

Spring 2016 Florida Panhandle Shorebird Working Group (FPSWG) Minutes
Thursday, February 4, 2016 from 10 AM – 3:30 PM (CST)
Panama City Garden Club: 810 Garden Club, Panama City, FL, 32401
(Supporting Documents sent by Request)

- **Welcome and introductions** were led by Raya Pruner, Florida Park Service.
- A study on **Ghost Crab Removal and Beach Nesting Shorebird Survival** was presented by Raya Pruner, Florida Park Service.
 - The objective of this study was to explore ghost crab removal as a restoration tool and to expound upon potential connections between ghost crab habitat and additional diverse stressors on snowy plover productivity.
 - The study concluded that ghost crabs directly and indirectly impact breeding shorebirds at a level of conservation concern, and the threat of predation increases as ghost crab burrow densities increase.
 - Direct management of ghost crabs through trapping was discussed, as well as indirect management through the reduction of vegetation overgrowth in key snowy plover nesting sites because high vegetative cover appeared to support greater numbers of ghost crabs and their burrows.
 - Attendees discussed the need to create best management practices for dune restorations that would recommend more open spaces for plover nesting.
 - Supporting document: Pruner FPS Ghost Crab Presentation.pdf.
- Richard Hinnah, USDA-APHIS, discussed the **USDA Predator Trapping Matrix** and shared the **results of predator control management to date**.
 - Trapping per the matrix started on February 1st. Richard reminded attendees that when trapping a site, they will only use traps appropriate for the tracks they see out there.
 - The topic of whether USDA-APHIS traps feral cats was raised. Richard acknowledged that feral cats are very destructive, but they receive astronomical protection from the public, and are even legally protected in some areas, such as the city of Jacksonville FL. For this reason, feral cats are not in the trapping agreement the shorebird partners have with USDA. The current protocol is that if feral cats are trapped while trapping a site, they are taken to a local shelter. Shelters need to be educated that they cannot/should not be releasing the feral cats back onto the beach.
 - Richard updated the group on the status of trapping at Dog Island. Up until now, all trapping has been done on the East end. Attempts to expand have experienced heavy public pushback, but there is an option for expansion this coming season as long as it is on TNC property.
 - Through oil spill monies, there are talks of funding a larger scale management project that could tie in a research component to determine the effectiveness of predator removal. One concept to investigate is whether removing coyotes from sites is beneficial or detrimental because the coyotes could actually be deterring raccoons.
 - The group reviewed that feeding wildlife in state parks is illegal.
 - Discussed the use of effigies to deter fish crow depredation at Lanark.
 - Supporting document: Results of Predator Control 2013-2015.pdf.
- Patty Kelly, USFWS, led a review of this year's **International Piping Plover Census**.
 - A big thank you to all of this year's participants!
 - Patty and a crew from St. Marks NWR completed airboat surveys of the oyster bars off the coast of the refuge.
 - 33 species were documented, including 77 AMOY.
 - 108 PIPL were documented within our region.
 - The Northeast experiences higher productivity (2.2) than the FL panhandle (0.2), likely due to the use of predator exclosures.

- There was no net loss of PIPL documented as a result of Hurricane Sandy.
 - Nanotags can be used to track individual bird movements. These are being used to plan locations for wind turbines to avoid loss due to turbine strikes.
 - Supporting Document: 2016Census.pdf
- Kat Harris, FWC, gave a review of the **Florida Shorebird Database** and gave an update on a few changes to the survey methods/data entry.
- Surveyors are requested to now report the total breeding adult counts along routes for AMOY, SNPL, and WIPL. This includes adults that are courting, actively nesting, between nests, and about to nest. Does not include birds that are non-breeding or part of migratory groups. (i.e. do not count birds in groups of 10 or more adults, unless in an area with dense nesting.)
 - The “pre-nesting” option on the shorebird nest form and the seabird colony form in the FSD was eliminated. Record only confirmed and suspected (“probable”) nests.
 - On the rooftop visit forms in the FSD, information for building location and management will now be recorded on a separate form so that the information does not have to be entered each time data is reported for a rooftop site.
 - Kat’s update ended with questions from the crowd. Kat answered these questions in a follow-up email that was distributed to the FPSWG contact list. The questions and answers follow:
 - When will the FSD open? – It will open in March, in time for the first count window.
 - Will “batch uploading” be available to some partners this year? – That is still on the back burner for now, so most likely not this year. Hopefully next, but Raya is in close contact with Janell and she’ll be the first to know about its availability.
 - Will there be a place to enter band re-sight info in the FSD this year? – We were hoping to add that to the FSD “solitary nest” interface this year, but due to other priorities it had to be put on hold. Most likely will happen next year.
 - Pertaining to the new “Total Adult Counts” for AMOY, SNPL, WIPL seen along a route, Ezra Thompson asked a good question: What if you count an adult along the route it is actively nesting, but then see the same bird along a different route (based on bands)? Do you count it along both routes, or do you record it under the route that it’s actually nesting on? This was a really good question, and one the Seashore Team spent a couple days deliberating on an answer (pretty much what I had advised Ezra at the meeting). We know in the Panhandle birds move a lot between sites, so there’s a real good chance for double counting the same adults along different routes. That’s OK. We want everyone to report the actual observed # of adults counted along each route during each survey, regardless of where they came from. As long as they are “breeding” adults (actively nesting, in between nests, courting, mating, territorial; not flocks of 10+ birds that are migratory or non-breeding groups). We don’t want partners to manipulate counts, even if they know that half of a pair is missing from a route. Someone on an adjacent route (who is less confident) may be reporting that bird, so this can lead to over-counting. There may be slight shifts in # of birds between nearby routes from survey to survey, but the total counts per area hopefully won’t be affected significantly. And for those who will be asked to report “actual counts” at the end of the season, that’s their chance to refine the numbers based on their knowledge of the individual birds using those routes.
 - Supporting document: FSD_2016_updates.pdf
- The importance of **Winter Survey Data and Key Information for Future Summaries** was covered by Caroline Stahala, Audubon Florida.
- Data provides information on abundance, species diversity, patterns, and key locations for specific species, area/land use, peak migrations, total birds during peak count, etc.
 - Things to consider for winter surveys: Share data (FSD). What info should be recorded? What schedule? What species?
 - Info can be used to help protect important wintering sites that may not be used for nesting.

