



INTERNATIONAL SHOREBIRD SURVEY

Newsletter | May 2026

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The new ISS Site Report tool

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Tumaco, Colombia

Celebrating Robert Penner
Over 40 years of contributions to ISS

ISS now an eBird Project
What does that mean for your checklists?

Participation in ISS is expanding across the Western Hemisphere. Explore the people and places behind the numbers.

In 2025, 823 contributors submitted 7,680 surveys across 24 countries through the International Shorebird Survey. The data collected through ISS feed directly into conservation status assessments, national planning efforts, and international agreements that shape protections for migratory shorebirds.

ISS is growing, with participation increasing across the hemisphere. In this issue, we highlight regions and countries where growth is most evident. Where has it been greatest? The photo offers a clue.



Leonice da Rosa Homem in Mostardas, Brazil scanning for shorebirds.

You will also see how ISS is evolving. With the launch of eBird Projects, it is now easier than ever to contribute to targeted data collection efforts and see the impact of your data. We also introduce the ISS Site Report tool and show how you can help characterize your survey locations to make your data even more valuable.

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COMPLETE YOUR ISS SITE REPORT FORM

Add site details to strengthen your shorebird data.

Enhance Your ISS Site Data in 10 Minutes

Add your site details through a Google Form:

- Describe your survey area
- Note habitat and disturbance
- Capture important site and survey characteristics

How?

1. Go to the [ISS Map](#)
2. Find and click your site
3. Click “Google Form” at the bottom of the pop-up window
4. Submit (10–15 minutes, only one time for your site)

View Site Reports for any site with a completed form using the link at the top of the pop-up window.

ISS Site Report Form

Thank you for helping us make your ISS counts even more valuable to shorebird scientists and conservation partners. In answering questions, please remember the information collected about your ISS site will be part of a public database, so personal information should not be part of your answers. Your name and email will NOT be shared publicly in any way. For an example of a completed form, please click here: [Ellisville State Park example survey](#)

Please describe your ISS site in general terms, include details about your survey route and **access information**. Specific habitat questions will be part of the final section.

Your answer

Least Sandpiper	/93	ISS:17
Western Sandpiper	50	ISS:15
Semipalmated Sandpiper	2076	ISS:18
peep_sp.	292	ISS:1
Calidris sp.	175	ISS:1

For Contributors, if this is your official ISS site please click to fill out the [Google Form](#) to add your ISS Site Report.

ACCESS SITE FORM HERE



SECTOR
VELASCO IBARRA
JOSÉ LUIS
TAMAYO

Ballenita

Santa El

Via Ancon



Submit by
June 15

To be entered
to win an ISS
t-shirt!

Why These Site Details Matter

International Shorebird Survey data are used to track population trends, inform conservation decisions, and shape protections for shorebirds across the hemisphere. The surveys you contribute are part of a long-term dataset that scientists rely on to track changes in shorebird populations. One key piece of that dataset, however, has not been collected consistently in recent years: site-level information.

In the early decades of ISS, Brian Harrington asked contributors to submit not only survey

data but also detailed site descriptions, including habitat, disturbance, and survey coverage. As ISS transitioned to digital data entry via eBird, counts became much easier to collect and manage, but site information was no longer consistently collected.

That information is critical. It helps ensure that surveys consistently cover the same area over time, allows new observers to continue a site with confidence, and makes it possible to include habitat and disturbance in analyses of population change.

SITE HIGHLIGHT

COLOMBIA

El Bajito and Bocagrande, in Tumaco, Colombia, known as “The Pearl of the Pacific,” are vital stopover sites along the Pacific Flyway. Coastal wetlands and sandy beaches here provide essential resting and feeding habitat for migratory shorebirds that travel thousands of miles from Alaska to Chile.

