



# The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan

## *Building Partnerships for Shorebird Conservation*

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Mr. Michael J. Johnson, Chief  
Division of Bird Habitat Conservation  
Coordinator, Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Advisory Group  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
4011 North Fairfax Dr., MBSP 4075  
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Mr. Johnson,

We are writing to you in response to the questions posed by the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) Advisory Group relative to addressing shorebird conservation priorities with NMBCA funding. Below are our responses to the specific questions posed in your letter of 25 January 2010.

1. What are the priority locations in the Western Hemisphere for neotropical migrants (covered by NMBCA) in the plan (including breeding, non-breeding, and stopover)? What conservation actions are needed in these locations?

Because the NMBCA does not address wetland habitats in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, shorebirds would benefit by a focus on beach and dry grassland habitats. Within these habitats, protection, enhancement, and restoration projects would certainly benefit shorebirds. For particular species and landscapes, understanding the factors that limit shorebird populations would ensure effective conservation investments. Projects that reduce all types of disturbance in beach habitats would also greatly benefit shorebird populations. Many of the areas identified as "Nationally Significant Shorebird Areas" for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act Standard Grants would also be appropriate for grassland- and beach-nesting shorebirds. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) sites, Important Bird Areas (IBAs or AICAS), and Ramsar designated sites would be appropriate geographic priorities for targeting shorebird conservation activities. Because only a small number of sites are officially designated within Ramsar and WHSRN and IBAs lean toward globally rare, endemic or high concentrations of species, conservation opportunities need to be expanded beyond these sites.

2. What are the priority neotropical migrant bird species (covered by NMBCA) in the plan?

The following list includes shorebird populations of high conservation concern identified by the USSCP and those identified as Birds of Conservation Concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that are pertinent to the NMBCA. Asian and Pacific migrants and within U.S./Canada migrants are not included, but species shared with Mexico, the Caribbean, and Latin America are included.

American Golden-Plover	Hudsonian Godwit
Snowy Plover	Marbled Godwit
Wilson's Plover	Ruddy Turnstone
Piping Plover	Black Turnstone
Mountain Plover	Surfbird
American Oystercatcher	Red Knot
Black Oystercatcher	Sanderling
Lesser Yellowlegs	Semipalmated Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper	Western Sandpiper
Upland Sandpiper	Dunlin
Eskimo Curlew	Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Whimbrel	Short-billed Dowitcher
Long-billed Curlew	Wilson's Phalarope

3. What are the specific, priority research and monitoring needs in the plan, those that will translate directly into the conservation of neotropical migratory birds covered by NMBCA?

The Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring lays out a framework for monitoring efforts to track changes in population size, and NMBCA projects could contribute to this effort. Monitoring within the context of the NMBCA could also be directed toward evaluating the effectiveness of funded projects, although we realize the time scale of project benefits might be beyond the scope of one- or two-year projects. Any monitoring project should be well-designed and follow, for example, the guidance suggested in the US-NABCI Committee's *Opportunities for Improving Avian Monitoring* report.

Research projects should promote conservation and management decisions, by applying science to address factors that limited shorebird populations. The Shorebird Research Group of the Americas suggested five possible causes for potential declines in shorebird populations: 1) habitat loss and degradation, 2) human disturbance, 3) contamination, 4) avoidance of predators, and 5) climate change, which could provide a general basis for NMBCA research projects. Species-specific research needs are highlighted in the appropriate Species Conservation Plans (available on the WHSRN and National Biological Information Infrastructure websites).

4. What are the specific, priority outreach and education, law enforcement, or other activities in the plan that would benefit neotropical migratory birds covered by NMBCA?

Outreach and education should be directly connected to other project activities (e.g., wetland protection/restoration), rather than general approaches, and issue-specific community education could be a key component of NMBCA projects. Education and outreach could also be a component of projects addressing research on limiting factors identified above. Addressing human disturbance to shorebirds on beaches is a critical shorebird outreach challenge throughout the hemisphere.

Enforcement, and development, of laws and regulations regarding direct take of shorebirds may be more important for maintaining shorebird populations than previously thought. Projects addressing direct shorebird take, particularly in the Caribbean basin, would be a high priority.

Funding innovative approaches for conservation in Latin America should be a priority of the NMBCA. For example, development of water funds, sustainable agricultural practices, and new product markets as new conservation approaches for migratory bird conservation should be encouraged.

e. How can the above information be easily accessed by our partners in, at least, English and Spanish?

Much of the above information is currently available on the USSCP website (<http://www.fws.gov/shorebirdplan/>) and other websites. A summary could be produced for posting in NMBCA grant guidelines or on a specific page on the USSCP website. We could make a bilingual synopsis available at one of the above websites.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Cecil', written in a cursive style.

John Cecil, National Audubon Society  
Chair, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan