



## International Shorebird Survey Protocols (April 2018)

The following guidelines are designed to assist you as an ISS cooperator, 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.

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

We would like volunteers to adhere to one of the following protocol options. The only difference in these options is the frequency with which you visit your survey site. We would like you to note that you should conduct each shorebird count in the same method each time you visit. All ISS data should be submitted through an eBird account. When you submit your eBird checklist, select "International Shorebird Survey" from the list of other protocols. Please view our Data Entry Guide for additional instructions on entering ISS data using eBird.

For collaborators looking to participate in Central or South America, your peak dates of shorebird abundance are going to differ from the dates suggested below. Please contact us so we can best direct your efforts.

**Option 1. (Preferred)** Our request is for one count to be made each third of the month throughout the survey period, at roughly ten day intervals, on or within 3 days of the dates below.

Spring	Fall	Winter (optional)
15 Mar	15 Jul	5 Nov

Spring	Fall	Winter (optional)
25 Mar	25 Jul	15 Nov
5 Apr	5 Aug	25 Nov
15 Apr	15 Aug	5 Dec
25 Apr	25 Aug	15 Dec
5 May	5 Sep	25 Dec
15 May	15 Sep	5 Jan
25 May	25 Sep	15 Jan
5 Jun	5 Oct	25 Jan
15 Jun	15 Oct	5 Feb
	25 Oct	15 Feb
		25 Feb

(For those surveying in northern United States and Canada, please begin your spring counts on April 1st if you can. For those in southern United States, please begin your spring counts in mid-March, but you do not need to continue after June 5th.) **Please consult us if you are interested in performing counts in Central of South America, as target dates for those sites may differ.**

The more counts 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 the 10-day counts as described above provide the most useful data.

Don't be discouraged if for some reason you can't get out as frequently as Option 1. Less frequent counts are also welcome and much better than none at all. In recognition of this, we have outlined the following options:

### **Fall Migration Survey Periods**

**Option 2)** Survey your site once in July between the 11th and 31st, twice in August, twice in September and twice in October. Counts should be done at least one week apart. If you'd like to continue your counts after October 31st, we'd be delighted.

**Option 3)** Survey your site three times between July 15th and October 15th. The first count should be between July 15th and August 15th, the second between August 16th and September 15th and the third between September 16th and October 15th. Counts should be at least 14 days apart.

### **Spring Migration Survey Periods**

**Option 2)** Survey your site twice in April, twice in May and once in June between the 1st and 10th of the month. Counts should be at least 1 week apart. (For those in the Southeast, survey your site once in March between the 15th and 31st of the month, twice in April and twice in May.)

**Option 3)** Survey your site three times between April 1st and June 10th. The first count should be between April 1st and 23rd, the second between April 24th and May 16th and the third between May 17th and June 10th. (In the Southeast, the first count should be between March 15th and April 6th, the second between April 7th and 29th and the third between April 30th and May 22nd.) Counts should be at least 14 days apart.

### **Survey time of day and location**

At coastal sites, please try to count during times when the census will be most accurate. At some coastal stations this will be at high tide when birds gather at resting areas, or at other sites it may be at lower tides when they are feeding. In any case, please record in the comments of your eBird checklist the tide as best you can, as follows: **1 = high; 2 = almost high, and rising; 3 = almost high, and falling; 4 = half tide, rising; 5 = half tide falling; 6 = almost low, rising; 7 = almost low, falling; 8 = low; 9 = not observed, not applicable, or observations made during more than one of these periods.** Remember to accurately record the duration of your count.

At inland sites and in wetlands (including lakes, ponds, etc.) tell us whether you think the water levels were **normal (N), High (H), or Low (L).**

## 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!