

## Florida Keys Shorebird Partnership

10.11.2017

1<sup>st</sup> floor conference room, State Government Building, Marathon

**Present:** Tom Sweets, Key West Wildlife Center (Chair)  
Nicola Hodge, Key West Wildlife Center  
Emma LeClerc, FWC  
Ricardo Zambrano, FWC  
Kevin Kalasz, USFWS – Coastal Project  
Andrea Pereyra, FWC  
Shea Armstrong, FWC  
Heather Linn, Long Key State Park  
Matt Martin, NAS Key West  
Susie Nuttall, FWC  
Trudy Ferraro, Florida Dept of State

**Apologies:** Janice Duquesnel

### MINUTES

#### 1. Welcome and Introduction – Tom Sweets

Tom Sweets welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed hope that people had not been too badly affected by Hurricane Irma. Special thanks were given to Ricardo for facilitating Tom's access to the other Bird Centers immediately after the storm.

#### 2. Round Robin updates and highlights from 2017 Spring/Summer Shorebirds Survey

Tom – Significant new sites inc Ripley's where chicks spotted falling from roof but staff provided access. No Roseates, but possible sighting at Lower Keys Medical Center – will monitor next Season. Total of 36 chicks returned to rooftops, 7 fledges released. Good system for returning to rooftops (45' modified shrimp net). Some traffic related issues in area of Professional Building – request to erect signs was denied. Education campaign launched via social media to raise awareness. No activity at KW High School, K-Mart or FairVilla. Normal Least Tern activity on other rooftops inc Truman Annex, but more challenging due to construction work. May look into erecting a platform. Hog's Breath provided access re chicks down in parking lot, nests atop complex multi-tiered roof. Issues with air conditioner repair on rooftop of Sigsbee Charter School – asked to wait until season ended.

Ricardo asked whether fences had been checked post-storm. They have not.

**Action: Tom to check rooftop fences.**

Heather – No nesting to report at Long Key State Park. Long Key Park is devastated, you cannot drive into it.

Trudy – A dozen Least Terns nested on Ocean Reef rooftop. No reports of chicks on ground. No nesting at Winn Dixie for several years. One Wilson’s Plover nest on ground reported on restoration site, but no visuals on chicks. Due to work they are unlikely to nest there in future.

Susie – Nothing to report.

Matt – No Roseates at JIATFS, despite nest boxes. Small Least Tern colony at building 290 disrupted by storms, unsuitability of roof (not gravel). Handful of fledglings. Steel platform on Big Coppitt Key 12x24, 4ft high filled with pea rock. Successful proof of concept – 31 pairs at peak. Flashing light on post prevented predation, surrounded by water on 3 sides. Matt saw one pair of Plovers close to platform. Laughing Gulls attacked chicks at the end of the Season. Matt hopes to be able to create a super-colony in the future.

Ricardo – Not a good year for Roseate Terns, numbers keep dropping. Keys-wide 42 pairs, 26 of which were in Dry Tortugas. The Government Building was a prime site, but no nesting this year. 5 pairs nested on County Building. 17 Roseate chicks in whole of Keys. No nesting of Roseates on La Bresa. A few Roseates seen flying over the Navy building. Matt saw a few individual Roseates at the start of the Season. Tom said he would monitor Lower Keys Medical Center closely next year. The crumbling bridge at Bahia Honda remains a good habitat – 130 Least Terns were on this bridge. Janice discovered a Least Tern colony with 10-15 nests that had been there for a couple of years and erected signs on gate. Janice surveyed the Old Bahia Honda bridge during almost every survey window and did observe Roseate Terns on the crest of the bridge.

Ricardo said we should ask building owners how their roofs are post-Irma, whether they will be re-roofed and whether they will use gravel. Winn Dixie, Habitat for Humanity and Big Pine Key rooftops damaged in hurricane. Ricardo will check Government building gravel roof. A State-wide rooftop survey will take place next year, using staff hired for purpose. Some areas are completely clear of vegetation – the group should look out for these gravel areas as they could be closed off for use by Terns if we are alerted in time. More accurate methods of checking rooftops from ground are being explored. A discussion took place about the use of drones. Megan Johnson is the new Biologist at Dry Tortugas. Ricardo is working with her on Roseate Terns.

