo. She will coordinate and lead the field research for the Mangrove Cuckoo Project beginning in 2012.

Rachel received her Bachelors of Science degree in Wildlife Management and Conservation at Humboldt State University. Her extensive experience, passion for research and education, and drive to connect individuals to our conservation mission have made her an invaluable member of our staff.
**AVIAN REINTRODUCTIONS**

**Western Bluebird Reintroduction Project**

Since 2007, Ecostudies and its partners have been working to reestablish a breeding population of Western Bluebirds to portions of its historic range in the Pacific Northwest. Once a common inhabitant in oak-prairie and open forest habitats of the region, the bluebird disappeared due to habitat loss and degradation. Particularly important was the loss of tree cavities in which they built nests and raised young. Our project completed its 5th year of translocations on San Juan Island in 2011, using methodologies developed during our successful reintroduction of Eastern Bluebirds to Everglades National Park. Project partners also are working to conserve the prairie-oak ecosystem that the birds depend on, both through protection of habitat and education and outreach.

**White-breasted Nuthatch Reintroduction Project**

Following the success of Western Bluebird reintroduction efforts, Ecostudies Institute and other partners are turning their attention to the Slender-Billed White-breasted Nuthatch. The nuthatch, like the bluebird, has experienced profound range contractions in the south Puget Sound region, where the last known breeding effort occurred in 1985. With large-scale management and restoration projects increasing the quality and quantity of its preferred oak-prairie habitat, and the ability to use nestboxes as a management tool to address cavity availability, the time is right to consider reestablishing this species to its former haunts. In 2011, we met with many potential partners and have agreed to initiate pilot translocation beginning in 2012.

**Key results and accomplishments**

- Over 5 years, 99 adults and 35 juveniles have been translocated to San Juan Island.
- In 2011, the breeding population size reached 38 individuals; overall, 212 young have fledged from nests during the 5-year project.
- Successful breeding, the return of translocated individuals and their offspring from winter grounds, and demographic rates in the reintroduced population equaling those in other populations of bluebirds in the Pacific Northwest indicate the project has met measures of restoration success.
- Translocation and monitoring results for the period from 2007-2010 were published in a special issue on the state of conservation and research in oak-prairie habitats in the journal Northwest Science.

**Future plans**

- In 2012, we will not release birds on San Juan Island, but we will begin translocations to Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, broadening the scope of the project to an international level.
- Meanwhile, we will continue to monitor the breeding population on San Juan Island to further evaluate the success of the reintroduction effort and the need for additional management.
**WATERBIRD CONSERVATION**

In 2011, we continued our waterbird conservation program, which has been ongoing over the last decade. Our current work focuses on a diverse group of shorebird species that use estuarine and agricultural habitats in the Pacific Northwest. Most of these species have exhibited long term population decline. Working with partners from Pacific Coast Joint Venture, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Simon Fraser University, and Canadian Wildlife Service, we are currently conducting research on the habitat requirements and food needs of Dunlin. This research will help inform the development of conservation strategies in both estuarine and upland habitats.

**PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

Everglades National Park  
Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Joint Base Fort Lewis-McChord Military Base  
American Bird Conservancy  
San Juan County Audubon  
Salt Spring Conservancy  
Biscayne National Park  
Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge  
South Florida Audubon  
Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team  
San Juan Preservation Trust  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS
In addition to completing technical reports for individual projects, which can be found on our web page, we work to present our results through a variety of oral and written means. In this way, we can ensure that our results reach a broad array of conservation-minded individuals, including land managers and scientists, who can then use the information for advancing the conservation of birds and their habitats.

Presentations

Publications
2011 Financial Statement

How We Use Funds

Ecostudies Institute accomplishes its mission using funds obtained through grants from government agencies, foundations, and other nonprofit organizations and through support from the general public. By using funds efficiently, we are able to direct most funds straight to our specific conservation programs.

Annual Support and Revenue

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Grants</td>
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<td>Foundation, Organization</td>
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<td>Interest</td>
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<td>Other Income</td>
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<td><strong>Total Annual Support and Revenue</strong></td>
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Annual Expenses

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<td>Management and General (9%)</td>
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<td>Fund-raising (4%)</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
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Net Assets as of 31 Dec. 2011 $47,903

Please consider a donation to Ecostudies Institute.

As a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations, all contributions - cash, in-kind support, or equipment - are tax-deductible. Donations can be made through our web page www.ecoinst.org via Paypal or by contacting our main office. Please feel free to contact us for more information about how contributions are used.

Find us on

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