

St. Johns and Flagler Shorebird Partnership

2018 Post-season Meeting Notes

Thursday, October 11th, 1PM – 4PM

St. Augustine Alligator Farm Conference Room, St. Augustine



1:00 Videos and Introductions

In Attendance: *Shea Armstrong (FWC), Mara Coleman (Volunteer), Peggy Cook (Volunteer), Besse Dawson (Volunteer), Jason DePue (DEP-SP), Tom Dilts (Volunteer), Chris Farrell (Audubon), Kurt Foote (NPS), Michael Graves (FWC-LE), Sue Killeen (Volunteer), Joshua Lawrence (FWC-LE), Logan McDonald (FWC), Jean Olbert (FWC), Jade O'Neill (SJ County), Nathan Otter (SJ County), Soledad Pagliuca (Volunteer), Frank Quinn (Volunteer), Jean Rolke (Audubon), Megan Thomas (FWC-LE), Tyler Turner (FWC), and Steve Zukowsky (FWC-LE)*

1:15 2018 Rooftop monitoring/WIPL monitoring updates: presentation and Q & A

Rooftop Monitoring

- Project Goals: to determine confidence associated with flush counts and develop a monitoring strategy.
 - Increase survey effort from April to June 2018 (719 surveys in 2017, 1185 surveys in 2018). Thank you!!
 - Using flush counts alone provides a good minimum population estimate for least terns (LETE).
 - Flush counts can represent the number of nests on a rooftop. The data suggests that a measurable proportion of adult LETE are missed during each survey.
 - FSA partner data was critical for success of this project, flush counts are good predictors and will be used to assess statewide minimum populations for least terns.
 - This approach does not work equally for black skimmers due to behavioral differences.

Wilson's Plover Project

- Project Goals: to refine the state population estimates and trends for Wilson's plovers (WIPL).
 - Most partnerships located more WIPL nests this season than in 2017 (approximately 40 new nests statewide). A total of 356 WIPL nests were recorded in the FSD in 2018 (*it is important to note that this data includes renesting attempts and does not represent the population of WIPL for the state*).
 - Next Steps:
 1. Increase WIPL monitoring efforts in the keys
 2. Develop a strategy for estimating the statewide population

**Jean Olbert presented on behalf of Janell Brush (FWRI)*

**See attached presentation for more information (2018 Post-breeding Season Results)*

1:35 2018 Season Summaries (Jean Olbert)

- Presentation created by Florida Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) with statewide shorebird/seabird distribution maps and survey frequency charts.

**See attached presentation for more information (2018 Season Summary)*

1:45 FSD Custom Search Function Tutorial (Jean Olbert)

- Partners are encouraged to explore and utilize the Custom Search function located on the Florida Shorebird Database (FSD).

FSD > Explore Data (tab) > Custom Search > select options

- The tutorial (attached) was created by FWRI.

**See attached presentation for more information (FSD Custom Search Tutorial)*

1:55 MBTA updates (Alex Kropp)

- The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was reinterpreted in December 2017 (Memo 37050).
- The reinterpretation concluded that no federal authorization is required for “incidental take” of non-listed birds, active nests, eggs, or young.
- Incidental take = take that is incidental to an otherwise lawful activity.
- FWC Rule 68A-4.001: a state rule that protects birds, eggs, young, and other wildlife. This means that take of birds, their eggs, or young is prohibited without a state permit. FWC does not typically issue permits for take of active nests.

**See attached presentation for more information (Migratory Bird Treaty Act Update)*

2:05 Bird Stewarding Efforts (Jean Rolke)

- Total stewards = 23; Total stewarding hours = 680
- Stewarding locations =
 - Anastasia SP (20 stewards/482 hours)
 - Fort Matanzas (8 stewards/70.5 hours)
 - Julia’s Island (5 stewards/128 hours)
 - Nocatee (1-2 stewards)
- Primary focus: Outreach and education. Additional focus: Reduction of human disturbance.
- Over 1009 people were interacted with in an educational capacity (964+ on ASP), 30% of which expressed appreciation of birds and/or stewards.
- Main Issues: dogs, lack of signage, vehicles on beach
- Next Season: would like to find more kayak ready stewards for Julia’s Island.

**See attached presentation for more information (Bird Stewarding Efforts)*

2:15 Law Enforcement Activities: FWC LE and County Natural Resource Deputies (Officer Graves)

- In St. Johns County FWC Law Enforcement:
 - Participated in a total of 83 patrols between April 13th and August 31st and spent over 176 hours protecting sensitive shorebird habitat.
- Statewide FWC Law Enforcement:
 - Participated in a total of 629 patrols between January 24th and August 31st and spent over 1,057 hours protecting sensitive shorebird habitat and Critical Wildlife Areas.
 - FWC Officers appreciate the continued effort of partners that post *and* twine nesting colonies as this helps to deter trespassers. They also expressed appreciation for guidance on important nesting sites that have human disturbance issues. This enabled Officers to focus their efforts where it was most needed.

- **Updates:**

- St. Johns County unveiled their new signs set to be installed just south of Anastasia SP. The signs will designate the SP boundary and the legal restrictions for dogs within the SP.
- In St. Johns County, Officers now have a UTV available to access remote locations (e.g., north end of ASP) for shorebird patrols.

