

Klamath Bird Observatory: Oregon United States of America

Introduction

The Klamath Bird Observatory (KBO) is a not for profit bird conservation organisation located in the North West of the United States of America, with its base in Oregon. The KBO is concerned with bird conservation in the Pacific North West and throughout the ranges of the birds that migrate in that geographical area. The scope and extent of the KBO's interests cover the Klamath-Siskiyou Bio-region located across Northern California and Southern Oregon.

The KBO's Conservation Model and Activities

The KBO describes the Klamath-Siskiyou Bioregion as *"beautifully rugged and wildlife rich."* KBO's activities are based on a conservation model that seeks to:

- Carry out long-term monitoring to provide information about changes in bird populations;
- Conduct in-depth theoretical research designed to enhance understanding of bird distribution and movements; and
- Perform applied ecology that looks at the challenges relating to the management of natural resource management.

To deliver these three core activities, the KBO works at local, regional and at supranational level, operating with local, regional and international partners, as indicated above. The KBO states that it: *"owes its success to committed donors, volunteers, staff, and partners who demonstrate that each of us can contribute to a legacy of abundant bird populations and healthy land, air, and water."*¹

At supranational level, the KBO works with international partners through Central America and South America, simply because it is concerned about the birds that migrate to and from the North West Pacific region.

The KBO has both managed and participated in a number of conservation projects, some of which have been centred on monitoring specific birds, including: the Oregon Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus affinis*); the Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*); and Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*). KBO's science projects also include habitat restoration and conservation, as well long-term monitoring of bird populations.²

KBO's Bird Logo or Mascot

The logo of the KBO (see below) is a representation of the Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*), complete with monitoring tag on its right leg, which, as mentioned above, in itself is a symbol of one of the KBO's core activities, monitoring the movements of birds in the Klamath-Siskiyou Bioregion and beyond:

¹ Source: <https://klamathbird.org/about-kbo/>

² Source: <https://klamathbird.org/science/projects/>



The commentary by eBird on the Yellow-breasted Chat says the following:

“Strange, long-tailed tanager-like bird with thick bill. Once thought to be a warbler, but now considered unique in its own family. Bright yellow throat and breast, contrasting white spectacles and dull olive-green upperparts. Known for its skulking habits. Often difficult to see in dense thickets, shrubby areas and field edges.”³

The KBO’s own commentary on the Yellow-breasted Chat provides a more localised view:

“The Yellow-breasted Chat, one of our more charismatic riparian species, plays an important role in our region’s cultural and ecological heritage. It is a Partners in Flight focal species for western riparian habitats (i.e., situated on or near the banks of a river), it is the “Salmon Grandmother” in local Native American mythology, responsible for bringing salmon to the Klamath River, and it is KBO’s official mascot.”⁴

The KBO’s profile of the Yellow-breasted Chat also indicates that the breeding season is a good time to observe this bird, as the males defend their territory through sustained singing from a high perch, punctuated by graceful, undulating in-flight displays (to attract the females) to a second perch.

Whilst the Yellow-breasted Chat breeds in North America, it heads South for winter to Mexico and Costa Rica.

The KBO Conservation Science Stamps

KBO Conservation Science Stamps

The KBO has issued its own Conservation Science Stamps for a number of years, since 2014⁵. The KBO became an agent for the Federal Duck Stamps in 2017 and since then, has sold the KBO Conservation Science Stamp (priced at \$15) alongside the Federal Duck Stamp (\$25.00). The section below looks at a sample of the KBO Conservation Science Stamps. Unfortunately, I do not have images of all the stamps (missing years: 2015-16 and 2016-17). In addition, for those readers not

³ Source (edited): <https://ebird.org/species/yebcha>

⁴ Source: <https://klamathbird.org/callnote/bird-bio-yellow-breasted-chat/>

⁵ Source: date the first Conservation Stamp issued confirmed in email exchange with the KBO.

familiar with the Federal Duck Stamp programme, I have included in [Annex A](#) an overview of those stamps and their history. But the focus of this article is on the KBO Conservation Science Stamps so we will stick with those here.