- Ezra Thompson, Audubon Florida, discussed the **Operation and Use of Camera Traps for Shorebird Research**
 - o Camera traps are beneficial because they can provide additional evidence for the cause of nest failures: (Predators, weather, or other disturbance).
 - o Camera traps have highly customizable programming/set-up.
 - o Pros: make it easier to determine nest fate, provide 24/7 nest monitoring, reduce nest visitation, capture nocturnal occurrences
 - o Cons: May potentially attract predators, High cost (\$200-600), require multiple accessories, going through data can be time consuming.
 - o Supporting document: Camera Trap Presentation.pdf

- Eric Grendel and Jennifer Manis, FPS, reviewed an **Animal Tracks ID Refresher and Predator Control Management**
 - o The goal of predator control is to increase shorebird recruitment by preventing nest and chick predation and reducing stress and energy loss from disturbance
 - o Predator control includes predator aversion in addition to trapping.
 - o Track ID is used to determine what predators to target with trapping
 - o For track ID, see supporting document: FPS Predator Management.pdf

- Justin Davis, FWC, covered the **FWC Imperiled Species Management Plan**
 - o After a long and complicated history, the FWC ISMP is slated to be approved this year
 - o 23 species will be up-listed from “Species of Special Concern” to State-Threatened. This includes the American Oystercatcher and Black Skimmer.
 - o 15 species will be delisted. This includes the Brown Pelican
 - o 14 Species will remain listed as State-Threatened. This Includes the Least Tern and Snowy Plover.
 - o 5 species will remain as Species of Special Concern while additional research is completed.
 - o The definition of “Take” is more specific for State-Threatened species than for Species of Special Concern, including prohibitions against harm, harassment, and habitat modification/degradation.
 - o Supporting Document: ISMP Overview for Spr2016 PSWG.pdf

- Bonnie Samuelsen, Audubon Florida, closed out the meeting by leading a quick discussion regarding disturbances and solutions.
 - o There has been a recent issue of beachgoers misrepresenting family dogs as service dogs to bring them onto the beach/ have them unleashed.
 - o There is no official accreditation for service dogs. Therefore, and pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), **you cannot ask someone to “prove” that their dog is a service dog. You also cannot ask someone what their disability is.**
 - o However, service dogs must still either be leashed or under the verbal control of their human. It is still considered “take” for a service dog to disturb shorebird nesting if the dog is not under control.
 - o Volunteers and surveyors are reminded to tread very carefully with this issue. Violations of the ADA are very serious. An educational approach is preferred over a regulatory approach in these situations. Please consult <https://adata.org/factsheet/service-animals> and http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm for more information.

- Fall Meeting: **Thursday, October 6th, 2016.**

Posters (Sent by Request)

Pruner, R., M. Friel and J. Bente. 2016. Evaluating Banding and Capture Methods by Modeling Wilson’s Plovers (*Charadrius wilsonia*) Survival at Various Life Stages

Hardin, M., C. Bromley, M. Nichols, and M. Durkin. 2015. Shorebird Management at Gulf Islands National Seashore, Florida District

Durkin, M. and M. Stantial. 2015. Radio Telemetry for Plover Chicks

Durkin, M., M. Hardin, M. Nichols, and C. Bromley. 2015. Snowy Plover and Least Tern Demographics at Gulf Islands National Seashore, FL