WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS

POSTCARDS FROM THE FIELD

GALA 2020

125 Years at the Forefront of Bird Conservation - Migratory Bird Conservation in Arctic Beringia

PHOTO: KILIII YUYAN/WCS

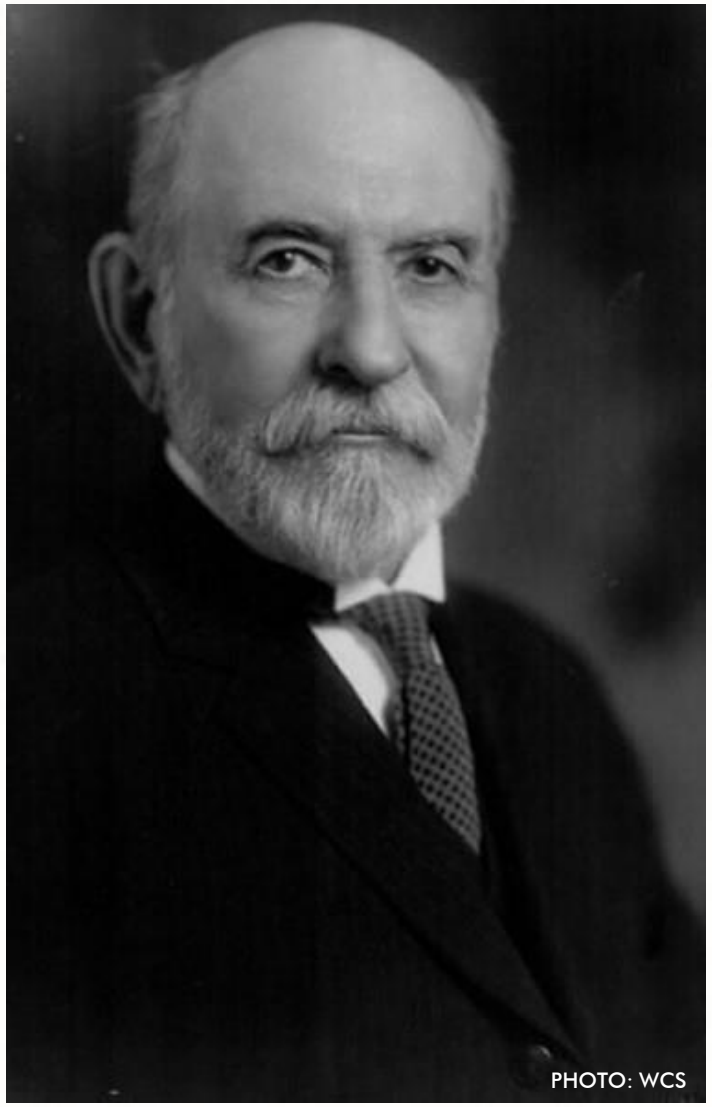
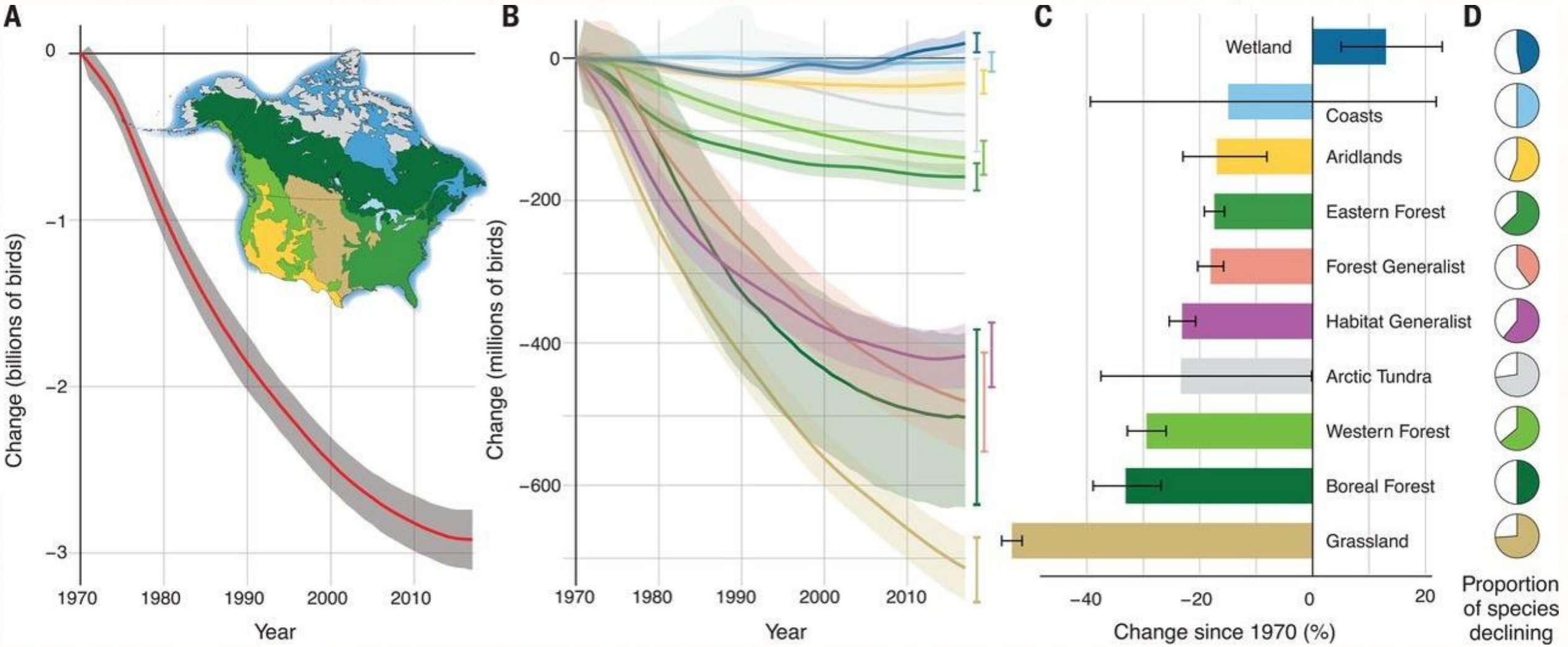


