



Take a Second Look
42 Baker Avenue
Lexington, MA 02173

TASL Shorebird Censuses:
August 20, September 24, October 22
for more information, call (617) 863-2392 or (617) 268-7571

Is There Life After Shorebirds?

Each year the trickle of April yellowlegs turns into the torrent of May Black-bellied Plovers; dowitchers, turnstones, peep sandpipers, an occasional Willet, a few dozen snipes all put in a quick spring appearance. Then they disappear as quickly as they appear, off to their northern breeding grounds.

Sometimes, if you don't catch the spring flight right, or if the weather blows them off course, shorebirds don't turn up in any sort of numbers. 1995 was one of those years. Are they suffering population declines? How can we tell?

Continued on page 2

The ISS Reports...

[These are brief summaries of material from the newsletter of International Shorebird Surveys. Newsletter dates in parentheses]

Semipalmated Sandpiper migration through different eastern states falls into a wide variety of patterns. In New England, for example, spring migrant Semis are a "tiny blip" compared to the fall migration; this is the reverse of the pattern seen in the mid-Atlantic, southern and midwestern states. The southern coastal states reported no particular "wave" of fall migrant Semis, but in the mid-Atlantic region and further north a strong peak in August is followed by a gradual decline through October. (3/91)

Continued on page 4

REMINISCING

Quickmuck

On August 7, 1994, my husband, Peter, and I met Soheil at Point of Pines, Revere, to scout locations for the shorebird survey later in the month. We checked the few low tide spots Soheil wanted us to visit and then a high tide spot. As an

afterthought, Soheil led us to one more location overlooking a marsh at the Pines River. As he put it, "We know where the birds go at low tide; but where they go at high tide is still pretty much a mystery."

Sure enough, when we had climbed to the lookout spot, we were able to see birds clustered tightly together far out in the marsh, but they were much too far away to identify.

"We all have our Wellies on," I said. "Why don't we just walk out in the marsh for a closer look." Soheil twinkled and said "Let's go!" So the guys grabbed

their 'scopes and we set off straight across the marsh.

The footing seemed a little soggy but not too bad until all of a sudden I put my right foot down and nothing was beneath it. In I went, up to my upper thigh in mud. Mild concern didn't turn to horror until I tried to pull my leg out and found that the mud had such a firm hold on my boot and leg that no motion was possible. I immediately thought of quicksand stories I had heard and decided not to struggle.

Continued on page 2

Puerto Rico's Riches

The Fraternidad and Candelaria sites are currently under consideration for purchase by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources. During the past year ISS's Brian Harrington spent several weeks with biologists from the above agencies evaluating shorebird data from Cabo Rojo and other shorebird sites in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. The goal was to determine the relative importance of Fraternidad/Candelaria compared to other Caribbean shorebird sites. As most often proves to be the case, with the exception of ISS data, there was pitifully little compiled information available to the evaluation group—a fact that serves to emphasize the key role ISS continues to play in shorebird conservation efforts.

From ISS News, March 1994

Life After Shorebirds (continued from page 1)

Then, in the fall—which, for shorebirds, can start in mid-June—they start pouring through again. This time they stay around long enough to be seen and appreciated and lovingly tabulated. But are their numbers declining?

One of the difficulties of knowing what is really happening with shorebird populations is that both their breeding grounds—arctic tundra for many of the species—and their wintering grounds in southern hemisphere wetlands are difficult to access for most researchers. Migration watching is the best way we have of seeing and monitoring many of these birds.

A number of shorebird conservation groups worldwide have been gathering migration data on these birds for twenty years or so. One of the most venerable is Manomet Observatory's ISS: International Shorebird Surveys. Beginning in 1974, Manomet's Brian Harrington and R.I.G. Morrison of the Canadian Wildlife Service established a loose network of local volunteer censurers who were willing to submit consistent shorebird counts from areas that they normally birded anyway. From the beginning, the emphasis has been on having fun birding but also maintaining consistency of area and method, as long as those don't conflict with the enjoyment of birding.

I started submitting Belle Isle Marsh shorebird data to ISS in 1980, and have been receiving their mailings throughout the intervening years. I have summarized some of their material in *The ISS Reports...* (page 1).

By the mid-80s ISS became truly international by receiving shorebird counts from Central and South America. The Canadian branch of the research is now called Maritime Shorebird Surveys (MSS).

One of the mainstays of the ISS methodology has been to request that the censurers cover their chosen area a minimum of three times a month. The highest shorebird count from each ten day period is reported on the report forms. Our TASL censuses have, of course, not been anywhere that frequent, but if we continue them they will become a consistent data set to supplement the ISS continental data. Then maybe our shorebirds will become real—in the statistical sense! (See box *Puerto Rico's Riches*, page 1.)

Soheil Zende



Quickmuck (from p.1)

At that point I think I said "Help!" because Soheil turned around and joined Peter in staring at my predicament. First Peter tried to pull me out, but again I didn't budge. Then Soheil got my other arm and started pulling. Once, twice, finally on the third try I pushed with all my might and both guys pulled as hard as they could; slowly I arose from the marsh, trembling either from exertion or fear—I'm really not sure which—and covered with mud.

