



22nd Annual - Alaska Shorebird Group Meeting
Cordova Center
Cordova, Alaska 99574
Tuesday, December 6, 2016

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

December 6, 2016, Tuesday

13:00 – Welcome and opening announcements, Erin Cooper, Chair, ASG
(Housekeeping, sign in sheet, introductions)

13:15 – Announcements and Updates

Nils Warnock - International Wader Study Group (IWSG)

- 41st IWSG meeting was held in Ireland and a success
Stephen Brown commented that the IWSG is an extraordinary group, with a lot of scientific achievements, and that it was a rewarding, rich and diverse meeting. Attending was worth it to him and he highly recommends joining the meetings for others interested.
- Next IWSG meeting will be held in Prague, 15–18 September 2017
- Everyone is encouraged to join the IWSG; they have student rates too!
- Everyone is encouraged to submit papers to Wader Study for publishing; this is a good location to get information out that won't make it in a higher rated journal. They also have a news and events section, as well as a place to put abstracts from theses.
- The IWSG also has a great webpage. Check out: waderstudygroup.org

- Audubon Alaska is updating their Watch List. Nils encourages everyone to comment on the new list and note that some species will drop off the list as their populations seem to be stable, and other new species will be added.

Lee Tibbitts - Global Flyway Network and Yellow Sea issues update

- Currently the network is tracking Great Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit to analyze population trends. Many shorebird populations migrating through the Yellow Sea region are currently declining and not a lot has been done to improve these issues. One new development is that New Zealand signed a migratory bird agreement with China. One project within the framework of that collaboration is the monitoring of Spoon-billed Sandpipers via tracking devices to try to monitor and preserve the species within China.
- *Rick Lanctot* commented that the Yellow Sea (East Asian) is an imperiled part of the world, with large level of reclamations as a main issue currently. The area has a high level of impact to the health of shorebird populations, including through harvest as bycatch from fisherman. How it pans out depends mainly on Chinese and South Korean governments. The area may be nominated for a World Heritage Site (the Paulson Institute, IUCN birds and other groups are working on it).

Rick Lanctot - The Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative (AMBI) & the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAF)

- The next AMBI/EAAF meeting will be held between 7–15 January 2017 in Singapore.
- 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-initiative-ambi>). 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-Eurasian, and the East Asian-Australasian flyways. The EAAF flyway plan focuses on intertidal habitat degradation and illegal harvest as main drivers of shorebird population declines. This group will discuss forming a taskforce to address the illegal harvest issue. In some areas/countries shorebird harvest is legal, but not in others. For other regions again, harvest levels are completely unknown and/or out of control.
- Many groups and representatives are trying to improve/change things for the better. It can be very frustrating to work as part of these large international groups, however, as things move very slowly. At least some conservation efforts are occurring and awareness is being raised – which is a large improvement compared to a few years ago.

Rick Lanctot - Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group (WHSG)

- Their last meeting was in Virginia in September 2015 and their next meeting will be in Paracas, Peru on 10–14 November 2017. The WHSG brings together people throughout the Western Hemisphere, and includes 3–4 days of talks, and many tag-on meetings (e.g. Atlantic and Pacific flyway groups). The WHSG is meant to be a ‘one-stop shopping’ for all people interested in shorebirds across the Western Hemisphere. The WHSG fundraises substantially to pay for travel for people from many countries to participate in these meetings. Travel grants are available to U.S. and Canadian students, and Latin American professionals and students. There is no current information about the upcoming conference in 2017, but should be out soon. Awards are given out by the group including the Lewis W. Oring Lifetime Achievement Award for Shorebird Research and the Allan Baker Lifetime Achievement Award for Shorebird Conservation. Information on how to nominate someone for these awards will be out soon. The WHSG discussed having a more formal structure of the organization during the last meeting but so far this has not been very successful, mainly due to issues with setting up a financial wing that could handle bringing in and spending money at the various meeting venues.
- Meeting locations alternate between South, North, and Central America. The next meeting should be in Central America.
- If you want to join the Western Hemisphere or the Alaska Shorebird Group listservs, send a blank message to WHSG-join@lists.fws.gov or Ak.shorebird-join@lists.fws.gov
If you have trouble joining contact Rick at Richard_lanctot@fws.gov.