PHOTO: WCS

For 125 years, WCS has been a leader in the conservation of migratory birds. William Hornaday (left), the first director of the New York Zoological Park (now the Bronx Zoo) was a staunch advocate for reducing the fashion industry's use of these incredible species. He was a key player in the passage of the 1916 Migratory Bird Treaty, and helped write language in the 1913 Tariff Act prohibiting importation of bird plumage for hats.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS



GRAPHIC: K. ROSENBERG ET AL., *SCIENCE*

However, recent findings in the journal *Science* revealed that three billion North American birds have vanished since 1970—a stark reminder of how much work remains…

Each year millions of birds return to the tussock tundra of Arctic Beringia to breed; an area crisscrossed with melt pools from the underlying permafrost and the tracks of caribou (bottom left). A day earlier we landed on the lake with a plane on floats, but now it is frozen again!

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS

These birds, including this Arctic tern, have travelled from as far away as Antarctica to breed.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS

PHOTO: CAMERON RUTT/WCS

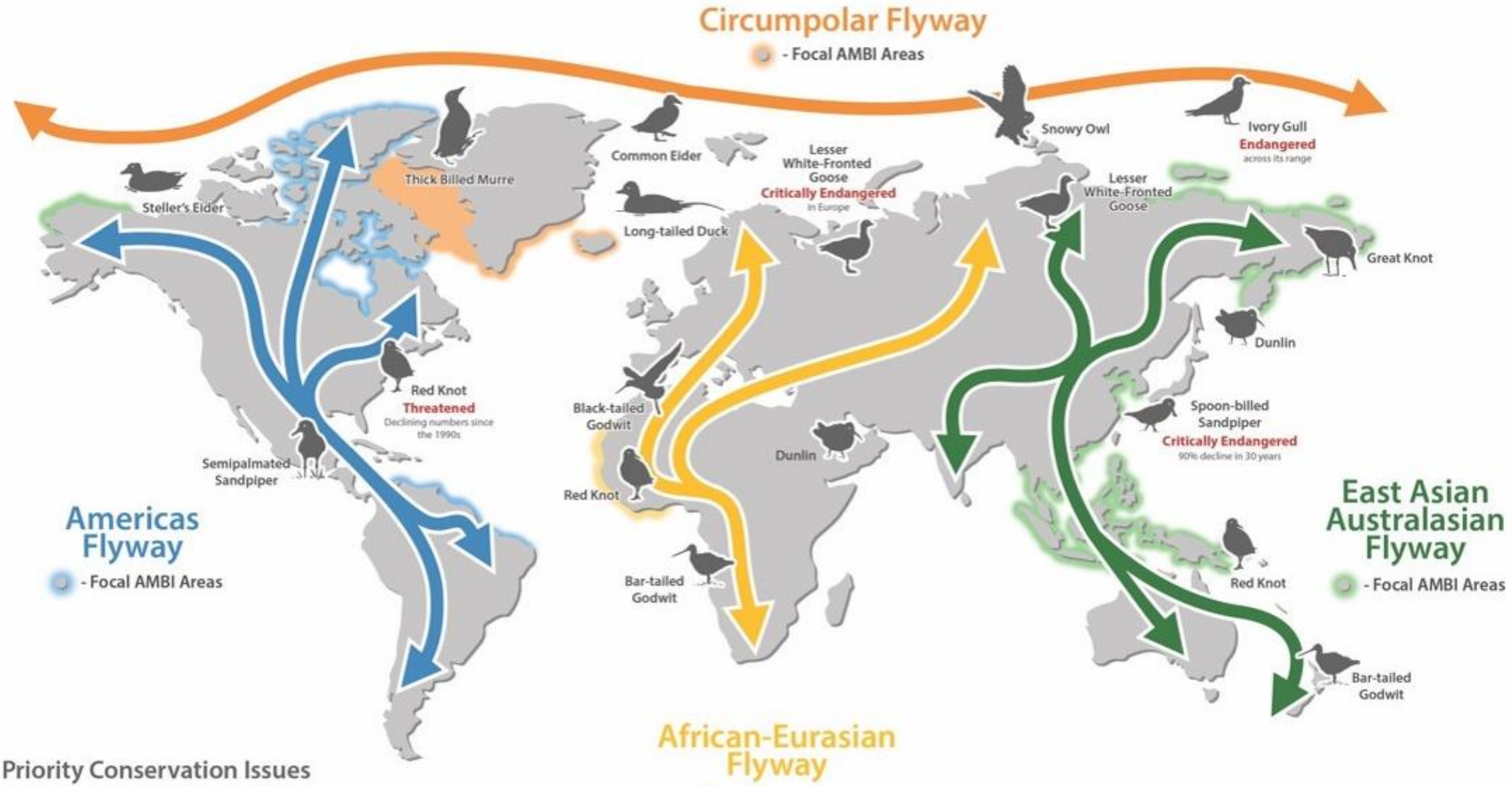
Yellow-billed loons return from the coasts of Russia and Japan, setting up territories on choice lakes as soon as there is open water.

…and the stately Dunlin flies in from as far afield as Vietnam.

