

# Nature Coast Shorebird Partnership 2017 Post-Season Meeting

Wednesday October 11<sup>th</sup> 2017 | 12:00pm-3:00pm EST  
Senator George Kirkpatrick Marine Library | Cedar Key, FL

**Goal:** *To update partners on current shorebird related projects on the Nature Coast, discuss the 2017 shorebird nesting season, and to prompt discussions about future plans and opportunities.*

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## 12:00-12:10 Welcome/Introductions

*Attendees: Joe Marchionno (FWC), Jamie Letendre (DEP), Trisha Green (DEP), Janell Brush (FWC), Ariam Jimenez (FWC), Nick Vitale (UF), Libby Cagle (Cedar Keys Audubon), Blair Hayman (FWC), Megan Wallrichs (FWC), Ann Paul (Audubon), Yasmin Serajfar (FWC), Fara Ilami (FWC), Adele Mills (DEP, by phone), Vic Doig (USFWS)*

## 12:10-12:25 Florida Shorebird Program Updates

***Megan Wallrichs-FWC***

FWC has received a grant to increase their staffing capacity to help implement the FL Shorebird Program. The overall goal of the program is to increase statewide populations of American oystercatchers, snowy plovers, least terns, black skimmers, and Wilson's plovers by 10% over a 10-year period. To meet this goal, the programs will implement six strategies: reducing human disturbance, habitat management, predation management, addressing management information needs, improving conservation regulations, and ensuring effective monitoring. Regional shorebird biologists have been hired in the panhandle, NE Atlantic Coast, and SW to focus on management issues and monitoring support. Even though Nature Coast does not have a dedicated shorebird biologist, a shorebird biologist in the NE will free some of Megan & Blair's time. Florida Shorebird Alliance (FSA) will still be the vehicle in which shorebird conservation will occur; the role of the FL shorebird program is to support the vital role of all the work that all of our partners currently do.

## 12:25-12:45 Barge Canal & Cedar Key Nesting and Predation

***Nick Vitale-UF***

Nick is a graduate student studying American oystercatchers in Cedar Key and the Barge Canal Spoil Islands. Reproductive efforts in these locations are high, but productivity is low. Nick is investigating potential factors: human use, predation, habitat change or loss, and prey availability. Using a combination of cameras and weekly surveys during the breeding season to monitor nesting and opportunistically survey human use, these are some preliminary results from the first season:

- Human Disturbance: overall not much human use. People fish nearby, but generally do not land. One exception: Easter egg hunt on an island resulted in crushed eggs. All other summer holidays had little to no disturbance issues.
- Predation/Survival: Barge Canal Islands – 62.5% hatch. Cedar Key- 14% hatch. Racoons, peregrine falcon, black crowned night heron, great horned owls show up on nest cams, but still unsure of main driving culprit. 57% of all nests in CK and Barge Canal Islands failed because of overwash, but this number is largely driven by CK. Barge Canal Islands failed mostly because of predation.
- Survival to 35d is good, but survival to 65d is poor; unsure of reason but suspect predation.
- It was asked if predation management for racoons will happen for next season—since it is still unclear what the main predator is, monitoring will occur for another year before a predation management plan will be put in place.
- **Action Item: Adele would like Janell and Nick to do another presentation for DEP staff**

12:45-1:00

**Opportunity: Crystal River Power Plant?**

**Janell Brush-FWC/Everyone**

Duke Energy power plant in Crystal River has spoil islands that may have potential for good nesting habitat with some minor management actions (some vegetation management and possible installation of electric fence for predator protection). Question: Does anyone have a contact there?

- Adele/other DEP staff: no
- Ann: A Duke Energy rep gave a presentation at Audubon Assembly last year which resulted in Ann and Marc taking Duke Energy staff out early 2017 to where AMOY nest. Duke Energy staff were possibly interested but nothing has come of it yet. Duke is involved in the Hunter Springs living shorelines project and may be looking for other positive PR “wins.” This could be an opportunity to re-address the topic.
- Janell: Nature Coast Biological Station staff may have a contact. Janell will ask.
- **Action Item: After reaching out to possible contacts, Janell, Blair, and Ann will connect to plan.**

1:00-1:20

## Partner Updates

*Everyone*

- Jamie:
  - In the past have been understaffed, but now have new staff to provide support for surveys in future.
- Ann:
  - Went out twice on airboat with Joyce; no habitat for beach nesting birds on Chassahowitzka but there were 2 pair of nesting reddish egret.
  - No nesting on any rooftops in Crystal River. No new info on rooftop condition.
- Libby:
  - Cedar Key Audubon does not survey any routes, but have distributed brochures and other bird information at festivals.
  - Doug Maple looks for WIPL on the inner march with no luck. New rookery location for BRPE (#4 channel)
- Vic:
  - Surveyed McClammory to Horseshoe Beach + jetties every window except one. Did not locate any nests, but saw a # of WIPL & LETE fledglings. No nesting on jetties.
  - Snake Key rookery had a good year despite high water event in May. Approx 5000 nests (BRPE, 300-500 Tri-colored heron, SNEG and 3-4 REEG). Trying to expand posting area next year.
  - **Action Item: Janell and Ariam will get with Vic to talk about places to look for WIPL more.**
- Fara:
  - Continuing Don't Cut the Line Campaign
  - Mobile phone app for location wildlife rehabbers is almost ready to roll out.
  - Ann: Sandy Reed will talk about pelican feeding efforts, etc at Florida Birding & Nature festival (at S. Hillsborough Community College).
- Joe:
  - Routine breeding surveys in conjunction with Nick's work.
  - Ramped up banding efforts of chicks. Had difficulty banding adults (will work more on that next year)
- Ariam:
  - Working on a method for accurately estimating rooftop nesting numbers from the rooftop monitoring data
- Megan:
  - Surveyed Road to Nowhere. 8 pairs of WIPL max, found one nest but no hatching. WIPL gone by July count window.

1:20-1:40

## Post-Irma Site Assessments

*Joe Marchionno-  
FWC/Everyone*

- Joe:
  - Overall not too much of an impact on Nature Coast; probably due to the wind direction, how the storm dissipated, and that the storm came through at a negative low tide. No direct mortality of birds observed.
  - Performing qualitative assessments is important after any major weather event (not only hurricanes)—noting site condition, photo documentation, mortality, accessibility
  - Do not do site assessments if it is not safe!
- Jamie:
  - Mangrove islands being damaged by wind; tunnels inside and less dense overall; falling out on outside; important roost site
- Janell
  - This is the first time that a formal post storm assessment has been done
- Ann
  - Further south, Irma did have more of an affect with some areas like Sarasota feeling no impacts, but in Manatee the mangroves badly damaged.
- Group discussion occurred on performing assessment after major storm events
  - **Action item: Consensus to share information on storm impacts. Focus on specific known important nesting or roosting sites. Email Blair ([Blair.Hayman@MyFWC.com](mailto:Blair.Hayman@MyFWC.com)) and Janell ([Janell.Brush@MyFWC.com](mailto:Janell.Brush@MyFWC.com)) if you have this info.**

1:40-1:55

*BREAK*

2:00-2:20

## Atsena Otie Nesting Platform

*Vic Doig-USFWS*

- SRWMD owns Atsena Otie, but leases it to the Lower Suwannee NWR. The dock there needed constant costly maintenance so they let it go.
- On a 40' section of the dock installed stainless steel frames filled with gravel, added signage bird spikes, shade structures, decoys, cameras, and a sound system playing LETE calls to create an artificial nesting platform in February 2017
- LETE and other terns roosted on platform-no nesting
- May 21-25 2017: Fishing kids vandalized platform by throwing decoys into the water, putting caught fish on bird spikes, possibly disabled the sound system. Few days later a high water event combined with a storm (4ft tides) overwashed platform
- Excited by LETE using platform, will try again next year.

