



27th Annual Alaska Shorebird Group Meeting

November 15, 2021

Virtual meeting minutes

Agenda

9:25– 11:00 Announcements and updates (5 min each)

International Wader Study Group –Dan Ruthrauff

The International Waders Study Group has been around since the 1970s and celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2020. The 2020 conference/celebration and 2021 conference were both held virtually and proved very successful. There was participation from all over the world and allowed people who wouldn't normally be able to travel the opportunity to attend. Virtual presentations are available to watch online:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DjInQk7P_idRZVAnZSUJp_Yv1NkC353i

Global Flyway Network and Yellow Sea issues update – Lee Tibbitts

A suite of 14 shorebird stopover sites in the Yellow Sea are on UNESCO's Tentative List for World Heritage Status <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6555/>. These sites are not just biologically important for birds, but also have a cultural and/or ecological importance for local communities.

Global Flyway Network (<https://www.globalflywaynetwork.org/flyway/east-asian-australasian-flyway/>): The East Asian-Australasian Flyway has shared tracking information for Bar-tailed Godwits, which links individuals between Alaska and New Zealand. Several birds were tagged as juveniles and 2 years later, movement data was been collected, which shows birds exploring the full flyway from the Yellow Sea to Russia and Alaska.

<https://www.globalflywaynetwork.org/flyway/east-asian-australasian-flyway/map>

East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership – Casey Burns, Rick Lanctot

The east Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership was launched in 2006 with the goal of protecting migratory waterbirds, their habitat and the livelihoods of people dependent upon them. There are currently 39 partners from 18 countries, 6 intergovernmental agencies, 13 international NGOs and 1 international private enterprise. There are 150 designated sites in 19 countries and the USA has two sites: Yukon Delta NWR and Qupaluk. This is an active group and has a list serve that anyone can join. The group meets in person/virtually every two years and supports a small grants program of up to \$5,000. The priorities of the group include: 1) Support identification and monitoring of important sites, 2) Support conservation of shorebird species, 3) Support capacity building for shorebird conservation and management, and 4) Enhance

communication relating to shorebird conservation. By holding virtual meetings, more people have been able to participate in the conferences. New subgroups have evolved including 1) Shorebird Science and Tracking Group (contact: chan.yingchi@gmail.com), and 2) Asian Flyways Collaborate for Waterbirds which focused on linking central Asia with East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

Update: The partnership will be reviewing small grant applications very soon. Communication Education Participation and Awareness (CEPA) working group is revising action items, pulling together a report and developing collaborative projects. Anyone who has ideas about connecting education and outreach across the flyway should get in touch with Casey Burns.

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group – Rick Lanctot, River Gates

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird group was established in 2006 and initiated by Brad Andres. At the 2006 meeting, Bob Gill gave a presentation about connecting the western hemisphere together and the group was formed. The goals of the group include: 1) Raise public's awareness of shorebirds, 2) Promote research, monitoring, management, conservation and education/outreach relevant to shorebirds in the Western Hemisphere, 3) To provide a structured forum to facilitate, coordinate, and enhance the exchange of shorebird information, and 4) Promote range-wide management and conservation of shorebirds in the Western Hemisphere. Conferences are held every two years and 2022 will be virtual from 1-6 September. These meetings are valuable because they provide bilingual translations and field trips. A call for abstract will be posted in early April 2022: <https://whsg2021.org/home-2/>. If you would like to join the list serve, contact Rick Lanctot.