Gallery of the KBO Conservation Science Stamps

2021-22 KBO Conservation Science Stamp: Avian Knowledge Network



Image source: <https://klamathbird.org/product/conservation-stamp-set/>

For 2021-22, the KBO Conservation Science Stamp was aimed at supporting the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN). Gary Bloomfield was the artist that designed the KBO Conservation Science Stamp.

The AKN is one of the projects in which the KBO is an active participant. The AKN's long-term aspiration is to see a world in which bird populations thrive, through conservation and management that is informed by a network of avian knowledge. The KBO is a partner in the Avian Knowledge North West, the regional branch of the AKN project.⁶ According to the KBO website, the AKN project offers:

⁶ Partner link: www.Avian.KnowledgeNorthwest.net

“.....tools for collecting, entering, uploading, managing, accessing, and summarizing bird monitoring data. AKNW also provides science-based information about bird populations and habitats to inform natural resource management planning and to advance ecosystem conservation.”⁷

The KBO is one of the hosts to the Avian Knowledge Network North West.

The 2021-22 Federal Migratory Bird and Conservation Stamp went on sale on 25 June 2021. The Government printed 60,000 of these available to purchase (for example, through the US Postal Service). The image on the 2021-22 stamp illustrates the Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*), which eBird indicates is widespread across North America. The eBird description of the male and female Lesser Scaup is as follows:

“Peak-headed diving duck. Males have black breast, finely-barred gray back, whitish sides (often slightly dusty-looking), and yellow eye. Head appears black with a purplish or greenish sheen in good light. Females are brown overall with white patch at base of bill and yellow eye.”⁸

2020-21 KBO Conservation Science Stamp: Partners in Flight



Image source: <https://partnersinflight.org/put-your-stamp-on-conservation/>

The KBO Conservation Science Stamp celebrates the 30th anniversary of “Partners in Flight”, which is a voluntary network which brings together some 150 organisations and individuals and others (including the KBO, of course) to work together in partnership to support “range-wide” bird conservation across the Americas. Proceeds from the sale of the Conservation Science Stamp were directed towards KBO’s participation in “Partners in Flight.” The partnership has its own website: <https://partnersinflight.org/>. Its aims are quite simple: “Keeping common birds common and helping species at risk through voluntary partnerships.” Printmaker and artist Sherrie York created the artwork for this stamp.

The 2020-21 Federal Duck Stamp, sold alongside the KBO Conservation Science Stamp, featured the Black-bellied Whistling Dick (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*). The stamp was available from 26 June 2020;

⁷ Source: <https://avianknowledgenorthwest.net/about-aknw/>

⁸ Source: <https://ebird.org/species/lessca>

and the Government printed made 60,000 of them for sale. eBird describes the Black-bellied Whistling Duck as follows:

“Gangly duck with long neck and legs. Unmistakable adult has chestnut-and-black body with electric pink legs and bill. Juvenile is duller brownish overall with grey bill and legs and a white wing stripe; typically shows some black coming in on the sides and belly. Flocks gather in marshes, lakes, rice fields, and swamps, sometimes by the hundreds. Active day and night. Occurs throughout Middle and South America. Range is expanding northward in the U.S., but still largely restricted to southern states.”⁹

2019-20 KBO Conservation Science Stamp: Hermit Warbler (*Setophaga occidentalis*)



Image source: <https://klamathbird.org/donate/conservation-stamps/>

The KBO sold its 2019-20 Conservation Science Stamp, designed by artist Erin Linton¹⁰, alongside the Federal Duck Stamp that was valid from 28 June 2019.

