

21st Annual - Alaska Shorebird Group Meeting
U. S. Geological Survey
Alaska Pacific University
4210 University Dr.
Glenn A. Olds Hall, main level
Conference room on west side of building
Anchorage, Alaska
Dec. 9-10, 2015

Meeting Notes: See full agenda at back of this document.

December 9, 2015, Wednesday

8:30 – Welcome and opening announcements, Erin Cooper, Chair, ASG 8:40 – 10.:40 – Announcements and updates

Nils Warnock - International Wader Study Group

The IWSG celebrated it's 40th meeting in Iceland in September 2015. 130 people from 22 countries attended. ASG members are encouraged to join IWSG to support the group and the journal (Wader Study, which is the only journal focused on shorebirds in the world). Great talks were given during the meeting. For example, one talk on the effects of climate change on Red Knots. Years of early snow melt, REKN had low body weight and young were smaller on average, also there were feeding differences. Next meeting will be held 9-12 of Sept. 2016 in Ireland. Then in 2017 in Czech Republic, 2018 meeting will be held in Netherlands with emphasis on grasslands and waders.

Lee Tibbitts - Global Flyway Network and Yellow Sea issues update

Lee, Dan Ruthrauff and Bob Gill visited China in May 2015 in coordination with Miranda Shorebird Center. They attended a Wetlands International Workshop and visited the NE corner of the Yellow Sea. Lee and Dan gave talk on what they're doing in relation to Bar-tailed Godwits, which breed in Alaska and stopover in the Yellow Sea during northbound migration. They did lots of outreach, "schmoozing", and learning. They were most impressed by the very large Waterbird Center in Yalu Jiang Nature Preserve, especially the interpretive display showing the travel of E7 – one of the most famous Bar-tailed Godwits tracked with satellite transmitters. Overall, they felt like there was a lot of infrastructure and interest but there was so much development. Dan also mentioned that he had put in a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation proposal to study survival of Godwits in AK.

ASG wrote a letter in support of upgrading the listing the *bauri* Bar-tailed Godwit to vulnerable status from least concern on IUCN Red List.

Rick Lanctot-East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAF)

In Feb 2016, Rick went to Japan for Meeting of the Partners of the EAAF. Rick became chair of the shorebird working group. This partnership is represented by folks higher up in government (e.g. environment ministers) getting together for a top-down effort to advance conservation. Numerous entities in the network trying to effect change. They have a network website. The next meeting will be in January 2017. Rick is looking for a shorebird project to connect AK to the rest of the flyway, perhaps something related to how Dunlin use the EAAF. This flyway is the most problematic flyway in the globe. No natural areas on the coast of Taiwan. There are lots of economic pressures in the region.

Rick Lanctot - Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative

The Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative (AMBI) is an initiative within the Conservation of Flora and Fauna, which is an Arctic Council group (http://www.caff.is/arctic-migratory-birds-initiativeambi). AMBI was formed as a way to get governments outside of the Arctic to help conserve birds that breed in the Arctic and migrate to their region during the nonbreeding season. AMBI has four flyway groups; each identified priority species and issues within their flyway. These consist of the Americas, Circumpolar, African-Eurasia, and the East Asian-Australasian (EAAF) flyways. Collectively the AMBI steering committee decided that the EAAF was the highest priority. Concerns for the EAAF is due to the large amount of intertidal reclamation in the Yellow Sea and illegal hunting occurring. Singapore will have meeting to discuss illegal harvest of birds in Asia. Japan will get involved also. Nils Warnock went to an America Flyway meeting in Vancouver; species focused on were rufa and roselaari Red Knot and Semipalmated Sandpiper. Funds were obtained from the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (an environmental group that was borne from the North America Free Trade Agreement) to identify important sites for these species, nominate important sites to the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, implement action items to protect sites, and link stopover sites together. There are also funds to purchase GPS tags to track migration of Red Knot from Alaska to Mexico.

