

2014 Fall Collier County Shorebird Partnership Meeting

October 28, 2014 1pm – 4pm

Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center, 300 Tower Road, Naples, Florida

Purpose:

The post-season meeting is an opportunity for partners to meet and share information about shorebird and seabird nesting data in Collier County, learn more about statewide data and provide an opportunity to discuss important management issues that arose during the nesting season.

Objectives:

- Share 2014 Collier County shorebird and seabird nesting results
- Begin planning for 2015 nesting season
- Evaluate needs of Collier County Shorebird Stewardship Program

Attendees:

Beverly Anderson – Rookery Bay

Naomi Avissar – Florida Shorebird Alliance

Brooke Carney – Rookery Bay

Jeff Carter – Rookery Bay

Brad Cornell – Audubon Florida/Audubon of the Western Everglades

Kevin Cunniff – Rookery Bay

Julie Drevenkar – Rookery Bay

Jean Hall - Audubon of the Western Everglades

Susan Kubat – Friends of Tigertail

Katie Laakkonen – City of Naples

Mark Mahoney – FWC LE

Carol Rizkalla - FWC

Nancy Richie – City of Marco Island

Charlette Roman - FWC

Deborah Woods – Rookery Bay

Ricardo Zambrano - FWC

Meeting Notes

SW Florida Nesting Season Recap (sites, nesting numbers, management issues)

Keewaydin Island – Beverly Anderson (RBNERR). Site posted with string and flagging. High LETE nest count on the south tip was 95 (second highest LETE nest count on KI in the past 10 years). High chick counts were 31 downy, 23 feathered and 57 flight-capable. 4 WIPL nests but no BLSK or SNPL nests. Placed 30 v-shaped concrete roof tiles within the colony as chick shelters for sun/crow protection. Visited weekly to conduct counts. Rookery Bay Team Ocean volunteers repaired string & flagging, provided outreach and picked up trash.

Kice/Cape Romano – Beverly Anderson (RBNERR). Along Kice, 1 WIPL nest at Blind Pass and 2 at Morgan Beach. Cape Romano is no longer viable for LETE. Most of the open sandy beach has eroded away and the increased vegetation has made this site marginal for LETE. Site posted with string and flagging for WIPL and had 3-4 nests.

Second Chance – Beverly Anderson (RBNERR). Pre-posted with string and flagging in mid-April. High LETE nest count was 111 (lowest in last 5 years). High chick counts were 16 downy, 13 feathered and

13 flight-capable. Possible causes for low productivity this season was an increase in visits to Second Chance by Eco-tour operators offering “shelling trips”, more rental boat visits and unleashed dogs on weekends.

Caxambas CWA – Carol Rizkalla (FWC). Sandbar has still not rebuilt to support nesting.

Big Marco Pass CWA – Carol Rizkalla (FWC). Two large colonies posted with string and flagging. High BLSK nest count was 620. High BLSK chick counts were 47 downy, 623 feathered and 97 flight capable. High LETE nest count was 540. High LETE chick counts were 9 downy, 27 feathered and 55 flight capable. FWC put 30 wooded pallets inside the colonies for LETE chicks to hide under after 11 to 13 crows were seen taking eggs and chicks. High WIPL nest count was 6.

Collier County Rooftops - Julie Drevenkar (RBNERR). 4 rooftop sites consistently monitored (26 total visits). Several of the more consistent historical sites had no LETE in 2014. One new site was located (Bayshore). Most disturbance at rooftops was from crows.

Statewide – Naomi Avissar (FSA)

The FSD is still open so please finish entering 2014 data by November 1st.

Second Chance Critical Wildlife Area proposal update and Rookery Bay CWA signage plans – Brooke Carney (RBNERR)

Second Chance: Rookery Bay ready to pursue designation of Second Chance as a CWA. Reserve has nesting data for past 5 year to support a seasonal 6-month closure (March – August). The goal is to be ready for the June 2015 FWC Commission meeting in Sarasota.

Rookery Bay Colony CWA: Under SR 18.23, in order to minimize disturbance RB will post signs on the mangrove islands being used for nesting by wading birds within Rookery Bay. If this is unsuccessful and the birds are still being flushed and disturbed by boaters approaching too close to the island (s), RB will pursue the CWA redesignation process.

“Determining Impact of Human Disturbance on Least terns at Highly-vs. Lightly-Disturbed Sites”.

Graduate research project overview – Kevin Cunniff (RBNERR)

The Rookery Bay Research team is currently working with Brittany Fournet, a graduate student at the College of Charleston in the Master of Science Environmental Studies program, to conduct field work within the Reserve. Her research focuses on if and how human disturbance impacts the reproductive success of the least tern. She will monitor the bird’s flushing distance response to beach-goes proximity to nests and chicks while measuring the success rate of randomly selected nests and has selected two least tern colonies within Rookery Bay Reserve as research study sites, one on the southern tip of Keewaydin Island and one on Second Chance sandbar near Cape Romano. She will also use two colonies located in Florida Fish and Wildlife Critical Wildlife Areas, one on Marco Island in Collier County and one in Lee County. This summer, Brittany worked to refine data collection methodology and will return in the spring of 2015 for a full season of field work. Her preliminary findings from 2014 show least terns react most strongly (time spent off nests and in the air) to dogs, either leashed or unleashed.

“Vegetation Management for Imperiled Beach-nesting Bird Recovery” – Carol Rizkalla (FWC) FWC is in the process of applying for a permit to modify vegetation density to increase the area of viable

nesting habitat for least terns at five sites statewide. In Collier, Big Marco Pass CWA has been selected. Least terns require less than 10% vegetation coverage to nest and vegetation transects conducted by FWC at several locations on BMP showed 23% coverage. Vegetation would be removed in the early spring only if enough wasn't naturally removed by winter storms.

Marco Island Beach Regrade Project Update - Nancy Richie (City of Marco Island)

The City of Marco Island is still perusing a permit to move sand from the southern end of Marco Island to a wide stretch of low-lying beach that becomes flooded during storms and high tides. It would not affect the BMP CWA.

Law Enforcement Updates & Issues – Lieutenant Mark Mahoney (FWC)

The ABC Islands CWA signs were updated with new verbiage and are now legally enforceable. FWC LE officers can now write citations and have written 2 so far. Kayakers and fishermen occasionally enter but it's becoming less of an issue.

To report a wildlife infraction on the water, be sure to include the FL number of the boat and a description of the boat and the people onboard so officers are able to identify the boat when they arrive on scene.

There will be a statewide FWC LE meeting in November to discuss new laws for new issues (kite boarders, drones, etc.)

Group Roundtable Discussion: Issues and Solutions - Brooke Carney (RBNERR)

Reporting dead birds:

Ricardo Zambrano – if it's a single bird, no need to do anything unless it looks like it was intentionally killed. In that case, report it by entering it into the FWC online database. Also report any large occurrence of dead birds to the FWC online database.

Crows predation & chick shelters:

Ricardo Zambrano - the pallets we put out at BMP CWA provided shelter for chicks and we'll put out a few more next year. Best to put pallets out after the birds have nests so then know where to place them. Still looking a solutions to egg predation from crows.

Year-round stewardship:

Brad Cornell - Audubon is looking to expand the stewardship program from the nesting season to all year to include migrating and wintering shorebirds.

Closed area for wintering shorebirds:

Carol Rizkalla – FWC has new signs available for partners who want to post resting/feeding areas for wintering shorebirds. They're educational and provide information about why it's important to minimize disturbance to shorebirds and cite applicable state and federal laws.

Meeting Conclusion

Thanks to all of you for your continued support of the Collier County Shorebird Partnership!