

International Shorebird Survey Celebrates 50 Years!

1974–2024

An Idea Hatched

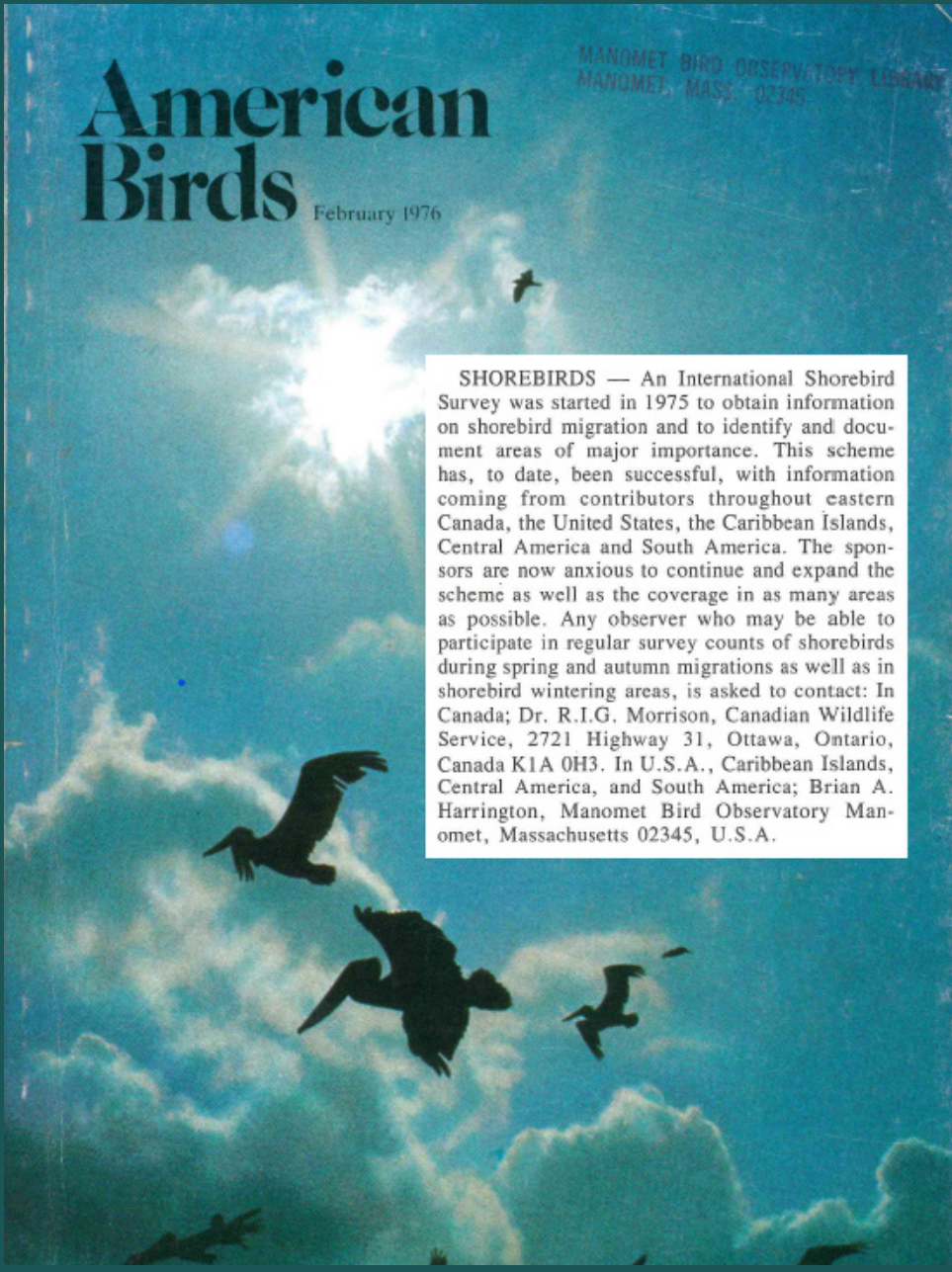
It all started with a small announcement in *American Birds*, a journal devoted to bird records in North America calling for “any observer who may be able to participate in regular survey counts of shorebirds during spring and autumn migrations.” Interested candidates in Canada were to contact Guy Morrison of the Canadian Wildlife Service, and those elsewhere could reach out to Brian Harrington at Manomet Bird Observatory.

The Flock Grows

In 1974, Brian and Guy received data from 67 important shorebird sites across the hemisphere. By 1980, that had grown to 256, and in 2023, 750+ shorebird enthusiasts covered more than 1,300 sites, sending in over 11,000 checklists to the International Shorebird Survey through eBird to help shorebird scientists build their knowledge of population trends and migration paths.

