



Nebraska's Rainwater Basin Designated as WHSRN Landscape of Hemispheric Importance

MANOMET, MA, March 24, 2009 – The Executive Office of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) at Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences has announced the designation of Nebraska's Rainwater Basin as its first *Landscape of Hemispheric Importance*.

The Rainwater Basin is a 6,100-square-mile region of shallow playa wetlands located south of the Platte River in south-central Nebraska. In the spring and fall months, millions of migratory birds pass through the region to feed and rest. The Rainwater Basin, along with the Platte River, is a major component of the Central Flyway of North America.

Conservation of this region is spearheaded by the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture, a public-private partnership created through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan composed of conservation agencies, local government entities, non-profit organizations, and individuals.

Some of the 40 shorebird species that visit the Rainwater Basin include American Golden-Plovers, White-rumped sandpipers, Sanderlings, Wilson's Phalaropes, and Hudsonian Godwits that migrate each year between Tierra del Fuego, at the southern tip of South America, and the northernmost brink of Canada and Alaska. Because shorebirds spend a large portion of their lives in transit, each stopover is a much-needed opportunity for them to rest and fatten up, in order to survive the next leg of the journey.

One species, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper, is especially dependent on the eastern Rainwater Basin, with virtually all of the world's "buffies," estimated at 20,000 to 30,000, stopping over to feed in the region's agricultural fields each spring. The species winters in the pampas and cattle-grazing areas of Argentina, southern Brazil and Uruguay.

Because of the Rainwater Basin's vital role to the survival of shorebirds, it was designated as a *Landscape of Hemispheric Importance* from WHSRN. This new category was designed for situations with multiple landowners across a larger land

mass, often with numerous ephemeral wetlands. WHSRN requires a written commitment from a recognized conservation entity, such as a joint venture or watershed council, to work with the various landowners, making shorebird conservation a priority.

According to WHSRN Executive Office Director Charles Duncan, “The Rainwater Basin is a wonderful example of a variety of partnerships working effectively together to restore and protect wetland habitat that is vitally beneficial to shorebirds and people.” The nomination of the Rainwater Basin was achieved collaboratively by the state of Nebraska’s Nongame Bird Program Manager, Joel Jorgensen, and the recently retired coordinator of the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture, Steve Moran.

About WHSRN: [The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network](#) is the oldest and most important hemispheric-scale voluntary conservation collaborative in the World. Its mission is the conservation of shorebird species and their habitats through a network of key sites in the Americas. WHSRN currently comprises 73 sites and one landscape in 12 countries nations, some 25 million acres. The Executive Office of WHSRN is a key program of Manomet’s ambitious hemispheric-scale Shorebird Recovery Project.

About Manomet: The mission of [Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences](#) is to conserve natural resources for the benefit of wildlife and humans. Founded forty years ago as an independent, nonprofit environmental research center, Manomet brings together stakeholders—communities, individuals, universities, government agencies, and businesses—and guides them through cooperative, science-based solution development. Manomet’s programs focus on enabling communities to measure, manage, and sustain natural systems and the wildlife and people dependent on them. Initiatives include Climate Change, Natural Capital, and Conservation of Migratory Wildlife.

About the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture: The goal of the [Rainwater Basin Joint Venture](#) is to restore and permanently protect 37,000 acres of high-quality wetlands and 25,000 acres of associated uplands with adequate water and distribution to meet the habitat needs of waterfowl and other migratory birds

The Joint Venture provides partnership structure for agencies, non-governmental organizations, landowners, and farmers to address natural resource issues through projects that also improve migratory bird habitat. From its inception in 1992, conservation organizations, private citizens, business and industry have been equal partners with state and federal wildlife agencies in this Joint Venture. Providing incentives for landowners to manage their land for waterfowl has been the key to its success.