

Florida Keys Shorebird Partnership

2018 Fall Meeting (10.15.2018)

1st Floor Conference Room, State Government Building Marathon

Present: Tom Sweets, Key West Wildlife Center (Chair)
Janice Duquesnel, Florida Dept of Environmental Protection (FDEP)
Kevin Kalasz, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Natasha Warraich, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)
Ricardo Zambrano, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)
Meaghan Johnson, National Park Service (NPS-DRTO)
Suzy Roebling, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)/Audubon ESC
Andrea Pereyra, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)
Brittany Burtner, Monroe County

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Introduction

Tom Sweets welcomed everyone and explained the meeting goals. All attendees went around the room and gave a brief introduction.

2. Round robin updates- ALL

Tom – Lots of centralized rooftop colony activity around the area of Kmart, ATT, Verizon and Professional Building. Key West had no rooftop activity at Fairvilla, Sigsbee Community Info, Naval Commissary, First State Bank, Police Athletic League, La Brisa Condos, Lower Keys medical and KWHS. Less chicks/fledges were run over this year on 12th street. Key West Wildlife Center rescued 32 chicks this year, of which 29 were returned to their nesting colonies. No Roseate Terns were located this year. The Key West Wildlife Center did not have to make any calls to law enforcement, although Ricardo did have to call law enforcement regarding rooftop workers at Ripley’s Believe it or Not.

Meaghan- No nesting activity to report but did ask question of Tom: How does Key West Wildlife Center become aware of chicks/fledges down from rooftop colonies? Tom answered that 80% of rescue calls come from the general public and workers in rooftop colony buildings and about 20% from dedicated volunteers who walk areas below active rooftops on regular basis

Ricardo – Mentioned that no Roseate Terns were found on Geiger Key. There were 2 pairs of ROSTs on Bahia Honda Bridge. Overall numbers of ROSTs down in lower Keys. Ricardo mentioned that there are ongoing issues with Mosquito Control helicopters and staging areas that have a potential disruptive effect on nesting colonies. Roseate were not found in Key West or Marathon last season. There were 17 pairs at Marathon County Building, 1 at Switlick, 11 pairs at the Tortugas, but none are known to have fledged viable chicks.

Kevin- Steel Pit Big Pine 2 platforms 15 feet high 20x60 feet. Still clearing vegetation for Wilsons Plovers. Work should be finishing up in winter and site should be open in spring. There was a lot of rain on top of the fact that hurricane Irma took out other sites including Habitat for Humanity colony. Checking the

blimp road site, access is difficult from military. Could not get on roof. Suzy interjected that there was a hotspot for Wilsons Plovers at the Johnson Tract on Sugarloaf Key. The Navy platforms constructed had 15-20 LETE nests. They are working to get roseates as well which may mean a change in platform dimensions. Ricardo stated that the gravel area may need to be enlarged as well. There was a drone problem at Bahia Honda bridge that was flushing terns. There is a possibility that this kind of thing could become a chronic problem in the future.

Brittany- Slow year. Lower numbers of least Terns on Marathon FWC building. Talked about problems involved with finding the right people to make sure that leak repairs and fixes on rooftop are carried out within permitted limits. Talked about workers passing three different areas of signage and continuing to rooftop colony.

Suzy-Documented 2 Neotropic Cormorants nests that produced fledglings. Ricardo stated that this information should be published. there was a hotspot for Wilsons Plovers at the Johnson Tract on Sugarloaf Key. The site is pretty far inland and not easy terrain. Berms are present near to where they were seen.

Janice-5 Rooftops, 2 of which had no activity. Garden Cove was active until august. The most important information to note is that least terns nested on Sandspur day use area at Bahia Honda this year. The entire oceanside of Bahia Honda remains closed due to Hurricane Irma. Terns were first observed on June 10th by staff conducting sea turtle nesting surveys, she conducted the June surveys the following day. During the August survey, she observed numerous juveniles and adults, and two downy chicks. Below is a summary by month:

Garden Cove-0/0/32/7/9/no longer active. West Marine-Not active. Publix-0/10/48/8/10/no longer act.

Bank of America KL-0/0/3/5/3/no longer active. Bank of America Tavernier-Not active

Long Key No nesting but did observe piping plovers during surveys

Bahia Honda Calusa beach No nesting

Bahia Honda oceanside 0/0/0/14 nests and 42 terns/15 nests and 126 terns/two downy chicks at one nest and 221 mixture of adults and juvenile least terns

Old Bahia Honda bridge

0/0/12 nests and 25 least terns/10 nests/9 nests/2 adults and one downy chick

Janice went on to say that Laughing Gulls were nesting at Bahia Honda and Curry Hammock. Oceanside (closed) 15 Least Tern nests with hundreds of terns present in area. She noted that it was frustrating that the Trolley tours were disrupting Least Tern nesting. She worked to get it stopped and video of the incidents helped convince trolleys to be stopped and avoid area. Janice monitored the area and saw about 200 adults and downy chicks. She would just walk the edge of the area to not disturb them. The trolley tours started up again after the season and she is saving the coordinates for next season. There are more Least Tern nests on the beach at Bahia Honda than on the bridge. She stayed away from the main colony at Summerland so as not to disturb them but was also concerned about mosquito control and the restoration work on the colony.

3. Presentation: Preliminary results from rooftop and Wilson's Plover surveys:

The goal of the study was to establish a statewide breeding population estimate of least terns and black skimmers nesting on rooftops. The objectives of the study were to determine the confidence associated with flush counts and develop a monitoring strategy for detecting trends in populations and productivity of seabirds nesting on rooftops.

Preliminary results from the statewide rooftop survey show that partner flush counts are a good way to establish a minimum population estimate for least terns in the state nesting on rooftops. All the data collected this breeding season will be analyzed and the results will be available in 2019 along with recommendations for changes to current surveys methods.

No Wilson's Plover nests were recorded in the Keys. Next year the plan is to have a technician doing surveys for nesting Wilson's plovers in the Keys.

4. Presentation: Statewide breeding season recap- Natasha Warraich

A record number of ground colonies were recorded in the Keys this year. Keep an eye out next season for least terns nesting at construction sites or areas that have been cleared. The Florida Keys partnership had 19% of rooftop nesting colonies in the state.

5. Presentation: "Incidental Take Permits" Ricardo Zambrano

Least terns are a state threatened species in Florida. If they are nesting on a rooftop building, owners/managers need to get an incidental take permit to do any kind of work on the rooftop while nesting is taking place. If you notice work being done to a rooftop during nesting season you can inform the building or call FWC and let them know. FWC law enforcement can also be notified. Incidental take permits are issued by the permitting office in Tallahassee.

6. Any Other Business

- Natasha- Tom will be stepping down as chair for the shorebird alliance meetings. Natasha will take over in the interim and will oversee nominations for the new chair that is selected.
- Ricardo/Natasha- plan on holding a law enforcement workshop in the Keys before next nesting season to discuss imperiled species.