Rick Lanctot - Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group (WHSG)

The 6th meeting of the WHSG was held in Wallops Island, VA on 13-16 September 2015. This was a very nice meeting location. The three day meeting had 3 concurrent sessions and 1 day for a field trip to Chincoteague NWR and adjacent areas. There were several side meetings before and after as well. The meeting has a big travel award program that brings in people from all parts of S America, and is conducted in both Spanish and English. At this meeting, we adopted a Terms of Reference for the group. The group is just now forming an executive committee and trying to work out arrangements for dealing with finances. The WHSG has no aspirations for a journal. Next meeting will be in Paracas, Peru, 10 - 14 Nov in 2017. One of the side meetings was a shorebird bander certification workshop that was attended by a lot of people (as well as taught by people in this room). It seems the WHSG was solidified at this meeting. There were also a lot of graduate students present. The success of all this is primarily due to Rick's vision. Half of the talks were in Spanish. This made a big difference to the Spanish

speakers. Good session on the rosalari REKN population. A large group of Alaskans were in attendance.

Tamara Zeller – 100th Anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The 100th anniversary of Migratory Bird Treaty will be on Aug 16, 2016. To celebrate this event, the FWS has partnered with the AK Zoo, USGS and others. They have also worked with a local artist (Vie-rae, see http://vraeart.com/workszoom/1922528) who painted a picture of a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. This species will be show cased during the centennial, as it was one of the species commercially harvested prior to enactment of the MBTA. There are lots of events planned (e.g., lecture series) but it is currently a work in progress. The FWS sees this as a great opportunity to tell the story of bird conservation. However, it was noted that the MBTA made AK natives criminals until the treaty was amended to allow subsistence harvest in spring and summer. Get in touch with Tamara if you have any great conservation stories.

Audrey Taylor – Caribbean/S America Shorebird Hunting

Audrey discussed this project that looked at attitudes and use of rice areas by shorebirds. She became interested in this because one of the Semipalmated Sandpipers she saw in Barrow was later seen in French Guiana. It turns out that hunting may be a major source of mortality for shorebirds staging or wintering in the Caribbean and northeastern South America. Some of this hunting is regulated and other hunting is strictly illegal but provide subsistence food for people. Trying to get everyone on board and look at options for reducing shorebird mortalities. Recently a study was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to investigate five components, including increasing law enforcement, biological removal models, and three others. There has been some success stories already; owners of rice fields in French Guiana decided to sell part of rice field to gov't and manage it as a no-hunting shorebird reserve. Across the French islands/territories, hunting is not illegal. One species of particular interest is the Semipalmated Sandpiper, which declined by 80% between the 1980s and early 2000s. There is also work being conducted by Brian Watts, who is using biological removal models to estimate the level of harvest birds can sustain..

Lynn Fuller – Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture update

Lynn expressed an interest in writing a story for the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. She indicated that Land trusts will be profiled in the next bulletin, before Christmas. Two conservation priorities identified with the joint venture, including looking at open prairie conservation (oaks and prairie habitats), and implications of climate change in coastal wetlands. The Pacific Birds Habitat JV is also interested in identifying the key conservation priorities along the coast. The JV anticipates having a small grant program in the future. This program might support the finalization of planning documents.

Rick Lanctot – Artic Breeding Birds Conditions Survey Annual Forms

If you collected field data on shorebirds and other environmental variables in the Arctic or subarctic, please submit a report to the Arctic Breeding Birds Conditions Survey (http://www.arcticbirds.net/). Participation by Alaska researchers has been difficult to get, so we encourage all to submit the forms. They are relative simple to fill out.

AK Airlines magazine shorebird article progress

Magazine might be interested in the story of the festivals rather than birds. There is often a peak in interest. Getting into AK Dispatch, if mention flyways, stopover sites, etc. they might get interested. We have connections with AK dispatch – use to build interest. Nils, has connections with Audubon magazine with audience of 4 million. If we have a fleshed out idea, Nils is willing to work with us.

