

International Shorebird Survey

Newsletter April 2022

Site Highlight:

Albufera Mar Chiquita



Federico Barbano

Natalia Martínez-Curci at Albufera Mar Chiquita

More than 40 years ago, in 1981, Argentine zoologist **Mariano M. Martinez** (†1998) began conducting International Shorebird Surveys (ISS) at a site called Albufera Mar Chiquita. Each year, he mailed his handwritten tally sheets to **Brian Harrington**, founder of ISS. Among Mariano's observations, which included more than 60 surveys carried out between 1981 and 1985, high numbers of Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* (up to 400) and White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (counts of 1,000s) stood out. In addition, he reported flocks of Red Knot *Calidris canutus* of around 100 individuals. In their frequent correspondence in the 1980s, Mariano and Brian shared their interest and passion for this group of birds. At that time, they were already discussing the potential importance of this site for shorebird conservation, specifically for the Hudsonian Godwit, for which there was little information available on their non-breeding lands.

Albufera Mar Chiquita is located in the province of Buenos Aires, on the Atlantic coast of Argentina, covering a total of 55,000 hectares. The area comprises a coastal lagoon with brackish water that



is separated from the ocean by a strip of dunes approximately 30 km long. At its southern end, the lagoon is connected to the ocean by a narrow estuary. The wetlands are protected as a Nature Reserve and the surrounding grasslands are a Wildlife Refuge. Both the Reserve and the Refuge are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Natural Protected Areas, part of the Ministry of the Environment of the Province of Buenos Aires.

In February 2022, Albufera Mar Chiquita was designated as the tenth WSHRN site in Argentina, joining 113 other WSHRN sites in the Western Hemisphere. This designation was achieved through shorebird censuses implemented by **Natalia Martínez-Curci**, a researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET), in collaboration with staff from the protected area. They demonstrated that the site continues to be of great importance to shorebirds. Their surveys indicated that the site qualifies as a WSHRN site of Regional Importance for hosting more than 1% of the biogeographic population of Two-banded Plover *Charadrius falklandicus*, Hudsonian Godwit and Red Knot.



Aerial view of Albufera Mar Chiquita. Photo courtesy of Mar Chiquita Municipality.



Current efforts are closely related to the historical ones, as Natalia develops her research tasks in the Vertebrate Laboratory of the Institute of Marine and Coastal Research, dependent on the National University of Mar del Plata and CONICET - the same laboratory that Mariano directed in the past. In archives of this research laboratory, Mariano's field notebooks are preserved with his ISS counts and his detailed observations of the birds on the lagoon that he made in the framework of his doctoral thesis.

