

11th Annual Meeting of the Alaska Shorebird Group

**Gordon Watson Conf. Room, USFWS/USGS Building, Anchorage, Alaska,
5-6 December 2005**

Minutes of the 11th annual meeting of the Alaska Shorebird Group, Gordon Watson Conference Room, USFWS/USGS Building, 1011 E. Tudor Rd., Anchorage, Alaska, 5–6 December 2005

The Chair, Steve Kendall, convened the general meeting of the Alaska Shorebird Group (ASG) at 0930h on 5 December 2005. Twenty-seven people were present for the Welcome and Opening Announcements. Five additional people joined the meeting within the hour.

Monday, 5 December: The morning and early afternoon sessions were devoted to 20-minute-long presentations. [See attached Agenda of the meeting and see annual summary of projects for details of most of these presentations.] A few highlights from the talks included 1) Phil and Andrea Bruner finding two of three Ruddy Turnstones banded at their Alaska site in '05 spending the winter at the same park on Oahu, Hawaii, about 20 km from the their house! 2) A group of Whimbrel nesting on the Alaska Peninsula south of Iliamna Lake, 3) The very rapid movement of post-breeding sandpipers through coastal systems along the Beaufort Sea coast, 4) The *Sports Center* summary of the Beringian Expedition by Brian McCaffery, and 5) Use of videography at oystercatcher nests to record tidal flooding and predation events. Sue Hills of UAF gave a very timely presentation on what Alaskan investigators are doing in the arena of H5N1 avian influenza, and Mary Rabe of ADF&G gave an update on Alaska's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and the role the Alaska Shorebird Group played in its development and what the group can do to help keep the program viable.

The afternoon session involved short (~5 min.) updates on various local, national, and international activities pertinent to the ASG, including the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) by Lee Tibbitts; Committee on Holarctic Shorebird Monitoring (CHASM) by Rick Lanctot; the Australasian Wader Study Group and the Shorebird Working Group of the Asian-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy by Bob Gill; the Program of Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring (PRISM) and its Arctic (Rick Lanctot) and Boreal (Lee Tibbitts) components; Shorebird Research Group of the Americas and the International Polar Year, both by Rick Lanctot; and the Shorebird Sister Schools Program by Tamara Mills. From the presentation on WHSRN we learned that the site nomination process is being revamped by adopting the criteria used by other international programs such as BirdLife International's Important Bird Areas (IBA), Wetlands International, and Ramsar. The new system no longer recognizes flyway populations, but instead biogeographic populations with corresponding percentages for sites of Hemispheric, International, and Regional importance set at 30%, 10%, and 1%, respectively. Besides the percentage criteria, WHSRN retains its numeric criteria of 500,000, 100,000, and 20,000 shorebirds supported annually at a site for the three respective levels of site recognition. WHSRN no longer recognizes Endangered Species Sites and for now has tabled consideration of criteria that address breeding or "landscape" sites. Finalization of Arctic PRISM currently awaits consolidation of peer-reviewer's responses to a list of questions originally posed to them. Canada has proceeded with implementation of PRISM

in the Arctic. Boreal PRISM activities were conducted in Canada in association with the proposed gas pipeline route through the Mackenzie River valley and in Ontario where tests were done of the use of helicopters from which to census nesting shorebirds. The ASG adopts the concept of PRISM but realizes that its implementation (Tier I and II) across Alaska landscapes (and refuges) will be problematic without supplemental funding. Terms of reference for the Shorebird Research Group of the Americas have been formulated and adopted under the umbrella of the U.S. Shorebird Plan Council. The Boulder meeting in 2007 will use the “flyway-wide” Western Sandpiper model to promote studies that employ research and monitoring techniques to address declines in shorebird populations.

The final hour of the day was spent on announcements and ASG business. Rick Lanctot gave an overview of the Boulder, Colorado, meeting scheduled for late February 2006 (Shorebird Science in the Western Hemisphere); Mike Goldstein talked about the 11th Alaska Bird Conference and Workshops scheduled for Juneau in early February 2006, highlighting the workshop on Black Oystercatchers; and Joel Schmutz told us about the annual meeting of the Wildlife Society to be held in Anchorage, 23–27 September 2006, and a chance to showcase Alaska shorebird work.

Terms for two at-large Executive Committee members (Abby Powel and Colleen Handel) and the Secretary (Bob Gill) expire at the end of 2005. All agreed to stand for re-election. The floor was opened for additional nominations with none received. The suite of candidates, plus a call for other nomination, will be sent electronically to the general membership for consideration and voting.

The meeting adjourned for the day at 1700 h.