Erin Cooper - Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative (CRIMBI)

- The Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative is a collaboration between the U.S. Forest Service and other partners. The U.S. Forest Service is working with CRIMBI to connect

shorebird outreach projects. CRIMBI also connects and brings people to different shorebird research sites (e.g., South Americans to Alaska). The group further organizes internship that have been offered for 4 years now. It's been fabulous, if you like to bring on interns.

Jim Chu- Migratory Shorebird Project (MSP)

- Point Blue (formerly PRBO Conservation Science) is managing this project. We need to integrate our partners in Latin America better. Dr. Rob Butler from Canada came down to one of our meetings and asked to develop a collaborative citizen science project. Latin America partners said no simply because citizen science projects were not established in Latin America, but then we just developed one. Now we have 30–40 volunteers in Mexico, and Central and South America for this project. This summer we met with the Park Service and other groups in Mexico and all were interested in what we were doing and in adopting our protocol. Other projects can and should be developed. If you set up good governance we can get people to play nice together and develop projects together. We are looking to expand our MSP project in South America – e.g., work increasingly with the shrimp farm community, the embassy in Nicaragua, etc.
- Jim encouraged people to join the next MSP meeting in Paracas, Peru in November.

Lili Naves - Local Traditional Knowledge and Shorebird Subsistence Harvest

- The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) coordinates the annual subsistence harvest assessment. A recent project was funded that has multiple components related to shorebird harvest. The first component will include compiling all harvest data available Alaska-wide, to identify what knowledge gaps policy makers and managers need to fill and to improve the quality of current data. The second component of the project will focus on interviews with residents in Alaskan communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta to understand the importance of shorebirds as a food source and in a cultural perspective. The second step will include analysis of animal taxonomy as we don't know how people tell the various shorebird species apart. It is a large challenge for the harvest survey and this project will help us improve real harvest estimates. These interviews might include image exercises and/or Native words and vocalization documentation. Within the framework of this project, we will further conduct outreach in and communicate with the Native community. We are looking to get Native input and raise awareness about conservation concerns of various shorebird species. Additionally, we will aim to answer: What place do shorebirds have in their culture? Is there a place for Native people in shorebird festivals? Can we translate the curriculum to Native languages? How do we start talking to Native people about shorebirds?

It is challenging data to collect but we are working on it and the formal process to start interviews in villages (mainly in the Yukon Delta) is in development.

- One meeting occurred already in Fairbanks and people generally liked the idea of including shorebirds in their curriculums in schools.
- There are opportunities for partnerships within this project. So far USGS and a few others have signed up.

Audrey Taylor - Caribbean /South American Shorebird Hunting

- She is currently wrapping up a project analyzing how hunters in French Guiana use shorebirds in their overall hunting scheme. Shorebirds are regularly hunted incidentally. Therefore, if people say they don't hunt shorebirds, how many do they actually kill? To use the correct language is important.
- A report will be submitted to FWS by early spring. There appears to be a low-grade use of shorebirds by hunters only and we have ideas how we could raise awareness in people about shorebird conservation concerns.
- A Semipalmated Sandpiper banded by River Gates in AK in 2008/2009 was resighted in French Guiana. That was how the project originally was developed, and it then turned more into an analysis of harvest and hunting based on conservation concerns.
- Currently there are many projects and efforts put forward to understand shorebird issues in wintering grounds.
- *Stephen Brown* described the activities of the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Conservation Business Strategy group related to shorebird harvest/hunting. He mentioned that “what goes on in the Atlantic is quite important as they (i.e., shorebirds) all connect to Alaska.” Many threats exist and working groups were developed to work on these topics, including threats, coastal engineering, and others. We just finished the 13th workshop in 11 countries to do outreach and raise awareness for shorebird conservation.
- *Audrey Taylor*: One of the working groups from the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative is dealing with hunting impacts on shorebird populations; this group has used a business plan approach to come up with objectives and action items that can be proposed for funding (from NFWF and others). Outcomes of one of these projects include that Red Knots are now illegal to hunt in French Guiana and a new shorebird reserve in the rice field region of French Guiana was established. For more detail contact Audrey.

