



INTERNATIONAL SHORE- BIRD SURVEY

Newsletter | December 2023

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Semipalmated Plover on Plymouth Beach.

First Annual ISS Shorebird Blitz a Great Success across Coastal Massachusetts

Manomet's first annual ISS Shorebird Blitz took place August 5-14 as a coordinated effort to survey key shorebird stopover sites throughout coastal Massachusetts during peak southbound migration with impressive results. 89 observers counted shorebirds at 115 sites from Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Newbury to Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge on Cape Cod, from Provincetown's Race Point to Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary in Westport, as well as sites on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket to obtain an accurate coastal Massachusetts shorebird snapshot. We are grateful to all the shorebird enthusiasts, from our long-time ISS veterans to the many new faces, who made the blitz possible. All in all we counted over 73,000 shorebirds of 29 species!

Most of us are familiar with a "BioBlitz", an intense effort to catalog as many species within a designated location and time period. We wanted

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to take that concept one step beyond with the Shorebird Blitz, increasing the scientific value of the survey by asking our contributors to follow a few extra guidelines. For most sites, blitz surveys were conducted at high tide when feeding areas like mudflats and wetlands were inaccessible – and shorebirds were nestled on their high tide roosts and able to be counted more accurately. For sites nearby each other, we encouraged surveys to be conducted on the same day and tide cycle to avoid double counting birds flying between sites.

Thanks to all those contributors who made the extra effort to communicate with nearby surveyors. A map of all sites is shown below.

We chose early August to coincide with the first large pulse of southward moving shorebirds to get a snapshot of the number of shorebirds using our coastline during peak southbound migration and to identify significant stopover locations. While some species such as Sanderling and Dunlin peak later in the season, Semipalmated Plover, Semipalmated

Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper and Short-billed Dowitcher all have their highest numbers during this early window

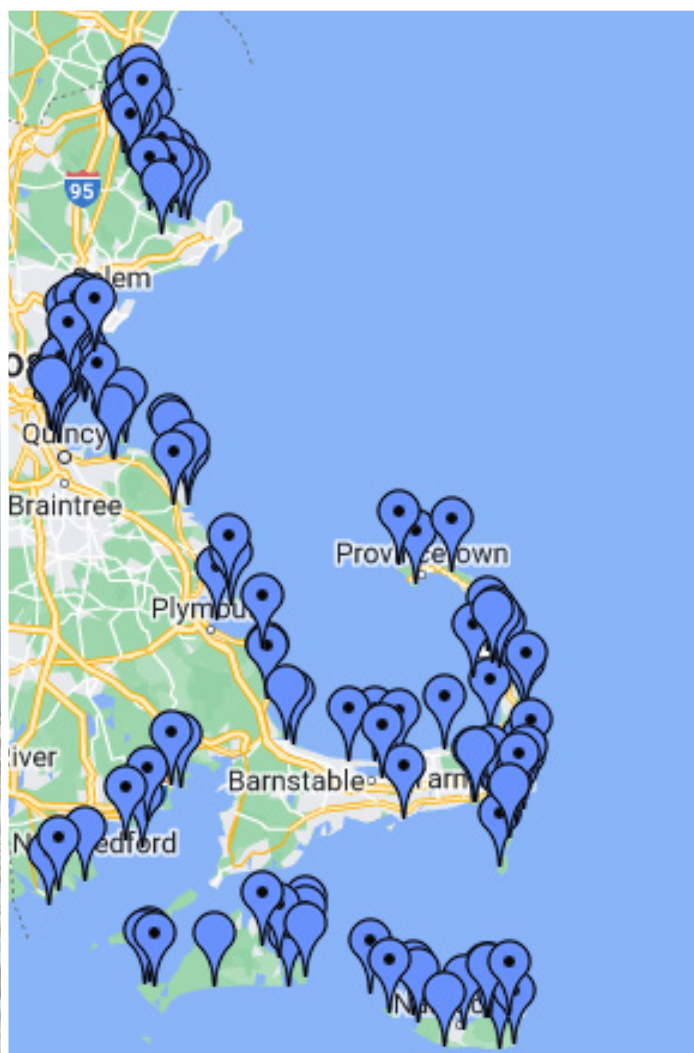
BLITZ BY THE NUMBERS

We had many highlights in terms of both quality and quantity of shorebirds and wanted to share a few. We had seven species that occurred at only one site - an American Golden-Plover at the Powder Hole on Monomoy, a Marbled Godwit at the Forest Beach and Conservation Lands, a Stilt Sandpiper on Plum Island, an Upland Sandpiper at Stauffer's Puddle, a Western Sandpiper at Third Cliff, and a Wilson's Phalarope at Nauset Marsh. Congrats if you were the finder of some of these more unusual species!