Tuesday, 6 December: The day was devoted entirely to updating the Alaska Shorebird Plan (hereafter the Plan). The initial version was produced in March 2000 and a second edition was drafted in March 2004, but progress on finalizing it has been slow. Nineteen individuals participated in the session: Phil Bruner, Bob Gill, Colleen Handel, Chris Harwood, Jim Johnson, Steve Kendall, Rick Lanctot, Brian McCaffery, Tamara Mills, Deb Nigro, Debora Perkins, Abby Powell, Dan Ruthrauff, Susan Savage, Stan Senner, Iain Stenhouse, Audrey Taylor, Lee Tibbitts, and Kent Wohl.

The group reached consensus on several items pertaining to revision of the Plan. Namely, the Plan will: 1) encompass a five-year period (2006–2010) following the model used by the Shorebird Working Group of the Asian-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, 2) largely be reorganized rather than re-written, but will include an expanded section on international issues and connections through flyways, 3) be issue driven and referenced by BCR (Birds Conservation Region), 4) incorporate measures of accomplishment by tracking defined Action Items, and 5) be a high quality publication (hard copy and likely also electronic) produced through a non-governmental source and distributed widely to potential users.

For those wanting details about the above structuring, please read on. Stan Senner introduced the idea of a matrix that would appear in the beginning of the Plan that would summarize general and specific issues and affected species by BCR. It was unclear whether or not the matrix would

also address critical information needs. Deb Nigro agreed to format the matrix and distribute it to BCR committees (coordinators in bold): BCR 1—Aleutian/Bering Sea Islands, **R. Gill**, J. Williams, H. Renner; BCR 2—Western Alaska, **B. McCaffery**, S. Savage, B. Bruner, R. Gill; BCR 3—Arctic Plains/Mountains, **D. Nigro**, A. Taylor, R. Lanctot, S. Kendall; BCR 4—NW Interior Forest, **C. Harwood**, L. Tibbitts, R. Gill, National Park Service, Alaska Bird Observatory; BCR 5—Northern Pacific Rainforest, **J. Johnson**, Mary Anne Bishop, Dan Ruthrauff. These in turn would be forwarded to Stan Senner who will integrate them into the final matrix. Accompanying the matrix will be a map of each BCR depicting symbols that denote major conservation issues being addressed within each BCR. It was agreed that they would not be depicted at site-specific levels. General issues include, but may not be limited to, oil and gas development, marine transport, marine-based recreation, mining, subsistence harvest, predators/exotic animals, and climate change. Priority species will come from Appendix 5 (March 2004 draft) and be representative of habitats and annual cycle events (e.g., nesting, staging) but limited in number so as to avoid “list overload.”

International issues will be elevated to a section level within the plan with its own vision, goals, objectives, and action items. Within the section it was agreed that there should be a graphic (kept fairly simple) that depicts the geographic dispersal of shorebirds from Alaska to different continents, regions, and/or countries. The section would also include discussion of mechanism fostering international cooperation as well as identify areas (subject and geographic) where such mechanisms are lacking.

The compilation of important shorebird sites in Alaska that meet WHSRN criteria (Appendix 7 of the March 2004 draft plan) will be revised. The new effort, adopting the one percent criterion used the IBA, Ramsar, Wetlands International programs and now WHSRN, will result in additional sites being identified while at the same time allowing clusters of adjacent sites to be nominated as units. Major sites that far exceed the one percent criterion will continue to be identified under appropriate WHSRN designations. Lastly, despite there being no formal criteria to designate breeding areas or areas of high diversity or species richness, we decided to include at least a map (and appendix?) that would depict breeding areas of species such as Bristle-thighed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, and Black Oystercatcher (e.g., Middleton Island)

There was discussion over how the ASG would measure its effectiveness over the five-year period encompassed by the new plan. It was agreed that all major sections would include *action items* and *timelines*. These would be linked to specific project summaries reported in the compendium of shorebird projects prepared annually for the ASG. [Compiler’s note: We ran out of time before the group could identify a preliminary list of action items. Such a list should come from the entire ASG membership, so I propose the following. As done for the initial plan in 2000, an email query should be sent to the entire membership asking them to provide three action items under each main category (assessing populations, assessing habitats, conservation threats, outreach, and international). This would serve at least two needs: 1) eliminate action items being associated with only existing projects which would produce a false assessment of the group’s effectiveness, 2) update the overall list of action items—some of which have been accomplished or are no longer deemed important since being identified in the 2000 plan.

Jim Johnson, Audrey Taylor, and Dan Ruthrauff offered to develop a new outline for the revised plan and circulate it for comment. Again, because we ran out of time, we were not able to link individuals with responsibility for the revision of specific sections, graphics, or tabular data. This will have to be done via email as will a discussion of the timing of the meeting in 2006. We also failed to resolve several issues dealing with re-organization of the plan's contents, especially if the plan focuses on BCRs. For example, does each BCR now have sections on conservation goals, research, status of habitats, and public outreach? Do we identify action items specific to each of these areas within each BCR?

