



International Shorebird Survey Protocols (April 2019)

The following guidelines are designed to assist you as an ISS volunteer and to encourage consistency between surveys, for purposes of analysis and reference. We have tried to keep the protocols simple enough that collecting ISS data does not interfere with your regular birding habits. In 2007 ISS partnered with eBird to allow ISS participants to enter their data using the same methods they use to enter normal eBird data. Basically, when you submit your eBird checklist, select “International Shorebird Survey” from the list of other protocols. The complete eBird data entry instructions are located here:

<https://www.manomet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Data-Entry-Guide-for-web-2018.pdf>

Survey Frequency

ISS protocol relies upon repeated visits to your site throughout the migration period. We ask as a minimum that our volunteers visit their site three times during a migration season and that one of those visits falls within “peak” migration. Check the table below for these dates in your area. Please keep in mind, however, that more data is always better. We encourage our volunteers to conduct surveys as often as they would like. In fact, we have found volunteers often consider a visit to a site every ten days to be an achievable goal. However, please don’t be discouraged if you can’t get out as frequently as every 10 days. Data obtained every two or three weeks or even once a month are still very valuable to scientists. Again, if you do choose to cover your site only three times in a season, please make sure the middle visit to your site is during peak shorebird migration.

For our purposes, migration start dates, end dates, and peak are considered to be:

	Southern United States, Mexico, and Caribbean		Northern United States and Canada	
	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall
Season Start	Mar 15	Jul 15	Apr 01	Jul 11
Peak Start	Apr 15	Aug 15	Apr 24	Aug 10
Peak End	May 12	Sep 15	May 16	Sep 10
Season End	Jun 05	Oct 31	Jun 15	Oct 25

However, these dates can vary according to your exact location and geography, so if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

The more counts are made at an ISS site and the longer the record of years, the more valuable a census series becomes as a scientific record. A minimum of one count per month is much better than no survey at all, but we'd like to reiterate that there is no such thing as too much data, so thank you for visiting your site as often as you care to.

This document is intended for North American observers. For collaborators looking to participate in Central or South America, your peak dates of shorebird abundance will differ. Please contact us so we can best direct your efforts.

Survey time of day and location

At coastal sites, please try to count during times when the census will be most accurate. At most coastal stations this often will be at high tide when birds gather at resting areas. At some sites, however, it may be at lower tides when they are feeding. In any case, please plan your survey for the same tide each visit and record in the comments of your eBird checklist the tide category as best you can: High - Near high (falling) - Half tide (falling) - Near low (falling) - Low - Near low (rising) - Half tide (rising) - Near high (rising) - Not observed - Not applicable - or - Observations made during more than one of these periods. At inland sites and in wetlands (including lakes, ponds, etc.) tell us whether you think the water levels were Normal, High, or Low. Also, remember to accurately record the duration of your count.

Survey accuracy

Often it is not possible to count a thousand or more small sandpipers that are actively feeding. In cases where you must estimate numbers of birds, please indicate in the "species comments" field of your eBird checklist whether you are submitting an accurate count of a flock or if you are estimating. For more information on estimating and reporting flock sizes please read this series of articles written by eBird staff: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/counting-101/>

Species identification

We cannot always identify all of the shorebirds we see. Often, for example, it is not practical to look at a large flock and identify each of 5,000 Semipalmated Sandpipers. Most of us check a portion of the flock, and make our identification, brushing over the possibility that one or two Western Sandpipers may be present. For the International Shorebird Survey, please record as "identified" ONLY the birds that you HAVE

identified. Thus, if you identify 100 Semipalmated Sandpipers from among 5,000 peeps, please record them as 100 Semipalmated Sandpipers and 4,900 peeps. If you did not identify any of the sandpipers but presumed they were all Semis, please record them as 5,000 peeps. If you are not sure whether a flock was comprised of Sanderlings or a mixture of Sanderlings and Sandpipers, please record them as “shorebird sp.” In short, resist the temptation to present accuracy that does not exist!

We hope you can join our team of dedicated volunteers! If you have questions about these materials, please don't hesitate to contact Lisa Schibley (lschibley@manomet.org).