

## **Alaska Shorebird Working Group 2002 Annual Meeting**

Wedgewood Resort, Fairbanks, Alaska – 4 March 2002

### I. Introductory Comments – Brian McCaffery

- A. Introductions of attendees
- B. Sign-up sheet circulated – list of attendees attached.
- C. Rick Lanctot volunteered to take minutes

### II. Announcements

- A. All Bird Conference to be held 5 March 2002, John Wright
- B. North Slope Shorebird Predation Study to be held 5 March 2002, Philip Martin and David Payer
- C. ASHWG List-server Coordinator needed – Rick Lanctot will take on these responsibilities.

### III. Review of 2001

#### A. Administrative

- a. A few hurdles...
  - i. Internet and e-mail problems at USFWS and other DOI agencies
  - ii. Heather Johnson and Brad Andres left ASHWG
- b. Progress on Action Items
  - i. North Slope – Japan Dunlin study
    - 1. Kent Wohl – banding on North Slope for 3 years now, with a surprisingly high number of resightings in Japan. May band again this summer at Barrow. Would like to expand studies to China where large concentrations of Dunlin have been seen.
  - ii. Arctic Breeding Surveys – NPRA, YKD, arctic Canada
    - 1. Jon Bart reviewed program – 50 locations in NPRA during 2001. Data from 2001 half analyzed.
  - iii. Shorebird profiles for monitoring handbook
    - 1. Stephen Brown is now coordinating and revising this book. Hopes to prepare a summary of responses so that species that have similar behaviors can be clumped together.
  - iv. Symposium Planning – delayed till 2004 at next Alaska Bird Conference.
  - v. Improved harvest surveys – Tamara Mills and Brian McCaffery have revised handouts for native people to document harvest on YKD. Will now separate into more classes of shorebirds.
  - vi. Shorebird Sister Schools program – Tamara Mills will address in topic below.
  - vii. Western Alaska BCR planning – a discussion was held addressing how NABCI could be stepped down from their large scale plans to the more regional planning level.

#### B. Publications by working group members

- a. Brian McCaffery summarized recent publications and graduate degrees produced by the Alaska Shorebird Working Group. He encourages everyone to continue to notify him of recent publications.
- C. Alaska Bird Conference – Brian indicated that shorebird research was coming into its own, as roughly 30% of the talks during the conference were on shorebirds.

#### IV. Briefings

##### A. Priority Species

- a. Buff-breasted Sandpiper: Rick Lanctot gave a brief overview of his work in South America on this species. He indicated that the species uses a very restricted habitat along the coastal fringe of Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina, and that these habitats are potentially at risk from mining, tourism, pine plantations, and ranch subdivision.
- b. Marbled Godwit: Abby Powell plans to have a student initiate a study to use remote imagery to delineate habitat boundaries of the species on the Alaska Peninsula. She will use existing habitat use information in this endeavor. In the future, she hopes to conduct ground surveys of the estimated habitat range to determine use by the species.
- c. Bristle-thighed Curlew- Phil Bruner discussed his observations of the species on the wintering grounds and the potential problems of predators. Bob Gill plans to implant satellite transmitters in curlews on Seward Peninsula. Kent Wohl talked about the new South Pacific meeting to be held at Cook Islands in July (everyone is invited). He suggested that this would be a good opportunity to generate collaborations on the species.

##### B. Information and Education

- a. Shorebird Sister Schools – Tamara Mills talked about how Hilary Chapman is the new National Coordinator, and that there are now regional coordinators in all the USFWS regions. She also mentioned that the SSS curriculum has been revised to accommodate shorebirds across the Arctic (including Alaska and Canada), and briefly mentioned the Buff-breasted Sandpiper as the new Central Flyway SSS species.
- b. Subsistence Brochure – Tamara Mills, Brian McCaffery and Cynthia Wentworth have revised the brochure, and it is being distributed via the Refuge Information Technicians to all parts of the YKD. The revision will allow more detailed harvest information to be collected as it separates shorebird species into different major groupings.
- c. Copper River Delta Virtual Field Trip – This virtual field trip will connect 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> graders through the internet. There is a “winging northward” TV show to be aired May 8 at 1-2:30 pm ET.
- d. “Celebrating Alaska’s Shorebirds” – a new video highlighting Alaska’s shorebirds was produced by Juneau TV.

##### C. International Highlights

- a. Bob Gill is the new North American coordinator for the Wader Study Group Bulletin. He encourages all of us to submit papers to this peer-reviewed journal.

- b. Kent Wohl talked about efforts to make connections with China, possibly using Dunlin that winter in the area.
- c. The Central Pacific is another area currently being tapped for international coordination and collaborations. There will be a meeting at the Cook Islands in July towards this end.