Tom Rothe - Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture

- The Venture includes all of AK, BC, Washington, Oregon, and northern California (down to San Francisco Bay). They were reprogramming joint venture the last few years to look at habitat enhancement opportunities and they set new priorities. One project is developing right now: the Coastal Wetlands Program will run from Humboldt Bay to Alaska (pretty much covering BCR5). They want everyone to home in on the geography and complexity of bird research and management; currently entities are not talking to each other. We hope to collaborate with others on habitat components in regions important to shorebirds to work toward integrated plans that are practical and affordable.

River Gates - Pacific American Shorebird Conservation Strategy

- The *Pacific American Shorebird Conservation Strategy* is a flyway-scale conservation plan that is following the model of the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative and its Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Conservation Business Strategy. We are engaging different partners. We are currently in phase one of a multiple stage project (developing strategies, the business plan/ implementation phase will follow), looking at flyway-scale conservation threats across the Pacific Americas Flyways. Phase one is nearly completed and a final draft of the conservation strategy will be published by the end of the calendar year. We are working toward getting more funding to develop implementation plans for various parts of the strategy. Technical documents

will include additional education- and outreach-based documents (in Spanish and English), workshops at meetings, etc.

- A Central Flyway Shorebird Conservation Plan is also anticipated to be developed soon (no funding yet as far as known).

Kim Jochum – Annual Summary Compilation

- 17 summaries were submitted so far for the 2016 project time period. A few more people were recruited to submit abstracts the next few weeks and the final summary document for 2016 will be published before year's end.

14:35 – Elections

- Chris Harwood (FWS) – new Chair, expires in Dec 2018
- Brian Robinson (USGS) - Member, expires in Dec 2018
- Mary Anne Bishop (Prince William Sound Science Center) – Member, expires in Dec 2018
- Thought about adding members, but we cannot do that due to bylaws
- Melissa Gabrielson (FS) was interested to become a member; but decided to wait till next year
 - A complete list of the executive committee is on the Alaska Shorebird Group website (https://www.fws.gov/alaska/mbsp/mbm/shorebirds/working_group.htm)

14:45 – Fundraising

- *Stephen Brown and Rick Lanctot.* We need funding to pay for River Gates' salary to update the Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan. \$7,500–\$10,000 are anticipated to be needed. It would be great if multiple agencies could support a little bit of these efforts.

15:10– River Gates - Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan: Revision Planning (Part 1)

- River sees her role in this project in trying to get the job done in a short amount of time. She intends to set up a timeline, with the goal to complete revisions within the next 6 months. She has quite a bit of infrastructure that has been put in place already (section revisions of BCR chairs and teams from last year). This effort will be focusing on a general revision and aim on revising everything. River read >40 shorebird conservation plans while working for the Pacific Flyway Strategy Project and thinks our plan is in good shape. The Alaska plan mainly needs updates based on changes that occurred and increased knowledge that was gained during the last 10 years. Should we update the priority conservation species or not?
- Updates from BCR Chairs
 - *BCR 1- Dan Ruthrauff.* BCR1 is in pretty good shape, relatively straight forward; currently updated. I don't think it needs more detail. Changes have been run by appropriate folks. BCR1 should be the easiest and least of our worries right now.
 - *BCR 2 - Kristine Sowl.* The BCR 2 plan is very Yukon Delta heavy and she would want the plan to include a wider perspective. She added some info from Kodiak and the Seward Peninsula so far. She has a revised plan but it would be good to get some more information and input from other folks. Also checking priority management species (PMS) and action items would be good to do. And if someone has some good photos to contribute that would be helpful.
 - *BCR 3 – Deb Nigro.* A small group worked on the BCR 3 plan at the last ASG meeting. The BCR description is fine. They are looking at deleting 2 priority species, based on the