Brian Robinson-Annual Summary Compilation

We had a total of 19 summaries that were submitted, and 11 publications. Thanks to everyone who was submitted!

Other announcements

The next ABC/ASG meeting is likely to be held in Cordova in December 2016. This should be a great venue with great opportunities. Please sponsor students. Bunk houses provided by the agencies.

10:45 - 11:00 - Election of Officers

Executive Committee Secretary (currently filled by Brian Robinson) – Kim Jochum nominated herself. Group unanimously voted in favor of electing Kim as Secretary.

Executive Committee Member (currently filled by Dan Ruthrauff) – River Gates nominated herself. Group unanimously voted in favor of electing River as committee member.

Traditionally, the ASG chair has written a yearly summary for the Tattler newsletter.

11:00 - 12:00 Presentations Part 1.

River Gates- Pacific Americas Shorebird Conservation Strategy

A major effort is currently underway to develop a conservation strategy for the Pacific Flyway to address declines in shorebirds. Several meetings have been held by stakeholders to identify the key issues, species and priorities. An international steering committee has also been formed. Pacific Americas Flyway includes Arctic, north temperate, tropical, and south temperate. In the strategy, shorebird conservation targets (focal species) will be identified. Potential species might include endemics (BLTU, SURF), species of conservation concern (REKN, SNPL), and flagship species (WESA, DUNL). Input from ASG members is needed. Currently the boreal region is not included in the strategy; ASG members recommend inclusion of the boreal region in the plan.

Erin Cooper – Copper River Migratory Bird Initiative

This initiative was started by the Chugach National Forest, and continued by the US Forest Service's International Program. It is a large collaborative group involving organizations from Alaska to northern South America. Some current projects include: Good Governance (WHSRN), Connecting Festivals, Facebook Page, Shorebird Surveys, Internship Program through EFTA, Partner Capacity Building, Red Knot (Pacific).

Rebecca Bentzen - Long-term Shorebird Nest Monitoring at Prudhoe Bay, Alaska

Rebecca reported that birds are initiating nests earlier (from 2003-2015), but they have not detected any changes in nest density during the study. She also discussed their studies on bird use on rehabilitated oil pads. Shorebird densities did not vary between tundra and revegetated pads but bird use varied. Nest densities were higher on tundra but a few birds nested on pads.

13:30 - 14:30 Presentations Part 2.

Stephen Brown – Migratory Connectivity of Semipalmated Sandpipers

Stephen gave overview of where Semipalmated Sandpipers breed: 60% in AK and 40% in Canada. On wintering grounds in northern South America, researchers found an 80% population decline since 1982. It appeared that this decline on the wintering grounds was most a reflection of a decline of the eastern Canadian breeding birds but information on migration patterns was lacking. He then described a study that used light-level geolocators to document migration patterns. 194 were deployed at 7 sites, 48 returned, 42 provided good data. Western breeding birds tended to winter in northwestern South America and eastern breeding birds tended to winter in northeastern South America. Birds breeding at Barrow appeared to use all parts of the range.

Kristen Sowl – PRISM Surveys on the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

Helicopter and boat-based surveys were conducted throughout the refuge in 2015. The project had some very complicated logistics. Some 301 plots (400 x 400 m) were surveyed using a rapid approach. RNPH, DUNL, WESA were to most common birds observed. There are efforts ongoing to improve protocol for 2016. Full 2016 proposal has been submitted to National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Manomet raised money to match funds.

Kim Jochum and Ellen Martin – Shorebirds on military lands in interior Alaska

Kim and Ellen described their efforts to design a program to survey shorebirds on military lands. Project objective: Determine range of shorebird species inhabiting military lands in interior Alaska and their associated breeding habitats. They plan on using shorebird surveys and occupancy modeling.

