

AMOY Working Group Meeting Notes
All meeting sessions were recorded on Zoom and are available for viewing
Tuesday February 2, 2021

Plenary: Applying conservation social science insights to reduce the threats to Atlantic Flyway shorebirds.

Ashley Dayer and Carolyn Comber

- Consensus building project to define human disturbance – Mengak and Dayer 2019, Environmental Management
- Changes in human behaviors, not changes in bird behaviors
- Conservation Social Science – using theories from social science to address environmental management challenges; different lens for these topics
- Presentation includes results from land manager surveys about human disturbance related variables – all results available in full report
- Notable comments from managers:
 - Challenge of protecting shorebirds that are stopping over and/or wintering in an area and communicating that message to the public
 - Law enforcement is spread out so not effective but when they are present they are
 - Face to face conversations between volunteers and stewards and the public is more valuable than LE
 - More funding is needed to support staff and volunteers to interact and communicate with the public
- Surveys of beachgoers – not the typical approach
 - Instead: Community based social marketing approach – 5 key steps

Q&A:

- How did they handle people who both leash and unleash their dogs during a walk for the analysis?
 - Usually off-leash dog walkers typically had their dogs off-leash and only leashed them when necessary for some reason, so they were categorized as off-leash.
- Are infographics effective for reporting numbers and facts?
 - Suspect that infographics are helpful for grabbing people's attention but may still have challenges if people are not predisposed to appropriate behavior; but Carolyn's research shows that the knowledge deficit might be an important gap to fill as well.
- How did managers assess the self-reported effectiveness of strategies?
 - No set protocol; more based on anecdotal information or logs from managers.
- Dog walking surveys – were these on beaches where dogs are permitted?
 - Looked for beaches that allowed off-leash dog walking at some point during the year and/or day. Also chose beaches on biological data that had been collected previously Audubon and other partners and summarized by Virginia Tech.
- How often do people mention that their dogs chase the birds for exercise?
 - Happened quite often, surveyors could not show bias.
- Would Ashley and Carolyn be willing to present findings to field season staff?

- Could share recording from this meeting; they are also working on a set of shorter presentations that could be used for this purpose and ultimately will be available on the AFSI website. **Contact Ashley and Carolyn at dayer@vt.edu and ccomber1@vt.edu for requests for content specifically related to their presentation.**
- Interest in conducting a similar study across northern Gulf Coast.
- Are there good links to specific examples of successful CBSM approaches to bird conservation?
 - Bird Studies Canada – beaches and high tide
 - <https://www.redknotready.com/> - It's on Seabrook
 - Bird Life Australia – creation of 'wildlife' beaches and 'dog' beaches

Links to some of the papers and other resources that Ashley and Carolyn talked about:

Bennett et al on conservation social science:

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2016.10.006>

Defining Human Disturbance to Shorebirds by Dayer and Mengak:

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00267-019-01230-2>

Strategic Communications for Shorebirds Conservation:

<https://www.waderstudygroup.org/article/14636/>

The dog walking report (Carolyn has manuscript coming out in Human Dimensions of Wildlife soon):

<https://tinyurl.com/shorebird-CBSM>

Land manager survey:

<https://tinyurl.com/land-manager-survey>

Migration BMP:

<https://tinyurl.com/migration-bmp>

Links from Carolyn

<https://www.amazon.com/Interpreting-Our-Heritage-Freeman-Tilden/dp/0807858676>

<https://www.amazon.com/Interpretation-Difference-Sam-Ham-Ph-D/dp/1555917429>

2020 STATE UPDATES

Maine and New Hampshire – Shiloh Schulte

- COVID – cancellation of Shiloh's Alaska field work meant increased opportunistic monitoring of ME and NH coastlines
- Stratton Island, Maine with 5 pairs, only grouping of pairs in Maine, others scattered along rocky coastline; notable pair on Cape Porpoise Island, rocky substrate.
- Beach closures resulted in PIPL nesting on mainland beach, no AMOY
- NH – Isles of Shoals; just on NH side of Isles; first nesting pair of AMOY

Massachusetts – Carolyn Mostello

- 189 pairs monitored; not a complete census due to COVID
- 0.63 productivity from 150 pairs with fledge data
- Pairs increasing overall in MA and proportion of urban pairs increasing

Rhode Island – Maureen Durkin

- 43 pairs in RI, overall increasing trend since 2009
- 2020 productivity 0.47 fledged chicks/pair, driven by nest loss at south county sites

Connecticut – Beth Amendola

- COVID impacts – field season delayed at the beginning; reduced staff and volunteers; more people on the beaches.
- 56 pairs in CT, 21 non-breeding pairs (pairs considered non-breeding if no nest, chicks or scrapes found – remote pairs not visited frequently may have been nesters but just not confirmed), 48 chicks fledged; 0.85 fledglings per pair.