CAFF's Arctic Migratory Bird Initiative – Courtney Price

CAFF is formed from countries in the arctic (U.S., Norway, Canada, Russia, etc.) and other entities (Bird Life and Wetlands International). Action items for the initiative include: 1) leverage the structure of the arctic council for conservation success, and 2) better understand and address threats. The initiative tries to address challenging topics that are typically underrepresented at a global level. There are four working plans, one for each flyway, included in the initiative. The Americas Flyway work plan includes: 1) Evaluate impacts of overabundant geese populations on Arctic shorebird habitat and implement appropriate mitigation measures, 2) Reduce shorebird habitat impairment from human intrusions, disturbances, destructions and degradation, 3) Flyway planning and implementation, and 4) Identify and promote the protection of climate resilient shorebird breeding and wintering habitat. The Central and East Asian Flyways work plan includes: 1) Identify and secure important breeding and staging sites in Alaska and the Russian Arctic, 2) Secure intertidal habitat at key staging and wintering sites, 3) Increase quality and quantity of population estimates, and 4) Prevent illegal hunting and regulate unsustainable harvest of priority species. The Circumpolar Flyway work plan includes: 1) Enhance data collection, 2) Harvest assessment and mitigation of unsustainable harvest, 3) Support the international Snowy Owl Working Group, 4) Mitigate bycatch, and 5) Address environmental pollution. CAFF works with many different entities, organizations, and helps with funding and research support. <https://www.caff.is/arctic-migratory-birds-initiative-ambi>

Finally, the Arctic Terrestrial Biodiversity Report, www.arcticbiodiversity.is/terrestrial is moving along!

Arctic Breeding Birds Conditions Survey Annual Forms – Sarah Saalfeld

www.arcticbirds.net. A two part questionnaire aimed at gathering information on bird numbers, nest success, and environmental information such as predators (fox) and prey (lemmings). Anyone who conducts research in the Arctic or is visiting the Arctic should complete these forms each year.

Shorebird Science and Conservation Collective – Rick Lanctot

The collective was started 1 year ago and is led by Autumn-Lynn Harrison at the Smithsonian. The goal of the collective is to translate tracking data to on-the-ground conservation. The key features of the group include: 1) Fill existing analytical voids in applying shorebird tracking data to management, 2) Provide talented people for demand-driven scientific support to diverse conservation stakeholders, 3) Key questions and applications determined from within the shorebird community through an Advisory Group, and 4) Use science to promote most effective on-the-ground conservation. The collective was funded by the Knobloch Family Foundation and has provided the funding to hire three fellows: Quantitative ecologist (Dr. Allie Anderson), Regional Conservation Specialist (Candace Stenzel) and a Local Conservation Specialist (vacant). The focus of the collective is the Central Americas Flyway and includes a 14-member Advisory Group. Early on, possible datasets were identified by leveraging existing efforts to aggregate bird tracking data. There is a data agreement for the shorebird science and conservation collective and outlines 5 types of possible data: 1) Exploration, 2) Conservation applications and outreach projects, 3) Websites and social media for education and outreach, 4) Funder reports, and 5) Scientific publications. So far there are 38 data contributors, 46 projects, 81 datasets and 35 species (>2,000 trackers). The next steps of the collective include: 1) Continue collating and exploring data sets, 2) Establish collaborations with federal and private entities to share tracking information for conservation, 3) Identify highest priority projects that tracking data can help, and 4) Hire a local conservation specialist and establish 3-5 local projects in the Midcontinent.

Midcontinental Shorebird Conservation Initiative – Kelli Stone, Isadora Angarita, Benoit Laliberté

The Midcontinental Shorebird Conservation Initiative has the goal of filling shorebird conservation gap in the Americas, to sustain shorebird populations for future generations, and provide ecosystem services to benefit human well-being. The 3 major regions of the initiative include: Arctic/Boreal, North America and South America. The initiative was started in 2020 and the plan is to continue to work with indigenous people with an implementation goal of May 2022. The conservation target currently includes shorebird habitats and 26 focal species. Major threats among the three regions have been identified as phenological mismatch, permafrost melt, severe weather events, shrub expansion, sea level rise, forest fires and native habitat conversion. Funding for development of the framework comes through U.S. federal agencies, Canadian agencies, and ConocoPhillips. There have also been many in-kind contributions from partners across the Americas.

Three Billion Birds report and Road to Recovery efforts – all

The current Lesser Yellowlegs research will expand to include a demography study based out of Churchill (funded through the Knobloch Family Foundation). The Lesser Yellowlegs project will also expand to look at pesticide contamination in the Prairie Potholes region. Funding will also be used to fund a coordinator position to begin a Lesser Yellowlegs working group.