Taking Wing: ISS Today

Over the decades, ISS data have increasingly been used to assess and monitor shorebird populations. Why does it matter? Because **the dependence of shorebirds on coastal and wetland habitats makes them an excellent indicator of the health of our shared environment.** And, recent studies by Manomet scientists and partners show shorebird populations are among the fastest declining bird groups in North America, and data collected by committed ISS volunteers contribute to our understanding of the effects of recovery efforts implemented by partners throughout the Western Hemisphere.



American Oystercatchers

PHOTO: MAINA HANDMAKER



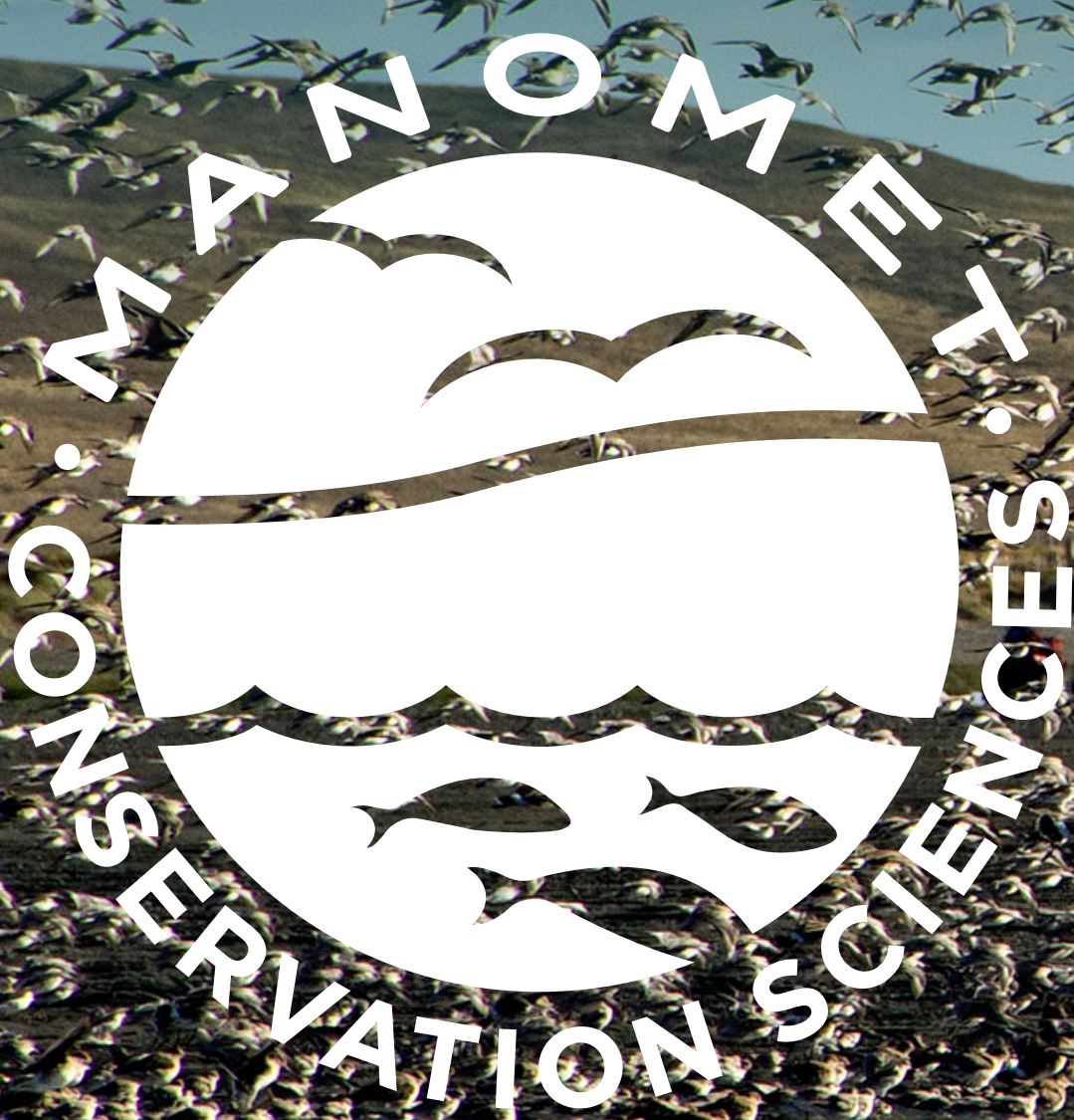
Flock of Hudsonian Godwit

PHOTO: SRP STAFF



Red Knot

PHOTO: SRP STAFF



Bahía Lomas: Hudsonian Godwit and Red Knot

PHOTO: ANTONIO LARREA

Brian Harrington

Emeritus biologist Brian Harrington began his Manomet tenure in 1971. His work focused on conservation issues associated with the long, nonstop migrations of many kinds of shorebirds. In 1996, Brian authored the popular book, *The Flight of the Red Knot: A Natural History Account of a Small Bird's Annual Migration from the Arctic Circle to the Tip of South America and Back*, which explores much of his work on these incredible birds that make a mammoth migration.