Additional discussion:

Colleen Handel described the Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey (ALMS) program and the potential for it to be a vehicle to count shorebirds. They count all birds but the seasonal window is optimized for songbirds. However, shorebirds are also being detected although detection probability is lower. Discussed automatic recording units to determine which species are residents versus migrants.

15:15 – 16:30 - Discussion on the revision of ASG Conservation Plan process

Objectives. What are they?

Jim Johnson: I don't see any reason to revise part one. I'd like to see changes made on each BCR. For example, updates are needed to decide what to do next or what are the priority species.

River Gates: Focus on diversifying action items. There currently are not a lot of conservation actions suggested in the current plan.

Chris Harwood: At BPIF meeting we decided that BCR4 was overly ambition in action items since we knew so little. Should find out first where they are before addressing more complicated research questions.

Rick Lanctot: Advocated for keeping plan broader so that people from many different organizations could justify their projects and hopefully obtain funds. Colleen and Julie Morse, in the past, standardized and simplified plans across BCRs.

Colleen Handel: What is the time frame? Originally it was 10 years. We had specific actions within a time frame. We should separate short and long-term goals and actions. Now we've learned so much about climate change that we may want to consider a separate document related to shorebirds and climate change.

Diane Granfors: Class on climate smart conservation. Incorporating climate into the plan is better than a separate plan. The park service has a similar document.

Erin Cooper: I get the sense that we should just integrate climate change into the BCR sections.

Someone voiced that they think the revision should be viewed as a triage. What did we miss? Is there a range expansion? Where are the red flags that we need to address?

Another person indicated that the severity of Yellow Sea issue was not previously addressed in version 2 of the plan.

What about the accessibility of the document? In a better format, website, for example so that it is readily available.

Conservation species should be updated because it gets used frequently for justification for why development should avoid those issues.

Should include more information on invasive plants (clover, spartina, brass buttons) and oil and gas/mining.

Group agrees to have more fluid documents and interactive table. Updated summaries are going to stay at least in PDF format.

Future tasks:

- Annual summaries, list of executive committee, meeting notes, and presentations from this meeting will be uploaded to ASG website (http://www.fws.gov/alaska/mbsp/mbm/shorebirds/working_group.htm).
- Edits to Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan.
 - o BCR chairs will update document
 - Smaller group update tables
 - Part 1 needs to be revised, especially for big issues such as climate change, yellow sea, invasive plants.
 - Dan and Lee willing to address the yellow sea
- New photos needed for 3rd version of the plan
- Possibly look for funding for person to clean up document Pacific Birds Joint Venture?

People discussed the need for the ASG to conduct projects that expand across areas and connect the group together. Some examples were efforts to investigate brood survival, collective research on the movement of birds within Alaska, climate changes in the ocean that may be influencing shorebird prey, some type of citizen science project, creating a Boreal Shorebird Demographic Network.

10 December 2015, Thursday

8:30 - 14:00 - BCR Groups met to discuss changes needed in each BCR

No notes available for this.

14:00 – 15:00 Whole group met to discuss process for revising the Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan

2nd day ASG meeting attendees

Jim Johnson
Dan Ruthrauff – Chair BCR1
Lee Tibbitts
Kristine Sowl – Chair BCR2
Erin Cooper
Cheryl Carrothers – Chair BCR5
Matt Moran
Melissa Gabrielson

Debbie Nigro – Chair BCR3
Rick Lanctot
Stephen Brown
Colleen Handel
Chris Harwood – Chair BCR4
Kim Jochum
Ellen Martin
Jeff Mason
George Matz

