

**AMOY Working Group Annual Meeting  
Cedar Key, Florida  
November 27-29, 2012**

***Many thanks to the local organizing committee – Peter Frederick, Amy Schwarzer, Janell Brush and Nancy Douglass – for hosting a successful 2012 meeting!***

**Tuesday, November 27, 2012**

**Shiloh Schulte – State of the American Oystercatcher Recovery Initiative**

- Review of Business Plan guidance and goals
  - \$10M over 10 yrs. from NFWF
  - 30% population increase in 10 years
  - ~0.5 chicks/pair/year
- Annual AMOY productivity
  - chicks fledged since 2009 – average of 0.53/year after start of initiative; above threshold for goal for increase in business plan
  - data suggests declining population prior to 2009
- 2012 field season
  - Data incomplete but so far looking at about 0.52 chicks/pair for 2012. Highest number of pairs with productivity data since we started the collective database.
  - Note that 24 pairs monitored in NY in 2012 were from Breezy Point; AMOYs nesting on very little beach area with minimal signage, lots of disturbance; implemented shelter for chicks, productivity went up to 1.33.
- What other metrics should we be thinking about to measure our success? Will discuss this as the meeting goes on. How can we quantify the extent of our efforts so that it's consistent across the range? e.g., how much habitat, quality of habitat, etc. then translating that to numbers to present to the public, to funders, etc.
- Vital signs of the initiative
  - Population size
  - Productivity
  - Coordinated management
  - Coordinated monitoring
- Does the productivity level track over time with the amount of money put into monitoring and management? Would be instructive to illustrate this.
- Context of what Shiloh is presenting marks the beginning of NFWF funding for AMOY recovery efforts and adoption of business plan by Working Group.

**Brad Winn – Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative**

- Iteration of the 2001 Shorebird Conservation Plan
- Progressed from regional plans to thinking about flyway efforts to address declines of shorebirds
- Business Plan philosophy came straight from the AMOY Working Group example
- 23 shorebird species in long term decline
- E.g. Red Knots declined by 80% since 1998
- Large scale initiative launched to address declines
- Need to:
  - Define threats
  - Develop overarching strategies
  - Design actions
  - Secure funding using investor language
  - IMPLEMENT conservation actions
- Overview of threats

- Main threats were identified and 7 strategies were identified
- Broke out Atlantic flyway into large scale focal geographies then broken into finer scale
- Theory is to move away from species specific initiatives and use a broader approach to address more species at once.
- List of 15 species
- Spreadsheet with threats as tabs
- Main funding audience is NFWF.
- AMOY WG is encouraged to keep thinking independently as far as the support that a single species working group may get. In terms of work on the ground and proposals, keep thinking about individual projects but be thinking about framing those projects in the context of how other species are impacted.
- Questions and Discussion
  - What is the Atlantic Flyway? Tierra del Fuego all the way up to Mackenzie River Delta. Very broad brush. How far west on the Gulf coast? Follows the waterfowl concepts. Their flyway is our flyway.
  - Draft version available. States can now present this document to their states to influence budgeting decisions. This is what should be happening. Will also eventually be a glossy document to use for that purpose.
  - Any plans to expand this to Central Flyway? Current thinking is that much of the declines that are considered in this plan are linked to what's happening on the Atlantic coast so Central Flyway is not currently being addressed.

#### Alex Wilke – Multi-species conservation in the context of AMOY recovery efforts

- Preliminary assessment shows huge potential benefits from AMOY conservation for multiple coastal species
- >800 miles of shoreline managed and/or monitored for American Oystercatchers
- > 90% of AMOY management benefits other coastal bird species
- Management of ~1500 AMOY pairs benefits ~19600 pairs of 14 species of shorebird and colonial waterbirds
- AMOY Working Group positioned to integrate with and potentially serve as a model for the Atlantic Flyway shorebird initiative
- Questions and discussion
  - Are we effectively using AMOY conservation funds to maximize multi-species benefits? Conclusion: Group opinion and the results of the initial survey suggest the group is on the right track, but more analysis is needed to understand the magnitude of the benefits to other species
  - Are we using the best metrics to track those benefits? Conclusion: Pairs affected and shoreline managed are a good start, but we also need to look in more detail at a subset of affected species and populations to estimate the benefits of Oystercatcher conservation on productivity and population growth of associated species.
  - Are we effectively communicating those benefits to the public and to funders? Conclusion: Mixed results. We can and should do a better job of highlighting the full range of benefits and successes associated with Oystercatcher conservation. Need for better communication in proposals and reports, but also through public interaction, social media, and educational material.
  - **Formed subcommittee to refine initial survey and address remaining questions**
  - Need to refine proportion the each separate affected species in order to put overall impact in context.
  - Caution to think about tradeoffs of aiming to do more with less. Do not spread too thin.
  - Instead, keep focus on AMOY but 'get credit' for other things that are being accomplished. AMOY WG really came about based on their umbrella nature anyway. This exercise will serve to actually quantify that.