The KBO Conservation Stamp illustrates the Hermit Warbler (*Setophaga occidentalis*), which is a long-distance migrant to Oregon, and which breeds in the Pacific Northwest and then overwinters in western Mexico and Central America. In conjunction with this stamp issue, to understand better the Hermit Warbler’s migration pattern, the KBO was to work with Oregon State University on a project to track the entirety of the bird’s annual migratory cycle.

eBird says the following about the Hermit Warbler:

⁹ Source: <https://ebird.org/species/bbwduc>

¹⁰ Source: <https://klamathbird.org/donate/conservation-stamps/>

“Yellow-faced warbler of western coniferous forests. Males are almost entirely yellow-headed with black nape and throat, gray upperparts with white wing bars, and whitish underparts. Females much duller with pale throat and dingy gray belly, and always show a blank yellow face (some with faint olive cheek patch).”¹¹

The Federal Duck Stamp which was available with the KBO Stamp shows the Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) in the foreground, with a decoy duck in the background. According to eBird, the Wood Duck has the following characteristics:

“Breeding males are stunning with ornate, colourful patterns visible up close; appears dark overall at a distance. Females gray-brown with thin white eye ring. Crest on head. Found in wetlands and flooded woods. Flies through trees with exceptional manoeuvrability, thanks to its long tail. Often shy and quick to flush. Call is a loud, screeching whistle.”¹²

2018-19 KBO Conservation Science Stamp: Mountain Quail (*Oreortyx pictus*)



Image source: <https://klamathbird.org/donate/conservation-stamps-2/>

¹¹ Source: <https://ebird.org/species/herwar>

¹² Source: <https://ebird.org/species/wooduc>

The 2018-19 KBO Conservation Science Stamp, by artist Nathan Trimble, illustrates the Mountain Quail (*Oreortyx pictus*), which is native to the Western States of the USA (Washington, Oregon and California). The KBO said of this bird when launching this stamp:

“This at-risk quail is an iconic forest bird, a culturally important game species, and a species that is valued by both birders and hunters alike.”

eBird’s description is also helpful:

“Found in scrubby montane forest, often in small groups. Boldly patterned quail with tones of rich chestnut and blue-gray accentuated by white highlights. Look for the long, straight black plume atop the head and thick white bars on the sides, which help separate this species from California Quail. Female is slightly drabber than male.”¹³

According to the organisation “Quail Forever,” the Mountain Quail is the largest of the six native Quail species found in the United States. It is easily identifiable from the other quails by the two thin and long head plumes; and the chestnut-coloured sides with bold white barring, all of which Nathan Trimble has captured in his illustration of the Mountain Quail.¹⁴ The IUCN Red List indicates that the Mountain Quail has “Least Concern” conservation status; and that the population of mature individual birds numbers some 260,000.¹⁵

The accompanying 2018-19 Federal Duck Stamp, which went on sale on 29 June 2018, illustrated a pair of Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), with three others in the background, in mid-flight. The artwork for this stamp was created from Bob Hautman, an artist from Delano, Minnesota. Apparently, this was Bob Hautman's third federal duck stamp contest win. His artwork has previously appeared on the Federal Duck Stamps for 1997-1998 and 2001-2002.¹⁶

2017-18 KBO Conservation Science Stamp: Vesper Sparrow (*Poocetes gramineus*)



Image source: <https://klamathbird.org/>

¹³ Source: <https://ebird.org/species/mouqua>

¹⁴ Source: <https://quailforever.org/Habitat/Why-Habitat/Quail-Facts.aspx>

¹⁵ Source: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/22679591/139204160>

¹⁶ Source: <https://www.ducks.org/press-room/news-releases/2018-19-federal-duck-stamps-on-sale-june-29>

The 2017 KBO Conservation Science Stamp illustrates the Oregon sub-species of the Vesper Sparrow (*Poecetes gramineus*), a bird which is native to North America. With regard to the Oregon sub-species, the KBO makes the following observations:

