

Rice and Waterbirds Working Group

In-person meeting 4 October 06; 5:30pm-7:00pm local time, Veracruz, Mexico
(at the North American Ornithological Conference)

Next Call: to be determined

Participants:

(current Working Group members):

Ghisselle M. Alvarado, octrop@racsa.co.cr, National Museum of Costa Rica
Garry Donaldson, Garry.Donaldson@ec.gc.ca, Canadian Wildlife Service
Charles D. Duncan, cduncan@manomet.org, Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network
Chris Elphick, chris.elphick@uconn.edu, University of Connecticut
Lourdes Mugica, lmugica@fbio.uh.cu, University of Havana, Cuba
Katharine C. Parsons, parsonsk@manomet.org, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
Jennifer Wheeler, Jennifer_A_Wheeler@fws.gov, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

(Guests):

Martin Acosta, macosta@fbio.uh.cu, University of Havana, Cuba
Andrew Bernick, bernickaj@yahoo.com, City University of New York
Susan Elbin, elbin@wildlifetrust.org, Wildlife Trust, New York
Mauro Fasola, fasola@unipr.it, Università, Pavia, Italy
Michael Fry, mfry@abcbirds.org, American Bird Conservancy
Mike Hooper, m.hooper@ttu.edu, Texas Tech University
Johanna Hurtado A., jhurtado@sloth.ots.ac.cr, Organization for Tropical Studies-Costa Rica
Andrea Jones, ajones@audubon.org, Audubon California
Stefani Melvin, Stefani_Melvin@fws.gov, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Marie Perkins, mperki6@lsu.edu, Louisiana State University
Xavier Ruiz, frui@ub.edu, University of Barcelona, Spain
John Sterling, ani@cal.net, Harvey and Associates (Davis, California)

Discussion:

Thank you to Charles Duncan and Lourdes Mugica for translating portions of the discussion as needed.

Chris Elphick, Chair of the Working Group, opened the discussion by reviewing the purpose and goals of the Rice and Waterbirds working group as well as current activities. This information is summarized on the fact sheet "Rice, Water, and Birds / Arroz, Agua Y Aves" made available at the NAOC and now available on the website: <http://birds.fws.gov/waterbirds/rice.html> (this address has a number of aliases).

Participants then introduced themselves, and their interests and affiliations reflected the complexity and breadth of issues associated in the rice and waterbird relationship. The following points were expressed during the subsequent conversation:

- With regard to the working group's goal of promoting rice management and policy recommendations favorable to birds, it is essential to recognize that "best" practices may differ substantially depending on location.
- The management practices most favorable to waterbird population health and most feasible for implementation will vary with the biology and behavior of the bird populations as well as agronomic, economic and social influences on rice producers.
- Rather than a specific set of management and policy recommendations, the working group might collaborate to develop a matrix of considerations that would enable conservationists to more easily address the "puzzle" of determining the best approaches and practices in their area and situation.
- Although recommendations should be tailored to location, it is important also to understand and consider the largest scales of influence on rice production, e.g., the global rice situation. For example, working with the Food and Agriculture Organization of (FAO) of the United Nations might be a way to effect worldwide bird conservation benefits.
- It is extremely important to understand the perspectives and needs of the rice production industry if approaches are to be successful. Individuals working in cooperative extension agencies (aka agencies providing agronomic assistance) might be approached as advisors. Also, members of the working group might pursue attending rice producers conferences to better understand the industry and develop contacts.

Next Steps:

The recently launched website is a work in progress, and feedback and submissions are welcome; please contact Jennifer Wheeler. (Emerging information, such as how to obtain the new Cuban wetland birds book and the results of the South American rice fields study, has been added to the website.)

Due to the strong level of interest in the working group and its efforts (evidenced by attendance at this meeting and by emails received by Chris Elphick), it is likely that a listserv (automated e-mailing contact list) will be developed to share information. Emails of interested individuals are now being compiled.

A small group continues to develop plans for a symposium at the 2007 Waterbird Society meeting in Barcelona. Input and ideas on the speakers and program are welcome; please contact Chris Elphick.

Katharine Parsons is interested in being part of a team to develop relationships within the rice production industry; individuals with ideas or interest in such a team should contact Kathy.