Rules of revisions for BCR chairs

- 1. Primary Conservation Objective Section within each BCR -- this should be for action items that do not fall into the threats categories very easily (e.g. life history gaps, outreach and international needs). This is not meant to be items of "immediate action" as was written in the BCR3 2008 version, but a catch all that cannot be identified easily in threats section.
- 2. do not prioritize action items under any heading list all in equal footing as we did in the 2008 plan
- 3. review the list of threats in the classification list given to us by Dan so that we use this nomenclature and do not miss anything
- 4. review the landbird section for your BCR for things missed or language that might help in your edits
- 5. review other BCR shorebird sections for things missed
- 6. review appendix 5 to be sure the important shorebird sites in your BCR are identified on the general Alaska map need a volunteer with GIS skills to update this map. Send any suggestions to Rick until we have this person identified.
- 7. review Part1 major areas (research, population monitoring, Habitat management and protection, outreach, international, outreach) to ensure that something relevant (and important) to your BCR is included. Send these suggestions to Dan for inclusion.
- 8. add new pictures to your section as needed.
- 9. for any new literature, please send this in a separate file so we can add to the final literature cited section
- 10. if you remove citations from your BCR section, please advise us on this too.
- 11. Provide a clean version of your BCR section and new literature cited section by 1 February. This should not be in track changes but a clean WORD doc. Send to Rick for collation.

Other tasks

- 1. Dan is revising some of the threats narrative sections in Part1 to ensure all parts of the flyway of the birds are discussed, especially in relation to climate change. He will also collate action items under each category from BCR chairs when sent.
- 2. Jim is going to send around a summary of how Brad Andre's determined priority shorebirds in his 2015 revision, and how this compares to what we originally did so that we can begin to

determine how we wish to develop priority birds for Alaska. This is a high priority item since identifying priority birds affects many other sections of the plan. Jim will revise Table 2 once the final process is determined.

- 3. final priority shorebird species will have to be updated in Part 1 (new narratives), and in all the tables in the BCR sections
- 4. Dan and Rick agreed to work on updating basic information in Tables lets discuss who is doing what.
- 5. Chris Harwood will work on updating Appendix 2 list of federal and state lands
- 6. Lee will create an appendix listing the IBAs using information from Audubon Alaska info from Beth received will send along shortly.
- 7. Appendix 3 will go away and be replaced with reference to 2015 shorebird priority list process (or our modification to it). Jim will provide this information
- 8. Luke will update Appendix 1 with new nomenclature and any recent updates on birds sighted.
- 9. Everyone review Appendix 6 and provide updates to Rick.
- 10. Deadline for cleanup of these sections is 1 February.

Rick and 1-2 volunteers will collate all the sections from 1 Feb - 15 Feb, and provide to Caroline for an overall review between 15 Feb and 15 March. We will send this version to greater ASG community for comment between 15 March and 15 April. Final edits done after that.

I anticipate several conference calls may be needed to iron out priority species, what final documents should be posted on the web, etc. Feel free to initiate calls as you need.

One final question, did we agree not to identify people in pictures on purpose in version 2? Did we do this for a reason (personal protection or something?). Can we change this?

I hope this represents our discussion fairly well. If I missed something please send a note to the entire group. Sorry if I volunteered you incorrectly (or without asking). Also thanks for "stepping up". I really appreciate the fact that shorebirds are represented by so many awesome people in the state of Alaska!



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9 December 2015, Wednesday

8:30 – 10:00 Welcome, Announcements and updates

- Welcome and opening announcements, Erin Cooper, Chair, ASG
- International Wader Study Group Nils Warnock, Stephen Brown
 - o *Iceland Meeting, September 2015*
- Global Flyway Network and Yellow Sea issues update Lee Tibbitts
- East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Rick Lanctot
- Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group: Rick Lanctot, others
 - o VIth WHSG, Wallops Island, Virginia, 13-16 Sept 2015
 - o Next meeting in Paracas, Peru, 24-28 November 2017
- Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative -- Rick Lanctot
- 100th Anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act *Tamara Zeller and Rick Lanctot*
- Caribbean/South America Shorebird Hunting Audrey Taylor
- Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture update Tom Rothe
- Arctic Breeding Birds Conditions Survey Annual Forms Rick Lanctot
- Alaska Airlines magazine shorebird article progress??
- Annual summary compilation (summary) Brian Robinson
- Other announcements

10:00 - 10:45 Break

10:45 – 11:00 Election of Officers

The following positions are open for nomination and Election:

- Executive Committee Secretary (currently filled by Brian Robinson)
- Executive Committee Member, (currently filled by Dan Ruthrauff)

The following positions are currently occupied.