definition that they “commonly” breed. They got a large amount of editing done. Not much was changed in the ‘important shorebird areas’ section, mainly because of her ignorance of many areas on the slope. Pre-breeding information is definitely missing in the plan. The chapter also got tweaked a lot to follow the landbird plan. Overall, a fair amount was added and taken out, mainly things that are no longer an issue, and quite a few actions were added. For the climate change section, she copied information from Chris Harwood’s BCR4 plan document, which she thought was really good.

- *BCR 4 - Chris Harwood.* Chris indicated that they changed quite a bit in the BCR4 plan. The original version was conservation unit-centric with mostly national park and refuge lands being recognized; however, we didn’t want to exclude agencies that have multiple-use purposes but still have important shorebird habitat on their lands. The priority species were the most problematic part to deal with, and we ran into some taxonomic issues with some subspecies that we probably should omit. Some priority species have changed. Are we including stewardship species that might not be included in Brad Andres’ national shorebird priority list? Interior Alaska, outside of Cook Inlet, has no representation in Audubon’s Important Bird Areas due to more dispersed distributions of boreal shorebirds. No migration bottleneck in the Interior exists. Chris further tweaked the ‘conservation issues and actions’ quite a bit. A lot was based on economy at the time and we suggest making it more fluid with a changing economy. They further added new actions and got rid of some others. Chris’ group did add emerging conservation issues, including invasive species and wind energy development, but these are minor for the Interior and were grouped under one heading.
- *BCR 5: Cheryl Carrothers.* Cheryl didn’t recall what happened at the last meeting and was not prepared to go into much depth. Transboundary mines are still of concern. A lot of Chugach National Forest’s recent analyses will inform this BCR.

River Gates (chairing)

- There needs to be better coordination amongst BCR chairs. A conference call will be held in the upcoming year.
- We need to define a process or procedure that is standardized to identify priority species. Definitely consider new information as it comes to light but we should not pull apart what we have too much.
Try to rank priority species specific to each BCR into 3 categories (suggested by River):
Current priority management species, species that need revision, species we are not sure about.
 - *Dan Ruthrauff:* Jim reviewed the priority species process a year ago; he followed general guidelines but suggested BCR chairs do what is applicable for their BCR. We agreed during our last meeting (December 2016, Anchorage) to follow the national guidelines (i.e., US Shorebird Conservation Plan Partnership 2016) to identify priority species overall, but that it was okay to have stewardship species for each BCR.
 - *Nils Warnock:* Pectoral Sandpipers are listed as declining on National Watch list now. American Golden-Plovers have come off.
- We are looking for a technical editor to help us out with final editing of the plan. Two sets of eyes might be better than just one. Someone additional is needed who has technical editing skills. Melissa Burns (USFWS) said she would be happy to be the second set of eyes.