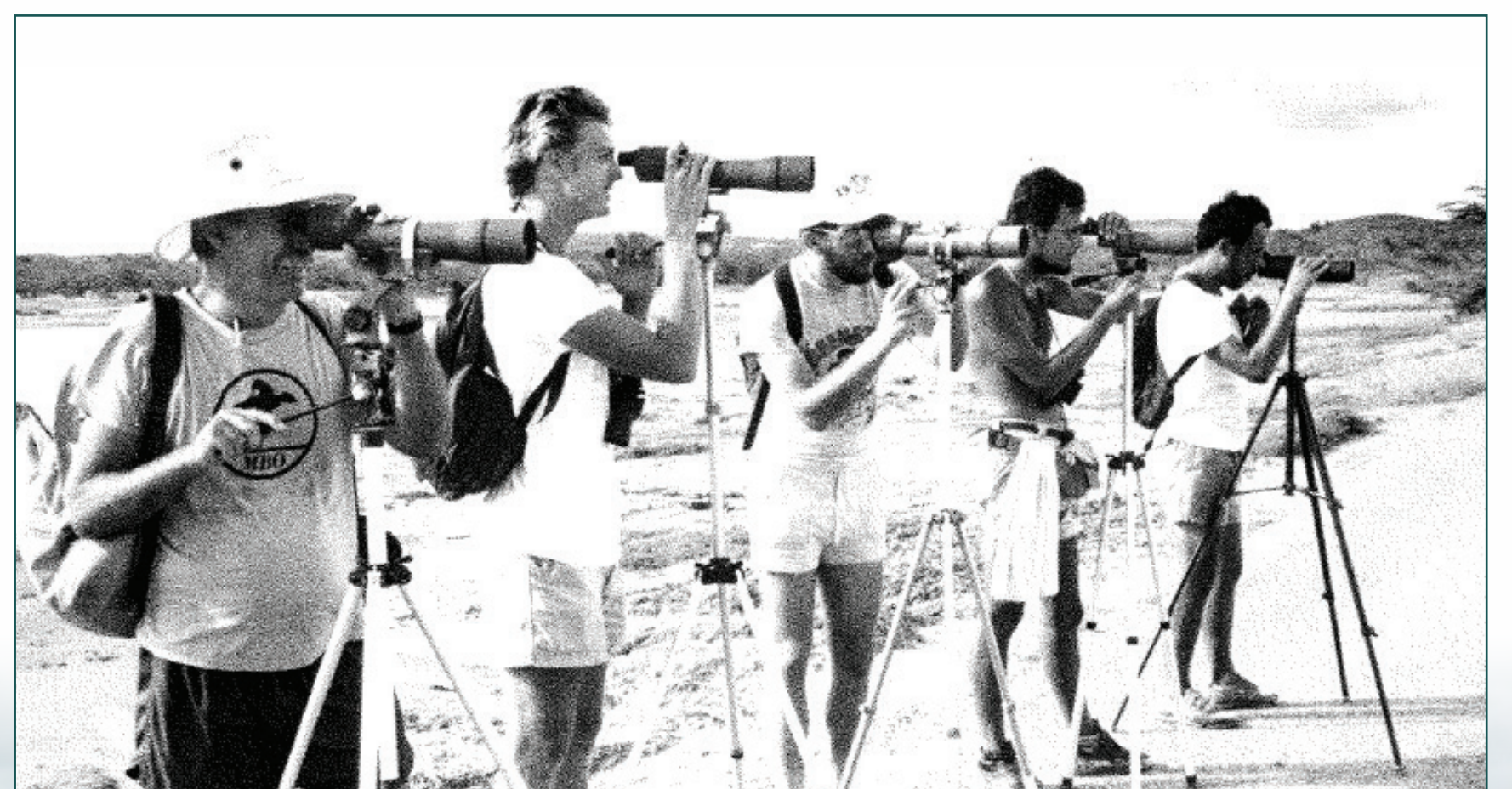


“We had no budget for the work we were doing, and I thought, ‘How can we find out where shorebirds are going, using a scientific approach without any funding? The idea was to enlist volunteers all around the hemisphere, which was the beginning of the International Shorebird Survey.’”

