

"CALL TO ACTION" SUCCESS STORIES

The task of reversing serious declines in populations can seem enormous and even hopeless. However, there are examples of where a "Call to Action" and focused efforts have contributed directly to the rebound of formerly declining populations.

Figure 2 shows seriously declining trends for most shorebird species in North America beginning in 1970. While there are still many shorebird species undergoing continued declines, others are responding to more focused work. The timing of this recovery is tied directly to conservation work in the late 1990's and the publication of the U.S. Shorebird Plan, which helped rally and focus management.

THE AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER

The American Oystercatcher also tells the story of a population responding to action. This large, conspicuous shorebird breeds along the Atlantic Coast from Cape Cod to Florida, and along the Gulf Coast from Florida to Mexico. The American Oystercatcher population was on a downward trend that could have made the species a candidate for listing as endangered or threatened.

The American Oystercatcher Recovery Campaign began in 2007 with the development of the first-ever Business Plan for Conservation, a radical departure from other conservation plans; tying recovery of the population to a specific funding level. More than twenty organizations and agencies are now working together to achieve the goals of the campaign. The campaign is coordinated by the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences and supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state agencies, and multiple private foundations and individuals.

With the development of the American Oystercatcher Recovery Campaign partners embarked on a focused management effort for this iconic species. Populations rebounded almost instantly with total population increasing after only the first year of work (Figure 3).

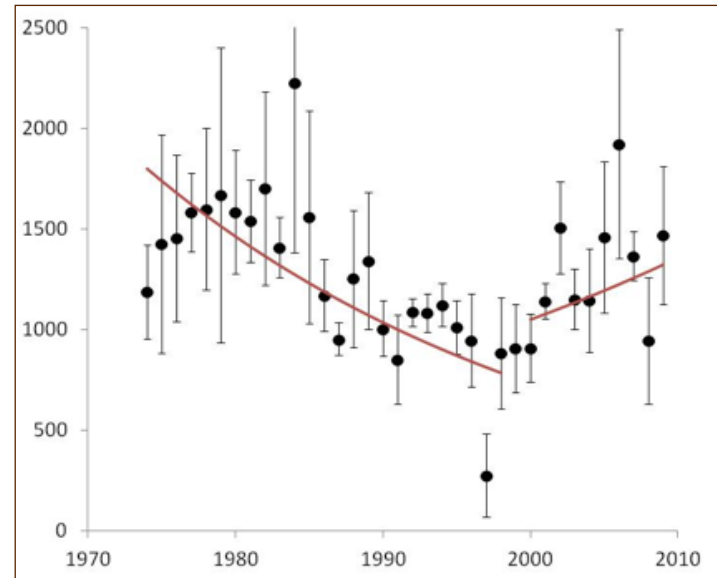


Figure 2. The downward trend in counts of all shorebirds from the 1970's to 1990's appears to be reversing since the start of targeted conservation efforts for shorebirds in the late 1990's.

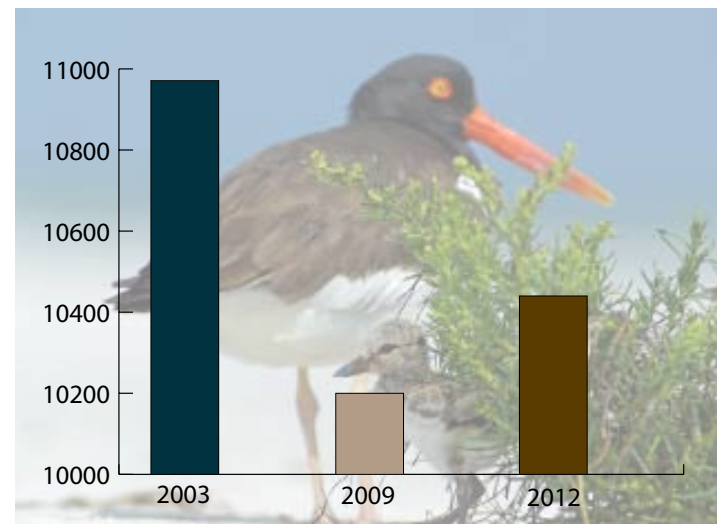


Figure 3. This graph shows American Oystercatchers projected rebound after recovery campaign is implemented in 2009. Photo by Jack Rogers

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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ATLANTIC FLYWAY SHOREBIRD

Business Strategy - Phase 1

A CALL TO ACTION

DECLINING POPULATIONS

Recent data suggest that several Atlantic Flyway shorebird species have experienced declines of between 50% and 90% within the last three decades, an alarming trend that requires the continuation of current conservation actions and an immediate response for additional work. One of the best-known examples is the eastern population of Red Knot (Figure 1). Semipalmated Sandpiper that once numbered over two million on their wintering grounds have dropped by 80%.

PRIORITIES SET, IMPLEMENTATION DEFICIENT

The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan set research and conservation priorities for North American shorebirds throughout the country that were implemented regionally through the North Atlantic and Southeastern Coastal Plains-Caribbean plans. These regional plans identified conservation priorities and actions for Atlantic Flyway shorebirds but did not furnish specific details on how to implement conservation actions.

A CALL TO ACTION

The Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Conservation Business Strategy is an unprecedented endeavor to implement conservation for shorebirds across an enormous geographic scale that involves numerous federal, state, provincial, and local governments, conservation groups, universities, and individuals. The business strategy approach emphasizes the involvement of scientists, advocates, funders, and other practitioners all working together for prioritized on-the-ground actions that move toward specific, measurable outcomes. In short, this strategy presents the needs, actions, and individuals that will recover this remarkable suite of species.