Brad Andres: A group has met to put together action items for shorebird conservation. Specific projects include working with refuges to update scoring acquisitions, intermountain west surveys and pushing along the Lesser Yellowlegs road to recovery process. BLM and the Forest Service are not yet discussing 3 Billion Birds at a local scale, but the Forest Service is offering webinars about forest management for birds nationally.

Pacific Shorebird Conservation Initiative, Oil spill response planning – River Gates

There is an upcoming opportunity for public comment with the Department of Environmental Conservation regarding oil spill response regulations. Oil spills have been identified one of the main threats for shorebirds. Is there anyone interested in writing a response to the Department and engaging in this topic? We want to make sure that there are policies in place to protect birds against oil spills. If interested, contact River: river.gates@audubon.org

Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative – Erin Cooper

CRIMBI normally struggles to connect with people across the Western Hemisphere, but virtual events have actually increased participation. Most recently, 60-80 people were involved in a seminar. CRIMBI recently sent a group of woman to Colorado State for a woman inclusion workshop with the goal of building capacity. Projects supported by CRIMBI include: a Snowy Plover tagging project, a shorebird study in Peru that is expanding to other countries in the Amazon region, a survey of disturbance by dogs at two WHSRN sites in Chile. CRIMBI also supports Red Knot research on Copper River Delta.

Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival – Erin Cooper

The Copper River Shorebird Festival was hybrid in 2021 with virtual and in-person components. The Chamber of Commerce in Cordova is a main sponsor of the festival and the festival brings ecotourism to the region. Because a large component was virtual, it was important to have an adequate amount of products (stories, presentations, field trips) to share on social media (Facebook) and the festival website. The goal in 2021 was to integrate shorebird tourism with local businesses through in-store purchases, online purchases, local experiences and virtual experiences. A care package was sent from Cordova for all registrants. Live local field trips took place on the Delta as well as live in-person and virtual shorebird presentations. The festival was also part of Bird Day LIVE because the Delta is an important stopover site along the Pacific Flyway. Lastly, there was virtual bird trivia sponsored by Audubon. In total, there were 275 participants from 34 states and 13 countries, 49 people traveled from outside Cordova and social media reached 21,204 people on Facebook and 4,775 people on Instagram. Other bird festivals in Alaska include the Stikine Bird Festival (<https://www.wrangell.com/birdingfestival>) and Yakutat Bird Festival (<https://www.yakutatfestival.org/>).

Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival – Kristine Sowl

The Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival was held in-person and virtually from May 5-9th. All speakers were online, but some educational activities were in-person. There were field trips in Homer and tents set-up outside the USFWS visitor center. Hova was a new online registration system used for the festival and provided a nice way to track participation. In total, 875 festival

passes were purchased. Most attendees were from Alaska and 13% were from out-of-state. Most attendees came from regions on the road system and as far north as Fairbanks. Most attendees considered themselves intermediate birders. Every year there is a high demand for field trips and this was no different in a virtual year. Attendees have also stated that there is a desire for more birding expertise from fieldtrip guides.

Alaska version of the USFWS 2021 Birds of Conservation Concern list– Melissa Burns, Megan Boldenow

The USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern list was published in 2021. To help simplify the list for Alaska species, Megan and Melissa created a spreadsheet version that is easy to navigate. This is a useful platform that can be used for making conservation decisions. Orange tabs summarize the full 2021 BCC list and the notes. The yellow tab shows the Alaska specific species and is cross-referenced with the full list. Green tabs include BCR information for species. This tool will be sent out via the list serve.

Management activities in 2021 – Kristine Sowl, Audrey Taylor, others

Liz Merging from Cook Inlet Keeper spoke about the federally proposed Lower Cook Inlet offshore lease sales. A draft environmental impact statement has been compiled and public hearings are occurring this week (Nov 16-18). It is estimated that offshore drilling in this area has a 19% chance of 42,000+ gallon spills that could affect resources. Visit BOEM.gov/ak258 or Inletkeeper.org/leasesale258 for more information.