**Action: Ricardo to distribute Megan’s email address to group.**

Kevin – No information on Refuge (in Kate’s absence). Wilson’s Plovers seen at Big Pine or Ramrod. (Kate to confirm). Kevin new to area – hired by US Fish and Wildlife Service in January, stationed in Keys on Coastal Program. Looking to develop partnerships for on-ground restoration of habitats of listed species in three focal areas. Some annual funding. Getting into Shorebird work. Part of small USFWS internal team working on establishing a MOTUS receiver network throughout FL and Caribbean. Motus – system nanotag technology placed on birds to track their movements as they come near receiving towers with 17km range. Coded leg flags. 8-10 out in State, 1 at Key Deer Refuge. SW Florida installation this Winter. Previous experience with Red Knot research and monitoring in Delaware Bay coordinating the Delaware Shorebird

Project. Looking to start a project in the SE on juvenile survival. Juveniles would be tracked with coded leg flags, nano tags, and possibly sat tags for first two years of life. Kevin spotted 100 Roseate Terns outside Key West in late April.

3. Preliminary data summaries for 2017 – Shea Armstrong

The deadline for data entry has been extended to 20<sup>th</sup> October, so data summaries are not yet available. A discussion took place about data entry and whether anyone had experienced difficulties. Shea asked Tom whether he needed any assistance with rooftop counts – Tom currently only has one volunteer available to assist with this and is busy with rescues so any additional help would be welcome. Tom said the training aids were helpful and the number of rooftops was increasing every year.

**Action: Andrea offered to recruit some volunteers to assist Tom with rooftop counts next year.**

**Action: Shea will follow up to ensure Tom has rooftop support.**

Ricardo attends Audubon monthly meetings and volunteers could be solicited from there. Kevin said he would approach the volunteer group at the Refuge to see if anyone wishes to volunteer services.

Kevin asked whether local businesses could be approached to ‘adopt a roof’ and support the counts. The high turnover of businesses in Key West would make this difficult and many remain closed at this time. Shea asked whether Audubon had contacted business owners as they are heavily involved with counts in other regions and give awards for participation. Tom said this does not happen in Key West to his knowledge. Susie suggested use of wireless trail cameras on some buildings, together with purchase of data plan.

**Action: Tom to explore use of wireless trail cameras on restricted access rooftop/s.**

Shea asked everyone about their experiences of inputting data onto the database and whether they had any difficulties. Tom said it was better this year than previous years and minimizing the map speeds the process.

Emma LeClerc is currently managing the database and invited anyone experiencing issues to email her on [fishorebirddatabase@myfwc.com](mailto:fishorebirddatabase@myfwc.com)

Matt asked whether the platform on Big Coppitt should be categorized as a rooftop. Information on alternate structures should be indicated in the comments section.

Tom outlined difficulties with La Brisa counts, as the two rooftops make it hard to tell whether a bird has come from the other roof.

**Action: Kevin will come down next season to assist Tom with La Brisa problem.**

**Action: Tom will look to revise La Brisa notes on database before window closes.**

Tom said a lot of work is done on rooftops during the nesting season (low season for tourists) and is scheduled long before season begins.

Trudy asked whether FWC could send a flyer to all businesses to raise awareness or send uniformed FWC officers to highlight issue. Ricardo said there were difficulties identifying business owners. FSA website has an updated letter which could be used.

**Action: All to try and identify business owners of known nesting sites before season begins.**

4. Florida's Shorebird Program – Shea Armstrong

The FSA launched in 2009 after surveys identified multiple species declining. Florida Shorebird Co-ordinator (Shea's post) appointed. Volunteer led partnership. BP Oil Program resulted in \$356M funding for natural resource conservation. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation allocated funding, requiring a business plan approach to species recovery. 2015/16 Beach Nesting Bird Plan to increase 5 species by 10% in 10 years. Dedicated staff needed. Audubon and FWC submitted proposals and received project funding. State-wide Wilson's Plover survey begins probably in 2019. FWC has 3 regional shorebird biologists. Emma leading on database development; FWC and Florida Audubon co-ordinates shorebird monitoring efforts to establish population estimates/trends. FL Audubon and FWC two partners that submitted project proposals, but shorebird conservation will always be led by all the partners. More rooftop co-ordinators around the State. If the project is successful it will be funded for another 4 years.

5. Any Other Business & Close – Tom Sweets

Andrea asked for assistance with a clean-up of marine debris in Sugarloaf Marina on 11/11. An email will be circulated.

Tom said he had received a lot of calls about osprey poles knocked down. Keys Energy have offered to assist in putting them back up. Tom asked whether FWC needs to approve this. Poles are down at MM9 and MM25. Keys Energy agreed to supply poles and get them installed. FWC confirmed no permit required to do this. Matt said if they are on Navy property he can assist.

Ricardo said Fish and Wildlife Service Winter Shorebird Survey is coming out to sites and getting counts of Plovers, Knots and seabirds. Email coming out in January to see if anyone is interested in assisting with this.