- *Stephen Brown*: Stephen indicated that changes in the national rankings of shorebird species was due to efforts to get all the bird groups to agree to one process. He agreed that stewardship management species are important and are a good idea to include in the Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan. He suggested we update the list with 2016 data and then send it around for review.
- We need a working group. An informal sub-committee will be set up (names gathered and given to River at the meeting).
 - *Nils Warnock*: Audubon has 4 categories for their new list. You can look at that as example.
 - *Colleen Handel*: Keep a clear understanding as to what documents the scores were based upon; you want to know why we are worried about this species, etc. If people understand composite scores they can argue and decide how to use them. She would lobby for including composite scores in the document itself.
- Should we also trying to include subsistence use and Traditional Ecological Knowledge into plan?
 - *Liliana Naves*: She will try to provide harvest data where possible. Within the current project ADF&G will identify data gaps and then can define more relevant questions that come out of the interviews.
 - *Rick Lanctot*: The subsistence information came up because I knew Liliana was doing that project; and maybe some new people to our group could identify other topics that are missing; please give us feedback.
- There are 2 parts to the plan. The general summary for the whole state will probably not change much, but the BCR sections are where all the changes will occur.
- Timeline for completion: We don't have a lot of time to do this. The general idea is that the BCR sections should be more or less revised by mid-January if possible. River will look at updating other components throughout plan (like appendices and figures). We need to do major revision components together before people get sucked into field season, then River would do the main part afterwards. Rather than the detailed stuff right now she would like to get some feedback to the overall revision process. Do we want new photos//pictures? Update all? I am not exactly clear if we are going to do a lot of revisions at that level? Do we want this to be an electronic version or print it as final project?
 - *Erin Cooper*: Redoing the design is almost double the project. What we have proposed is for you to rewrite the plan not redesign the plan. Also it should be an electronic plan, that people can print themselves.
 - *Colleen Handel*: Doing redesign doesn't necessarily mean you have to print it. InDesign is a great program to format a plan.
 - *Kris Krenz*: PDF or online only nicely formatted? From ADFG perspective we are more interested in content than layout.
 - *Erin Cooper* can volunteer and help with design stuff
 - *Colleen Handel*: Stick with MS Word, double column. It increases readability to single line layout. I would not change pictures – I would say keep the work to a minimum.
 - *Rick Lanctot*: I really think we want to get the plan done. We do the plan first and if there is money left over we will do an executive summary.
 - *River Gates*: Amazon now does printing where you can order copies if you want.

- That is all I have on my agenda. I got my marching orders, and feel like I better understand what you envision the revision to be. Contact me with other suggestions/questions @ Pacifica.shorebirds@gmail.com
 - *Nils Warnock*: Audubon AK – updated Important Bird Areas (IBAs) for some species; 1% of global population cutoff. That can help to identify IBAs in BCRs.
 - *Melanie Smith* with Audubon Alaska will send out a list of shorebird IBAs to BCR chairs and River.



22st Annual - Alaska Shorebird Group Meeting
Cordova Center
Cordova, Alaska
December 6th, 1:00-5:00pm

1:00 – 1:45 Welcome, Announcements and updates .

- Welcome and opening announcements, *Erin Cooper, Chair, ASG*
- International Wader Study Group – *Nils Warnock and Stephen Brown*
- Global Flyway Network and Yellow Sea issues update – *Nils Warnock and Lee Tibbitts*
- East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership – *Rick Lanctot*
- Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group: – *Rick Lanctot, others*
 - VIIth WHSG, Paracas, Peru, 24-28 November 2017
- Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative -- *Rick Lanctot*
- CRIMBI Update – *Erin Cooper*
- Local Traditional Knowledge and Shorebird Subsistence Harvest – *Lili Naves*
- Caribbean/South America Shorebird Hunting – *Audrey Taylor tentative*
- Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture update – *Tom Rothe - tentative*
- Pacific America Shorebird Conservation Strategy – *River Gates*
- Annual summary compilation (summary) – *Kim Jochum*
- Other announcements

1:45 – 2:30 Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan: revision planning (part 1) – River Gates

2:30-2:45 Break .

2:45-4:15 Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan: revision planning (part 2) – River Gates

4:15-4:30 Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan Funding: Next Steps - Rick Lanctot

4:30-5:00 Election of Officers .

The following positions are open for nomination and Election:

- *Erin Cooper – Chair – 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*

The following positions are currently occupied.

- *Secretary – expires Dec 2017 currently occupied by Kim Jochum*
- *Dan Ruthrauff – member -- term expires Dec. 2017*
- *Rick Lanctot – Staff Member – member for life (or till I quit FWS)*

Tuesday Night: Poster Session followed by dinner at the Reluctant Fisherman.