

**9th Annual Alaska Shorebird Group Meeting
Dillingham Room, Hilton Hotel, Anchorage, AK
15 March 2004**

Minutes taken by Colleen Handel and compiled by Rick Lanctot

I. Introductory Comments – Brian McCaffery (0900 – 0920)

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

II. International Developments (0920 - 1030)

A. International Wader Study Group Meeting/ Declaration from Cadiz – Bob Gill

Bob Gill walked us through a presentation by David Stroud describing recent evidence that shorebirds are declining worldwide. This information will be presented at the “Waterbirds Around the World” meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland in April 2004. Declines are based on data presented in recent publication entitled “Waterbird Population Estimates” version 3.0. Highlights of the presentation included:

- 1) North American shorebird populations are also decreasing (3x as many decreasing as increasing)
- 2) Asia and Oceania have high proportion of declining populations
- 3) Half of all insular populations are declining
- 4) Very little known about intra-continental migrants
- 5) Nearctic waders are better known than most
- 6) 49% of the migrating populations have unknown trends
- 7) 72% of the non-migrating populations have unknown trends
- 8) Assessing status of important stopover sites will focus on;
 - a. Habitat loss
 - b. Role sites play in energetics, stress, immune systems
- 9) short-distance migrants and non-migrants need more protection
- 10) population collapses are occurring across many species, e.g., Red Knots
- 11) New red data book for South America coming out
- 12) Some efforts to coordinate research on declines, e.g., global GIS efforts, coordinate input to Waterbird Population Estimate

The Cadiz declaration is printed in full in the Wader Study Group Bulletin, volume **101/102**.

B. Pan-Arctic Shorebird / Wader Monitoring and Research Workshop – Rick Lanctot, Brian McCaffery

This meeting held at Copenhagen, Denmark, in Dec 2003 was attended by Rick Lanctot and Brian McCaffery. The meeting sought to combine data across the circumpolar Arctic to evaluate the effects of global climate change on high Arctic-nesting shorebirds, and to

coordinate efforts to monitor these species throughout their range. Two papers are being produced from these studies. Theunis Piersma and Hans Meltofte are leading a paper that looks at climate change and variation in reproductive success in shorebirds. Nigel Clark and Rob Robinson are leading a paper investigating how juvenile age ratios at migration sites can be used as an index of productivity. Both studies rely on databases from around the globe.

Another outcome from this meeting was the creation of the Committee for Holarctic Shorebird Monitoring (CHASM) that seeks to standardize monitoring efforts for arctic-nesting shorebirds both in the arctic and at migration sites around the globe. This program will build upon existing monitoring programs such as the Arctic Birds Breeding Conditions Survey and the Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring. Information about CHASM will be presented at the "Waterbirds Around the World" meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, in April 2004, with a follow-up workshop to be held at the International Wader Study Group meeting in Papenburg, Germany, in November 2004. CHASM is being co-chaired by Rick Lanctot and Mikhail Soloviev.

The CHASM charter is published in the Wader Study Group Bulletin, **vol. 103**.

A ten-year synthesis for Alaskan contributions to the Arctic Birds Breeding Conditions Survey is slated to be completed by Bob Gill and Brian McCaffery in November 2004.

C. Conference on Western Hemisphere Migratory Species -- Rick Lanctot, Stephen Brown

This conference was held in Chile in October 2003 and was designed to organize the management of birds throughout the Western Hemisphere. Representatives from many countries were present, and they collectively identified concerns about birds within their countries. A formal committee was established to continue these efforts, and Herb Rafael was chosen to chair the group.

Stephen Brown indicated there was strong interest in studying austral migration in South America where a huge gap in knowledge existed.

D. Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network -- Lee Tibbitts

Charles Duncan is the new director as of October 2003. WHSRN is developing a new 5-year strategic plan that will decentralize responsibilities from the Manomet Center for Conservation by creating a series of international and regional councils. Other needs mentioned included being more proactive in the nomination of sites in South America, developing criteria for dispersed species and developing a framework for analyzing threats to sites.