Notable high numbers included 630 Black-bellied and 3760 Semipalmated Plover on Sandy Neck, 41 Piping Plover on Cranes Beach, 6850 Semipalmated Sandpiper, 420 Red Knot and 290 Ruddy Turnstone on Monomoy, 96 Least Sandpiper at Ellisville, 4 Solitary Sandpiper on Sesachacha Pond, 11 Spotted Sandpiper at Cape Poge Wildlife Refuge on Martha's Vineyard, 60 Greater and 45 Lesser Yellowlegs at the First Landing Park-Jetties, 51 Whimbrel on Morris Island, and 121 Willet on Saquish Neck in Duxbury. We loved that highlights came in from so many different locations across the state. It's very nice of Massachusetts beaches to spread their shorebird wealth around.

SHOREBIRD SURVEYS CONNECT US

The timing of Manomet's ISS Shorebird Blitz coincided with the Great Marsh Migratory Shorebird Survey conducted by The Trustees and its partners north of Boston. Rather than asking volunteers to conduct two different counts, The Trustees agreed we could incorporate the Great Marsh surveys on August 14 into our blitz data. The Trustees have



Mixed flock at Ellisville. MANOMET/LISA SCHIBLEY

been surveying migratory shorebirds at Crane Beach since the 1990s, but this year marked their largest collaborative effort across the Great Marsh ecosystem to conduct simultaneous surveys with partner organizations. Sites included barrier beach systems like Plum Island and Crane Beach, as well as marsh areas in Salisbury, Rowley, Newbury, Ipswich, and Essex Bay. During the Great Marsh survey, partners and volunteers counted a total of 8,959 shorebirds of 22 different species

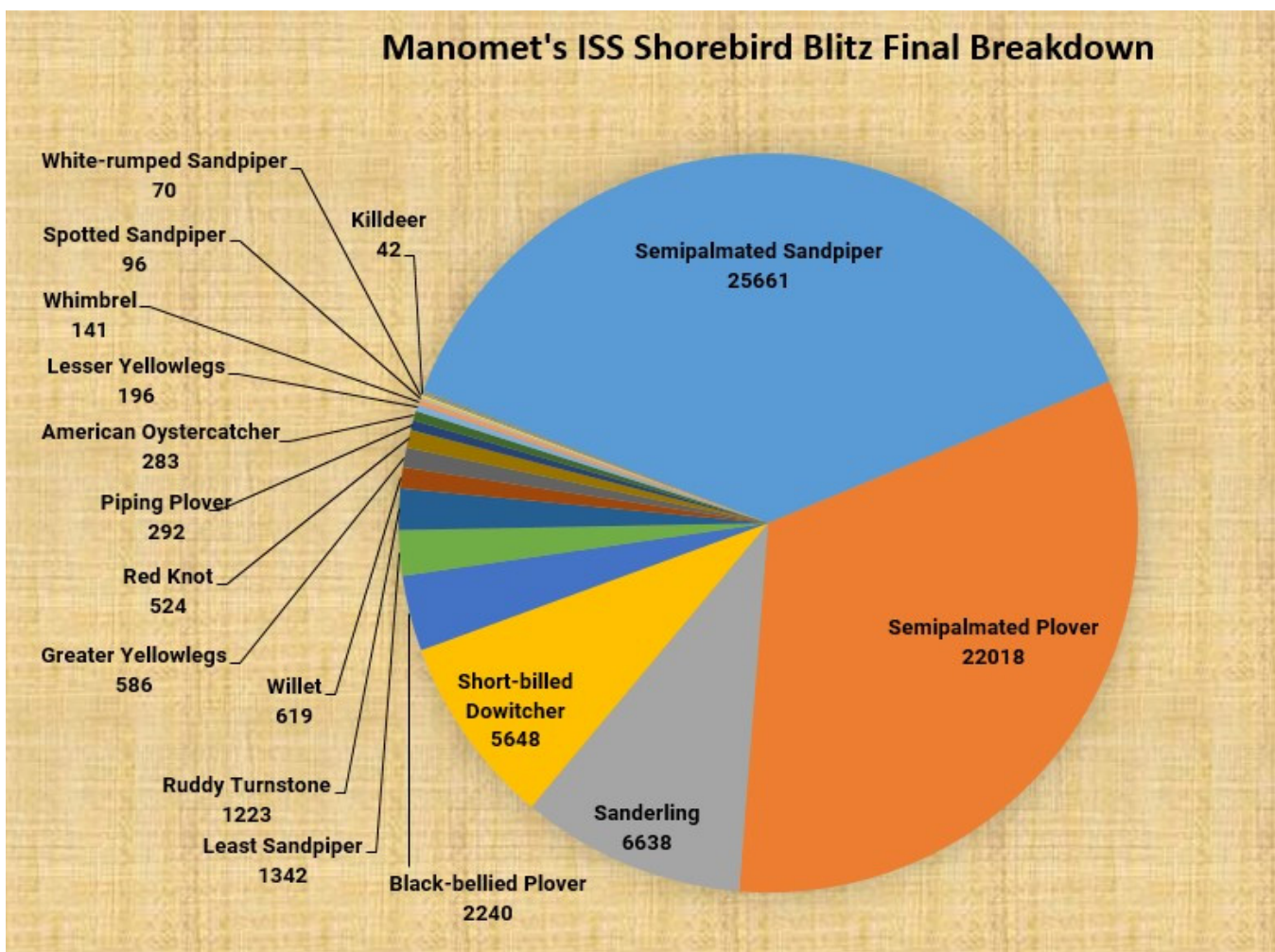
Another area with enthusiastic coverage was Boston Harbor. Coordinated by Sebastian Jones and Soheil Zende, the Metro Boston Shorebird Group selected the Wednesday evening high tide for their simultaneous coverage. Sixteen volunteers submitted checklists from fifteen locations. This data is especially valuable because the Boston Harbor Take a Second Look (TASL) survey project, coordinated by Soheil Zende, covered many of the same beaches and salt marshes periodically from 1980 through 1998. The coverage then was also done “blitz-style”

