



## USSCP Council Meeting Notes

5 November 2008

La Quinta Inn, South Padre Island, Texas

The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Council (U.S. Council) met in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Waterbird Society on South Padre Island, Texas. Twenty-two participants were present for the meeting, although we did not have a quorum of the Executive Committee. Catherine Hickey opened the meeting with introductions of participants, who gave a brief synopsis of their current shorebird projects. The items below were discussed.

### *Shorebird Population Size and Trend Evaluation Team*

The purpose of the bi-national Shorebird Population Size and Trend Evaluation Team is to review the best information on shorebird population sizes and trends and to provide guidance and technical advice on the use of this information for periodic assessments of shorebird conservation status. Recommendations would be provided to the U.S. Council, the Canadian Shorebird Conservation Plan National Working Group, and the Shorebird Conservation Assessment Team. We discussed the need to increase Canadian participation, and Cheri Gratto-Trevor, Environment Canada, was recommended to join the team. Immediate steps for the team are to devise criteria to evaluate information and decide on an evaluation timeline, which at a minimum should correspond with the three-year cycle of revisions to *Waterbird Population Estimates* (the next revision is scheduled for 2009/2010).

**Action:** Confirm participation of team members (Andres, 15 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Convene teleconference of team members to discuss purpose, tasks, and timelines (Andres/team leaders, 31 Jan 2009).

### *Shorebird Conservation Assessment Team*

In the past, we have convened an ad-hoc committee to update our list of shorebirds of high conservation priority. We would like to make the Shorebird Conservation Assessment Team a standing committee that would periodically review and update assessment scores, as new information becomes available; this team would work with the Shorebird Population Size and Trend Evaluation Team to incorporate their recommendations. There is a growing need for conservation organizations to have a single process to assess the conservation status of birds, and one of the first tasks of the team would be to determine if the current Partners in Flight assessment process could be effectively applied to shorebirds. Stefani Melvin, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, agreed

to serve on this team, and it was suggested to include more Joint Venture science folks on the team.

**Action:** Confirm participation of team members, including those from PIF and Waterbirds (Andres, 31 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Convene teleconference of team members to discuss purpose, tasks, and timelines (Andres, 15 Feb 2009).

**Action:** Designate team leader (team, 15 Feb 2009).

**Action:** Review draft Partners in Flight assessment scores (team leader, 15 Mar 2009).

### *Shorebirds and Climate Change*

Stephen Brown, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, gave a presentation on the effects that global climate change could have on shorebirds and their habitats. The presentation was constructed by Hector Galbraith, who Manomet recently hired as Director of Climate Change and Energy. Later in the week, Erica Nol gave a plenary talk on how climate change might affect arctic-breeding shorebirds. Because of increased interest, it would be beneficial if the U.S.-Canada shorebird community could produce a general outline on how shorebirds and their habitats might be affected by climate change. This summary could be used by U.S. and Canadian partners to supply information to their agency and NGO climate change initiatives and to ensure that shorebirds are considered in planning, monitoring, and mitigation discussions. Previous work by the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Committee for Holarctic Shorebird Monitoring should be consulted.

**Action:** Discuss paper concept with Drs. Galbraith and Nol and agree to a writing strategy (Brown and Donaldson, 15 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Draft paper and circulate for review (Brown and Donaldson, 15 Jan 2009).

### *WHSRN-US*

We discussed activities of the WHSRN-US Committee and decided that a work plan for 2009 should be developed, with links to WHSRN's strategic plan. There is lingering concern about trying to do more with sites than just seek their nomination into the network. If committee members have limited time to spend on WHSRN, how would their time be best spent? There are a few U.S. sites that numerically support  $\geq 100,000$  shorebirds (international importance) and are not in the network and nominations are not being developed: Tillamook Bay, OR; Willapa Bay, WA; Lake Albert, OR; and Delta NWR, LA. There was discussion of whether or not Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge, Minnesota, was in the network — it is not.

**Action:** Confirm participation of team members, add Bob Russell and Stefani Melvin (Andres, 15 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Select new chair of committee (Committee, 31 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Ask Justina Parsons-Bernstein, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, to join WHSRN-US committee (Andres, 15 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Check with Bob Adamcik, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – National Wildlife Refuge System, about his participation on the committee (Andres, 31 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Revise the Terms of Reference to change review period to 30 days, add clause about additional reviewers if disagreement over the nomination, and distribute to committee (Andres, 15 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Draft letter to internationally important sites asking if they would consider filling out a nomination (Andres, Chair; 15 Feb 2009).