E. Shorebird Research Group of the Americas -- Brian McCaffery

A double-sampling method for surveying shorebirds in tundra environments was field tested between 1998 and 2002. The data from these studies were used to develop a sampling plan and this plan was discussed in Quebec City in November 2002. One concern brought up at this meeting was whether all the birds were being detected on intensive survey plots. Consequently, an arctic-wide study was conducted in summer 2003 to investigate this question. The findings from this study were to be incorporated into a final document that was set for peer-review during the winter of 2004. At the time of this meeting, the final document had not been prepared. The Canadian shorebird team decided to continue surveying shorebirds in their region using this protocol despite lacking a peer-review primarily because they had funds available and did not wish to waste them. The US shorebird team is lacking funds to implement the monitoring plan and would like to see a peer-review prepared.

2) Boreal PRISM Lee Tibbitts

The Boreal PRISM subcommittee drafted a plan for developing a monitoring plan for boreal shorebird species. This plan covers 19 species, summarizes conservation status and potential for monitoring, prioritizes which species should be monitored first, suggests possible methods for monitoring, and emphasizes possibility of collaborating with the landbird monitoring program.

3) Migration PRISM Stephen Brown

See www.shorebirdworld.org. Stephen discussed on-going effort to write regional assessments for parts of the Atlantic Coast which could serve as a basis for sampling shorebirds during migration. This would enhance and build upon the current International Shorebird Survey.

Morning Break (1030 - 1050)

III. National and Alaskan Developments (1050 - 1120)

A. Upcoming U.S. Shorebird Council Meeting -- Brian McCaffery

During the meeting, there will be a review of Migration PRISM and the need to coordinate methods and develop an overall sampling plan. In Alaska, most of the emphasis has been on Arctic PRISM with less emphasis on Boreal and Migration PRISM.

B. Subsistence Harvest of Shorebirds

Rick Lanctot

A legal spring and summer harvest of birds was initiated in Alaska in 2003. The species selected for harvest were based on traditional and customary harvest criteria, and in the end included a number of shorebird species. At the upcoming meeting in early April, the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council will consider 15 proposals to change the regulations for the 2004 season. Some of the more shorebird pertinent proposals include

establishing regional harvest regulations; removing Bar-tailed Godwits from the harvest list; the addition of godwits, curlews, and whimbrels to the Seward Peninsula harvest, and the expansion of a closure period from 30 to 60 days to allow successfully breeding. Lee Tibbitts will represent the Alaska Shorebird Group at this meeting. There is a strong need to develop and administer an intensive outreach and education to hunters. During the winter of 2003/2004, a subsistence harvest survey plan was developed to determine what species and how many birds were being harvest by rural hunters.

There is a particularly high concern for Bar-tailed Godwits that have about 2000 birds harvested on the Yukon Delta each year. Brian McCaffery and others are working to develop a flyway-wide conservation plan

C. Shorebird Contaminants Study --Rick Lanctot

Rick Lanctot discussed a study to collect up to 8 eggs per species (1 egg/clutch) from the primary shorebird species in 2004. This is a continuation of a study conducted in 2002 in which a preliminary analysis indicated levels of heavy metals and organochlorines were not abnormally high. Angela Matz from USFWS Fairbanks is coordinating contaminant side of the study. Species were selected that migrated to different parts of the world so as to differentiate where contamination was occurring. He was soliciting help from other shorebird researchers to collect eggs, and has a protocol to disseminate to interested parties.

D. Beringian Shorebird Database -- Rick Lanctot

The effort to create a shorebird database is on hold until further funds are available. The database would collate peer-reviewed and gray literature and make this information readily available in a GIS format. This would also help identify where information gaps are present. A proposal was submitted to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to create such a database; initial reaction was to combine this database within a much larger database.