**See attached presentation for more information (FWC Law Enforcement Summary)*

2:25 **Predation Management and Monitoring** (Jean Olbert)

- Shorebird predators negatively impact nesting success, productivity, and population densities.
- Although predation of eggs and chicks is a natural process, in some areas, predation occurrences are overwhelming causing low population recruitment.
- FWRI is working on increasing ability for partners to document predators within their survey routes within the FSD.
- Data Needs: continued documentation of tracks/scat/predators within shorebird nesting sites. If you have questions about the type of predator based on the tracks please don't hesitate to send us photographs of prints. We recommend including a size reference next to the track (ruler, pen, coin, etc.) and taking photographs of the stride.
- It is important to note that predation management uses a broad array of methods, with lethal removal being the last line of defense. Any management efforts need to be data driven leading to mindful and purposeful actions directly benefiting shorebirds.

**See attached presentation for more information (Predator Management Presentation)*

2:35 Break

2:45 **Partnership Needs and Local Updates (5-10 minutes each)**

- ✓ Discuss challenges and successes during the 2018 season

Timberland Ridge and Nocatee: Jean Rolke, Tom Dilts, Jean Olbert

- **Timberland.** Tom noticed LETE at the Timberland construction site and alerted FWC who then contacted the contractors at the site. Permission was given to post/twine the colony and construction activities were halted.
- Construction continued after nesting ended so there will likely not be nesting there next year (possibly in the surrounding area though).
- A total of 12 fledged from the site this year.
- **Nocatee.** Colony collapsed June 1-5th. No visible signs of predators. Some issues of human intrusion into the colony prior to the installation of twine. Jean Rolke worked with FWC LE to address this issue.

Mickler's Landing North to Duval line: Jade O'Neill

- Nesting did not occur at this site this year

Mickler's south to GTMNERR, Vilano Road to GTMNERR South Boundary: Jade O'Neill

- Nesting did not occur at this site this year

GTMNERR: Diane Reed

- Nesting did not occur at this site this year

Tolomato River

- AMOY: 30 nests (7 renests); with a max of 15 flighted chicks observed during one survey.
- WIPL: 7 nests (unk renests); with a max of 2 feathered chicks observed during one survey.

Porpoise Point: Sue Killeen

- Nesting did not occur at this site this year. Ocean side closed to driving due to increased erosion. Inlet side is also being washed away, esp. during high tides.
- Currently low feasibility of ending driving at this site or future nesting.

ICW/Julia's Island: Joe Marchionno

- The majority of the LETE colony was lost due to predation issues. Photographs indicate a great horned owl present on numerous occasions inside of the colony.
- LETE: < 5 fledged, AMOY: 2 fledged (banded), WIPL: at least 6 fledged
- Stewarding on the evening of July 4th showed very minimal flushing/movement from nests as the result of fireworks.

Anastasia State Park: Jason DePue, Sue Killeen, Jean Rolke

- Two seabird colonies (south and north)
 - o **South Colony:** 200 LETE nests, suspected coyote predation pressure diminished the colony in mid-June. Some success with at least 40 flight capable juveniles observed at one time. Coyote was detected at the site on several occasions. Total of 9 BLSK nests, minimum of 6 young produced.
 - o **North Colony:** 90 nests, predation events (coyote) caused a sharp decline in nesting in early July. No LETE were produced at this site.
- WIPL: 14 nests total (including potential renesting), at least 15 flight capable young were produced.

Stretch between ASP and FMNM (St. Johns Managed Beach 1 route): Jade O'Neill

- Nesting did not occur at this site this year

Fort Matanzas NM and CWA: Kurt Foote, Peggy Cook

- LETE: 99 nests, 16 downy, 24 fledglings (most nests since 2010). Early predation event (sightings of bobcats, also found canine tracks in dunes).
- WIPL: 8 nests, 15 chicks, 5 fledglings

Fort Matanzas FIND SITE (SJ-1 DMMA): *access denied* Jean Olbert

- Access was denied to FWC at this site for 2018 breeding season. We are working on gaining access next year.

MSA-233 (Summer Haven mitigation site, A.K.A. "Ternapalooza Island"): Jean Olbert

- LETE: 65 nests, 3 consecutive predation events (great horned owl, opossum, great horned owl). At least 8 young fledged from this site.
- Working on increasing cover at this site by installing pallets and strategic vegetation.

Summer Haven River Restoration Project: Jean Olbert

- Total of 3 LETE colonies. All failed. Issues with private property owner at one of the colony sites (FWC was denied access to this site). Suspected human disturbance issues and predation events at all 3 colonies locations. Needs increased pre-posting on County property next season and increased focus on stewarding if resources/access allows. Continued outreach and communication with Summer Haven community needed.

Flagler County Rooftops: Frank Quinn

- Several rooftops in Flagler are suspected of being re-roofed.
 - o No nesting at Publix or Winn Dixie in 2018 (re-roofed)
- Late season nesting detected at Ocean Palm Villas (reported to David Hartgrove who was also monitoring the site).
- Some birds observed by Cameron Rudibaugh at the Flagler house but only on one survey.

Flagler Routes: Frank Quinn

- Nesting did not occur at this site this year. The beach is critically eroded and will likely not support shorebird nesting in current conditions.

St. Johns Rooftop Sites: Sue Killeen, Kevin Beamish, Jean Rolke, Chris Farrell, Jean Olbert

- Winn-Dixie, no activity. Jail, some activity at beginning, but then nothing (re-roofed, but set aside a small area of gravel), likely will not be successful again but will keep watch. Third site by mall active, saw several flushes, big decline after major rainstorm. The company plans on re-roofing once birds were gone.
- No birds recorded at Scottish Inn. FWC/Volunteers were unable to gain access to the rooftop at this site. Nothing on Anastasia Plaza rooftop by Worlds Gym, likely human induced failure.

3:45 Wrap-up/Action Items (Alex Kropp and all)

- FWC needs to visit rooftops in St. Johns and Flagler County to determine viability for nesting.
- Ongoing efforts to find funds for predator management at some sites.