#### Tracy Borneman – Website update

- Biggest change since last update is integrating website with banding database. Link on webpage within working group webpage.
- Historical archives of the banding schemes
- **Call for updates to state pages**

- Presentations will be put up on webpage, unless otherwise specified
- Ideas on links on other webpages to the AMOY website? Ebird? Edie will ask about ebird.
- How mobile friendly is the website? Doesn't use flash player. Tracy will ask website designer.
- Metrics for webpage – how many visitors, how often are they visiting, etc. They can pull that information out if anyone wants it.
- Visit the website often to raise the profile!
- Satellite transmitter work from Audubon NC will be on the webpage.

#### Ted Simons – BNA update

- BNA account was published in June. Working group members still have free access but public access online is limited because of cost. Great accomplishment. First BNA account/update to be written by a working group – 18 people.
- **Cornell will accept ONE set of revisions over the next year or so. Ted will ask for those revisions by email over the next few months.**

#### Lindsay Addison – Band/Resight database

- Database is live!
- Custom database operational now; flow of data entry designed to work specifically with AMOY data and to limit errors
- Public users can be registered or unregistered. Registered users can use My Oystercatchers page and would enter data on the database website. Unregistered users would enter through the form on the WG's site.
- Batch loading will not be the preferred option going forward due to additional administrative requirements. Best case is to use the database as much as possible. If a batch upload is needed (excessive number of records collected in a very short time), use the excel format that Lindsay sends.
- Do we want different levels of access? Eg. ability to search but not enter?
- Eventually want to have KML files for all the existing locations in each state so that people unfamiliar with the existing locations can see which sites already exist.
- Benefit of including information for other species seen with observation? In Notes section is a possibility and since they are searchable that type of information can be easily extracted.
- Think about key words and which ones could be suggested in the 'help' box for the notes section.
- How much coordination is happening with other initiatives? Example, FL initiative for recording breeding birds and any resights that are collected. Bandedbirds.org links you to this database. Ebird?
- Close to 20,000 records with update through 2012.
- **Make sure to send Lindsay recommendations/questions, etc. about the database after the meeting.**

#### Ted Simons – code of ethics discussion

- Previous discussion with BBL about partnership between the AMOY database and BBL. BBL is resource in public trust and we wanted to work towards making our information available to the public to maximize its benefit for the conservation of oystercatchers. Data sharing battles often holds back progress. Goal of making the data available but still respecting the rights of the owners of the data.
- Need a mechanism for moving into the public realm at some point.
- BBL recently indicated they are still interested in creating a partnership between the BBL and the WG. Lab does not have a history of maintaining auxiliary data but they hope to develop a role in the future for this. First need to generate consensus from this group that it's something we want to pursue
- BBL would want access to the database if we were interested in pursuing this.
- Ted presented first stab at implementing a data sharing agreement
- How do you get bound by the agreement? If you get a user name to the database.
- What about limited use of data for example for educational purposes. E.g., of someone writing a small article in a local newspaper about the history of a particular bird.