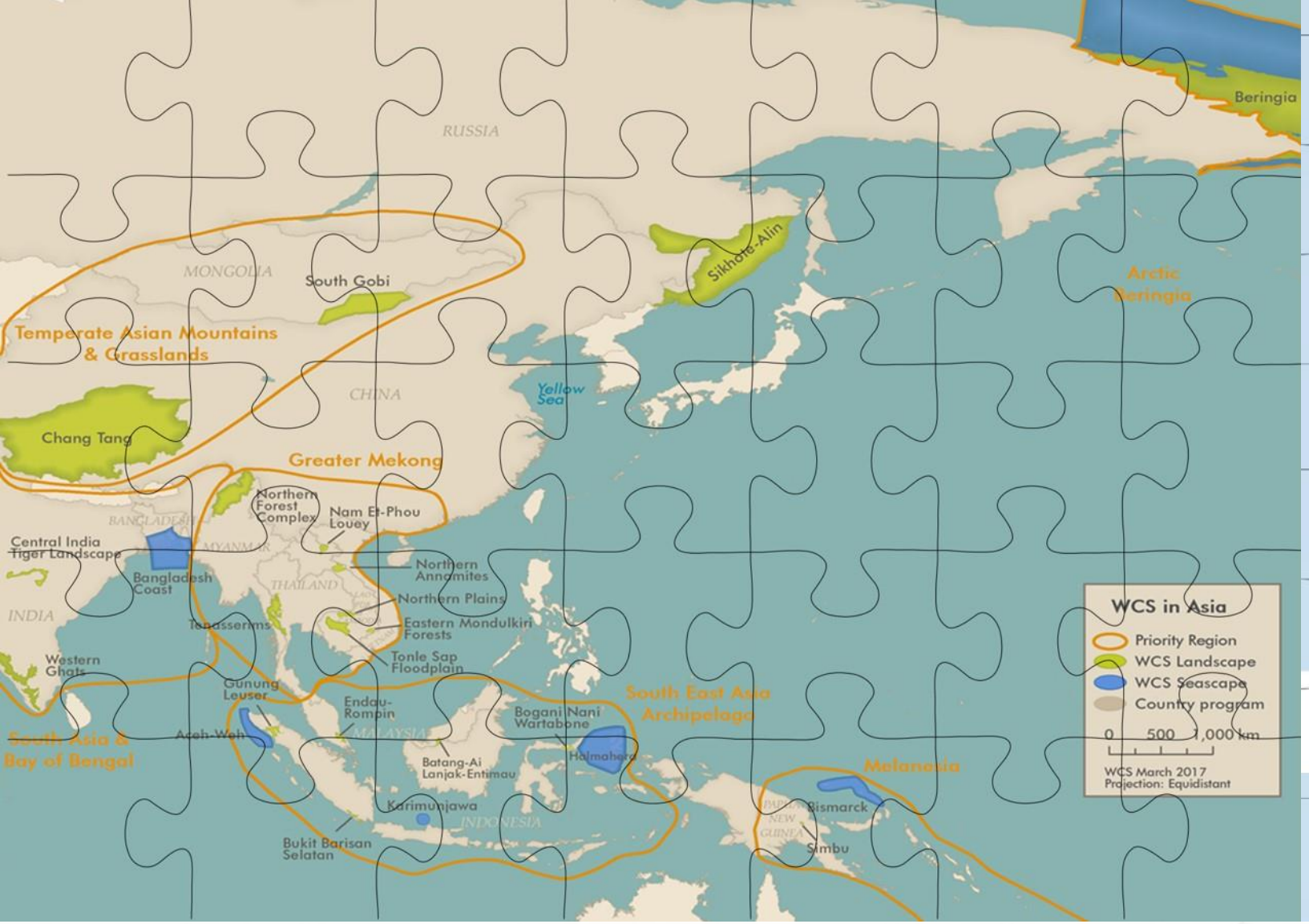
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS