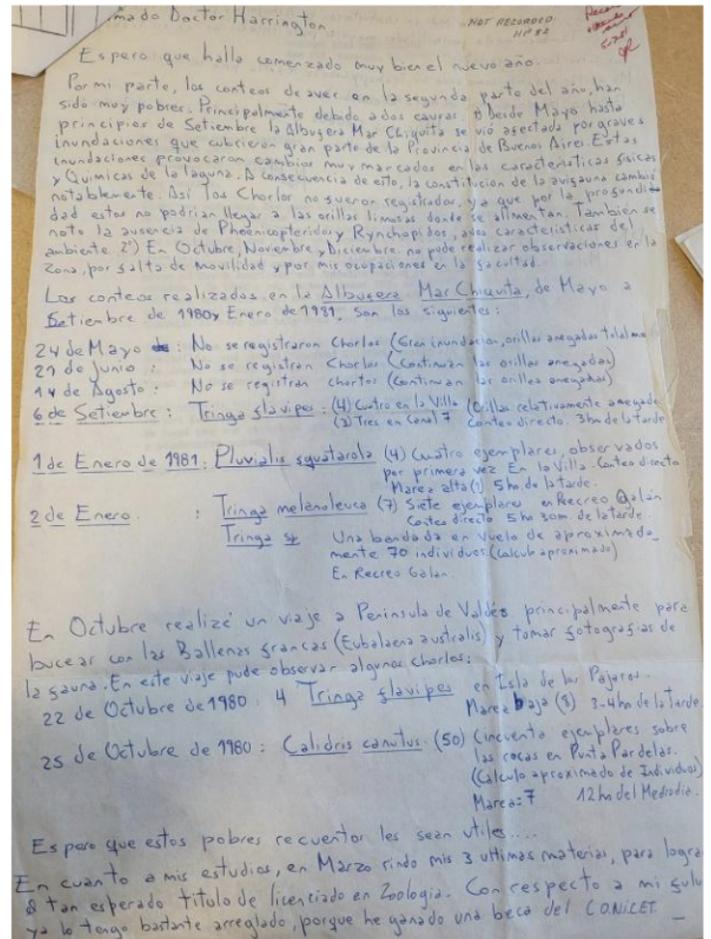
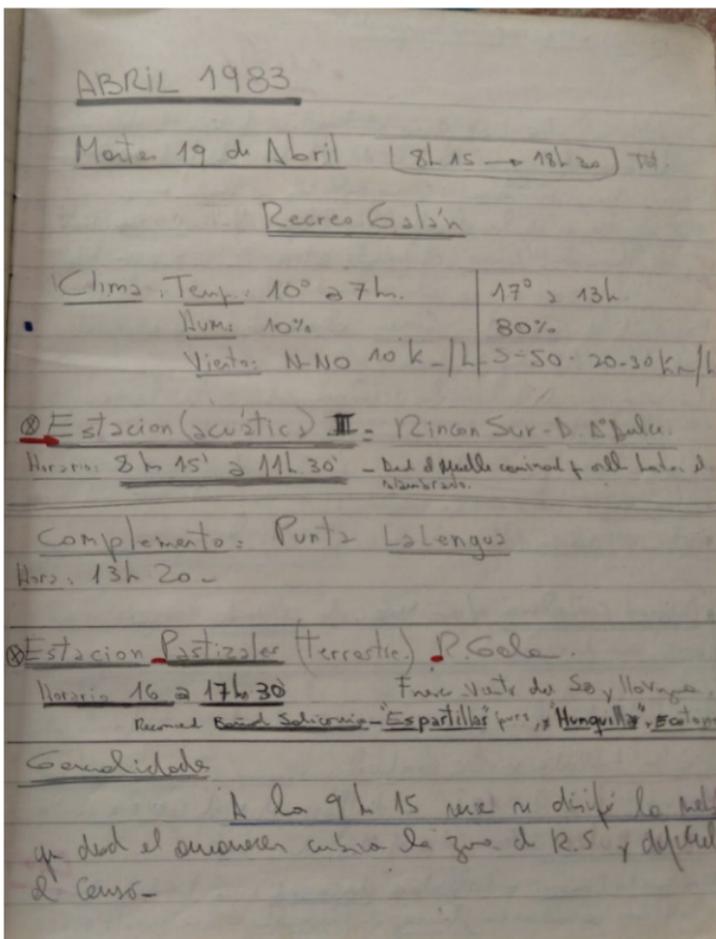
He periodically visited the natural habitats for several years, recording the species, their abundances, and everything that caught his attention. The main sites of the field trips carried out by Mariano were the fishing areas (San Antonio and Juan y Juan), the mouths of streams and canals (Arroyo Sotelo and Canal 7) and the mouth of the main lagoon. On these field visits, the birds that first caught his attention were migratory shorebirds. At that time, an interest in shorebirds migrating from the northern hemisphere was developing in southern hemisphere biologists and this led Mariano to Brian Harrington and ISS. Although not all the sites that Mariano surveyed are currently accessible, the Vertebrate laboratory will

continue surveying most of the historical sites for the ISS, sustaining the interest and passion for this group of birds through generations.



Laura Ferrero

Mariano in the field at Albufera Mar Chiquita, 1982



A page from Mariano's field book (L) and correspondence letter with Brian Harrington from 1981 (R)

Volunteer Highlight: Miguel Oliveira, Brazil

One of our newer ISS contributors is also one of our youngest. **Miguel Oliveira** started counting shorebirds for ISS at 15 (he's 16 now), and we wanted to share his story:

"My first contact with this group of shorebirds took place at the beginning of my career as a wildlife observer. As I was following a small flock of Collared Plover (*Charadrius collaris*) in their degraded habitat, watching their movements, studying their habits, I realized that I could make a difference for their conservation, not just for one shorebird species, but for many others. I started to dedicate my free time to the study of shorebirds, designing a research project and, later, discovering ISS through an old post on SAVE Brasil's social media. With the support of **Juliana Vitória** from the SAVE Brasil team, I was able to join ISS and am happy to be able to contribute to citizen science to help shorebirds.