**Action:** Identify and solicit nominations for sites that support  $\geq 2,500$  red knots along the Atlantic Coast (Stefani Melvin with Larry Niles, Brian Harrington, Brad Winn; 28 Feb 2009).

### *Interaction with Joint Ventures*

In early December 2008, the Joint Venture Coordinators will be meeting with the bird conservation plan coordinators to assess interaction among the groups and discuss ways to improve communications if needed. We discussed our current interactions, which mainly occur through the technical committees. Overall, we thought that shorebird expertise was fairly well represented on Joint Venture technical committees and that the most recently completed implementation plans adequately addressed shorebird habitat needs.

**Action:** Distribute outcomes of December 2008 Joint Venture Coordinators meeting (Andres, 15 Jan 2009).

### *Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group Meeting*

The third meeting of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group will be held at the Hotel Playa Mazatlán in Mazatlán, Mexico, 9 – 13 March 2009. The purpose of the meeting is three-fold and includes science, management and outreach. The science agenda hopes to: 1) bring together biologists studying breeding, staging and wintering shorebirds throughout the Western Hemisphere in one location, 2) promote information sharing on methodologies and study design among biologists working on different shorebird species,

3) to promote range-wide studies of shorebirds by fostering collaborations among biologists interested in particular species, 4) integrate science into the implementation of various shorebird conservation plans, and 5) to generate enthusiasm among the shorebird community to conduct additional studies of shorebirds in the future. To further the science component, we have planned a two-day *Population Demographic Modeling Workshop* led by Dr. Brett Sandercock on 7–8 March and a four-day *International Course on Avian Movements and Migration Technology* sponsored by MIGRATE (Migration Interest Group: Research Applied Toward Education) on 16–19 March. We encourage people interested in shorebird management, outreach and education to use this opportunity to gain knowledge and give presentations at the meeting. Travel awards will be offered to graduate students in North, Central and South America to attend the meeting and workshops. Professionals in Latin America will also be able to apply for travel support. The call for papers and other information is available at <http://www.fws.gov/shorebirdplan/> under “Current News”. Stephen Brown is asking for volunteers to help with translating abstracts into English and Spanish.

#### *Shorebird Sister Schools Program*

Please see the attached report on recent highlights and upcoming events for the Shorebird Sister Schools Program.

#### *Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative/Birdlife International*

Garry Donaldson, Canadian Wildlife Service, reported that the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative is undergoing some changes, and the U.S. Council may have the opportunity to comment on a new Terms of Reference in coming months. Birdlife International also recently met in Argentina. Garry Donaldson suggested that the Birdlife partners might be a good network for establishing monitoring programs outside of the U.S. and Canada. They have a new initiative for flamingos and high altitude Andes lakes (including Wilson’s Phalaropes). The Southern Cone Alliance is going strong with support from USDA Forest Service and National Audubon.

#### *U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative*

Catherine Hickey represents the U.S. Council in the US-NABCI Committee and has been regularly attending meetings. The Committee has been working on a strategic plan, a guide to the 2008 Farm Bill, and transition documents for the new administration. The Monitoring subcommittee has been addressing recommendations regarding data management. US-NABCI members are also involved in the generation of a “State of the Birds” report.

### *AFWA Southern Wings Project*

The purpose of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (AFWA) Southern Wings Project is "to create a funding mechanism that provides an easy and flexible avenue for states willing to participate in conservation in Latin America and the Caribbean by contributing funds annually through a U.S.-based third party that will handle the funds and coordinate the distribution of funds." Key recommendations of the Southern Wings task group include: 1) states would voluntarily contribute \$5,000-20,000 annually for bird Latin America & the Caribbean; 2) funds grouped regionally (regional Associations) to match migratory bird biology; 3) funds accumulate until  $\geq$ \$15,000 were available; 4) the AFWA Bird Conservation Committee would provide technical review of projects to be funded, and a 1:1 match of state funds would be required; and 5) the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies or the American Bird Conservancy would transfer funds to applicable U.S.-based NGO or agency that would manage the project. The proposal needs to be approved by the state directors and could be ready to receive funds in 2009.

### *Species Conservation Plans*

We briefly discussed the development of Species Conservation Plans for high priority shorebirds. Plans are gradually being added to the web at <http://www.whsrn.org>. The hope is that these plans will generate more funding streams to address the needs of high priority shorebirds. Many species working groups have been, or are being, formed to address priority species, although the viability of working groups and implementation of actions is not completely known. We need to make these plans active!