IV. Unscheduled Agenda Items/Announcements (1120 -1130)

A. Alaska Department of Fish and Game Nongame Program – Plan

Mary Rabe and Mark Burch described the development of a comprehensive statewide strategy for nongame animals. Development of the plan would involve two-day workshops centered around marine, terrestrial and aquatic animals. There will be 13 expert groups – 5 of which are some type of bird groups. Rick Lanctot will chair the shorebird group, with other team members being Bob Gill, and Lee Tibbitts. Brian McCaffery agreed to be a reviewer. The plan was designed to have objectives, measures and targets identified. The draft plan is due October 2004 and the full plan is due October 2005. Overall objective is for the states to consolidate their plans together so that they can seek additional funding from the federal government in the future.

Lunch (1130 - 1300)

IV. Draft Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan (2nd ed.)

The group went over a draft of version 2 section by section. The document had been revised by subject and each subject will be addressed below.

A. Monitoring (1300 - 1345) -- Rick Lanctot

The original section entitled “Populations and habitats” in version 1 of the plan was broken into “Assessing Status of Populations” and “Assessing the Status of Habitats” in version 2. The population section was rewritten to emphasize the goal of assessing the size and status of population under the broader PRISM and CHASM umbrellas. This would include the low and montane tundra monitoring currently being conducted that use double-sample and point count methods, and boreal and intertidal shoreline survey development.

Arctic PRISM was described as having three levels of intensity. A checklist program, rapid and intensive survey plots, and detailed population studies. A discussion of what parameters to monitor ensued, with a consensus that population size (also density), distribution, demographic parameters and richness/diversity were appropriate.

A Shorebird Habitat/Monitoring committee was formed, comprised of Susan Savage, Chris Harwood, Steve Kendall and Rick Lanctot. The committee was charged with devising a standardized inventory protocol that would include a standardized habitat data collection procedure. This committee was advised to coordinate with the Landbird Habitat Committee (i.e., Mellissa Cady and Maureen DeZeeuw). A suggestion was made to enhance the checklist protocol to include area specificity and habitat components. Others suggested including an objective for developing a monitoring program from inventory protocols using power analyses.

B. Research (1345 - 1430) -- Bob Gill

Group members suggested that research priorities be grouped by scale of study (i.e., international, national, regional, local). Falk Huettman suggested that habitat modeling across the landscape was an important research area that was presently neglected. Another member suggested that research issues should be driven by conservation. International research should be collaborative and focus on particular species such as arcticola dunlin, bar-tailed godwit, buff-breasted sandpiper and others. Bob Gill suggested that future funding likely to come from global climate change and National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska. Pam Miller indicated more study was needed in Bristol Bay and the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska where oil and gas, roads, and mine development was likely to occur.

C. Species Prioritization (1450 - 1515) -- Brian McCaffery

In version 2 of the plan, species prioritization explicitly followed the US Shorebird Conservation Plan (i.e., did away with Alaska specific criteria) aside from updating data and correcting total score errors in national plan. This led to several changes. Two taxa are now considered highly imperiled: *arcticola* dunlin and *cinnamomea* solitary sandpiper. Seventeen taxa are now considered high conservation concern in contrast to only 13 listed in version 1.

A discussion of whether and how we should implement an Alaska Priority score occurred. Stephen Brown indicated there was already a mechanism to increase a regional score (see rule 4b). This allows species to be upgraded with a region but never downgraded. The group agreed to add the Alaska priority back into version 2. Group members agreed that we should encourage species experts to review all the scores, especially related to threats. It was also agreed to change the old table 2 in version 1 so that Cook Inlet was a subregion of the NW Interior Forest.

D. Important Bird Areas (1515 - 1530) -- Lee Tibbitts

See Appendix 7 “Sites within Alaska Bird Conservation Regions ...” Some changes to Appendix 7 included splitting WHSRN criteria by number of birds and percentage of species criteria (latter put in bold), consolidating some sites (e.g., Cook Inlet), and adding specific language in the text part of the plan that highlights important places within each site. The group discussed adding “breeding areas”. These are harder to identify and might best be put into the text. Decided to include reference in legend of Appendix 7 so that readers know that these breeding sites exist and that they are addressed in narrative.

Group members thought it was inappropriate to have two bristle-thighed curlew map locations in Figure 2 but no other breeding locations. They suggested these two points be removed and they be discussed in the narrative for consistency.