with numerous simultaneous counts and produced a rich data set with which Manomet can compare our own numbers.

While the immediate goal of the blitz was to get a snapshot of the number of shorebirds using our coastline during peak southbound migration, Manomet also envisions the data guiding future research and conservation work in the region. The data and information collected has already inspired a number of shorebird research questions - for example, to what extent should the Boston Harbor beaches' wrack lines be kept intact to benefit shorebirds and are the shorebirds using the Barnstable flats part of the Monomoy population or independent. As we dig deeper into the data, additional topics of future interest could include investigating different stopover strategies and the extent to which different species associate with each other during migration.

Next year, we'll do it all again and incorporate many lessons learned. There are already several ideas

A breakdown of the more common shorebird species found during the ISS shorebird blitz along Coastal Massachusetts



TOP: Volunteers on Dennis Chapin Beach.
MIDDLE: Baird's Sandpiper at Crane Beach.
BOTTOM: Soheil Zendehe at Rumney Marsh.



SARAH DUFF



MILES BRENGLE



MANOMET/LISA SCHIBLEY

percolating around the virtual water cooler on how to use the Blitz approach for both different seasons and more species-specific surveys. And Manomet is always willing to share what we know: if you live in an important shorebird region and are interested in organizing a similar shorebird blitz using ISS contributors and other volunteers, please reach out. We'd love to help!

And one last benefit from Manomet's first annual ISS Shorebird Blitz. It is our hope that this and future blitzes will strengthen connections among the various organizations and volunteers that are part of the shorebird conservation community in Massachusetts. We are extremely grateful to all of the partners and participants who helped make Manomet's first annual ISS Shorebird Blitz possible. Partner organizations include: USFWS (Monomoy & Parker River), Mass DCR, NPS (Cape Cod National Seashore), The Trustees of Reservations (Ipswich & Martha's Vineyard), Metro Boston Shorebird Group, BiodiversityWorks, Mass Audubon (Coastal Waterbirds, South East Sanctuaries, North Shore Sanctuaries, Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard), Duxbury Beach Reservation, Nantucket Land Bank, Nantucket Conservation Foundation, UMass Field Station, Town of Orleans, Monomoy Bird Observatory, MassWildlife, South Shore Bird Club, Cape Cod Bird Club, Nasketucket Bird Club, and Paskamansett Bird Club.

First ISS Brazil Volunteers Meeting celebrates the importance of the network for shorebird conservation

On August 30, ISS Brazil volunteers gathered virtually to take part in the eagerly awaited first ISS Network Meeting, a significant moment for the Brazil's shorebird conservation journey. The event, promoted by SAVE Brasil's Shorebirds Program, was primarily a celebration of this important network that has become increasingly vital for the protection of resident and migratory shorebirds as it has expanded through the years.