La [Fundación para la Conservación de la Biodiversidad Guandal](#), together with the San Andrés de Tumaco Birding Group, promotes biodiversity conservation, scientific research, environmental education, wildlife observation, and nature-based tourism. The Foundation’s leaders, Mr. Vinicio Góngora and Marcela Cabanzo, play a central role in advancing monitoring and conservation efforts in the region—strengthening local capacity, advancing scientific knowledge, and supporting sustainable development.

The start of the 2025 shorebird and seabird migration season was spectacular. During the August count, 3,085 individuals representing 22 species were recorded on the beaches of Tumaco. Ongoing monitoring efforts at sites like Tumaco help document the importance of these coastal ecosystems as strategic refuges for migratory birds.

Through participation in the International Shorebird Survey and other coordinated monitoring efforts, data from Tumaco contribute to a hemispheric dataset that helps track migration patterns and inform conservation across the Americas.

Thank you to Mr. Vinicio Góngora, Ms. Marcela Cabanzo, and the Tumaco community for protecting shorebirds and supporting efforts that strengthen conservation throughout the flyway.



Willetts and Dowitchers along the Pacific coast of Tumaco, Colombia.
Photo: Vinicio E. Góngora Fuenmayor

Contributor Highlight: Robert Penner, Kansas

My Years with the International Shorebird Survey

Ever since I first watched dawn unfold across the mudflats, shorebird surveys have shaped not only my scientific career but also my appreciation for the vibrant yet fragile wetlands of the Great Plains. My shorebird journey has included muddy boots, smudged field notes from insect spray, stuck vehicles, flat tires, and an ever-growing fascination with the lives of sandpipers, plovers, and all things living in the wetlands.

I began conducting the International Shorebird Survey sometime in the early 1980s while working as a biologist for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, monitoring wetlands in the Rainwater Basin of south-central Nebraska. At first, shorebird identification was daunting, and my early attempts were riddled with uncertainty, but I was eager to learn. Each new species sent me home to read about its migration and behavior— and before long, I was hooked.

“Those early surveys taught me patience and precision.”

ROBERT PENNER

Those early surveys taught me patience and precision. I learned the subtle differences between the silhouettes of avocets and yellowlegs and how to tell a Baird's Sandpiper from a White-rumped Sandpiper. I came to appreciate the discipline required for surveys: careful observation, precise notes, standardized protocols, and a commitment to accuracy that would make the data useful long into the future.

In 1996, I joined The Nature Conservancy to work at Cheyenne Bottoms, a wetland of international importance and part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve



American Avocet at Cheyenne Bottoms. *Photo: Tom Blandford*

Network. I began conducting the International Shorebird Survey there and soon took on full responsibility after the state biologist retired.

Some of my favorite memories come from those early mornings as the rising sun cast a golden glow across the water, watching ten thousand Wilson's Phalaropes spin across the large pool on the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, or finding Buff-breasted Sandpipers feeding in grasslands managed just for them.

Spotting banded shorebirds personally connected me to the broader network of researchers and conservationists across the hemisphere. Encounters with rare or threatened species, such as the Piping Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, Ruff, or Little Stint, underscored both the beauty and vulnerability of these birds. Each sighting deepens the significance of our work, reminding me that every data point can help guide conservation efforts vital to their survival.

After twenty-eight years as Avian Conservation Manager at [Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve](#), I retired in May. My final survey was bittersweet, but I am grateful to continue contributing through seasonal work with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and part-time work with the Kansas Wetlands Education Center.

The rhythm of the surveys and the familiar calls at first light have been part of my life for decades, and I am thankful to continue returning to the wetlands that have shaped both my career and my sense of purpose. Decades later, the simple act of counting shorebirds still connects me to a hemispheric community committed to their conservation.