**Action:** Identify leads on Species Conservation Plans and determine activity of working groups (Andres, WHSRN; 28 Feb 2009).

### *Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring (PRISM)*

We discussed actions previously identified for moving PRISM forward, with the knowledge that we have not made great progress on these actions in the last year. Below are the actions we previously identified with modifications we discussed at the meeting. Timelines need to be set by the PRISM Steering Committee for some of the actions suggested below. Stephen Brown discussed the difficulties in finding funding to coordinate monitoring efforts in the Northeast. Region 3 of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has recently funded a Coordinated Bird Monitoring position for the Mississippi Valley.

**Action:** Finish up review of Arctic PRISM and distribute recommendations (Lancot, Andres; 15 Mar 2009).

**Action:** Review the "General Overview of Data Management Needs for shorebirds and have ready for January US-NABCI meeting (Andres, Skagen; 9 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Update the PRISM overview document, including acceptance of revised goals. Separate the boreal and arctic sections. For actions, group by topic but do not prioritize. Develop a realistic strategy for migration monitoring. Include data management priorities. Produce a glossy executive summary as a tool for fundraising. (Donaldson/Skagen to lead, Johnston, Lanctot, Lyons, Brown; 28 Feb 2009).

**Action:** Revise PRISM funding document to include a one-page summary and a more detailed document that outlines current goals and accomplishments (Andres (lead), Johnston, Brown, Niles, Peterjohn, Thomas, Skagen; 31 Mar 2009).

**Action:** Develop a color-flag reporting and feed-back web portal (Niles, Bart, Dey, Andres).

**Action:** Expand and improve the PRISM web site, which would include case studies (Bart, Niles).

**Action:** Enhance capacity for non-breeding neotropical/austral surveys. Increase communication with the Neotropical Ornithological Congress and Wetlands International to discuss capability and application of PRISM. (Lesterhuis, Blanco, Donaldson, Bart, Dey, Andres, Paul, Rob Clay, Guillermo Fernandez, Russell)

**Action:** Produce a document on general guidance for implementing rigorous shorebird surveys that follows PRISM's recommendations. Include Latin American partners in development. Make it available on the PRISM web site and, possibly, translate to Spanish (Andres, Skagen, Committee; 31 Mar 2009).

### *Assessment and Evaluation*

We briefly discussed the current membership of the U.S. Council and the composition of the Executive Committee. Clearly, we need to find a structure and composition that will help move the goals and objectives of the conservation plan forward. It was suggested that the Executive Committee convene a teleconference to discuss these issues. We discussed the development of a brief survey to poll U.S. Council members on how they see the U.S. Council serving them and how they could serve the collective efforts of the U.S. Council. One suggestion to keep plan momentum going is to schedule regular calls of the Executive Committee.

The terms for Chair and Vice-Chair have expired, and John Cecil was nominated for Chair and Catherine Hickey was nominated as Vice-Chair. Both would serve in a one-year interim position. The nominations will be distributed to the U.S. Council and the Executive Committee will decide on the positions in the next month.

We discussed the need to provide an assessment and evaluation of the accomplishments since development of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan. This idea has previously arisen within the U.S. Council, and there is now some external pressure to conduct some sort of assessment. One problem is that there has not been dedicated funding for shorebird plan implementation, so an in-depth accomplishment report is probably not warranted. Brad should coordinate this effort with Partners and Flight and Waterbirds to develop a similar assessment format. We would need to assemble a team to help draft an outline of what the assessment components might be. Regional shorebird leaders would play a key role in the process. Some alignment with the plan's goals and strategies would be desirable. Participants suggested that funding and an assessment of how we are doing with species or populations we have deemed "highly imperiled" would be useful. The team would need to decide on a general approach; what to measure, relative to goals; how to measure (metrics, outcomes vs. outputs); and how to report (accomplishments and projections).

**Action:** Review U.S. Council and Executive Committee membership and confirm participation (Executive Committee, 15 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Develop U.S. Council questionnaire as part of assessment (Executive Committee, 31 Mar 2009).

**Action:** Add advocacy position to Terms of Reference and get approval from Executive Committee (15 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Build team to draft assessment outline, including communication with Partners in Flight and Waterbirds (31 Jan 2009).

**Action:** Draft assessment outline (31 Mar 2009).

**Action:** Accept nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair (15 Dec 2008).

#### *Next Meeting*

The next U.S. Council meeting will be held in conjunction with the Waterbird Society meeting, November 2009 in Cape May, New Jersey.

Submitted by Brad Andres, 25 November 2008.