Bringing together volunteers from all over Brazil, the meeting was a great opportunity for participants to get to know each other and

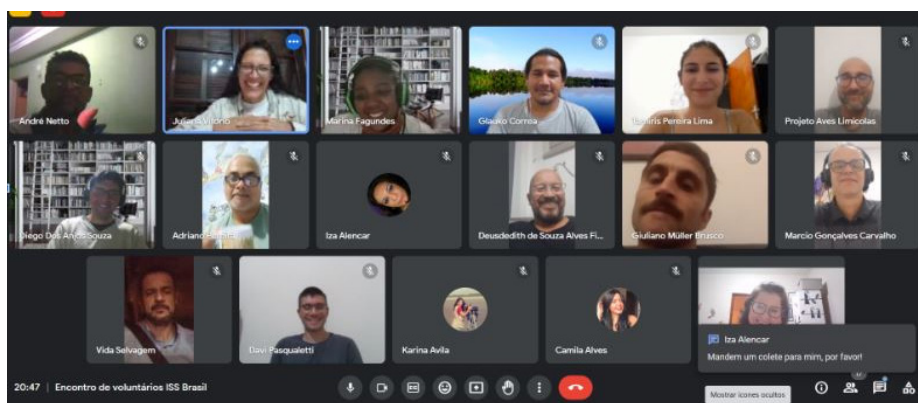
share experiences. With enriching dialogues and valuable exchanges of knowledge, the meeting was also marked by moments of recognition, presentation of results, and collective construction.

For volunteer Iza Alencar, who does ISS in the city of Palmas in Tocantins, just as important as bringing the volunteers closer together was the opportunity to talk to the SAVE Brasil Shorebirds Program team. "It was a time to ask questions, help each other and share experiences, as well as learn more about the situation of our beloved shorebirds and the results of the monitoring," she said.

A volunteer since 2022, Iza comments on the importance of sharing her love of monitoring with other volunteers. "I can't wait to take part in new meetings and even suggest the possibility of holding face-to-face events in different regions of Brazil, allowing us to create stronger bonds, learn and experience the observation and monitoring of these birds together," she said.

For biologist and ISS Brazil coordinator Juliana Vitória, the dialog and collective construction with the volunteers is another step towards strengthening the ISS network. "Based on the enthusiasm and dedication we've seen, we're sure that ISS will achieve even better results and that together, we can protect them and ensure the conservation and survival of these winged beings that unite the world!" said Juliana.

Our special thanks to all the people who were with us and made this meeting unique - you all are awesome!



Citizen Science Discoveries: Shorebirds at Ribanceira Beach

We are excited to highlight a significant publication based on research conducted by ISS citizen scientists on Ribanceira Beach, located in the Right Whale Environmental Protection Area (APABF) in the city of Imbituba, Brazil. The beach is well-known for the presence of majestic right whales, one of the world's most endangered whale species.



Diego dos Anjos, ISS volunteer and co-author: [Aves limícolas na Praia da Ribanceira, Imbituba – SC](#)

ISS Brasil volunteers Diego dos Anjos Souza and Guilherme Renzo Rocha Brito uncovered the beach's additional importance to shorebirds, presenting "Aves limícolas na Praia da Ribanceira, Imbituba – SC" at ICMBio's XIII Research Seminar and XIV Scientific Initiation Meeting in 2022.

With monthly visits and the mapping of a 2.1-mile stretch, the authors documented the importance of the site for ten species of shorebirds, including the Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*), a species considered "critically endangered" and on the National List of Endangered Species defined by the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment.

TRICKY IDS

The Black-bellied Plover (BBPL) and American Golden-Plover (AMGP) can be tricky to distinguish. Here are some pointers to help out! In all plumages, check out the bill - thinner, shorter, and more delicate for AMGP, chunkier for BBPL. In flight look for black wingpits and white rump on BBPL. (photo right)



A. KNEIDEL

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (BBPL)



C. JOHNSON

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (AMGP)



B. WINN



A. LAMOREAUX



P. SMITH



A. KNEIDEL



L. SCHIBLEY

BREEDING PLUMAGE

- » Extensive white on head, neck, and sides of the breast for BBPL. AMGP have a black cap.
- » Black undertail on AMGP. In molting adults, the black underneath will be spotty and confusing. If the spotting continues through to the undertail, it's a AMGP.
- » Adult AMGP has gold spangled upperparts but be wary of bright BBPL in juvenile plumage.

NON-BREEDING PLUMAGE

- » In all plumages, AMGP will often look smaller-headed with a thinner neck.
- » Contrast between the dark cap and white eyebrow will be stronger on AMGP.
- » Undertail coverts on BBPL are mainly clean snowy white. AMGP will often have some smudginess.

JUVENILE PLUMAGE

- » The brightest young BBPL can have more gold on its back than a dull AMGP, don't be fooled!
- » Marks on BBPL chest and belly will trail off higher, often ending at a distinct line.
- » Undertail coverts are more likely to be marked on AMGP.

There is always
more to explore

More about ISS at

manomet.org/project/international-shorebird-survey/

Explore all ISS data at

manomet.org/iss-map

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