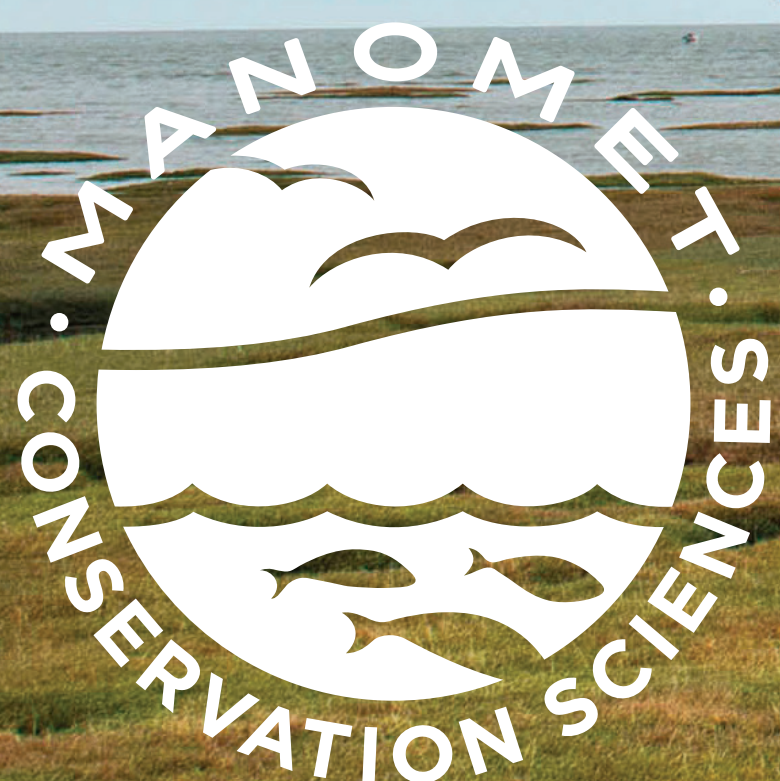
-BRIAN HARRINGTON

REVERSING SHOREBIRD DECLINE

ISS data has proven pivotal to a wide range of shorebird endeavors across the hemisphere including national shorebird conservation plans, site nominations for the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), and recently the 3 Billion Birds project.



Bahía Lomas—Mixed flock of Hudsonian Godwit and Red Knot



100,000

Total number of ISS field surveys gathered by volunteers during spring and fall migrations over 50 years

A Flock of Volunteers

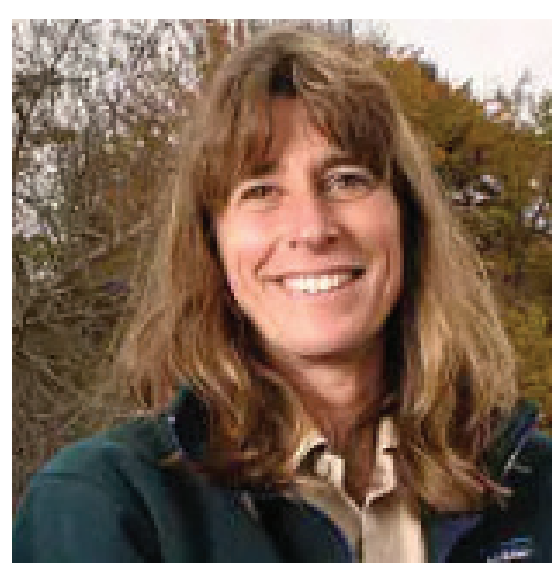
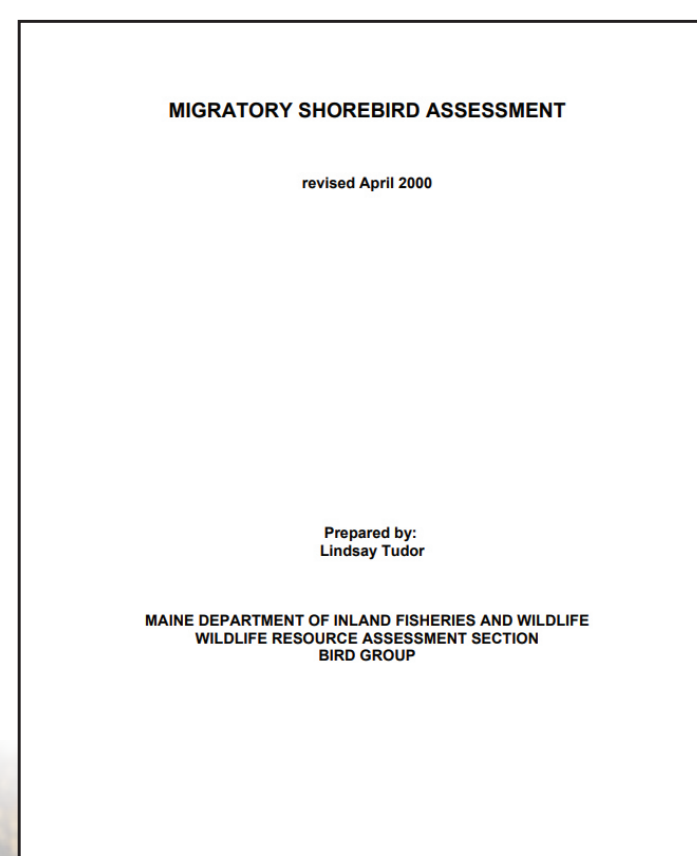
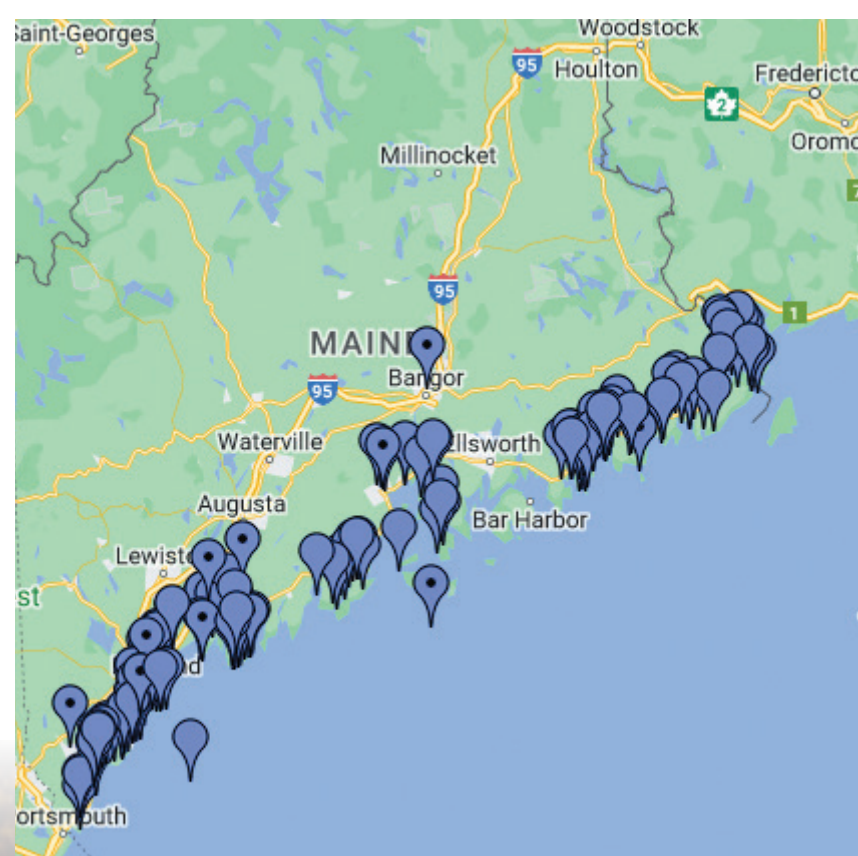
Marcelo Barbosa

