

MINUTES OF THE U.S. SHOREBIRD PLAN COUNCIL MEETING

16 March 2001, 8:30 - 11:30 am
North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference
Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTIONS. Jon Andrew opened the meeting and Council members and observers were introduced.

NEW NATIONAL SHOREBIRD COORDINATOR. Brad Andres started a new position with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Division of Migratory Bird Management, in Arlington, Virginia. His position will be evenly split between working with the Council to implement national and regional shorebird plans and supporting USFWS shorebird programs in their regions.

SHOREBIRD PLAN RE-PRINTING. Numerous state and federal agencies are supporting the printing of another 10,000 copies of the (slightly) revised United States Shorebird Conservation Plan. The plan should be ready for distribution by the end of April.

TERMS OF REFERENCE. A draft copy of the Terms of Reference for the U. S. Shorebird Council was previously sent to all Council members for review. One of the major changes over past operation of the Council is formation of an Executive Committee that will include five positions. Suggestions for that committee included: the Chair (Jon Andrew), Vice-chair (Robert Gill), states representative (Steve Miller), non-governmental organization (NGO) representative (Stephen Brown) and an at-large member (Susan Skagen). Brad Andres would serve as staff to the Executive Committee. Council members agreed to this form of the Executive Committee and decided to evaluate its utility after a year's trial. There was some concern about the disproportionate representation of the Federal Government. Randy Wilson agreed to serve as Lower Mississippi Flyway expert on the Council.

NORTH AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVATION INITIATIVE (NABCI) WORKSHOP. Stephen Brown summarized the NABCI workshop held the previous day. The debate continues over the role NABCI should play with regards to coordination and funding. The Council felt that NABCI was meeting some of the coordination needs of the shorebird plan. The Council felt that it should continue to advocate for shorebirds and that the shorebird initiative should maintain some autonomy. Particular to shorebirds are conservation issues of hemispheric-wide annual ranges and geographic and temporal bottlenecks. Thinking beyond the trilateral scope of NABCI will be important for hemispheric conservation of nearctic-neotropical migrant shorebirds.

Council members expressed concern about the lack of a NABCI research committee. For shorebirds, knowledge of limiting factors is crucial to understanding declines in their populations. There has been no real progress of the NABCI monitoring committee toward funding an all-bird monitoring program and the Council thought that NABCI will not meet monitoring needs for shorebirds in the short term. However, the Council needs to continue to work with NABCI to develop long-term, common themes (e.g, monitoring) for all bird conservation initiatives.

NABCI BUSINESS PLAN. A draft of shorebird staffing and funding priorities was previously distributed to all Council members and highlighted national and regional needs. Biologist coordinators in every shorebird planning region in addition to national coordinators are ultimately desired. The question was raised whether the Council should make decisions on priorities for funding, and it was agreed that the Council should develop funding strategies for outreach, research, and monitoring to bring to NABCI. The Executive Committee, with help from other Council members (Carol Lively, Cal McCluskey), will work on development of funding needs and opportunities. (Brad Andres distributed some immediate opportunities the week after the Council meeting). Brad, with Stephen Brown's help, will continue to work with NABCI and bird conservation initiative staff (particularly waterbirds) to fine-tune the shorebird component of the business plan. For now, the business plan should do more than provide infrastructure but stop short of full bird conservation delivery. Brad will serve as staff to the Council's NABCI representative (Steve Miller).

CURRENT DELIVERY. The Joint Venture (JV) management boards and coordinators should be commended for their support of shorebird plan implementation. Good shorebird conservation projects can now be found throughout Joint Venture regions.

The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) will be holding a series of integrated bird workshops over the next several years that will involve a process of stepping down bird conservation to the site level. A major objective is to make site managers aware of the bird conservation plans and how their areas fit into implementation of the shorebird plan. Steve Miller and Jon Andrew will ensure that shorebird plans are incorporated into the workshops.

Steve Miller serves as the Council's link to the IAFWA committee on shorebirds and waterbirds. Steve works with state directors of wildlife agencies to raise awareness about shorebird and waterbird issues. Stephen Brown has attended these meetings in the past and Brad Andres will attend in the future.

The Council discussed an expanded role of Partners in Flight (PIF) regional coordinators that would include waterbirds. Although the Council would support an expanded role of PIF regional coordinators, the general belief was that attention to the needs of waterbirds and landbirds would require more effort than a single regional coordinator could expend. If the regional shorebird plans are to be implemented, someone dedicated to shorebirds, or perhaps shorebirds/waterbirds, is desired.