- **Action Item: Blair, Megan, and Vic will coordinate for next season**

## **Nature Coast Biological Station**

***Savanna Barry-UF***

- Savanna was unable to make the meeting at the last minute but wanted everyone to know that the Nature Coast Biological Station is now open. She welcomed everyone to stop in during business hours.

**2:20-2:40**

## **Kayaker Outreach in Cedar Key**

***Fara Ilami-FWC***

- Creating a sign to post at kayak rental outfitters in Cedar Key to inform and educate kayakers about birds to reduce disturbance. Kayakers don't often believe that they have an impact.
- First bullet on sign encourages kayakers to learn about impt roosting/nesting sites before going out, but Ann and Blair asked how they were supposed to do that.
- Cedar Key Audubon has made contact with the kayak rental companies in town and are open to the idea of educational signs
- It was asked if kayak rental companies are required to have Special User Permits with any agency? Answer: No.
  - Vic-We require motorboat tour operators that take folks to refuge islands to have an SUP and have several restrictions, SUP also requires operators to attend an annual meeting to learn about wildlife and effects of disturbance
- Joe: contacting local fishing guides is a good idea. Nature Coast Bio Station is working on this and on creating a local map of kayak accessible fishing hotspots (LSNWR intern is helping on this; Vic has contact information)
- Janell:
  - rather telling people where NOT to go, focus on areas where people CAN go
  - Make sure language is consistent with the Nature Coast Birds Brochure
- Libby- How do we reach people who bring their own kayaks?
  - Ann: place signs at popular kayak launch spots
- It was asked if this sign is for statewide use or in Cedar Key
  - For now Cedar Key only, but if successful may be expanded to the rest of the state
  - If sign goes up at other locations, contact the Public Access & Service Office (PASO; Liz Sparks, coordinator of Saltwater Paddling Trail) for feedback.
- Ask kayak rental companies for feedback on sign
- Friends of Refuge website is another good location to post this sign

**2:40-2:55**

## **Restoration Efforts in Cedar Key**

***Joe M./Janell B.***

- Two AMOY high tide roosts (Airport & Corrigan's reef) in Cedar Key were focus
  - Goal: To increase elevation, stabilize, and promote oyster growth
  - Completed restoration in January 2017 and AMOYs were already using sites
  - No damage from high water events in fall 2016 and spring 2017 or from Hermine or Irma!
  - High winds have pushed sediments to accrete behind structure.
  - No oystergrowth yet, but oyster spat is highly variable in this area (can take 204 years).
  - Monitoring of these sites will continue through photo documentation, oyster sampling, elevation profiling
  - **Action Item: Volunteers needed for monitoring these sites early to mid-November in the early morning. Joe will email group to ask for volunteers.**
- Future restoration efforts for AMOY nesting sites:
  - All sites need work b/c all are highly susceptible to overwash
  - How to prioritize?
  - Derrick Key – historically 10-12 pairs, but now totally underwater
  - Gomez Key – currently most productive site in Cedar Key for AMOYs (~5 pairs/year), but several overwash events. Janell believes this site will share the same fate as Derrick within 2 years if nothing is done.
- It was asked what type of materials were used: derelict clam bags made of a biodegradable material fouled with oysters—not plastic

## 2:55-3:05      **Wrap up & Adjourn**

- **Thank you to everyone**
- Megan asked for feedback about the meeting format and content
  - Ann likes them ☐
- **Announcements:**
  - Friends of Crystal River NWR will be starting a speaker series the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month at the Crystal River Library at 5:30pm. Joyce Kleen will be the first speaker next week October 17<sup>th</sup> 2017
  - Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute's Marine Quest is October 21<sup>st</sup> 2017 in St Pete. There will be a shorebird booth. Stop by and say hello!
  - Open house at Cedar Key Lighthouse October 21<sup>st</sup> in conjunction with the CK Seafood Festival
  - Next summer Tampa Bay History Museum; Ann asks Janell to work with her on creating a diorama of shorebird natural history