The meeting adjourned at 1615 h. Twenty-one of us met latter at Gallos restaurant to sample Mexican food and quench thirst.

Minutes taken and compiled R. Gill
USGS/BRD
8 December 2005

11th Annual Alaska Shorebird Meeting

5–6 December 2005

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Office, Gordon Watson Conference Room
1011 E. Tudor Rd., Anchorage, Alaska

AGENDA

Monday, December 5th

9:30 **Welcome and opening announcements**, *Steve Kendall*

Project Presentations

9:45 Ongoing life history studies of Ruddy Turnstones at Woolley Lagoon, Seward Peninsula, Alaska. *Phil and Andrea Bruner, Brigham Young University, Hawaii.*

10:05 Preliminary results from the shorebird inventory of Alaska Peninsula lowlands. *Susan Savage, R.A.S. Kaler, and K.A. Sesser, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and L. Tibbitts, USGS.*

10:25 Summary of USGS projects: Marbled Godwit surveys on the Alaska Peninsula, Inventories in Katmai NP, and Rock Sandpiper-related habitat assessment on the Pribilof Islands. *Dan Ruthrauff, Bob Gill, and Lee Tibbitts, USGS.*

10:45 **Break**

11:00 Staging shorebirds on the North Slope: results from intensive camps and an extensive survey. *Audrey Taylor, Rick Lanctot, Abby Powell, Jim Johnson, Steve Kendall, Meg Laws, and Deb Nigro, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.*

11:20 Breeding ecology of shorebirds in Barrow, Alaska. *Rick Lanctot, USFWS, and Audrey Taylor and Nathan Coutsubos, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.*

11:40 Beringian expedition summary. *Brian McCaffery, USFWS, and Bob Gill, USGS.*

12:00 **Lunch**

13:30 Black oystercatcher projects: remote video project and demographics. *Michael Goldstein, USFS.*

13:50 Avian influenza monitoring and research in Alaska. *Sue Hills, UAF.*

14:10 State Wildlife Grant Program update and discussion on the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy; identifying priority projects. *Led by Mary Rabe, ADFG.*

14:40 Fall Shorebird Migration at the Copper River Delta's Barrier Islands. *Mary Anne Bishop and Heather Gates, Prince William Sound Science Center.*

15:10 **Break**

Updates, announcements, and ASG Business

15:25 Updates (~5 mins. each)

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), *Lee Tibbitts*
Committee on Holarctic Shorebird Monitoring (CHASM), *Rick Lanctot*
East Asia Shorebird group, *Bob Gill*
Program of Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring (PRISM)
 Arctic PRISM, *Rick Lanctot*
 Boreal PRISM, *Lee Tibbitts*
Shorebird Research Group of the Americas, *Rick Lanctot*
Shorebird Summit in Texas, *Rick Lanctot*
International Polar Year, *Rick Lanctot*
Shorebird Sister Schools Program, *Tamara Mills*

16:00 **Announcements and Election of Officers**

Shorebird Science in the Western Hemisphere meeting, *Rick Lanctot*
Black Oystercatcher Symposium, *Dave Tessler*
Alaska Bird Conference, *Michael Goldstein*
Black Oystercatcher working group, *Dave Tessler*
The Wildlife Society meeting, *Joel Schmutz*
Brief discussion of Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan activities for next day
Nomination and Election of Executive Committee Members

17:00 Adjourn

Tuesday, December 6th

8:30 ASG Business

Updating/completing the Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan, Moderator: Rick Lanctot

Discussion items related to the plan will include:

- 1) Format and degree of publication (B&W versus color and glossy)
- 2) Overall format of the document. Do we keep it generic in terms of goals and objectives and thus make it easy to revise, or do we spell out rather specific objectives with deliverables (and dates?)?

Break out groups to work on sections of the plan (if sufficient number of people present):

Section	Lead
Shorebird Species Priorities	<i>Brian McCaffery</i>
Shorebird Conservation Goals and Objectives/Research	<i>Bob Gill</i>
Important Shorebird Sites in Alaska	<i>Lee Tibbitts</i>
Shorebird Conservation Issues	<i>Group</i>
Outreach and Education	<i>Tamara Mills</i>
Assessing Status of Populations and Habitats/Implementation and Coordination/Wintering Habitat Update	<i>Rick Lanctot</i>
Priority projects for shorebirds in Alaska	<i>Group</i>
Appendix 1, 2: revised by <i>R. Gill</i>	
Appendix 5: revised by <i>B. McCaffery and R. Gill</i>	
Appendix 6: revised by <i>R. Lanctot</i>	
Appendix 7: revised by <i>L. Tibbitts and R. Gill</i>	

16:30 Adjourn (Annual culinary bash: 18:00–21:00 (Gallos Restaurant, corner of Dimond and Arctic))