



# NAWCA: a proven model for saving North America's birds

BY ADAM PUTNAM, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR — 02/25/20 09:30 AM EST  
THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS ARE THEIR OWN AND NOT THE VIEW OF THE HILL

76 SHARES

SHARE

TWEET



## Just In...

**To deter war with China, US must commit to defend Taiwan**

OPINION — 52S AGO

**Saudi Arabia bans pilgrim visits to holy sites amid coronavirus fears**

HEALTHCARE — 2M 47S AGO

**Clinton set to speak at Women in the World summit in April**

IN THE KNOW — 13M 47S AGO

**Top labor union launching \$150M anti-Trump campaign**

CAMPAIGN — 20M 56S AGO

**CDC declined to test new coronavirus patient for days, California hospital says**

HEALTHCARE — 28M 46S AGO

**Xi Jinping, coronavirus and the new cold war**

OPINION — 30M 52S AGO

**Sanders rips Pence: His last response to an epidemic was to 'pray' it away**

HEALTHCARE — 32M 40S AGO

**Japan's leader calls for month-long closure of schools due to virus threat**

HEALTHCARE — 1H 48S AGO

VIEW ALL

View Latest Opinions >>



© Getty Images

The first visitors to encounter the new world described skies filled with birds, rivers and bays teeming with activity and marshes loaded with a diverse array of wildlife. As our nation grew at a furious pace over the course of the centuries, a drastic altering of our natural landscape was taking place. By the 1980s, the continental U.S. had lost about 53 percent of its indigenous wetlands, [according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#).

Wetlands serve as unique and critical habitat for countless species of wildlife, including waterfowl and other migratory birds, but they also provide many other benefits. For example, they improve water quality by removing excess materials, they recharge aquifers and they even help to prevent soil erosion – especially in areas that are prone to flooding. They have been referred to as “nature’s sponges” for good reason.

That’s why, in 1986, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan was adopted as the blueprint for the future of waterfowl in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. Shortly after, the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) was created as a means to fund this ambitious new plan to conserve and restore wetland habitat. President George H.W. Bush enthusiastically signed it into law in 1989.

The big question is this: 30 years later, what are the results?

NAWCA and its impact and importance to Americans is even more critical today than when first enacted and this cannot be overstated. Since its inception, NAWCA has leveraged \$1.6 billion in federal grants into more than \$6 billion for conservation when combined with matching non-federal and private partnerships over the last three decades. Each dollar of that \$6 billion was used for the explicit purpose of wetland restoration and conservation. As a result, over 2,900 projects have been funded on more than 30 million acres of wetlands and grasslands in all 50 states. NAWCA is the single most successful wetland habitat conservation tool in our toolbox.

Beyond the dollars and the acres, though, the science shows why this policy is working well. In September 2019, the journal *Science* issued an [alarming report](#) detailing the dramatic decline of bird populations in North America – including many well-known and highly regarded species, such as sparrows, finches, warblers and swallows. The report shows that over

Related News by |



**THE HILL 1625 K STREET, NW SUITE 900 WASHINGTON DC 20006 | 202-628-8500 TEL | 202-628-8503 FAX**  
**THE CONTENTS OF THIS SITE ARE ©2020 CAPITOL HILL PUBLISHING CORP., A SUBSIDIARY OF NEWS COMMUNICATIONS, INC.**