OVERALL BUSINESS STRATEGY GOAL

The goal of this conservation strategy is to create a long-term platform for stability and recovery of focal species identified. The cumulative impact of the projects developed herein, will increase current shorebird population levels by 10-15 %, by 2020, at a cost of approximately \$20 million per year.



Red Knot. Greg Breese

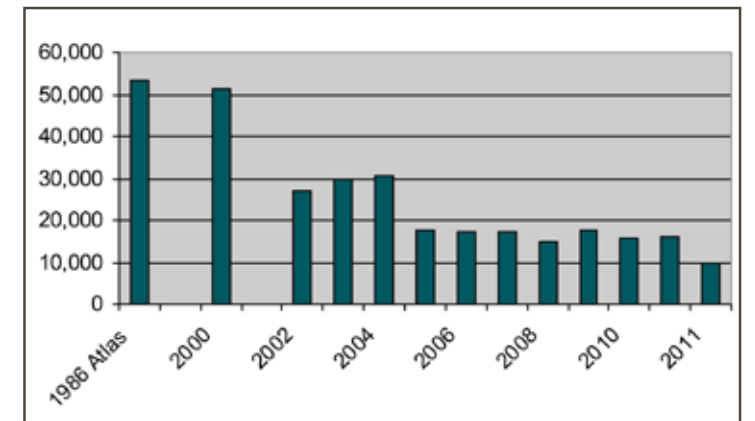


Figure 1: Red Knot wintering numbers in Tierra del Fuego declined by 80% since 2000



Piping Plover. Bill Hubick

TACTICAL CONSERVATION

Seven key strategies were developed as core conservation efforts necessary to address limiting factors. Given limited resources key strategies focus on actions that will have concrete and measurable outcomes on population growth and sustainability. The seven key strategies identified below, and examples of top tier projects are included to the right.

Strategy 1. Reducing Threats to Populations

Take immediate action to reduce threats on Shorebird populations throughout the Atlantic Flyway, including predation, recreational disturbance, and hunting.

Strategy 2. Habitat Management and Protection

Protect shorebird habitat from threats such as development; effectively manage habitat to meet shorebird needs; and create more habitat to recover shorebird populations.

Strategy 3. Strengthening Conservation Regulations

Engage and influence existing regulatory structures to ensure that strong and up-to-date regulations are in place for protecting shorebirds and their habitats at local, regional, and flyway scales.

Strategy 4. Developing Shorebird Conservation Constituencies

Employ a concerted strategy to engage citizens, organizations, and governments in actions to abate threats facing shorebirds throughout the Atlantic Flyway.

Strategy 5. Hemispheric Partnership Engagement

Facilitate effective international partnerships; coordinate activities across multiple countries within the flyway; and ensure that resources are distributed where they are required to reduce shorebird declines.

Strategy 6. Population Assessment and Monitoring

Gain knowledge of Shorebird populations, reproductivity, and survivorship to evaluate whether they are at risk from human activities, and prioritize corresponding conservation actions. Measure the effects of ongoing actions to ensure they produce maximum conservation benefits relative to the resources invested, and strategically adapt resource allocation as required.

Strategy 7. Reducing Gaps in Knowledge of Limiting Factors

Take immediate and proactive steps to evaluate, and address emergent, latent, and understudied threats to shorebird populations, before they have irreversible consequences.

THREATS & OBJECTIVES

Shorebirds face numerous threats during their lifetimes. Natural threats, such as predators and severe weather, have been around for eons, and shorebirds have co-evolved to persist with these pressures. However, human-induced threats, such as habitat destruction, recreational disturbance, unregulated hunting, and pollution are relatively new and can wreak havoc on shorebird populations.

Activities presented in this strategy address the most serious human-induced threats known to affect shorebirds and shorebird habitats in the Atlantic Flyway. The strategy also includes activities aimed at filling critical gaps in knowledge so effective management actions can be undertaken to alleviate such threats.

Hunting Objective

1. Reduce harvest of all shorebirds to sustainable levels of 4% per year of adult population.

Predation Objective

1. Increase productivity of temperate breeders to a level that allows 10% annual population growth by 2018 (e.g., 1.5 chicks/pair).

Human Disturbance Objectives

1. Increase productivity of temperate breeders to a level that allows 10% annual population growth by 2018 (e.g., 1.5 chicks/pair).
2. Increase in suitable disturbance-free wintering habitat by 40% by 2018.

Habitat Loss & Change Objectives

1. Increase the amount of protected and adequately managed shorebird habitat in focal areas across the flyway by 50,000 acres.
2. Develop and incorporate adaptive habitat management models and strategies for climate change scenarios for each region.
3. Achieve no net loss of shorebird habitat from coastal engineering projects.

Lack of Knowledge Objectives

1. Determine current knowledge of distribution and abundance of shorebirds in the Caribbean and South America and the most pressing threats affecting them.
2. Conduct comprehensive studies to identify priority areas for conservation and fill knowledge gaps.
3. Build capacity for monitoring, management and conservation.
4. Estimate and monitor baseline demographic data for all focal arctic-breeding shorebirds and determine factors affecting demography in the Canadian Arctic.
5. Identify the network of sites most critical to the conservation of each focal species and prioritize those sites most in need of conservation action.

REPRESENTATIVE PROJECTS FROM KEY STRATEGIES



Purple Sandpiper, Jim Fenton