Marcelo Barbosa is a biologist-ornithologist, birdwatcher, and bird guide in Tocantins, Brazil. He started learning about birds in 2002 and discovered the International Shorebird Survey during a bird watching event in São Paulo. He accepted the invitation to volunteer and adopted Praia da Graciosa, in Palmas, Tocantins, as his main site for monitoring and counting shorebirds. Starting on May 26, 2016, he has submitted 286 checklists for ISS.



“Understanding how such small birds are able to fly such great distances in search of food and a more pleasant climate, and then return to their breeding grounds, is what motivates us to keep monitoring.”

MARCELO BARBOSA



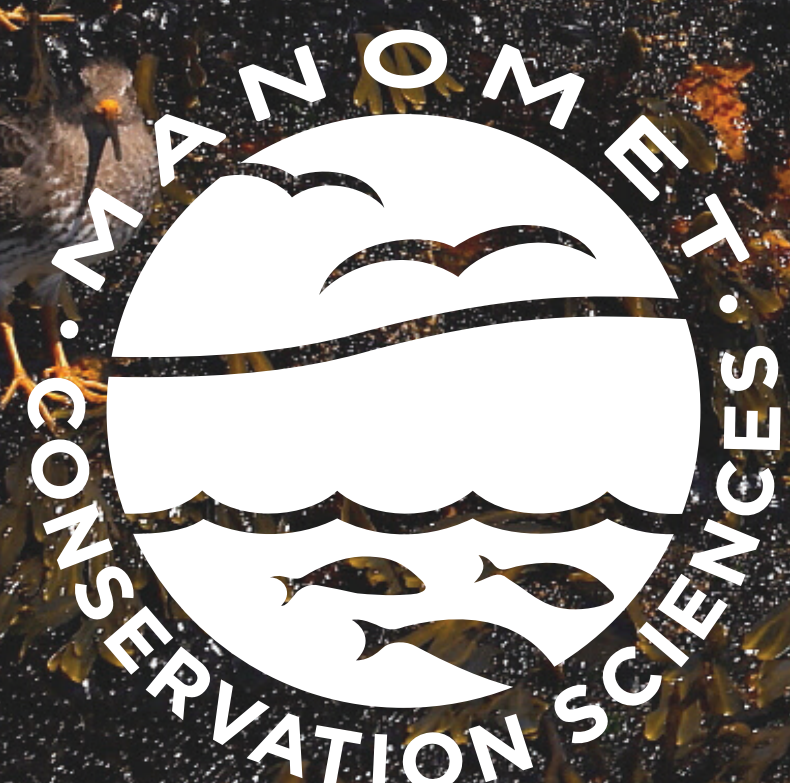
Lindsay Tudor

Lindsay worked as a shorebird biologist for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for 30 years before retiring. She submitted more than 4,000 ISS checklists herself, and is responsible for more than 10,000 ISS counts through her incredible army of volunteers along the Maine coast!



