

Florida Keys Shorebird Partnership

2017 Spring Meeting (03.10.2017)

1st floor conference room, State Government Building, Marathon

Present: Tom Sweets, Key West Wildlife Center (Chair)
Nicola Hodge, Key West Wildlife Center
Janice Duquesnel, Florida Park Service
Natasha Warraich, FWC
Ricardo Zambrano, FWC
Jim Valentine, Bahia Honda State Park
Heather Linn, Long Key State Park
Kate Watts, National Wildlife Refuge
Matt Martin, NAS Key West
Ed Barham, NAS Key West
Shelby Graham, NAS Key West
Karyn Buckley, Marathon Wild Bird Center
Sue Schaf, FWC
Steve Conners, FWC
Brittany Burtner, Monroe County

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Introduction

Tom Sweets welcomed everyone to meeting and thanked Janice Duquesnel for her work as former Chairperson.

2. Round Robin updates and highlights from 2017 Winter Shorebirds Survey

Janice - laughing gulls at Fort Taylor. Piping plovers observed at Long Key.

Karyn - reported snowy plover with botulism found in State Park (NFD)

Heather – experienced birders saw plovers and roseate spoonbills. Bald eagle nest and mating pair spotted. Flamingo visited in the Fall.

Matt – Roseate spoonbills spotted, plus piping plovers on airfield.

Ricardo – Red knots, Wilson plovers and piping plovers. Flocks of shorebirds important data.

Jim – Gannet on sea wall of old bridge at bird center.

Kate – Great White Heron Refuge had no piping plovers on any of the beaches. Sidney Mattock, piping plover researcher, saw 13 piping plovers on Boca Grande and Woman Key.

3. Roseate Terns (Ricardo)

Roseates in South Florida only nest in Keys, very threatened species. Recently nesting on rooftops, due to loss of habitat. Dry Tortugas had a dozen pairs last year.

Matt - Biggest colony on KW Naval Air Station who are proposing to create artificial habitat for the birds. Small platform (3ft above ground) to be installed at Big Coppit Key with effigies,

vocalizations to attract birds to (test) site and predator exclusion installed. Least terns have nested there previously.

Kate – Project to build 35ft deep Castillo pit at Big Pine, with gravel mounds. Separate plans for a concrete elevated platform habitat on Upland – permit applied for – for Wilsons plovers, funded from the Keys Restoration Fund, managed by Coastal Resource Group.

Ricardo – few pairs nested on County roof, but that is being re-roofed. Bahia Honda Bridge had over 100 nesting pairs of least terns. Least terns will have eggs on ground by end April – Roseates will nest by mid May.

Janice – Permits to re-do bridge were refused in case material got blown off during hurricane.

Tom – Roseates and Least Terns on Condominium S Roosevelt Blvd.

Matt – Roseates loved wooden pallets/gravel put up by Navy but not a good habitat long-term. Only one fledged, the others were picked off by falcons.

Tom – Work underway to encourage building owners to put mesh on drains etc, as chicks end up in parking lots. Truman Waterfront buildings are construction zone. 12th street professional building is a problem area with lots of traffic, commercial area, tall buildings – fledglings fall off into parking lot or roadway.

Karyn – Chick ‘corral’ used by Marathon Wild Bird Center – 100 sandbags.

Tom – worked with FWC and Sigsbee Charter School to secure rooftops with fencing.

Kate – Blimp site has semi-permanent structures 10” tall which work well.

Janice – Information signs required on Bahia Honda bridge as there is a lot of activity there including use of drones.

Ricardo – ‘Bird crossing’ signs are available. Flushing terns from bridge with drone would be illegal.

Janice - Aerial activity illegal in State Parks and also at bridge as it is part of heritage trail.

4. Rooftops, Monitoring Routes

Tom – Agreed to monitor same sites as last year.

Janice – Agreed to monitor same sites as last year.

Kate – Agreed to monitor blimps, plus Cudjoe Wetlands, gravel pit area

Pete – Unable to attend but will cover his sites.

Trudy – Agreed to monitor same sites as last year.

Janice said protocol needed for when we stop checking rooftops (birds have not nested there for a long time). Ricardo said if it has been re-roofed you can stop checking it. Janice suggested that NAS Key West remove the gravel piles from the end of Boca Chica Beach near runway to discourage nesting.

Ricardo – Particular interest to be paid to Wilsons Plovers as they are believed to be in decline.

5. Shorebird Database Custom Search Option & FSD Training

Ricardo demonstrated the new search facility on the Shorebird Database.

FSD training seminars are available – email FLShorebirdDatabase@myfwc.com to be included on list and receive a training update.

Shea Armstrong is the training co-ordinator for webinars.

The first count window is 18th to 24th March.

6. Critical Wildlife Area/Imperiled Species Management Plan

Ricardo – Plan proposed by Commissioners last year (work in progress over 20 years). Guide to how to list species, remove from threatened species list, or re-classify as threatened. Brown pelicans and ibis are no longer threatened. 23 species are newly listed as threatened and no longer endangered. 14 species remain threatened including Snowy Plover and Least Tern. There are some species of special concern.

No person shall take, possess or sell any threatened species (new definition of take)

Violation to flush state threatened species.

Two new policies regarding nest removal. If a bird is building a nest it is protected. Removal can only occur when a nest is inactive. In order to get a permit to remove a state threatened species you need to demonstrate a conservation benefit.

Critical Wildlife Areas – closed to the public. Trespassing on a closed area is a violation. There are 19 new areas in the State, but none in Monroe County. New areas can be denigrated.