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ROBERT PENNER



Robert Penner (center) celebrating the 30th anniversary of Cheyenne Bottoms as a WHSRN site of Hemispheric Importance

Where ISS Increased in 2025

ISS participation continued to grow across the hemisphere in 2025, with strong contributions from dedicated volunteers and partner organizations in key shorebird regions. We are also excited to welcome French Guiana to the ISS family. [GEPOG](#) (Group for the Study and the Protection of Birds in French Guiana) is a new and committed ISS contributor, and we look forward to sharing their highlights. This growth reflects the collective effort of the ISS community. Thank you to every contributor, from first-time participants to long-time surveyors, for every checklist submitted and every hour spent in the field.



Photo: Pied Plover by Marcelo Barbosa.

BRAZIL

One of the fastest-growing ISS regions, supported by [Save Brasil](#) under the leadership of Juliana Vitória, who coordinates engagement, training, and data organization for ISS Brazil and has helped build a strong, active volunteer network. Much of the survey effort in recent years comes from the outstanding work of João Damasceno, Francisco Inciarte, Libi Rivero, Davi Pasqualetti, and Jonathas Gabriel.



Photo: Christina Willner in Argentina.

ARGENTINA

Argentina continued its upward momentum in 2025. Cristina Willner in the Río Grande area added 289 ISS checklists, and [Asociación Ambiente Sur](#) submitted 583 surveys while leading community-based conservation and environmental education efforts. Their combined work has strengthened ISS coverage in key coastal and Patagonian wetlands.



Photo: Joey Negreann and Liana DiNunzio on Duxbury Beach.

MASSACHUSETTS, USA

Massachusetts continued its impressive rise in ISS participation. Much of this momentum reflects the work Liana DiNunzio has done through the [Massachusetts Shorebird Blitz](#), which has inspired a large and active volunteer community. The state now contributes some of the highest ISS survey totals in the entire network.



Photo: Greater Yellowlegs by Albert Linkowski.

CALIFORNIA, USA

California showed impressive participation this year. Albert Linkowski has played a major role in 444 ISS checklists since 2022, and the state continues to benefit from consistent, widespread survey efforts across coastal and interior wetlands.



Photo: Sanderlings in Peru by Frank Suárez.

PERU

Peru saw steady participation, supported by [CORBIDI's](#) (Centro de Ornitología y Biodiversidad) long-running efforts and its national shorebird census program. Contributors connected with CORBIDI have added consistent surveys from important coastal sites, reinforcing Peru's key role along the Pacific coast and expanding the reach of the ISS dataset.



Photo: American Oystercatcher by Dwight Mueller.

SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina also saw steady engagement. Dwight Mueller has submitted 624 ISS checklists in the past three years, helping to make the state one of the most reliable areas for coverage along the Atlantic Flyway.



Photo: Yanira Cifuentes Sarmiento in Colombia.

COLOMBIA

Colombia had another strong year of ISS participation. Yanira Cifuentes Sarmiento provided important leadership through 184 ISS checklists, alongside her work as national coordinator of the Neotropical Waterbird Census. [Asociación Calidris](#), which has supported bird conservation in Colombia for 30 years, also played a central role in expanding coverage across both the Caribbean and Pacific coasts.

MORE FROM ISS

Stay engaged, contribute, and explore what's new with ISS

ISS is now an eBird Project, enhancing data sharing and conservation impact

Join the ISS project to submit checklists: ebird.org/projects/1039

Full instructions: manomet.org/project/international-shorebird-survey/

Bring ISS to your Bird Club

Are you part of a bird club or organization with potential ISS contributors? We would love to present on the International Shorebird Survey at your next meeting. Contact Ischibley@manomet.org to schedule. Let's grow the ISS community together!



Don't forget to complete your ISS Site Report Form



Another Way to Support Shorebirds

Take part in Global Big Day by sharing your checklists with the [WaderQuest](#) team. If you were out birding on May 9, it's not too late to add your observations to this global effort, which brought together shorebirders from 23 countries and recorded over 1,600 species in 2025.

There is always more to explore

More about ISS at manomet.org/project/international-shorebird-survey/

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

Join the Facebook Page facebook.com/InternationalShorebirdSurvey



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