Purple Sandpiper

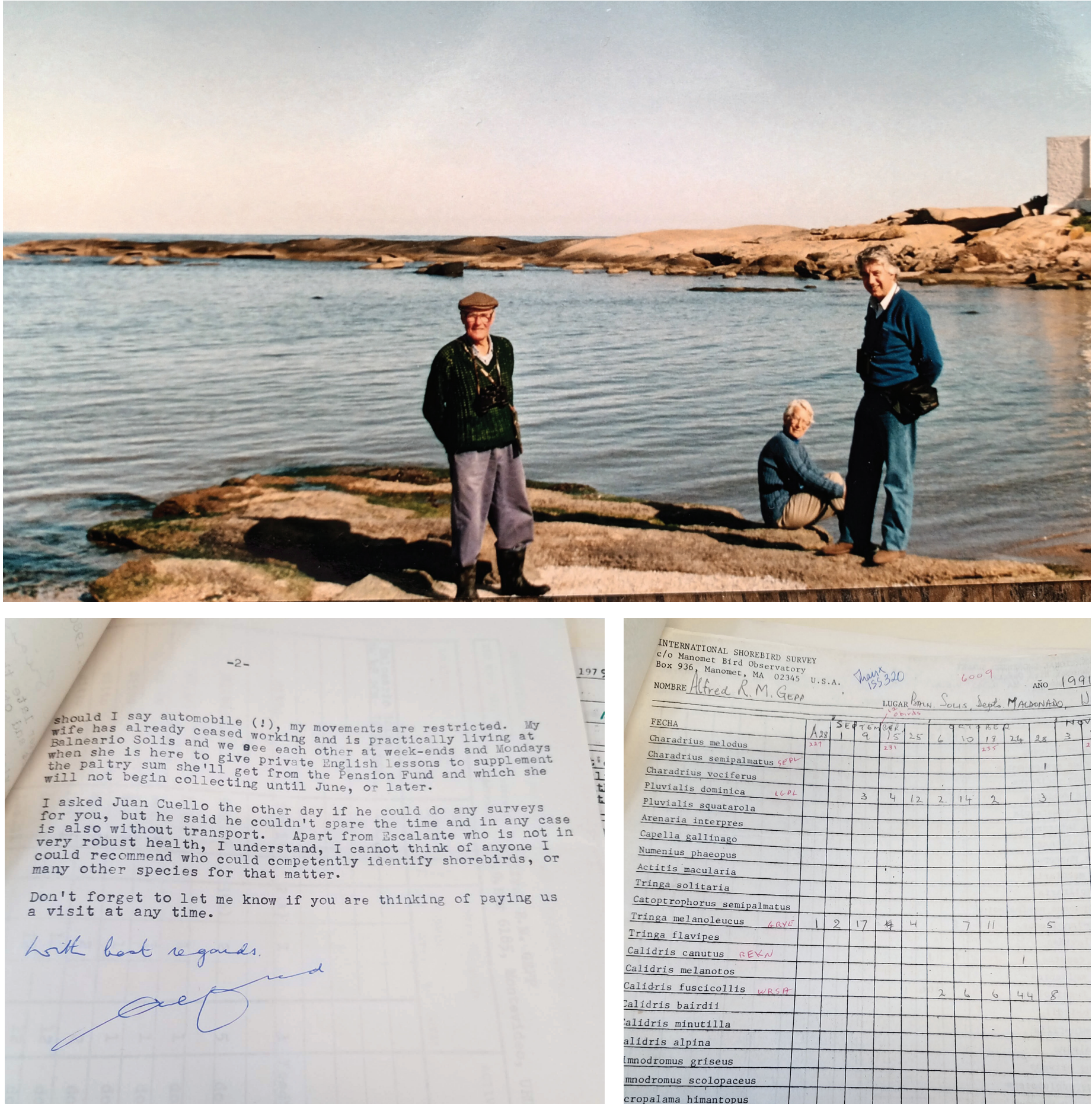
PHOTO: MANOMET/BRAD WINN



A Flock of Volunteers

Alfred Gepp

Alfred Gepp contributed about 40 surveys each year from 1978 to 1991 for several important shorebird sites in Uruguay. Brian Harrington remembers what a pivotal role Alfred played in Brazil shorebird conservation efforts: “He joined us in production of a shorebird workshop that we completed at Lagoa do Peixe in 1984 that focused on training Brazilian students and field workers in shorebird identification and capture/banding. We quite intentionally wanted instructors to represent as many countries as we could to emphasize (and build towards) international conservation efforts. Alfred was a great help with this ... the international interest helped convince Brazilian authorities that Lagoa do Peixe was precious to the international migration systems of shorebirds; they soon made Lagoa do Peixe into a National Park. So I honor him as a friend, but also for the memories and contributions that he made towards what eventually became the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network ... he helped plant the seed.”



