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MEDIA RELEASE

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American Bird Conservancy Warns of Impact to Bird Conservation Efforts if Key Funding Source is Not Renewed by Congress

(Washington, D.C., December 7, 2010) American Bird Conservancy Deputy Director of Conservation Advocacy Anne Law today expressed concern that the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) - a major source of bird conservation funding - is in danger of expiring, and without reauthorization, the well-being of many migrant songbirds could fall victim to federal spending cuts.

According to Law, NMBCA is the only federal U.S. grants program specifically dedicated to the conservation of migrant birds that is available throughout the Americas.

“NMBCA has a proven track-record of success, having supported 333 projects in 48 U.S. states and territories and 36 other countries since its inception in 2002. Advances in conservation for many declining species, such as the Cerulean Warbler, owe much to the NMBCA,” Law said.

The Senate is currently working to put together an omnibus package of wildlife, lands, and water bills before it adjourns at the end of the month. Law said that the good news is that the overall effort is being spearheaded by Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) who is also the champion for the NMBCA reauthorization. His office has indicated that the bill is likely to be included in the package.

While there is a lot of support for this package of bills including from Senate Majority Leader Reid, who has said he would try to move it before the end of the lame duck, it currently does not have the 60 votes necessary to pass in the Senate.

The NMBCA grant program is a catalyst for bird conservation and partnership development throughout the Western Hemisphere, actively promoting the long-term conservation of neotropical migratory birds and their habitats.

Since 2002, NMBCA partnerships have received more than \$35 million in grant funds to support 333 projects. Partners have brought in another \$150 million in matching funds, a partner to grant dollar match of more than 4:1. To date, about two million acres of migratory bird habitat have been positively affected.

NMBCA projects focus on priority areas and threats to neotropical migratory birds, funding activities that will protect habitat and energize local conservation initiatives. For example, the conversion of grassland habitat to agriculture is a major reason the number of grassland birds such as the Long-billed Curlew, is rapidly declining. Consequently, the conservation of this important ecosystem throughout the hemisphere is a high priority for the NMBCA grant program, which has supported two large scale conservation efforts aimed at conserving grassland habitats.

American Bird Conservancy (www.abcbirds.org) *conserves native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas by safeguarding the rarest species, conserving and restoring habitats, and reducing threats while building capacity of the bird conservation movement. ABC is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit membership organization that is consistently awarded a top, four-star rating by the independent group, Charity Navigator.*