A HEMISPHERIC PLAN FOR SHOREBIRDS. With the completion of the Canada and U. S. shorebird conservation plans and the development of a Mexican Plan, it seems prudent to think about how to merge these plans into a cohesive package for shorebird conservation. Given the extensive migration of shorebirds, the Council discussed the need to expand these efforts south beyond Mexico. Numerous independent efforts to conduct flyway-level projects are underway and these efforts might be enhanced by increased collaboration and coordination. Models to examine include the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) and the Asia-Pacific Waterbird Strategy. A committee of Garry Donaldson, Heather Johnson, Jim Corven, Larry Niles, Heidi Luquer, and Brad Andres were formed to investigate the utility of the development of a hemispheric strategy.

The Council endorsed a hemispheric approach to shorebird conservation and suggested that this message be transmitted to the WHSRN Council (which was done on 18 March).

The Council also suggested that a letter be drafted to NABCI in support of a hemispheric approach to the conservation of shorebirds, and that this approach should include elements of outreach, research, and monitoring.

The ad hoc hemispheric strategy committee, along with others, had a preliminary meeting to discuss the need for an organized approach. Eduardo Carrera, Ducks Unlimited Mexico, voiced optimism about the new administration's interest in conservation of wetlands in Mexico and the interest in the continued development of a Mexican Shorebird Conservation Plan. The evening's discussion touched on issues of the role of WHSRN, if formal structure would benefit the effort, and the need to do right things in the right places. The committee may develop a portfolio of potential projects and funding opportunities.

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS. Jeff Wells gave a presentation on the Important Bird Areas (IBA) program and proposed that the National Audubon Society (NAS) assist the Council in developing a set of IBAs for shorebirds. These would be state-based and NAS would hire a staff person to work on IBAs specific to shorebirds. They have undertaken a similar effort for waterbirds. This project could feed into new criteria for NAWCA funding (see below).

The Council will send a letter to NAS supporting cooperative work on the identification of shorebird IBAs.

NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION ACT (NAWCA) and COUNCIL (NAWCC). On March 14, 2001, the NAWCC reaffirmed its support for wetlands conservation projects that provide conservation benefits to all wetland- associated migratory birds. Approved program adjustments included: 1) better

accommodation in the scoring system for habitat specialists, 2) consideration of geographic priorities of all major bird groups, and 3) prioritization of projects that provide major contributions to bird conservation plans. These changes were incorporated to ensure that a slate of projects will accomplish major conservation objectives. The NAWCC approved funding of 34 small grant projects (16 in Canada, 8 in Mexico, and 11 in the U.S.) for a total of \$US 1,525,600. NAWCC staff were also charged with developing a framework for upland bird habitat project evaluation.

Brad Andres will assist the Council in developing a regional list of high priority shorebird sites. The Council needs to encourage partners to work with JVs and state biologists to develop proposals for the small grants program (about 1 December).

WHSRN - Jim Corven reported that the *Guide to Shorebirds in the Neotropics* (in Spanish) is now available. He also has available copies of the Shorebird Symposium held at the Neotropical Ornithological Congress in Monterrey, N. L., Mexico. WHSRN has been awarded a NAWCA grants for workshops to be held in Sinaloa, Mexico. The WHSRN Council may be expanded to include more members from the U. S. Shorebird Plan Council. The WHSRN met Sunday, 18 March.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING - The next Council meeting will be held in conjunction with the Waterbird Society meeting, 7-11 November, in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. The Council encourages participation to foster a strong shorebird element within the Waterbird Society.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Jon Andrew Chair, Migratory Bird Management, USFWS
Robert Gill Vice-Chair, Alaska Biological Science Center, USGS
Marshall Howe Research and Monitoring Chair, USGS
Heather Johnson Education and Outreach Chair, USFWS
Brad Andres U.S. National Shorebird Coordinator, USFWS
Stephen Brown Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
Hilary Chapman Shorebird Sister Schools Program, USFWS
Jim Corven Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network
Garry Donaldson Canadian National Shorebird Coordinator, CWS
Carol Lively Prairie Potholes Joint Venture Coordinator, USFWS
Cal McCluskey Bureau of Land Management
Keith McKnight Ducks Unlimited
Steve Miller Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Gary Myers Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Cynthia Ragland Taking Wing, USFS
David A. Smith Bird Habitat Conservation, USFWS
Melanie Steinkamp North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, USGS
Jeff Wells National Audubon Society (for Frank Gill)
Randy Wilson Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture, USFWS

MEETING OBSERVERS

Gerard Boere Wetlands International, The Netherlands
John Herron Texas Parks and Wildlife
Rex Johnson U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Heidi Luquer Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network
Bob McLean Canadian Wildlife Service
David Pashley U.S. NABCI Coordinator
Ken Ross Canadian Wildlife Service
Ed Theroff Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife
Steve Wendt Canadian Wildlife Service
Steve Wilds U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ken Williams U.S. Geological Survey

submitted by: Brad Andres, 30 March 2001. Please direct any questions, corrections, or comments to Brad_Andres@fws.gov