- Option to opt out of any of these procedures. Varying levels of options of access and permission based on individual users.
- Wanted to keep agreement as simple as possible. Put potential users in contact with the actual data owners and let them work it out.
- On the other side of that, want a mechanism for ensuring that people don't sit on their data forever – that is the last piece of this puzzle. Release into the public domain with a rolling window of time.
- Submission to BBL would require no additional effort from data owners.
- Lindsay will continue to work on a way to integrate the agreement into the database functionality.
- **The draft agreement will be posted on the WG website and everyone is encouraged to send comments and/or concerns to Ted and Lindsay**

#### Shiloh Schulte – Best Management Practices discussion

- Reviewed and discussed AMOY BMPs
- May be a sensitive issue to post BMP documents on website.
- **Shiloh will send it out for comment and review before the holidays for another version. Revisions to be collected between now and December 15<sup>th</sup> for initial round.**

#### Shiloh Schulte – Winter Survey

- Winter aerial survey to be repeated 2012/2013.
- Primary funder is NFWF and they want a repeat snapshot assessment of population size.
- January/ early February 2013 – simultaneous coverage of Atlantic and Gulf coasts so shortens time window.
- Jan 1-7, Jan 15-20, Jan 31 – Feb 6. Based on Atlantic coast tides.
- Includes ground counts for flock detection rates.
- **Right now they know which planes are being used and the basics of the details. Need to work through specifics of ground counts. Shiloh will do this with individual representatives from the states as we get closer to the time of the survey.**
- Observers – Ellen in Gulf of Mexico; Shiloh on Atlantic coast. Still trying to nail down pilots and accompanying observers for all of the other states.
- **Shiloh will send out information on the survey and the proposal that people can use if they need documentation to provide for match commitment.**

#### **Wednesday, November 28, 2012**

#### Janell Brush, Amy Schwarzer, Peter Frederick – Habitat selection of wintering AMOY in Cedar Key, FL

- Examining how AMOYs are using oyster bars in the winter season
- See powerpoint.

#### Margo Zdravkovic – Shorebird restoration on the Gulf Coast

- See powerpoint

#### Sue Heath

- Texas update
- See powerpoint

#### Lindsay Addison

- Boat disturbance study
- See powerpoint

#### Ruth Boettcher and Ted Simons – Range-wide AMOY breeding season survey update and discussion

- Update on coordinated breeding and resighting survey throughout the range

- Planning committee formed in 2011 to continue discussion about implementing survey. 13 states agreed that they would support getting the survey done but would likely need some level of funding.
- New faculty member at NCSU has a new fellowship that would support a PhD student that could potentially design and help implement a rangewide survey.
- Since 2011 meeting: planning committee talked to faculty at NCSU, agreed to bring a student on board. And established 2 overarching objectives
  - Determine number and distribution of AMOY breeding pairs by surveying suitable breeding habitat
  - Document number, distribution, age and breeding status of marked individuals during the nesting season.
- Student is recruited, will begin under supervision of Beth Gardner in January 2013.
  - Will assist with the design and/or analyses of the rangewide breeding/resighting survey
  - Begin tackling the analyses of capture/recapture database in partnership with AMOY WG.
- Reps from Canadian Maritime and gulf state regions are on board.
- Challenges:
  - Ted drafted preproposal and tested the waters for funding potential. Not much response or interest. Still might be other sources of untapped funding but...
  - Are probably looking at piecing together the effort on a state by state basis without overarching financial support from any one funder.
  - Will need a systematic approach for the survey.
  - Can we come up with an approach and funding to do the official survey in 2014?
- Planning committee agreed to meet in person sometime in early 2013 with NCSU faculty to discuss future steps and keep WG updated.

#### Tracy Borneman

- NCSU research update
- See powerpoint

#### Tracy Borneman

- NC pilot study with flags
- 2012 protocol changes
  - Edges sanded
  - 30+ days old for banding
  - Chick checks every 1-2 days
  - No recaptures for chicks
  - Observed incubation in adults
  - Checked eggs of banded adults
- Overall, no adverse effects of the flags on the chicks or adults
- Do we support continued use of flags? Considering that NC study did not see any adverse effects.

#### Matt Bailey

- DE pilot study with flags
- 25+ days old for banding, checked about 3 times per week after banding.
- 2010-2012: 26 flags applied, 15 to chicks, 11 adults.
- All but two chicks were seen up to 35 days.
- 9 of 11 adults resighted, many back to same breeding site.
- No sign of egg damage or hindrance to incubation.
- Conclusion is that they would support continued use of flags but to some extent defer to resighters for more information about reading the codes.
- DE flags were bigger than NC. Two of those flags might be an issue with band interaction between the two legs.