Soheil went on without us. Sure enough, the spot is a good one and will be added to the survey, but using a drier, more circuitous approach.

Several lessons could be learned here: watch where you're going, never assume a route is safe, etc. But the main lesson is this: When birding with Soheil, always bring a change of clothes.

Fay Vale

The Proposal

Our grant proposal to the Charles Blake Fund (administered by Nuttall Ornithological Club) resulted in a \$3900 grant, the bulk of which is to be used for analysis and preparation of the TASL winter census data for publication.

The grant will also help with the costs of publishing this newsletter, as well as fund one or more training seminars for our hard-working volunteers. More details soon.

1994 SUMMER CENSUS TOTALS

Species	8/21/94	9/18/94	10/16/94	Species	8/21/94	9/18/94	10/16/94
RED-THROATED LOO			6	SPOTTED SANDPIPER	7	1	1
COMMON LOO		3		UPLAND SANDPIPER	5		
LOON (S)		1		WHIMBREL	5	1	
PIED-BILLED GREI		3		HUDSONIAN GODWIT	12		
HORNED GREI			2	RUDDY TURNSTONE	141	33	31
GREAT CORMORAN		3		RED KNOT	19	3	
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORAN	109	665	331	SANDERLING	849	543	146
AMERICAN BITTER		1		SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER	4149	441	
GREAT BLUE HERO	22	23	24	WESTERN SANDPIPER	1	3	3
GREAT EGRE	4	1		LEAST SANDPIPER	80	55	
SNOWY EGRE	63	29	9	WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER	25	8	
GREEN HERO	8	1		HAIRD'S SANDPIPER		1	
BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERC	6	1		PECTORAL SANDPIPER	3	2	2
BRAN	2		41	PEEP (SP.)	25	25	88
CANADA GOO:		1		DUNLIN		36	264
GREEN-WINGED TEJ	4	31	20	BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER	4	1	
AMERICAN BLACK DUC		202	423	SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER	300	24	
MALLAR		14	4	LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER	1		3
BLUE-WINGED TEJ		21	4	DOWITCHER (SP.)		3	
NORTHERN SHOVELJ		2	2	LAUGHING GULL	69	249	46
GREATELUSCAU			5	COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL			1
SCAUP (S)	1			BONAPARTE'S GULL	258	931	577
BUFFLEHEA			6	COMMON TERN	133	3	
RED-BREASTED MERGANSI			275	LEAST TERN	31	2	
BLACK SCOTT			2	BLACK TERN	2		
SURF SCOTT		50	76	SHORT-EARED OWL			1
WHITE-WINGED SCOTT		185	1698	BELTED KINGFISHER	1	1	
OSPR	4	1		HORNED LARK	65	23	8
NORTHERN HARRI	2	1	1	AMERICAN PIPIT		2	103
BROAD-WINGED HAW	1			BLUE-WINGED WARBLER	1		
RED-TAILED HAW	1	1		BLACKPOLL WARBLER		1	
AMERICAN KESTRU	8	1	1	BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER	1		
PEREGRIN	2	3	2	SCARLET TANGER	1		
RING-NECKED PHAESAN	2			SAVANNAH SPARROW		28	5
BLACK-BELLIED PLOVI	1124	330	508	SHARP-TAILED SPARROW		2	
AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVI		33	7	SEASIDE SPARROW			1
SEMPALMATED PLOVI	1317	182	16	SONG SPARROW		15	6
KILLDEJ	6	17	2	SWAMP SPARROW			3
AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHI	8			LAPLAND LONGSPOR			1
GREAT ER YELLOWWLE	288	251	204	SNOW BUNTING			1
LESSER YELLOWWLE	107	16	16	Weather	Cloudy	Rain/Clear	Clear
YELLOWLEGS	25			Wind	SW-SE 10 mph	NE light	N 10 mph
WILLI		1		High tide	1:30 PM	10 AM	9 AM

What is TASL?

Take a Second Look (TASL) was started in the winter of 1980 by a local group of environmentally concerned birdwatchers; our primary focus has been to survey and census the bird population of Boston Harbor throughout the year, although the winter water bird censuses have been our major activity. A summer/fall series of "shorebird censuses" were initiated in 1993 and continued in 1994.

The 1995 summer TASL Harbor Census dates are listed on page 1; please mark them in your calendars. Can you drag along a friend or two and break them in?

Please remember: this is an excellent opportunity to learn—and teach—about the common water birds of the Harbor. You do not have to be an expert to participate. Each area will be led by at least one competent birder. That person will need help with navigation, driving and record-keeping. So make yourselves useful and learn something in the process.

Due to our new, enlarged census schedule, we have need of additional administrative assistance. There are a number of small jobs, e.g., compiling and editing tally sheets or improving our mailing list, that should be shared among volunteers. Also, if you would like to write for or illustrate this publication, we need you. For more information call Maury Hall (268-7571) or Soheil Zende (863-2392H, 923-0941W).