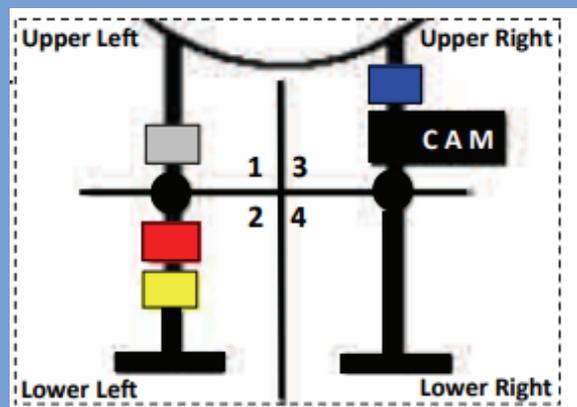
Thanks to the encouragement of friends, I decided to put the outline of my old project into practice, which has as its objective the empirical analysis of the behavior of shorebirds, their population and conservation in the Saquarema region of the state of Rio de Janeiro, an area with diverse avifauna.

What at first was just a hobby, became a great passion and a intense desire to help contribute to the preservation of shorebirds throughout Brazil!"

Report your Flagged Shorebirds to bandedbirds.org

While conducting ISS, have you noticed a flagged shorebird? Do you know how to report it? Data from flagged shorebirds complements your ISS counts. They help scientists identify shorebird migration routes, habitat choices, nesting and wintering areas, survival rates, site turnover rates, and more.

Report to reportband.gov or bandedbirds.org. Detailed instructions on those sites will walk you through the straightforward reporting process. We thank you for all your data!



Shorebirds can have any combination of flags and bands. Left and Right are defined with the shorebird facing away from you.

Flag colors tell you where the shorebird was banded. How far away did it come from?

REGION	FLAG COLOUR
Canada	White
United States	Dark Green
Mexico	Purple Red
Central America	Grey
Caribbean	Pink
Colombia, French Guiana, Guyana, Suriname, Venezuela	Black
Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru	Yellow
Brazil, Paraguay	Dark Blue
Argentina, Uruguay	Orange
Chile	Red

15 letters: **A C E H J K L M N P T U V X Y**

10 numbers: **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0**

4 optional symbols: **+ = @ %**

Not all letters are used to help reduce errors in field readings. Flags can have letters, numbers, and even a few symbols.

Submitting a photo is helpful but not necessary



Connection and Collaboration, ISS and Canada

When two organisms independently evolve similar traits to solve similar environmental problems, we call that convergent evolution. ISS contributors know the story of Manomet's **Brian Harrington**, who in the early 1970s was pondering important questions of shorebird migration and population biology and asking how could scientists, with limited funding, best document population sizes and trends for these long-distant migrants? His solution was the International Shorebird Survey. But ISS contributors might not know that at the same time Senior Research Scientist **Guy Morrison**, shorebird biologist for the Canada Wildlife Service, was contemplating this same question and in 1974 independently implemented a very similar solution. First named the Maritimes Shorebird Survey (MSS), focusing on Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, Morrison's solution relied on volunteers counting shorebirds at set intervals at designated sites, just as ISS does.

Over time the MSS evolved into a more comprehensive shorebird migration monitoring scheme managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada. The Atlantic Canada Shorebird Survey (ACSS) coordinated by **Julie Paquet** has generated data for 705 sites collected by over 500 volunteers. The Ontario Shorebird Survey (OSS) coordinated by **Christian Friis** consists of 250 sites and over 60 volunteers. The Prairie Regional Shorebird Survey coordinated by **Ann McKellar** has been active since 2014 and has data from 24 sites. The Pacific Region Shorebird Survey, coordinated by **Scott Flemming**, has focused on collecting data from two important sites for shorebirds in British Columbia.

The shorebird data generated by these programs have been used in a wide variety of conservation projects and publications including graduate theses, high-level environmental assessments, land conservation prioritization exercises, species distribution and abundance mapping, marine spatial planning, and have been instrumental in supporting WHSRN designation.