#### Band Discussion

- 3 digit flag and vertical combination seems to be the best combination; vertical is basically a backup when the flag is not in a good position.
- For the flags, the NC version (one digit on round part, 2 digits on flat part of flag) versus the DE version (digits all on flat part of flag) – Learys suggest that they are about the same to resight. But obviously the bigger band with all digits on the flat part is the easiest to read. We could also shrink the flag and still keep the digits on the flat part.
- Better to be conservative and go with the smaller flags. 1 digit on round part, 2 digits on flat part.
- What about having round band as the state color? Value to promoting citizen science and PR of the banding programs with keeping the state colors. On the other hand, should be standardizing as much as we can so we just all use green.
- **Group decided to adopt banding scheme with the smaller of the flags on one leg, 3 digits with one on round part and 2 on flat part, 3 digits vertically on round band on other leg.**
- How to administer the codes?
  - States will be assigned a bracket of codes so code will define state.
  - **Still needs to be more discussion about how exactly the codes will be administered. Enough detail for now.**

#### Working Group Committee structure discussion

- Revisit of the idea to create more of a structure for organization of the Working Group.
- Review of document that Shiloh sent out to group.
- As a group, do we want to go in the direction of having a more formal structure?
- Layers of benefits to having something more structured. One thing is justification for attending meeting. Another is that replacement of leadership is a good thing. Constant communication throughout the year and not just in close proximity to the meeting.
- Don't want to change the character of the group.
- How would representation work? Geographically with reps from different areas? How would 'terms' work? Staggered terms is a good idea too.
- Decided that subcommittees would be the basis for the beginning of a Steering Committee.
  - Multi-species
  - Breeding survey
  - 2013 meeting
- Meeting frequency every two months. Call end of January. Something that the first committee could work on would be some sort of protocol for how the steering committee should function.
- Initial group will be Shiloh, Ruth, Todd, Felicia and Alex and Walker to represent 2013 meeting committee.

#### Ellen Jedrey – mussel restoration

- See powerpoint

#### Brief updates via Shiloh on research from:

- Pam Loring (tracking common terns and AMOYs with nanotags in context with wind development in Nantucket Sound);
- Sean Murphy (Massachusetts breeding population studies).

#### Stephen Brown

- Introduction to the Mexico American Oystercatcher Working Group
- Regional shorebird conservation plan with AMOY as one of focal species
- Both Black and American Oystercatchers but mainly focused on AMOY
- Interested in collaborating with this working group and plan on sending at least one representative to 2013 meeting

#### Emily Wittman

- Prescott College Kino Bay Center for Cultural and Ecological Studies – waterbird monitoring program. Bahia de Kino, Sonora, Mexico
- See Powerpoint

#### Todd Pover – Sandy update from NJ

- See powerpoint

#### 2013 Meeting

- North Carolina with possibly Texas on board for 2014.
- Walker and Lindsay will be contacts for local planning committee.

#### **ACTIONS ITEMS**

- Convene meeting of WG steering committee with new members
  - Review committee organization and meeting schedule
  - Review action items from 2012 WG meeting and develop a timeline for addressing items
- Convene sub-committee to refine the integrated shorebird management survey and results
- Convene Breeding Season Survey design and planning meeting in North Carolina
  - Explore SWG funding for Breeding Season Survey
- Working Group Review and revision of AMOY Best Management Practices – December 2012
- Distribute survey information/protocols and finalize logistics and site-specific dates for AMOY aerial survey in January/early February
- Assess the planned scope of work for Working Group partners for the 2013 and 2014 field seasons and identify high-priority sites where additional actions and funding are needed
- Maintain close communication and collaboration with the Atlantic Flyway Initiative leadership
- Call for updates to state specific sections of AMOY WG website – please send to Tracy Borneman.
- One revision of online BNA account to be completed within the next year. Ted Simons will follow up with collecting edits/revision.
- Call for recommendations and/or further questions about banding/resighting database. Please address to Lindsay Addison.
- Call for comments/concerns on the draft data sharing agreement for the banding/resighting database. Please review the draft agreement and send any comments or concerns to Ted Simons and Lindsay Addison.

<http://amoywg.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/American-Oystercatcher-Band-Database-Data-Sharing-Agreement.pdf>