Please mail census results to Maury Hall, 849 East 3rd St. #2, South Boston, MA 02127.

TASL (Take Second Look) is organized and staffed entirely by volunteers. TASL data is compiled by Maury Hall. This newsletter is produced by Soheil Zende.

ISS Reports...(continued from page 1)

Whimbrels migrate through the mid-Atlantic states in large numbers in both spring and fall. They are "essentially absent in northeastern states during spring, but...common in autumn." (3/92)

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An aerial survey of the Sonora and Sinaloa coast of western Mexico in January 1991 revealed that this stretch hosts very large numbers of wintering American Avocets, Willets, Marbled Godwits, dowitchers and peep sandpipers (ten of thousands). "Our survey results clearly showed that shorebirds wintering on the Sea of Cortez coast were highly concentrated in particular bays, suggesting that these sites are of special conservation concern...The bay with the highest estimated numbers is Bahía de Navachis, just south of Las Mochis, Mexico." (3/92)

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The Double-banded Plover of southern South America is split into several populations, one of which (in the Falkland Islands) is "virtually sedentary, with individuals remaining in or near the same area throughout the year." Another population migrates north for the austral fall (March and April) and returns south in spring (September, October, November). Yet another population breeds in southern Brazil. "We are intrigued...because there is no clear north and south migration pattern." Suggested solutions to the puzzle include splitting the species into two, or calling its seasonal movements "post-breeding dispersal" rather than migration. (3/92)

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A number of organizations sponsor shorebird research and conservation throughout the Americas and the world. The most prominent are:

The **Wader Study Group** is based primarily in the old world. Contact: WSG, c/o Rodney B. West, Farnham Barn, Saxmundham, Suffolk, UK.

The **Pan American Shorebird Program** links color-banded shorebird observers and banders. Contact: PASP, c/o Dr. Cheri Gratto-Trevor, Canadian Wildlife Service, 115 Perimeter Road, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 0X4 Canada. Alternate contact: Mary Gustafson, Bird Banding Laboratory, 12100 Beech Forest Road, Laurel, MD 20708.

The **Neotropical Wetlands Program** coordinates a "twice annual census of all birds found in wetlands within the Southern Cone countries of South America." Contact: NWP, c/o Pablo Canevari, Monroe 2142, 1428 Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Wetlands for the Americas, launched in 1992, concentrates on wetland conservation throughout the Western Hemisphere. In turn it has launched the **Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network**, which identifies and recognizes critical shorebird habitats. Contacts: WHSRN, Julie Sibbing or Gonzalo Castro, Manomet Observatory, P.O. Box 1770, Manomet, MA 02345.

International Shorebird Surveys "focusses on collecting shorebird census data for all the Americas." Contact: ISS, c/o Brian Harrington, Manomet Observatory, P.O. Box 1770, Manomet, MA 02345. (2/93)

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Some shorebird species follow an "elliptical" migration route, travelling north in the spring through central parts of the continent and returning south along the east coast. Other species, like the Red Knot, appear to use an "oblique" coastal migration route, staying close to the east coast throughout their travels. An analysis of ISS censuses at four different locations produced the following information: Great Egg Harbor, New Jersey, is a major staging area for Red Knots during both spring and fall migration, with counts peaking between 2500 and 3500 birds. Chincoteague NWR in Virginia has a spring peak of 10,000 and a fall peak of around 2000. Monomoy NWR, Massachusetts, hosted small numbers (hundreds) of knots in spring, but several thousand in the fall. Finally, Parker River NWR, Massachusetts, is not a significant site for either spring or fall Red Knots. (2/93)

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The **Fraternidad and Candelaria Lagoons** at Cabo Rojo in southwest Puerto Rico appear to be critical to shorebirds wintering in the Caribbean islands. (See box on page 1.) Although total numbers of shorebirds on Caribbean islands is not large by continental standards, certain sedentary species such as Black-necked Stilts and Wilson's and Snowy Plovers clearly need these lagoons during hardship times. (3/94)

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New ISS censusing protocols are needed to monitor shorebird populations "over the long term." Although the data indicates a decline in the numbers of certain species, it turns out that using the data as currently supplied by ISS volunteers means that "there need to be very large changes in bird populations before we can detect them...We need to begin reorganizing operations...so that we will be able to detect change earlier than we currently can do." (3/95)



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Shorebirds use "staging areas" during migration to fatten up before flying on to their next long-distance destination. Most traditional staging areas produce large seasonal "blooms" of shorebird food, often invertebrates, which the birds "harvest" and then move on. Loss of one or more such areas, as well as loss of nesting or wintering areas, can put a shorebird population at risk.

The "highly predictable relationship between seasonal events at widely distant latitudes" is also threatened by global warming, because rising sea levels can affect the location and productivity of tidal mudflats, one of the major feeding areas for migrating shorebirds. (3/95)