Audrey Taylor spoke about the changes to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. On January 7, 2021, incidental take was removed from the MBTA. On February 9, a correction of effective date was posted and a request for public comments was established. On March 8, 2021, was the permanent withdrawal of solicitor opinion and May 7, the proposal revoked the January final regulation. Recently on October 4, the final rule to revoke January 7 regulation was passed and the advanced notice of proposed rulemaking. The MBTA is back to regulating incidental take. Audrey thinks it would be beneficial to form a team to propose science-based information in rulemaking.

Alaska Bird Conference 2023, Call for next host - Katie Christie, Kristine Sowl

Looking for a new host! If interested contact ABC host: Beth Trowbridge

beth@akcoastalstudies.org

Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative, Caribbean/South America Shorebird Hunting – Brad Andres

Harvest protections vary widely and harvest levels are not necessarily related to protection. For example, in Suriname, shorebirds are fully protected year-round but that is the country where harvest mostly occurs.

Martinique: Each June the government holds a discussion of harvest regulations for the upcoming year. OFB recommended daily/seasonal limits for five species and a daily limit of 20 Lesser Yellowlegs. These recommendations were not accepted by the hunting federation and there were protests. A lawsuit was filed to ban hunting on 10 shorebirds and the judge ruled to close four species BBPL, AMGP, WHIM and HUGO and set a 5/day limit on SBDO.

Guyana: Birds are harvested by shocking wire and used for personal use and commercial sales to markets and restaurants.

Barbados: The number of active shooting swamps has been reduced and there is a political and societal change in hunting. Several past shooting swamps are now maintained as no-shooting reserves. Harvest in Barbados has been halved in the last 30 years.

Annual Summary compilation – Laura McDuffie

This year we collected 21 abstract and 21 publication submissions from Alaska shorebird-related project spanning from the Arctic Coastal Plain to Midway Atoll. In 2021, Laura also produced an ArcGIS Online Story Map that provides a location of all fieldwork projects that were completed since the group's inception in 1997. The Story Map is a work in-progress and suggestions are appreciated. Also, Laura is accepting any and all high quality photos to replace the blurry images used as the title photo for several projects. Check out the Story Map here:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d3cb33e30b104f309d45e5ad6cb2633b>

11:15 – 11:25 Election of Officers

The following positions are open for nomination and Election:

Executive Committee Secretary (currently filled by Laura McDuffie)

Laura will continue for another 2-year term.

Executive Committee Member (currently filled by River Gates)

It would be nice to have a non-agency person become a member because they will be able to sign letters. The position involves outreach, comment letters, conservation plans, and preparing for the next meeting. Mary Anne Bishop was nominated and accepted.

11:25 – 11:45 - MOTUS towers on Pacific Coast Discussion – Joan Hagar and Erin Cooper

Joan Hagar: The Motus network began in eastern Canada and has returned very valuable information on local and migratory locations of birds. There are large gaps in the network on the west coast, so it is important to take a strategic approach to determine good locations for towers. A new working group was established and is looking at potential tower locations in Alaska as well as Oregon and Washington. Joan wants people to know that the new working group exists and they would like biologists to share ideas of desired locations for MOTUS towers. The first tower went up in April-May on the Copper River Delta, but was pushed over by wind or a moose. There are several tagging efforts that have been started along the Pacific coast, Mexico and Alaska. Please reach out to Joan if interested in participating in the Motus network planning: joan_hagar@usgs.gov

11:45 – 12:15pm ASG/BPIF Outreach Group (ABOG) Casey Burns, Katie Christie

ABOG mission statement

Mission statement: ABOG is a joint committee that was formed to keep common bird common and to raise awareness of threats to birds through education and outreach for all age groups.

Casey Burns: ABOG has a diverse membership of government agencies and NGOs. The groups' expertise is mostly landbirds and shorebirds and most people participate not because they are required but because they wish to. There was an outreach technical session in April, which gave context to bird-focused outreach.

Next steps: Develop and implement collaborative outreach projects. There are currently five projects: bird friendly coffee, Alaska birding trail, 3 Billion Birds and 7 Simple Actions, Bird banding with youth, and Marine debris outreach.