“The Oregon Vesper Sparrow is a prime example of what birders refer to as “little brown jobs” – those small, drab, hard to identify birds that we sometimes overlook. But this little brown job is an imperilled subspecies unique to the Pacific Northwest. One that serves as an indicator of the health of our grassland ecosystems and needs our attention and protection. With its small population size and declining trend, the Oregon Vesper Sparrow has recently been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act.”¹⁷

The Oregon Vesper Sparrow sub-species apparently occurs to the West of the Vesper Sparrow’s core continental breeding range. Historically, the Oregon subspecies of the Vesper Sparrow was common in grassland habitats found in south western British Columbia, western Washington and Oregon, on to north western California. Currently, its breeding range is confined to western Washington and Oregon. Across this range, the population of the Vesper Sparrow has declined by five per cent a year over the past 45 years. Currently scientists do not understand why this decline has occurred, which has impacted on conservation efforts, which are limited. KBO has been working with the American Bird Conservancy to study why the decline is happening across the range of the Oregon Vesper Sparrow.¹⁸

2014-15 KBO Conservation Science Stamp: Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)



Image source: <https://www.wintuadubon.org/tag/great-gray-owl/>

The 2014 Conservation Science Stamp coincided with the KBO’s first Mountain Bird Festival, Ashland, Oregon, at which the stamp was available to purchase. eBird describes the Great Gray Owl as:

“A large enigmatic owl of bogs, meadows and coniferous forests. This rare and sought-after species is most often seen hunting around dawn and dusk, when it perches silently at the edges of clearings. Feeds mainly on voles.”

¹⁷ Source: <https://klamathbird.org/callnote/uncovering-the-secrets-of-the-oregon-vesper-sparrow/>

¹⁸ Source: the Klamath Bird newsletter, Spring 2018

The Great Gray Owl is native to both northern North America and in Europe, (broadly) to the Nordic countries of Norway, Sweden and Finland. Philatelically, the Great Gray Owl has appeared on one stamp from Canada (2017), celebrating the country's provincial birds;¹⁹ and one stamp from the United States dating from 1978 and marking "wildlife conservation". There is also a plethora of stamps from countries where the Great Gray is not present.

Postscript

Since originally writing this article, I have received the 2022-23 KBO Conservation Science Stamp, which illustrates the Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Setophaga nigrescens*), a migratory bird that the KBO indicates: "*breeds in Pacific Northwest oak-conifer habitats and then winters in oak-pine and cloud forest habitats in both western Mexico and Central America.*"²⁰ Brazilian illustrator and senior designer Renata Miwa was the artist who designed this stamp.

2022-23 KBO Conservation Science Stamp: Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Setophaga nigrescens*)



Image source: <https://klamathbird.org/donate/conservation-stamps/>

The KBO is applying the funds raised from the sales of the 2022-23 Conservation Science Stamp to help finance the international banding programme. The KBO uses bird banding to provide data that can indicate if birds are successfully breeding in an area—an indication of a healthy habitat. The banding is also helpful in supplying data that tells the KBO if birds are surviving migration, i.e., providing information that helps decision-making in its international conservation efforts.

About the Black-throated Gray Warbler, eBird has the following to say:

¹⁹ It's the bird of Manitoba: see BSS Website Blog dated 11 April 2021.

²⁰ Source: <https://klamathbird.org/tag/conservation-science-stamp/>

“A warbler in grayscale except for a small yellow spot in front of eye. Note black-and-white head with a gray back, white wing-bars, and white underparts with dark streaks. Breeds in coniferous forests where they forage for insects; in migration and winter, found in variety of wooded areas. Winters mainly in Mexico.”²¹

I had not particularly noticed the yellow spot in front of the eye in the illustration by artist Renata Miwa until I had read the ebird summary, as included above. But it does make the bird distinct.

On the IUCN Red List, the Black-throated Gray warbler is classed as “Least Concern”: the IUCN indicates that the global population of mature individual birds is estimated at some 3.2 million. It is native to the western part of North America (largely west of the Rocky Mountains).