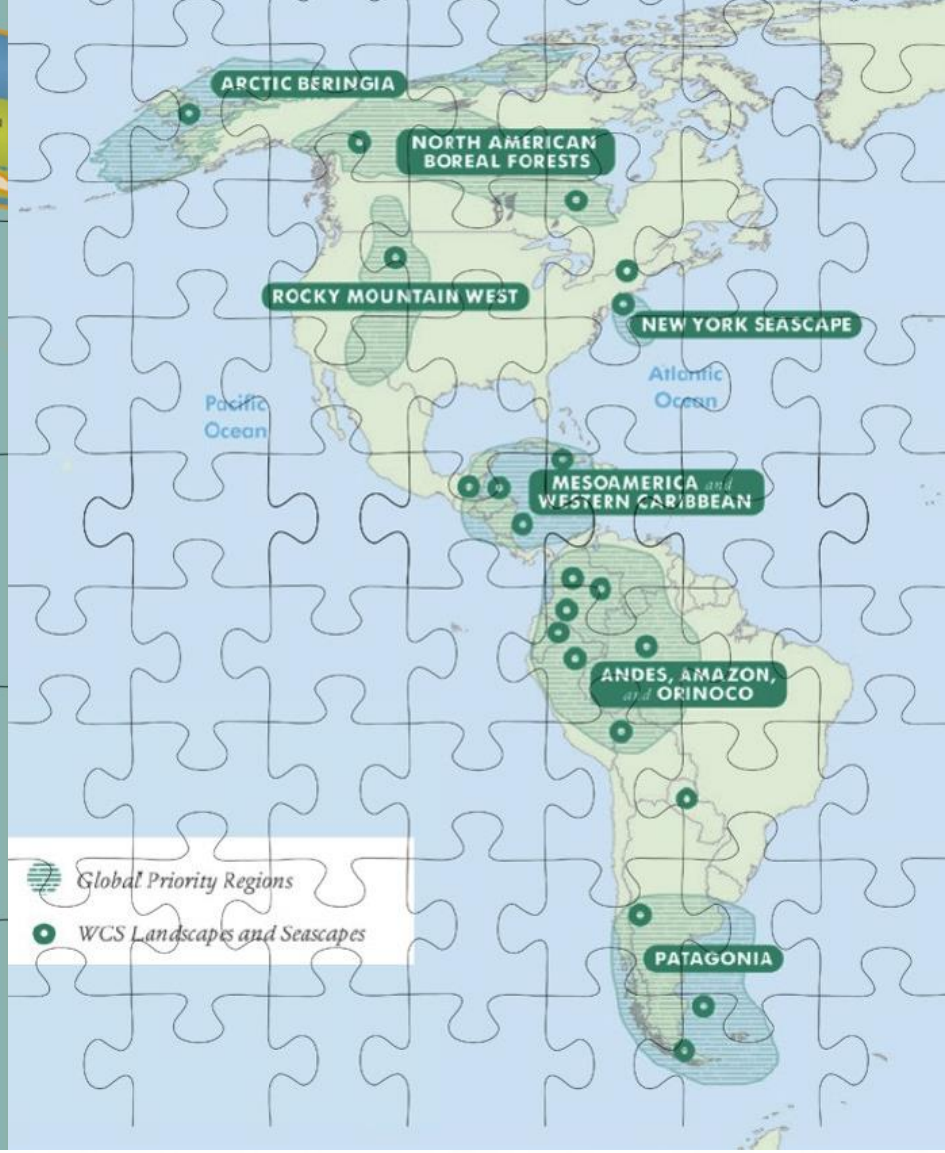

PHOTO: ZAK POHLEN/WCS

While our work in the breeding areas over the last two decades has emphasized the importance of our current Arctic protected areas, key factors leading to the profound population declines of many Arctic migratory birds stem from impacts during migration.



Arctic migratory birds use distinct flyways that link them to all areas of the globe. We work extensively on the East Asian Australasian and Americas Flyways.





