

Pacific Seabird Group



DEDICATED TO THE STUDY AND CONSERVATION OF PACIFIC SEABIRDS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

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9 July 2004

Senator Barbara Boxer
112 Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-0505

Re: Please Support Passage of S. 2547

Dear Senator Boxer:

On behalf of the Pacific Seabird Group (PSG), we urge you to support S. 2547 to amend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to return to its interpretation before a federal court decision in December 2001. PSG is a non-profit organization organized under the laws of the State of California that was founded in 1972 to promote knowledge, study, and conservation of Pacific seabirds with a membership drawn from the entire Pacific basin, including Canada, Mexico, Russia, Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, and the USA. Among PSG's members are biologists who have research interests in Pacific seabirds, government officials who manage seabird refuges and populations, and individuals who are interested in marine conservation.

PSG strongly supports excluding all introduced, non-native birds from the protections of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. PSG has for many years worked to remove non-native creatures, including rats and birds, from seabird colonies throughout the world where they can cause great destruction to native seabirds. For example, mynahs introduced on Midway Atoll from India are known to eat the eggs of native seabirds such as white terns and black noddies. Introduced cattle egrets on Oahu, Hawaii, eat ground-nesting terns on several seabird colonies there. Non-native birds such as European starlings and house sparrows harm California native birds populations of cavity-nesting birds such as western bluebirds, acorn woodpeckers, red-breasted sapsuckers, white-headed woodpeckers, Nuttall's woodpeckers, and ash-throated flycatchers. Feral pigeons serve as a reservoir for a variety of avian diseases and parasites, including avian pox. It is likely that abundant non-native birds that are adapted to urban environments enhance the risk of transmission of West Nile virus and other infectious diseases to humans. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act was never intended to protect introduced species, and the court decision has greatly

interfered with the activities of wildlife managers to protect and manage native bird populations. We need legislation to correct the erroneous court decision and clarify the intent of Congress. We note that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the biological arm of the federal government, agrees with us and supports S. 2547.

PSG also strongly supports the re-authorization of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act contained in this legislation. The bill not only increases funding levels for important bird conservation projects, but it allows states, including our own California, to once again properly manage non-native, human-introduced species.

We understand that you have expressed concerns against this bill but note that the original version of the bill was amended in the House and that subsequently, 58 conservation, ornithological, and wildlife management groups have signed-on. They include many of the most prominent organizations that are involved in conservation in this nation: American Bird Conservancy, National Audubon Society, Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Defense, World Wildlife Fund, American Birding Association, Izaak Walton League of America, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Wildlife Management Institute, The Wildlife Society, American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Cooper Ornithological Society, The Waterbird Society, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Maryland Ornithological Society, Delmarva Ornithological Society, Virginia Society of Ornithology, Tennessee Ornithological Society, Georgia Ornithological Society, Connecticut Ornithological Society, Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, California Waterfowl Association, Point Reyes Bird Observatory Conservation Science, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, New Jersey Audubon Society, Audubon Pennsylvania, Madison Audubon Society, Illinois Audubon Society, Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States, Ducks Unlimited, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, and U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance.

We stand with these groups and hope you will support expeditious passage of this important legislation for bird conservation

Sincerely,

/s/ Craig S. Harrison

Craig S. Harrison
Vice Chair for Conservation