INTERNATIONAL SHOREBIRD SURVEY

c/o Manomet Bird Observatory

Box 234, Manomet, MA 02548 U.S.A.

Name: Rey Larsen

Address: 21 Dudley Ave.

Newquart St. Helena

Date: 2002

Site: Lagoa do Peixe

Observer: Rey Larsen

Assessor: [blank]

Date: 1991

Site: Lagoa do Peixe

Observer: Rey Larsen

Assessor: [blank]

Date: 1991

Site: Lagoa do Peixe

Observer: Rey Larsen

Assessor: [blank]

Date: 1991

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A Flock of Volunteers

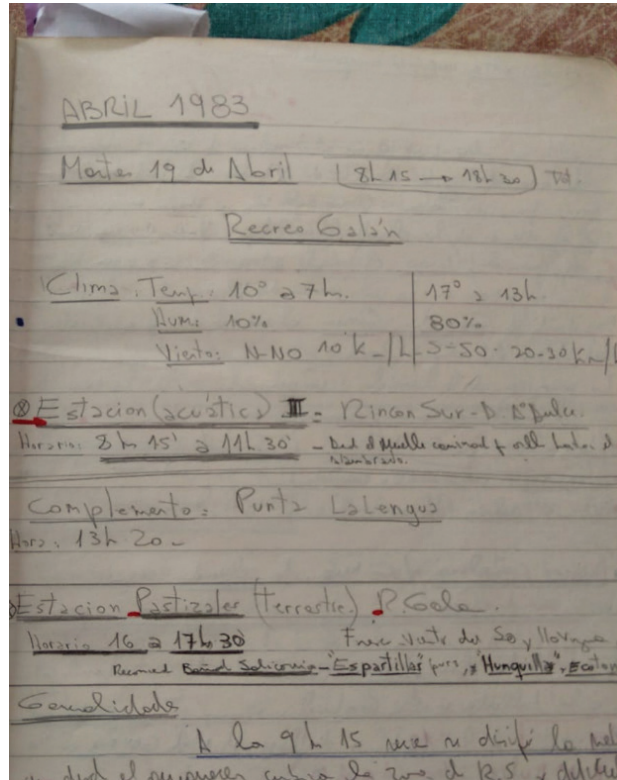
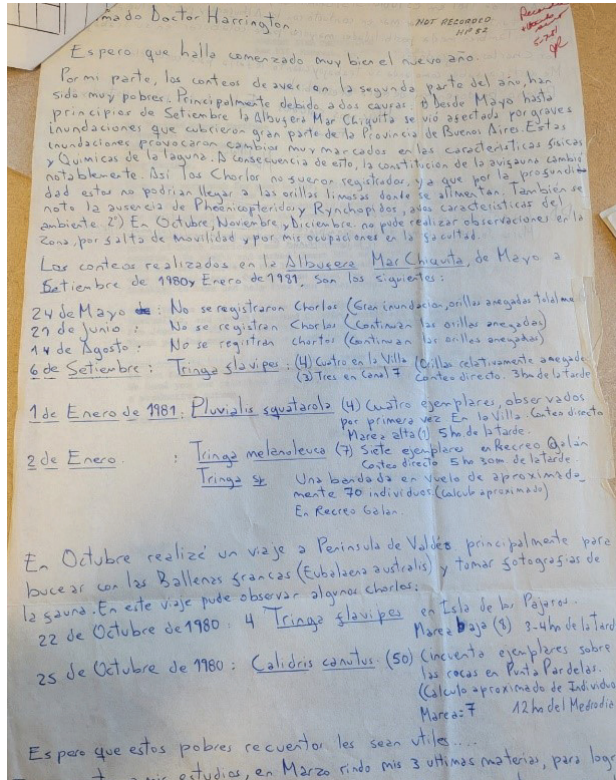
Mariano Martinez

Mariano Martinez submitted more than 60 ISS counts carried out between 1981 and 1985 at Albufera Mar Chiquita, which is now a WHSRN site in Argentina.

More than 40 years ago, in 1981, Argentine zoologist Mariano Martinez began his International Shorebird Survey (ISS) volunteer work in Argentina. Back then he sent his input in writing to Brian Harrington. Among Mariano's observations, the high numbers of Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa*

haemastica (up to 400 individuals) and White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (counts of 1,000 individuals) 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 talking about the potential importance of Albufera Mar Chiquita for the conservation of shorebirds, specifically for the Hudsonian Godwit, for which there was little information available on their non-breeding lands.