- Erin Cooper Chair term expires Dec. 2016
- Deb Nigro Member term expires Dec. 2016
- Kelly Overduijn Member term expires Dec. 2016
- Audrey Taylor Member term expires Dec. 2016
- Tom Rothe -- Member term expires Dec. 2016

• Rick Lanctot – Staff Member – member for life (or till I quit FWS)

11:00 – 12:00	Presentations, Part 1
11:00 – 11:20	Pacific America's Shorebird Conservation Strategy – River Gates
11:20 - 11:40	Copper River Migratory Bird Initiative – Erin Cooper
11:40 – 12:00	Long-term Shorebird Nest Monitoring at Prudhoe Bay, Alaska - Rebecca Bentzen
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch break .
13:30 – 14:30	Presentations, Part 2.
13:30 – 13:50	Migratory Connectivity of Semipalmated Sandpipers – Stephen Brown
13:50 – 14:10	Advancing our Knowledge about Shorebirds: PRISM Surveys on the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge – <i>Kristin Sowl</i>
14:10 – 14:30	Identifying shorebird species and breeding sites to protect suitable shorebird nesting habitat on military lands in interior Alaska <i>Kim Jochum and Ellen Martin</i>
14:30 – 15:15	Break .
15:15 – 16:30	Discussion – revision of ASG Conservation Plan process .

Dinner location and timing

Sarah and Nils Warnock residence

Address: 2451 Wellington Court Anchorage AK

Phone: 530-304-4621

Time: 5pm and on

Menu: Thai Takeout (\$15/person); there will also be soup and rice

Drinks: BYO alcohol; we'll provide non-OH drinks

10 December 2015, Thursday

(there will be a random drawing to award a prize for those participating)

8:30 – 14:00	BCR groups meet to revise 2008 Alaska Shorebird	
	Conservation Plan	
12:00 – 13:00	Working Lunch	
14:00 – 15:00	Discussion – summary updates from BCRs, future process	
15:00 – 17:00	Yukon Delta PRISM survey breakout meeting	

Meeting days: Snacks will be provided but please donate funds if you partake.

Webex and Teleconference Connections:

WebEx:

Topic: Alaska Shorebird Group, Anchorage, AK

Date: Wednesday and Thursday, December 9 and 10, 2015
Time: 8:30 am, Alaska Standard Time (Anchorage, GMT-09:00)

Meeting number: 715 103 085 (Wednesday)

712 725 405 (Thursday)

Meeting password: This meeting does not require a password.

Although no login account is required to use Webex to attend a meeting, you will need to supply your name, email address, and a meeting password (if provided) to join the meeting. The WebEx requires certain drivers to be loaded to your browser, so please give yourself enough time to ensure that all software runs smoothly. Please check and prepare your computer a day or two in advance of the meeting as follows:

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When it is time to attend the meeting, please visit this link:

Wednesday: https://usgs.webex.com/usgs/j.php?MTID=m5d8f05c2a7fa64276657a89c28514c3b

Thursday: https://usgs.webex.com/usgs/j.php?MTID=md9cb06fd95404ae9a80840efdba32c00

For audio/teleconference, dial one of the following numbers:

Department of Interior participants: 1-703-648-4848

non-DOI (toll-free): 1-855-547-8255

After the tone, enter the security code: 12185, followed by #

Parking:

Parking is limited at Glenn Olds Hall and Grace Hall. If parking at these sites is unavailable, guests should park at the Moseley Sports Center or the lot between Carrs-Gottstein and Atwood buildings. Please allow a few extra minutes for walking. Thank you.

SEE MAP FOR MEETING LOCATION BELOW.