Bird conservation along these flyways is like jigsaw puzzles: all the pieces must be in place for them to work. Consequently, we are building collaborations with other WCS country and regional programs to address the need to protect coastal wintering areas or migratory stopovers.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS

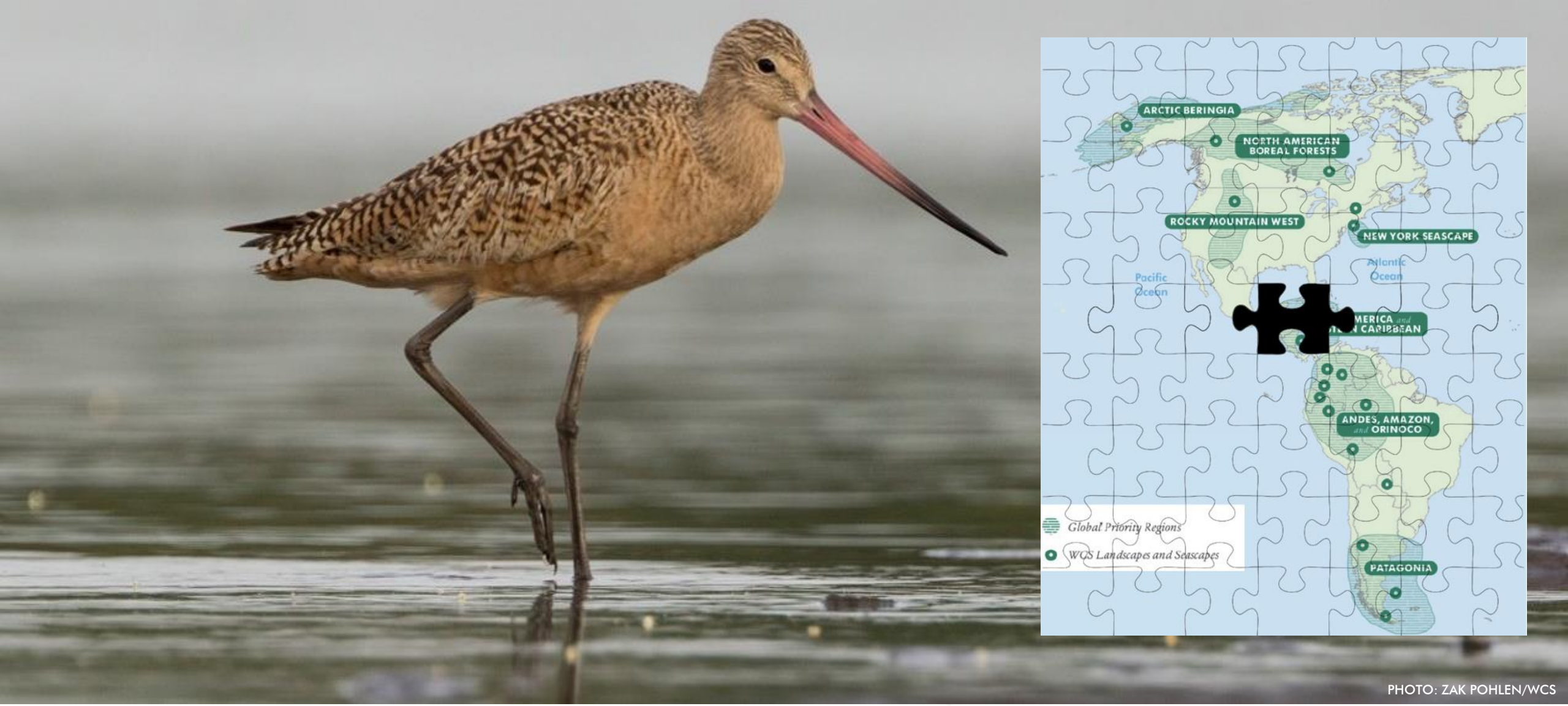


PHOTO: ZAK POHLEN/WCS

For example, over the past two years, the WCS-Guatemala and WCS-Arctic Beringia Programs, in partnership with the local NGO Fundaeco, led the first comprehensive Pacific coast survey of migratory birds in Guatemala.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY WCS 125 YEARS

PHOTO: ZAK POHLEN/WCS

Our initial two-year project now continues with the early-career Guatemalan researchers who received training during our project continuing efforts to a) gain coastal protections (MPAs) and b) encourage best practices by artisanal salt and shrimp farms.

