

PRBO Conservation Science
3820 Cypress Drive #11
Petaluma, CA 94954
707-781-2555
www.prbo.org



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Press Release for July 10, 2008

Contact: Melissa Pitkin, Education and Outreach Director, 707 781-2555 ext. 307

PRBO Invited to Testify: House Subcommittee Hearing on Decline in Bird Populations:

Going, Going, Gone? An Assessment of the Global Decline in Bird Populations

Dr. John Wiens, the new Chief Science Officer at PRBO Conservation Science presented testimony on the declines among bird populations to the U.S. Congress on Thursday, July 10, 2008. The House Committee on Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans held a hearing to address recent large losses of native birds, worldwide as well as in the U.S. PRBO, headquartered in Petaluma, California, is an independent center for ecological research throughout western North America and the Pacific basin. PRBO studies birds as indicators of natural systems, using long-term data to detect and also predict ecosystem changes.

Among the key points John Wiens discussed with Congressional committee members:

- Long-term monitoring studies provide a trustworthy baseline for detecting and interpreting change. They reveal what is actually happening and evaluate the effectiveness of our actions. A prime example is the 40-year data set that PRBO has established on Southeast Farallon Island, working in cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Studies of breeding seabirds help explain changes in marine ecosystem such as the 2008 salmon crash.
- Partnerships among private land managers, public agencies, and non-profit groups (for example, Joint Ventures) are proven effective and merit more Congressional support. With adoption of an "all bird" framework, to encompass songbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl, such collaborations can help sustain bird populations and prevent vulnerable species from becoming threatened or endangered.
- Broader public involvement in addressing the problem of bird declines is essential. Private land owners and managers, for instance, can contribute to a strong mosaic of healthy wildlife habitat with public-agency support for enhancement projects on their properties.

Detailed written testimony was also provided for entry into the Congressional record. PRBO Chief Science Officer John Wiens, Ph.D. is among the United States' most accomplished conservation scientists. He pioneered the field of landscape ecology, served on the faculty of universities from Colorado to Oslo, Norway, has published seven books and 330 scientific papers, and recently advised The Nature Conservancy

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as Lead Scientist. Having just joined PRBO's staff in June, 2008, Dr. Wiens will help guide the organization's research programs to address current ecological challenges.

PRBO President and CEO Ellie M. Cohen notes: "Under John's guidance, we expect to significantly increase the scope of PRBO's already major contributions to bird and ecosystem conservation. He is the best possible science leader we could have envisioned to help shape and grow PRBO's scientific research and conservation programs."

PRBO Conservation Science is a non profit conservation and education organization dedicated to advancing conservation through birds and ecosystem research. Founded in 1965 as Point Reyes Bird Observatory, PRBO Conservation Science partners with hundreds of governmental and non-governmental agencies as well as private interests to ensure that every dollar invested in conservation yields the most for biodiversity — benefiting our environment, our economy and our communities. Visit PRBO on the web at www.prbo.org.

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