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US Forest Service honors outstanding achievements in bird, bat and butterfly conservation

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Last night, Associate Chief of the US Forest Service, Mary Wagner, presided over the 2013 Wings Across the Americas Conservation Awards ceremony. The festive event was held as part of the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. Forest Service employees and their partners are celebrated at the ceremony for their outstanding work in the conservation of birds, bats, butterflies and dragonflies.

Migratory species play unique ecological roles, figure prominently in culture--and are intrinsically beautiful. The Forest Service invests heavily in protecting habitat for listed migratory birds many of which spend the winter in Latin America and the Caribbean. If habitats in these areas are not protected, the tremendous US domestic investment in conservation is wasted. We work extensively in the winter ranges of many critical species to develop capacity to better manage the winter homes for these birds—a small investment with a huge impact. Despite their value, many birds, bats, butterflies and dragonflies unfortunately continue to face a multitude of threats.

Successful conservation work typically happens through partnerships—and last night's award winning projects were no exception. All of the Forest Service employees receiving awards shared the stage with partners from a myriad of organizations. They include universities, volunteers, foundations, conservation organizations and private firms.

The 2013 Awards ceremony was held at the 78^h North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. Gregory Butcher, as the evening's Master of Ceremonies, announced the winners for each of the following categories:

- In the *Research and Partnership Award* category, the first winner was the **Eastern Golden Eagle Working Group**. The group represents international collaboration of biologists and wildlife managers from more than 20 institutions in the USA and Canada, all working to ensure the species' long-term sustainability and to make the species a flagship for landscape scale conservation.

- A 2nd award in the *Research and Partnership Award* category went to the **Black Swift Migration and Wintering Grounds Investigation**. For more than 10 years, this group of dedicated scientists worked to study this rare and elusive bird and recently used a newly-developed 'bird backpacks' which fit lace around the swift's body and wings to discover the wintering area for the bird.
- In the *Habitat Management and Partnership Award* category, one award went to the **Dusky Canada Goose Nest Island Partnership**. With much of the habitat for the Dusky Canada Goose destroyed by the Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964, the population of the species has been on a steady decline. The partnership increased and protected artificial nest islands for the geese which have been shown to drastically increase breeding success.
- In the *Habitat Management and Partnership Award* category, a second award went to an innovative partnership called **Foresters for the Birds**. The Vermont-based partnership designs and provides tools and training that foresters need to help private land owners integrate timber management with Neotropical migratory bird habitat conservation.
- In the category of *International Communities in Conservation*, the winner was the **International Migratory Bird Day** which celebrates and highlights the importance of one of the most spectacular events in the Americas: bird migration.
- In the *Bat Conservation* category, the winner was **BatsLIVE! A Distance Learning Adventure**. BatsLIVE! Is a comprehensive education and outreach program that encourages innovative partnerships through a variety of events to reach more than 220,000 people with high-quality, engaging information on bat conservation.

Please visit our website, www.fs.fed.us/global/wings, to see the full list of award winners and the many partners who made this work possible.