

10th Annual Meeting of the Alaska Shorebird Group
Gordon Watson Conf. Room, USFWS/USGS Building, Anchorage, Alaska,
6-7 December 2004

Minutes taken by and compiled by Robert Gill

Minutes of the 10th annual meeting of the Alaska Shorebird Group, Gordon Watson Conference Room, USFWS/USGS Building, 1011 E. Tudor Rd., Anchorage, Alaska, 6-7 December 2004

Rick Lanctot convened the general meeting of the Alaska Shorebird Group (ASG) at 0930 h on 6 December 2004. Brian McCaffery, the group chair, could not attend the meeting. Thirty-two people were present for the Welcome and Opening Announcement.

Monday, 6 December: The first half of the morning session consisted of 20-minute-long presentations focusing on species-specific studies. [See the annual summary of projects for details of most of the following.] Presentations included those by Wally Johnson (Pacific Golden-plovers), Phil Bruner (Ruddy Turnstones), Paul Meyers (Black Oystercatchers), and David Tessler (Black Oystercatchers). The second half of the session involved presentations by Lee Tibbitts (NPS bird inventory), Jim Johnson (mapping North Slope breeding birds), Steve Kendall (nest survivorship of birds), and Audrey Taylor (postbreeding shorebird studies at Barrow).

The afternoon session began at 1430 h and included a presentation by Mary Rabe about the State of Alaska Nongame Partner Program. The Program funded 18 projects in 2004, including several addressing shorebirds, but problems meeting the 25% non-federal matching request prevented implementation of any shorebird projects through the regular proposal process. The other aspect of the Program that appeared to hamper participation by federal resource agency personnel was the requirement that funding was available on a reimbursable basis and not through a granting process. Ways were discussed on how to leverage funds and meet the 25% non-federal match requirement. For the 2005 Program, Mary thought the state would fund between 4 and 6 projects, selected from a list of about 80 submissions. She anticipated that there would be a shorebird project among those selected. A call for additional details on selected pre-proposals will be requested in December 2004. The mandated write-up of the state strategic plan is near completion and will be open for public review from February to April. A final strategic plan is scheduled for completion in October 2005.

Other presentations included those by Mary Anne Bishop (Western Sandpiper migration project), Rick Lanctot (conservation of Buff-breasted Sandpipers), Jim Johnson (staging and wintering Hudsonian Godwits), and a video of the Saemangeum intertidal reclamation project in Korea. The meeting adjourned for the day at 1645 h.

Tuesday, 7 December: The morning session began at 0900 with a presentation by Steve Kendall (USFWS) on his participation in a Russian-lead expedition to Moreshechnaya estuary along the

northwest coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula. This was followed by a presentation by Sue Thomas (Region 1, USFWS) about the U.S. Pacific Islands Shorebird Conservation Plan. Of interest to the ASG was the plan's treatment of species such as Bristle-thighed Curlew, Ruddy Turnstone, Wandering Tattler, and Pacific Golden-Plover, and how effective population monitoring might be achieved through joint efforts between Alaska and Region 1.

Following the presentations there was a session to update the general membership on various shorebird monitoring programs and results of international meetings. Rick Lanctot gave brief summaries of two upcoming meetings. The Shorebird Research Group of the Americas (SRGA) will convene in Portland, OR, 23–25 January 2005, in conjunction with the Waterbird Society annual meeting. Vicki Johnson (Canadian Wildlife Service) mentioned that the Red-necked Phalarope Working Group was recently formed under the umbrella of SRGA. There will be a "Shorebird Summit" in Galveston, TX, 22–25 February 2005 to: 1) assess shorebird conservation planning efforts over the past five years, 2) update focal species groups, 3) review monitoring protocols (PRISM, species specific, Boreal forest, Joint venture), assess regional shorebird conservation plans, and 5) hold business meetings for WHSRN-US and the U.S. Shorebird Plan Council. Several Alaskan's have tentatively been selected to give presentations.

The next section included updates of various monitoring protocols. Rick Lanctot began with an overview of the overall PRISM followed by Vicki Johnson's overview of Arctic PRISM activities in Canada. The Arctic PRISM committee is finalizing the peer-review paper describing the proposed methodology for surveying shorebirds in the Arctic. It is hoped that results of the peer-review will be presented at the Galveston meeting in time to be incorporated into field efforts during 2005. Vicki Johnson then gave an overview of Boreal PRISM, the newest of the PRISM protocols. Lee Tibbitts, Brian McCaffery, and Chris Harwood are playing key roles in the Alaska component of Boreal PRISM. Briefly, the program encompasses four Bird Conservation Regions spread across a wide band of taiga habitats stretching from the Chukchi Sea to the Atlantic coast Canada. Nine species have been identified as priorities for monitoring, including Surf-bird and Wandering Tattler (montane component), Hudsonian and Marbled godwits, Lesser and Greater yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, and Wilson's Snipe. It is recognized that two or more monitoring protocols will be needed to accommodate this diversity in species and their life history traits. Vicki Johnson will host a meeting in Edmonton, Canada, in early February 2005 to plan for testing boreal survey methods during the 2005 and 2006 field seasons. Chris Harwood asked about inclusion of Breeding Bird Survey routes along rivers and it was agreed this was a viable protocol if it produced enough detections.

