

U.S. - MEXICO BORDER FIELD COORDINATING COMMITTEE

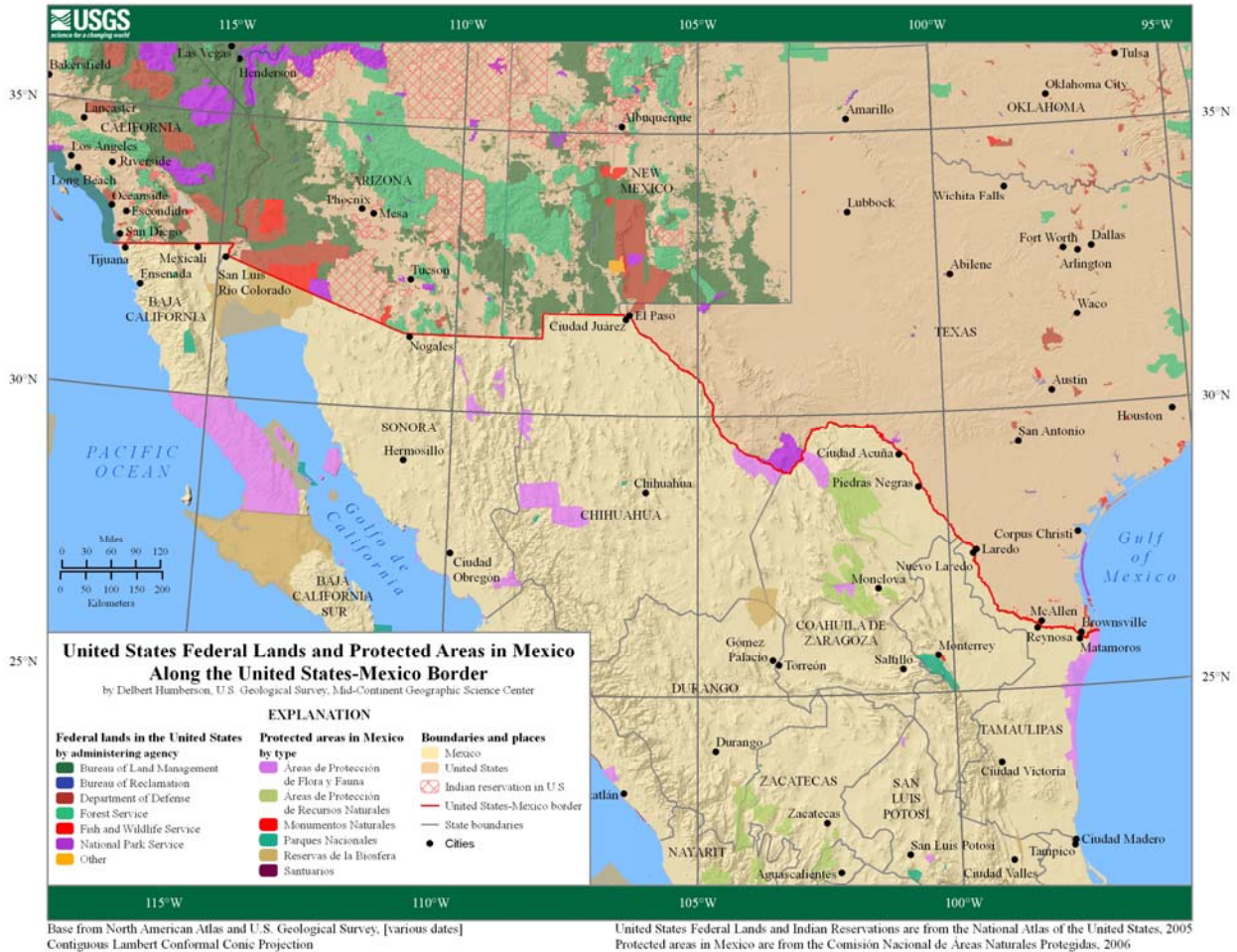


Figure 2: The USGS Border Environmental Health Initiative has a new map of the U.S. Federal Lands and Mexican Protected Areas for the border region. The National Atlas of the U.S. provided the 2005 source data for the U.S. Federal Lands and the Indian Reservations. The Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas provided the 2006 source data for the Mexican protected areas. The data and map will be available soon from the website at <http://borderhealth.cr.usgs.gov> Above is a preview of the map.

The Sonoran Joint Venture: Building Bridges for Bird Conservation

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The Sonoran Joint Venture (SJV) is a partnership of organizations and individuals that share a common commitment to the conservation of the unique birds and habitats of the southwestern

United States and northwestern Mexico. Founded in 1999, the SJV works with partners in both the United States and Mexico to achieve on-the-ground bird and bird habitat conservation.

The SJV region includes southern Arizona, southern California, and the Mexican states of Sonora, Sinaloa, Baja California, and Baja California Sur, as well as the Gulf of California and its associated islands. The varied topography and distinctive climate of the region translate into an

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array of desert, scrubland, riparian, forest, and freshwater and saltwater wetland habitats. This variety, in turn, supports extremely diverse bird life.

To date, 744 species of birds have been documented breeding in, wintering in, and/or migrating through the region. This is nearly two-thirds of all bird species that occur in northern Mexico, the United States, and Canada.

Because of the diversity of habitats and birds in the SJV region, birding ecotourism has arisen as a tool for economic diversification for some landowners in the area. The SJV and its partners are supporting projects that encourage rural landowners in Mexico to implement habitat protection and restoration projects on their property and then invite birders to enjoy outstanding opportunities to enjoy the scenery and birding in the resulting protected habitat.

One of the SJV's innovative offerings is the Bird Guide Training Workshop (*Taller de Capacitación de Guías de Aves*). The program is designed to teach basic skills to local residents in communities where SJV partners are working to use ecotourism as a conservation incentive. The workshop is a combination of time spent birding in the field and interactive classroom discussions. Participants learn basic bird biology, how to use a field guide, and how to identify birds.

They also learn important techniques for leading groups and get hands-on experience acting as guides during the workshop. Participants receive a copy of the Kaufman *Guía de Campo a las Aves de Norteamérica* (the Spanish-language version of the Kaufman Field Guide to the Birds of North America) and a binder full of accompanying materials to assist them when they return home and start to implement their own projects.

Approximately 30 people have participated in the two Bird Guide Training Workshops the SJV has offered to date (one in northern Sonora and one in Alamos, Sonora). Participants included fishers, ranchers, nature and adventure guides, and staff from Mexican conservation NGOs and agencies who hope to implement bird conservation outreach efforts in their communities. Because of the popularity of the workshops, several more are being planned for the coming year.



Although birding ecotourism is not a panacea for problems related to habitat loss or degradation in the region, it does provide a way for some landowners to gain additional income from their land for protecting birds and bird habitat. Used as one piece of an overall habitat protection and/or restoration effort, birding ecotourism has the potential to be one piece of a larger solution to the issues facing bird populations in the SJV region.

To learn more about the work of the Sonoran Joint Venture, please visit the website at <http://www.sonoranjv.org>.



Participants spend time birding in the field and learning how to use a field guide to identify birds.