## V. Projects in Need of Collaborators

### A. Pacific Flyway Telemetry

- a. Mary Anne Bishop, Dan Logan, and Nils Warnock initiated a second year of their study on dowitcher and western sandpiper migration. This year they will equip 60 birds and follow their migration between Mexico and San Francisco.

### B. Hawaii – Alaska Telemetry

- a. Wally Johnson and Phil Bruner will equip 20 Pacific Golden-Plovers with radio transmitters in Hawaii this spring. They will focus on following individuals as they leave their wintering territories to learn more about their pre-migration schedules and habitat use. They also have people listening for radio transmitters in Alaska.

### C. Breeding Shorebird Surveys in Western Alaska

- a. Volunteers are needed to conduct surveys for 3-4 weeks.

### D. Other topics

- a. Jon Bart discussed the creation and functioning of PRISM (Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring). Jon along with Guy Morrison are co-chairs of the group. Bob Gill and Kent Wohl are also part of the decision making group. Jon indicated PRISM was designed to help organize the large monitoring effort, to raise funds, and to indicate priority spending of funds. During the past year, about \$250,000 has been raised through PRISM, approximately 50% of this money maybe attributed to funding efforts by the PRISM group. Their proposed budget is ½ million over the next 5 years.

## VI. Discussion Topics

### A. Function of Alaska Shorebird Working Group

- a. Current structure of the ASHWG is that anyone can be a member, that the chairperson coordinates meetings and tackles any questions/problems that occur between meetings, and that participants pay their own way to and from meetings. The goals of the ASHWG are to coordinate programs, establish protocols, exchange and translate information, and to implement plans.
- b. Brian McCaffery is currently serving as Chairperson. He indicated there was a need for a new secretary and listserver person. Declan Troy was thanked for serving as listserver during the past few years. Philip Martin suggested the new USFWS Region 7 shorebird coordinator serve as co-chair of the ASHWG.
- c. There was a general discussion about ASHWG's role in advocacy, technical assistance, and or advisory. Most agreed that we should not be advocacy, but

that the group could make recommendations to help agencies understand what the group considered high funding priorities.

- d. There was also a suggestion that the group monitor treaties/international agreements that may date back to the 1930s that could affect shorebirds.
  - e. There was a discussion about starting a Technical Advisory Committee to provide answers to questions for the chairperson. Because the ASHWG has no charter this would not be possible now. However there could be an Ad Hoc Technical Advisory Committee to assist the Chair until a Charter is established. This Technical Advisory Committee would help make decisions on topics when the group is not meeting (see Goals at the bottom of the document).
  - f. The group decided to formalize the Alaska Shorebird Working Group by developing a charter, complete with our own letterhead. Bob Gill, Kent Wohl, and Brian McCaffery were slated to draft the Charter prior to the start of this field season. Once the charter is in place, we anticipate initiating a Technical Advisory Committee (see Goals at the bottom of the document)
- B. Agenda for afternoon
- a. Consensus to discuss monitoring boreal species first, followed by species-specific monitoring (e.g., BTCU, BLTU, SURF, PGPL)
  - b. Jon Bart requested we designate on a map of Alaska where we wish to survey for shorebirds in the next 4-5 years.
- C. Afternoon preliminary discussion
- a. Alaska Shorebird Plan needs revision, noted that information on BARG was missing.
  - b. Modification will wait until a new Alaska Shorebird Coordinator is named.
  - c. It was announced that the USFS awarded USFWS Region 7 a “Taking Wing Award” for their work conducting telemetry studies in the Pacific Flyway.

## VII. Boreal Forest Shorebird Surveys

- A. Double sample protocol discussed. This could include rapid and intensive survey plots, point counts combined with marked birds, or distance estimation methods.
- B. Boreal Forest Problems
  - a. Lee Tibbitts discussed how different species have different detectabilities, and that bird’s nest, display, and feed in different places. Thus, there is a high chance of missing or double counting individuals. This could lead to under or overestimating the number of birds.
  - b. Other problems identified by the group included:
    - i. Can hear many birds but difficult to estimate distance to birds. Thus, you may get an index of the number of birds, but density is difficult to determine.
    - ii. Different species are breeding and displaying at different times.
    - iii. Habitat difficult to do transects in.
    - iv. Birds fly towards you and follow you.
  - c. Discussion of possible Pre and post-breeding survey – boreal birds may clump up at migration stopover sites. Surveys conducted along rivers, lakes (e.g., early thaw lakes) might be able to be counted.