Sue Thomas then gave an overview of Migration PRISM and what is being done along the Pacific and Atlantic coast. The overall objective is to design and implement flyway-wide sampling protocols that can be used to sample primary sites annually to get yearly values (vs. Arctic PRISM done on 7- to 10-year cycle). The Pacific effort differs from the Atlantic in that the latter involves "re-design" of existing protocols (ISS) that are currently being tested by Manomet Center for Conservation Science. The Pacific effort focuses on Oregon and Washington, is based on "shorebird-use-days," stratified sites based on quality of habitat and numbers supported, and for now excludes rocky coastline. Migration Prism efforts have varied throughout the United States depending on interest and funding.

Sue then moved her discussion to PRISM's temperate breeders where protocols are mostly species specific (Long-billed Curlew, Mountain Plover, Piping Plover). She used the curlew protocol as an example in which 180 randomly distributed roadside routes are in place covering three habitat types. Each route entails 40 points spaced 800 m apart that are covered by two observers (double observer method). Potential drawbacks include trouble doing 40 stops in a day, not getting enough observers, and routes with few birds (maintaining observer interest). Next year they will experiment with the addition of some off-road routes and expansion of effort across the entire breeding range.

CHASM (Committee for Holarctic Shorebird Monitoring). Rick gave overviews of the initial meeting from which CHASM was born and of follow-up meetings at the Waterbirds Around the World held in Edinburgh, England, in April 2004, and the International Wader Study Group (IWSG) meeting in Germany in November 2004. The overall objective of CHASM is to standardize sampling protocols throughout sites in the Arctic. A summary will be published in the April issue of the Wader Study Group Bulletin (R. Lanctot as lead). The next meeting of CHASM will decide priority species and when during their annual cycles monitoring would achieve desired results.

Bob Gill next gave summaries of the annual meetings of the IWSG meeting and the Shorebird Working Group (SWG) of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. [See also abstracts in the 2005 summary of Alaska projects.] At the SWG meeting in Korea a special session was convened to go over and adopt the Dunlin Action Plan for the flyway. From this came formation of a Dunlin Study Group with representation from five countries (China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United States). Bob Gill and Rick Lanctot are members of the group, but anyone with an interest is welcome to join.

At the SWG meeting Bob also gave an hour-long presentation on the planned Beringian Expedition in Alaska in 2005 and the desire among several biologists throughout the East Asian-Australasian Flyway to create a working group for Bar-tailed Godwits. The concept was well received, with Russia, Japan, Korea, China, and Australia eager to participate. [New Zealand was not represented at the meeting, but their interest was known beforehand.]

The last item under Updates was an overview by Bob of the "New" Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). This resulted from a 2003 review of the 20-year-old program. The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council (Council) agreed in March 2004 to take on responsibilities for implementing the WHSRN strategy in the U.S. As a result there is now a WHSRN-US committee that operates under the auspices of the Council to ensure coordinated implementation of the WHSRN strategic plan and the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan. Bob Gill serves as one of nine member to the WRSRN-US Committee with responsibility to 1) develop annual work plans, 2) identify important sites that meet biological criteria and solicit nominations for new sites, and 3) review site nominations and provide recommendations for acceptance into the network.

ASG Business:

Status of draft Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan. During the year (9 months) five major sections of the plan were revised. These need to be reviewed and collated into a final draft, hopefully during winter 2004–2005.

ASG logo. Pat Johnson, Montana State University, agreed to craft the logo with the only stipulation that the group wanted the flagship species, the Black Turnstone, to be depicted in flight.

Timing of the annual meeting. The group agreed that the annual meeting should be held the first week of December, even during years that the Alaska Bird Conference is held (usually in March). Colleen Handel and Chris Harwood are going to check with Partners In Flight folks to see if they will commit to an early December meeting schedule to make it easier for those traveling from outside the greater Anchorage area. The next meeting of ASG is tentatively scheduled for the week of 5–8 December 2005.

Election. Elections are a bit complicated this year because at last year's meeting we agreed to have terms of Executive Committee members staggered, with half of the eight positions coming up for election each year. Further complications are brought about this year by four members (Steve Kendall, Brian McCaffery, Mary Rabe, and Lee Tibbitts) wanting to step down from their positions. So where does that leave us? The positions occupied by Rick Lanctot, Abby Powell, Colleen Handel, and Bob Gill are not up for election until 2005 and all agreed to remain in their positions until then. That leaves us having to fill four positions—the Chair (vacant with Brian's resignation) and three at-large members, positions currently held by Steve Kendall, Lee Tibbitts, and Mary Rabe. Both Lee and Mary have asked to step down and not be considered for re-election.

For the Chair position, Steve Kendall had agreed to stand for election.

For the three at-large positions, the following have agreed to stand for election: Jim Johnson (USFWS), Wally Johnson (MSU), Brian McCaffery (USFWS), Iain Stenhouse (Audubon), Audrey Taylor (UAF), Deborah Perkins (Anchorage independent) and Dave Tessler (ADF&G).

Rick Lanctot will inquire of other potential candidates for all positions and then send a general ballot to the membership.

The meeting was adjourned at 1410 h.

A very delightful social was held in downtown Anchorage at Subzero, an extension of Humpey's restaurant. Good food, a great selection of beverages, and lively conversation were shared by all.

R. Gill

9 December 2004