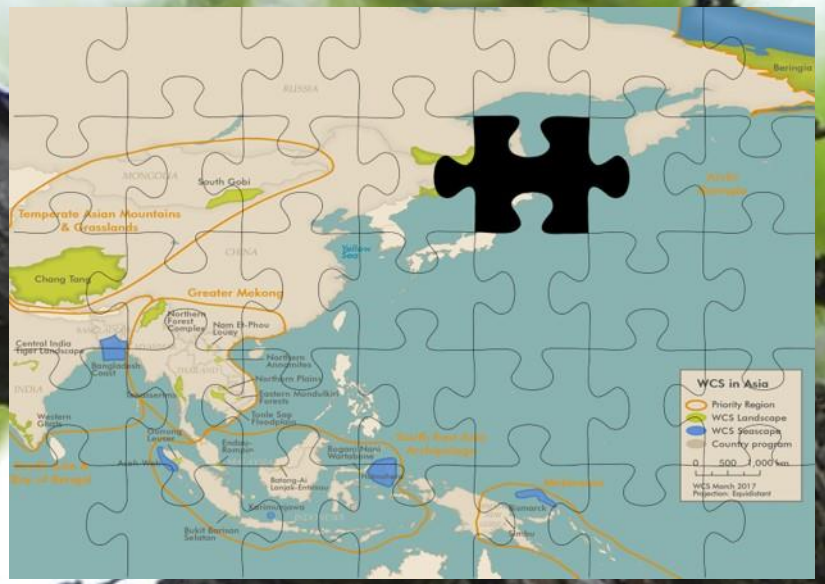


PHOTO: PHILIPP MALEKO/WCS

Similarly on the west side of the Pacific, WCS is supporting an international collaboration studying the endangered Nordmann's greenshank on the Sea of Okhotsk coast in Russia. The work seeks to establish another coastal protected area used by migratory birds.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS

PHOTO: KILIII YUYAN/WCS

Back in Alaska, our core activities on the breeding grounds are focused on maintaining protections, both for the birds, and for our Arctic wildlife strongholds more broadly. With climate change, these large areas provide room for wildlife to adapt.

PHOTO: MARIO DÁVALOS

Teshekpuk Lake Special Area within the National Petroleum Reserve hosts phenomenal concentrations of migratory birds. Here, WCS has led on-the-ground research at the new international flyway site – Qupaluk – to ensure we have the information to protect against impacts from new oil and gas development, and other infrastructure such as roads.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS

PHOTO: ZAK POHLEN/WCS

WCS remains fully engaged in Washington DC and Alaska to advocate for the long-term protections of the National Petroleum Reserve's Special Areas. And, of course, we remain committed to long-term protections of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's coastal areas.

PHOTO: PETER MATHER/WCS

WCS is actively working to document and protect nesting common eiders – a species at the forefront of climate change impacts and risks from oil spills. This includes the coast of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge where we work in partnership with US Fish and Wildlife Service.

PHOTO: PETER MATHER/WCS

After our 18 years in the Prudhoe Bay oil fields it is clear that heightened vigilance will be needed to ensure long-term protections of the nesting grounds as oil prices drop, and the larger companies exit, leaving less and less interest and capacity for field clean-up and best operating practices.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS

PHOTOS: MARTIN ROBARDS/WCS

On the Russian breeding grounds of Arctic Beringia, WCS is working with local partners to create Land of the Spoonbill Sandpiper Nature Park, a 15,000 km^2 area designed to protect the largest known breeding concentration of these critically-endangered birds and other wildlife.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS

PHOTO: KILIII YUYAN/WCS

Through our flyway-wide, global approach to conserving birds, we will help turn the tide on population declines and maintain the long tradition of WCS's stalwart protection of our incredible avian biodiversity.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY
WCS
125 YEARS