It was also decided that additional verbiage was needed that indicated the Alaska Shorebird Group supported the WHSRN program and nomination of sites in the narrative. Also need to develop priorities for nomination process. WHSRN headquarters can provide letters of support from other countries that may aid in the nomination process.

E. Conservation Issues in Alaska (1530 -1630) -- Philip Martin / Brian McCaffery

Philip Martin rewrote this section but was unable to attend meeting. Brian McCaffery lead discussion. Philip left word that he wanted the document reviewed for completeness (especially geographically). The section on the Arctic Coastal Plain needs to have recent developments on the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska addressed. Joe Liebezeit agreed to draft a few sentences and e-mail this to Philip. The mining section needed to be revised to reflect concerns around Lake Clark / Lake Iliamna. Two additional sections were suggested for future incorporation: urbanization and road development. Kristine Sowls agreed to write a few paragraphs about road development.

The group then made a list of information needs that members would like to see addressed.

- Species identified for study were solitary sandpiper, marbled godwit, arcticola race of dunlin, hudsonian godwit, bristle-thighed curlew, and buff-breasted sandpiper. Taxonomic / distribution issues identified included concerns over how red knot, ruddy turnstone, whimbrel, bar-tailed godwit, bristle-thighed curlews, marbled godwits (wintering areas) and upland sandpiper were subdivided.
- Monitoring protocols that need additional study include development of a monitoring protocol for boreal forest species, and a population estimate for marbled godwits.
- Distribution and abundance issues included developing maps for BCC species in areas subject to development (e.g., NPR-A), determining post-breeding distribution of staging arcticola dunlin, identifying non-breeding concentration areas for black oystercatchers, documenting inland migration timing and use of stopover sites, identifying gaps where inventory work still needs to be done, revisited previously inventoried sites to see if numbers have changed, and finally, determining the winter distribution of marbled godwits.
- The *arcticola* race of the dunlin was listed specifically because the population was documented declining through 1997 when Arctic slope monitoring was last done. These declines matched those documented in Japan. People expressed an interest to determine a population estimate for the species.
- Demographic issues identified included needing more Tier II sites where demographic parameters could be collected (especially for Hudsonian godwits). This would allow population viability analyses to be conducted.
- Human disturbance studies were needed to assess how important breeding areas in NPR-A would be impacted by development.
- Raise concern on a flyway-wide basis for bar-tailed godwit and bristle-thighed curlews, with a special emphasis on addressing subsistence issues.
- Assess contaminant exposure in birds, especially for interior migrants. Some money is needed outside Alaska (e.g., pacific golden-plovers exposure to chemicals in golf courses and lawns in Hawaii)
- Investigate global climate change – do habitat associations change with GCC, are there changes in breeding chronology within and between sites, is there a decoupling of insect and bird chronologies.
- Should link our studies to Shorebird Research Group of the Americas.

V. Alaska Shorebird Group Business (1630 - 1715)

Brian McCaffery

A. Alaska Shorebird Group Logo

Group agreed to flying black turnstone with state in background and the name “Alaska Shorebird Group” spelled out.

B. Shorebird Plan Revision -- Timetable and Assignments

It was agreed that major contributors would incorporate revisions. Any changes would need to be sent to contributors by 15 April. People can send changes to Brian McCaffery and he will forward on to rest of contributors.

C. Executive Committee Elections

By-laws say committee members elected to 2-year terms, with ½ of members elected each year. However all members were elected in 2003. Group agreed that would have elections of ½ of members in December 2004.

D. Newsletter

The newsletter is not being done right now. We are looking for person to take charge of this task. Could be written or web-based.

E. Publication List

Brian McCaffery agreed to put the publication list together.

F. Web Site

Web site is under construction.

G. Next Meeting - Site and date

Group suggested next meeting should be early December 2004, perhaps between 6-10 December. The meeting should be two days and include presentations.

Meeting adjourned at 16:50 hrs.

Attendees:

Name	Affiliation	e-mail
Chris Harwood	USFWS – Kanuti NWR	Christopher_harwood@fws.gov
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