Acknowledgements

I should not have been able to complete this article without the assistance of the Klamath Bird Observatory website (for both images and background). I also found that the US Government website (US Fish and Wildlife Service), for information on the Duck Stamps and the National Refuges, to be very helpful. I am also grateful to the US Postal Service for information relating to the Federal Duck Stamps. Other sources consulted include eBird and others that I have referenced in the footnotes. Finally, I express appreciation to the work done by members David Cox and Randy Shore for stimulating my interest in this area of collecting, through their articles in past issues of *Flight* magazine.

Steven Ardron

²¹ Source: <https://ebird.org/species/btywar>

The Federal Duck Stamp

The US Fish and Wildlife Service is the federal agency that is responsible for overseeing hunting, fishing and wildlife conservation across the country and for managing the national nature reserves (refuges), some of which will have been funded from funds generated by the sale of Duck Stamps.

The Federal Duck Stamps date from 1934, when President Franklin D Roosevelt signed the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act, in response to national concerns about the destruction of wetlands critical to the survival of migratory wildfowl. Amongst other things, this Act required all waterfowl hunters aged 16 and over to buy annually and to carry with them, the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. Today, the Duck Stamp has evolved in various ways and is now formally referred to as the "Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp."

Since its inception, most of the proceeds from Federal Duck Stamp sales have gone into a Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and then used to purchase wetlands and wildlife habitat to be included in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The idea being that the Duck Stamp helps fund nature reserves that will be protect wildlife for years to come.²²

The US Fish and Wildlife Service states that, since 1934, the Federal Duck Stamp has helped provide \$800 million of finance for the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund and has helped protect more than 5.7 million acres of habitat.²³

The design for each Duck Stamp is the subject of an annual contest, which attracts submissions from noted wildlife artists each year, though anyone may enter. The first such contest took place in 1949. It is the only art competition of its kind sponsored by the US Government.

In 1989, the US Government also extended the Federal Duck Stamp design competition to one which included a junior section. These "Junior Duck Stamps" are available at \$5.00 each from the US Postal Service (and other outlets) but have no validity for hunting purposes or for postage. For illustrative purposes, I have included here the Junior Duck Stamp for 2019-20, simply to display the high quality of the annual submissions:

2019-20 Junior Duck Stamp – Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*)



Image source: <https://store.usps.com/store/product/stamp-collectors/> and <https://www.ebay.com>

²² Source: <https://www.fws.gov/refuges>

²³ Source: <https://fws.gov/program/federal-duck-stamp>

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Nicole Jeon (from New York) designed the Harlequin Duck stamp. Some 3,000 of the Junior Duck Stamps are sold each year to help fund conservation education through art.²⁴

The Junior Duck Stamp is generally made available for sale to the public on the same day as the Federal Duck Stamp.

²⁴ Source: <https://www.ducks.org/press-room/news-releases/2019-20-federal-duck-stamps-on-sale-june-28>

The KBO Conservation Stamps

2014-15	2014 Mountain Festival, Great Gray Owl, artwork by [unknown]
2015-16	Issue not known
2016-17	Issue not known
2017-18	2017 Mountain Bird, Vesper Sparrow, artwork by [unknown]
2018-19	Mountain Quail by artist Nathan Trimble
2019-20	Hermit Warbler by artist Erin Linton ²⁵
2020-21	Partners in Flight artwork by Sherrie York ²⁶
2021-22	Avian Knowledge Network by Gary Bloomfield
2022-23	Black-throated Gray Warbler by Renata Miwa

The stamps are large in size: the 2021-22 Avian Knowledge Network stamp measures 75mm x 75mm and is a self-adhesive stamp, on a backing paper.



²⁵ Erin Linton website: <https://www.orphangirlfineart.com/contact>

²⁶ Sherrie York website: <https://www.sherrieyork.com/page/27113/biography>