Ron Ridout

OSS Volunteers counting migrant shorebirds

As with ISS, the Canada coordinators love to celebrate their extraordinary volunteers and shared some of their stories with us: **Lori Wilson**, IBA caretaker for Reed Lake and board member of the Chaplin Nature Centre, is instrumental in assuring the Chaplin/Reed surveys are conducted each year for the Prairie Shorebird Survey. **Mark Maftei** and **Adrian Dorst** have been responsible for spearheading surveys on Vancouver Island and promoting the Tofino mudflats WHSRN site. **Susann Myers** has been a dedicated and valued ACSS contributor for over 20 years. Data from her surveys in Cape Breton and eastern Nova Scotia have been instrumental for the identification of regionally important shorebird fall staging sites in the Maritimes. **Michael Clark**, who sadly passed away recently, was a staunch supporter of the OSS, conducting counts for 40 years. He contributed annual summaries of his sites in Hamilton, Ontario and drafted the proposal for a new WHSRN site, Western Lake Ontario. Michael's dedication and love for shorebirds will be dearly missed.

Recently survey coordinators from Manomet and the Canada Wildlife Service recognized the need and usefulness of building data continuity and capacity between the two shorebird survey projects to improve the efficiency and accessibility of shorebird survey data through improved data management systems. Over the past year, we have partnered to upload 48,583 checklists from these four projects into eBird and to include them on the International Shorebird Survey Mapping Tool such that all migrant shorebird survey data in Canada and the USA are combined and available as one dataset. So the next time you check out your data on the ISS Mapping Tool (<https://www.manomet.org/iss-map/>) you may notice a lot more placemarks north of the U.S. border, about 2,200 in fact.

We look forward to continuing this partnership to make certain the data generated by both shorebird survey projects continue to be available to scientists, partners, and conservationists in their effort to protect the shorebirds we all love.



2,200 newly uploaded Canada sites in yellow from the ISS Mapping Tool

The Importance of Counting Shorebirds



Last October, Bird Observer published *The Importance of Counting Shorebirds: Manomet's International Shorebird Survey (ISS)*. The article highlights a bit of ISS history, particularly in New England, along with sharing ways ISS data are used, guidance on how to become an ISS contributor, and the stories of a few of the most prolific ISS contributors in Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Bird Observer is a New England-based bimonthly journal

ISS Site	Primary Contributor/s	State	Surveys
Milford Point	Thornton Masten	Connecticut	258
Stratton Island	Lucy Lee Lacasse	Maine	474
Taylor Bait Farm	Ed Grew	Maine	365
Scarborough Marsh--Winnock's Neck	Florence Cyr	Maine	242
Spurwink River	Florence Cyr	Maine	232
Weskeag Marsh	Don Reimer	Maine	206
Plymouth Beach	Brian Harrington	Massachusetts	722
Monomoy NWR--North Monomoy Island	Blair Nikula	Massachusetts	703
Parker River NWR	Deborah Melvin, Douglas Spencer, Nancy Pau	Massachusetts	303
Allens Pond WS--Allens Neck	John O. Hill, Jr	Massachusetts	303
Monomoy NWR--South Beach, Chatham	Blair Nikula, Brian Harrington	Massachusetts	291
Crane Beach	David Rimmer, Rus Hopping, Franz Ingelfinger	Massachusetts	259
Longmeadow Flats	Seth Kellogg	Massachusetts	253
Belle Isle Marsh Reservation	Sohell Zende	Massachusetts	501
Third Cliff, Scituate	Wayne Petersen	Massachusetts	153
Sachuest NWR Salt Marsh	Rey Larsen	Rhode Island	946
Third Beach, Middletown	Rey Larsen	Rhode Island	796
Napatree Point	Rey Larsen	Rhode Island	720
Trustom Pond NWR	Sharon Marino, Don Tiller	Rhode Island	290
Sachuest Point NWR	Rey Larsen	Rhode Island	282

Figure 6. Some prolific ISS contributors in New England.

for birders of all skill levels which publishes original articles on birding locations, avian populations and natural history, regional rarities, and book reviews, plus field notes, bird sightings, photographs, and artwork. You can find the article in the October 2021 issue of Bird Observer, linked here.

Introducing: **Sam Wolfe** Shorebird Biologist, Texas Coast

We are excited to introduce **Sam Wolfe** as the newest member of Manomet's International Shorebird Survey team.

Sam recently joined Manomet as a shorebird biologist focused on growing the International Shorebird Survey in Texas. Her work involves identifying important shorebird stopover and wintering sites, recruiting ISS volunteers, and coordinating survey routes. As a member of Manomet's Science Team, Sam will also provide field support for other shorebird research projects in Texas.



There is always more to explore

Explore all ISS data at manomet.org/iss-map

More about ISS at

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

Join the Facebook Page

facebook.com/InternationalShorebirdSurvey

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