- d. Possible to do aerial surveys at these migration stopover sites?
- C. Consensus that may be better to survey in winter, in conjunction with migration counts.
  - a. Information needed on major wintering sites on N. Coast of South America for yellowlegs and dowitchers.
- D. Possible to use playbacks to monitor breeding birds – this would also only provide an index and not a density estimate.
- E. Survey locations by species
  - a. River surveys – SPSA, WATA, SEPL, SOSA
  - b. SBDO – span a variety of habitats in boreal forest region of Alaska Peninsula
- F. Boreal Forest Shorebird Subcommittee needed to develop methodology
  - a. Canadian’s want to implement such surveys but methodology not in place
  - b. Likely that one method will not work well for all species.
  - c. Likely that it is too early to start monitoring boreal species in Alaska

### VIII. Species-specific Monitoring Plans

- A. General Comments
  - Needed for species where general monitoring does not work.
  - Potential species in need of specific plans include: PGPL, BLOY, WATA\*, WHIM, BTCU, HUGO\*, BARG, MAGO, BLTU, SURF, ROSA, DUNL, BBSA\*, SBDO, although a few of these species (e.g., ROSA, DUNL) may be covered in a broad-based sampling scheme.
  - An “\*” in above list indicates species that may not be able to be monitored in Alaska
  - Noted that priority species lists do not match among state and national shorebird plans, or Audubon Society
  - A list of the appropriate protocols for each species is needed. Would be good for an Ad Hoc Tech committee.
- B. Black Turnstone
  - Audubon Watch list has BLTU as high priority
  - Maybe can census in spring at Montague Island, PWS
  - Maybe can census on breeding grounds on YKD
- C. Black Oystercatcher
  - Dan Logan of USFS indicated they have been conducting surveys in eastern and western PWS
  - Abby Powell mentioned she had done or will do a small study on BLOY
- D. Pacific Golden-Plover
  - Kolea watch, community based approach for monitoring birds
- E. Bristle-thighed Curlew
  - Two surveys done to date (early 90s and early 2000s). Results indicate stable population in one area but 20% decline in second population. Difficult to interpret results – need more replicated surveys.
- F. Surfbird
  - Breeding grounds survey won’t work because there is not enough money to cover all of breeding range. A potential site for winter surveys might be Montague Island.

- G. Whimbrel
    - Potential to count at Kanuti NWR based on Merry Maxwell, Refuge biologist
  - H. ROSA, DUNL, BLTU
    - May be able to conduct broad surveys for these species
  - I. Marbled Godwit
    - Would require special survey in their small range
- IX. Implementation of PRISM (Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring) in Alaska – website is <http://wss.wr.usgs.gov> (has 8-10 articles)
- A. History of program
    - a. U.S. Shorebird Plan written – identified species of high concern and in need of research
    - b. Powers-that-be decided that it was impractical to study each species specifically, so implemented a multi-species broad survey – i.e., PRISM
    - c. Now there is interest in pursuing single- species surveys where necessary
  - B. Tundra Breeding Surveys
    - a. Previous work focused on NPRA, and preliminary surveys in Canada
    - b. 2002 field work will focus on Arctic NWR, Yukon Delta NWR, Northern Quebec, SW Baffin Island, Kent Peninsula/Walker Bay
    - c. Will also begin initial work where possible in other national wildlife refuges in Alaska, including Alaska Peninsula, Alaska Maritimes, Selawik, and Tetlin.
  - C. Migration and Wintering Surveys
    - a. Now developing Regional Shorebird Monitoring Plans based on BCR and state boundaries
    - b. Jon Bart showed examples for Western Oregon/Western Utah
    - c. These plans are very detailed, and will likely require pilot studies to know how to survey birds in particular areas
  - D. Overall goal is to have both a migration count, and a breeding or wintering ground count for each species. The migration count will help provide trend data, whereas the breeding or wintering ground count will help with population estimate.
- X. Incorporation of National Wildlife Refuges into shorebird management
- A. General Comments
    - a. Need to show managers how important shorebird work is to keep their support
    - b. Need to target areas and species that require work on refuge
    - c. Need to let the managers know how their refuge is contributing.
    - d. Incorporate Shorebird Sister School program where possible.
    - e. Include Section in revised Alaska Shorebird Plan on how refuges can contribute.
  - B. Opportunities to chat with refuge folks
    - a. Project Leader’s meeting in November each year
    - b. Refuge Centennial this year
- XI. Final Comments
- A. Plan to meet next in December 2002

**B. Goals from this meeting**

- a. Develop a charter – Kent Wohl, Bob Gill, Brian McCaffery
- b. Once charter present, develop an Advisory Technical Committee; members to be determined by current Chair – Brian McCaffery
- c. Advisory Technical Committee help on:
  - i. Redrafting Alaska Shorebird Plan
  - ii. Identifying subcommittee members to participate in Boreal Forest Monitoring protocol, Single-species protocols
  - iii. Identifying new priorities (if any)

Alaska Shorebird Working Group - 2002 Meeting Attendees

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