

ISS NEWSLETTER, WINTER 2013—2014

THE INTERNATIONAL SHOREBIRD SURVEYS (ISS) AND PROGRAM FOR REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SHOREBIRD MONITORING: EAST (PRISM)



This is our annual newsletter to cooperators and friends of the ISS and PRISM. In 1974 Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences organized the ISS to gather information on shorebirds and the wetlands they use. Together we have completed almost 80,000 census counts at 1,200 locations in 47 states of the U.S., with additional counts from Central and South America. PRISM is a complementary project comprised of ISS focal sites and is aimed to better track population change

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THANK YOU ALL FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE 2013 INTERNATIONAL SHOREBIRD SURVEY!

Welcome to all the new surveyors and thank you to everyone for all your hard work counting shorebirds in 2013! We are looking forward to working with you this season. Your data is valuable for estimating shorebird population trends, migration timing, providing baseline data on shorebird numbers at a site, and to help fill gaps in our understanding of shorebird ecology. During the past year the ISS crew worked on a project with Larry Niles, Jon Bart, and Paul Smith to improve ISS survey coverage and to strengthen our ability to use ISS data to estimate shorebird populations and trends (see details below). We are impressed with the response from our Atlantic Coast partners and deeply appreciate all the work going on from Maine to Florida as a result of renewed ISS activity.



New! ISS Protocol in Spanish and French

The ISS survey protocol has been translated into Spanish and French and will soon be available for download. The data entry instructions will also be coming out in French and Spanish soon. These protocols will be available through Manomet's website (<https://www.manomet.org/srp>) as well as the [ISS-eBird website](#). A huge **THANK YOU** to Cynthia Pekarik and her staff at the Canadian Wildlife Service for providing this valuable addition to the ISS.

As always, we appreciate suggestions and feedback from our Cooperators. Your stories from the field and photos are welcome for next year's newsletter. We hope this brief summary reminds you of the contributions that we are all making to better conservation planning and increase the understanding of these remarkable birds. **Thanks to all for a great effort in 2013!**

Important Updates

ISS eBird Dataset downloads

Some of you may have noticed that full ISS eBird dataset is no longer available on the Avian Knowledge Network website. The Lab of Ornithology's eBird team is working hard to design an easier download system for ISS data. We will keep you apprised of their efforts and provide instructions and links when the new system is in place. If you have a need for the full ISS eBird dataset at this time, please contact [Brad Winn](#) for more information.

Update: Project to Improve ISS and Estimates of Shorebird Populations

In November 2012, Brad Winn, Jon Bart and Larry Niles worked with Atlantic Coast state biologists, federal partners, and shorebird survey volunteers to begin a project primarily to establish a sampling frame within ISS that will lead to greater accuracy in shorebird population estimates and trends over time. This past spring (2013) was the pilot year for the project and as a result there has been excellent progress made on the development of this sampling design.

The Atlantic Coast study area has been partitioned into nearly 4000 plots. Results of surveys are still being received but so far there are records entered into ISS eBird for >1500 surveys on >250 plots. More than 2 million sightings of shorebirds were recorded on these surveys. We believe this is the largest rigorously-designed survey of shorebirds in the world.

Additionally, there is significant progress on an analysis of the status of shorebird populations and the threats that they face in North America and around the globe. The investigators developed a database summarizing status and threats for 514 biogeographic shorebird populations; 304 had adequate monitoring data to define trend. Of these, 43% were declining and only 11% increasing, with disproportionate numbers of declines in Asia and North America. Fifty-eight variables were defined describing threats and life-history traits that might be correlates of decline. A comparative analysis of these variables in relation to trend is ongoing, but preliminary results suggest that long-distance migrants, across the globe, are declining more so than shorter-distance migrants or resident species.

Building on earlier work by the Shorebird Research Group of the Americas, the results of the above analysis are being used to define testable hypotheses for causes of declines. In the coming phases of the project, these hypotheses will be evaluated by augmenting standard migration surveys with additional short-term efforts (e.g., recording disturbance levels, collecting samples for contaminants analyses). By combining these methods we hope to improve the value of migration monitoring for trend estimation and broaden the purview of the surveys so that they also help us design better conservation strategies for declining species.

Update: ISS Outreach Method Survey or "To Blog or not to Blog"...

Thank you to those who responded to our outreach survey last year. One of the challenges of running a Citizen Science project is determining which technologies to use that would allow folks to interact with others and make the project interesting to them. We asked you if you would like a blog or another type of outreach feature that would allow you to maintain communication with the ISS community. The results were mixed although the majority of surveyors did not feel the need for further outreach technologies. Therefore, at this time, we will continue to communicate with you via the annual newsletter. We will continue articles of interest and as usual ask you to contact us with stories or features that you would like to read about. In fact, we welcome stories about your site, so please get in touch!