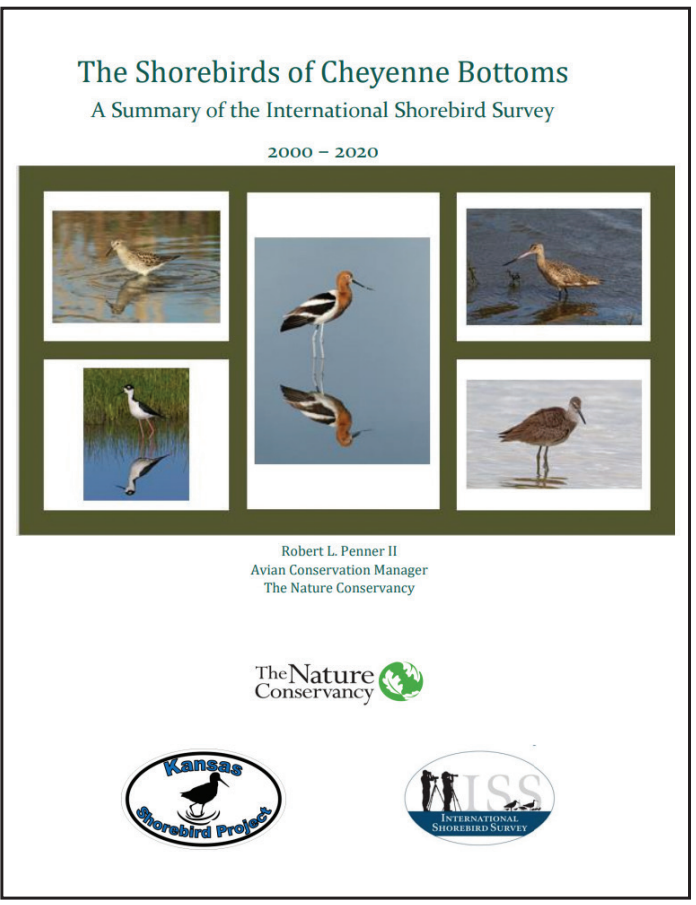


Robert Penner

Robert has been conducting surveys at Cheyenne Bottoms in Kansas since 2008, along with a number of volunteers and shorebird biologists with whom he coordinates.

Every spring, the mudflats of Cheyenne Bottoms are filled with the clamoring calls of shorebirds. The central Kansas wetlands are hundreds of miles from the nearest coast, but serve as a vital refueling stop for Hudsonian Godwits, Baird's Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers, and many other

species making their annual migration north. The vast majority of shorebirds pass through Cheyenne Bottoms in late April and early May, stopping for a few days to rest and gorge themselves on the bounty of invertebrates in the marshes before continuing north. For some, it's their first break after thousands of miles of flying. Because of the importance of Kansas to shorebirds, the International Shorebird Survey data has been of major importance in the development of the Midcontinent Shorebird Conservation Initiative.



(L) Sanderling;
(R) Short-billed Dowitchers

PHOTO: MANOMET/ALAN KNEIDEL

A Flock of Volunteers

John Danzenbaker

At one point, John Danzenbaker was a World Listing record-holder credited with 7,535 species on his Life List and is still famous in birding circles. John submitted thousands of counts for ISS in New Jersey from 1974 to 2005.

In our Manomet archives, we have a copy of a 1985 letter John, a passionate local conservationist wrote to the state of New Jersey about his much-frequented Great Egg Harbor Inlet: “Its banks exposed during low tides attract thousands of shorebirds during migration...it is simply too important to migrant birds to permit anyone to ‘develop’ it. I urge you to consider acquiring this area.” (His high count there of Red Knot was 3,550!)



INTERNATIONAL SHOREBIRD SURVEYS		NAME	DATE	YEAR
770 Manomet Bird Observatory U.S.A.		Box 936, Manomet, MA 02345	U.S.A.	1987
NAME		JOHN D. DANZENBAKER	CENSUS AREA	2NJAC1
ADDRESS				6/13/87
DATE		7/30		
Piping Plover				
Semipalmated Plover				
Killdeer				
Golden Plover				
Black-bellied Plover				
Ruddy Turnstone				
Whimbrel				



João Damasceno

João Damasceno has contributed to ISS since 2015, when he was recruited by Dr. Juliana Bosi de Almeida, then lead of the Shorebird Program at SAVE Brasil, now the Managing Director of Flyways at Manomet. He has contributed more than 657 surveys at important

shorebird sites in Brazil. João now has earned a Ph.D. in Ecology and is a project coordinator for Save Brasil, where he recently led the effort to add one of his sites, Bacia Potiguar, to the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN).



Mixed flock of Hudsonian Godwit and Red Knot

PHOTO: SRP STAFF