New York – Kaitlyn Parkins

- COVID impacts varied across organizations and agencies. Presentation provides details of different restrictions by entity.
- 129 total pairs. Overall 0.72 chicks per pair.

New Jersey – Emily Heiser

- Highest number of pairs since 2003 but likely attributed to increased monitoring coverage; also doesn't include pairs nesting in the marsh.
- 152 pairs monitored in 2020; 0.34 fledglings per pair
- High productivity at some of the state's least "natural" areas and most highly-recreated sites
- Are pairs moving from marsh to the beach because of flooding?

Virginia – Alex Wilke

- COVID impacts – NWR staff delayed until early June. Otherwise back to normal. Other partners not impacted.
- Most annual monitoring and management along seaside of Virginia Eastern Shore – complete stay survey done every 5 years, last done in 2018
- Barrier island survey end of season estimates – 542 pairs, highest since monitoring began in 2000. Not a complete state estimate; latest was 730 pairs in 2018.
- 272 pairs monitored; overall productivity 0.35 chicks fledged/pair

North Carolina – Lindsay Addison

- 2019 – state census 393 pairs total.
- COVID impacts – beach closures early on meant lower human use of beaches; same sites monitored for productivity as usual
- 10 year average in NC 0.41 young/pair.

Georgia – Tim Keyes

- COVID impacts – main beach closures pushed beachgoers to more remote nesting sites; limited stewards
- Generally a good year for productivity; 120 pairs, 0.4 chicks fledged per pair.

Florida – Janell Brush

- COVID impacts – beach closures early on but recreation was allowed and beaches began opening as season progressed; AMOY had higher than usual disturbance pressures on shell rake and spoil nesting islands; social media and virtual outreach was important
- 235 pairs, 0.4 chicks per pair
- Rooftop nesters; paper coming out soon

Alabama – Lianne Koczur

- 2019 – 5 pairs, 4 fledglings.
- 2020 – no boat based work because of COVID; reports of 4-5 pairs from Coffee Island but no productivity estimates
- Alabama banding with Dark Blue bands

Mississippi – Melissa Averhart

- COVID impacts – 2020 monitoring scaled back
- Two pairs on Cat Island monitored
- No nesting on mainland beaches
- Next year all 8 nesting islands in the state will be monitored; may start banding

Louisiana – Katie Barnes

- LA's coastal master plan - \$1 billion over the past 15 years for habitat restoration/creation
- 2-3 pairs on Queen Bess Island; Whiskey Island – 4 pairs

Texas – Susan Heath

- 40 pairs monitored by GCBO; 22 fledged chicks; 0.58 productivity
- Volunteers monitored 13 pairs, 4 chicks fledged; 0.30 productivity
- Average 0.45 productivity over the last 10 years; bad years mostly driven by weather; all birds nesting on islands
- COVID impacts – no volunteers working with staff, less frequent monitoring, anecdotally more boat traffic from the public

Q&A

- How was outreach impacted by COVID and any impacts on human behavior? Lots of info submitted to the chat.

From Ashley Dayer (she/her) to Everyone: 11:43 AM

For sites where you have outreach programs too, how did COVID impact your ability to do outreach? Anecdotally, if less outreach, any impacts to human behaviors?

From Alex Wilke to Everyone: 11:44 AM

We couldn't use volunteers

From Hen Bellman (she/her) to Everyone: 11:44 AM

We had no volunteers either in DE

From Kaitlyn Parkins- NYC Audubon to Everyone: 11:44 AM

In NYC we were unable to run our "Share the Shore" program and ended up only doing some chalk messaging on the boardwalk

From Pam Denmon to Everyone: 11:45 AM

We couldn't post signs that we normally would.

From Hope Sutton to Everyone: 11:45 AM

We still can't use volunteers - looking toward posting for the season

From Abby Sterling, Manomet to Everyone: 11:45 AM

In GA we did not use volunteers for outreach either, although we had some volunteers checking rope lines at one site.

From Ashley Dayer (she/her) to Everyone: 11:45 AM

Thanks, all. So do you feel like less outreach had impacts or not?

From Emily Heiser to Everyone: 11:45 AM

No volunteers in NJ until late season. The folks that watch our birds on municipal beaches aren't necessarily formal volunteers - regular beachgoers that get particularly attached to them and keep us updated.

From Ashley Dayer (she/her) to Everyone: 11:45 AM

(Other than staff having more work)

From Lindsay Addison (she her) to Everyone: 11:46 AM

Our use of volunteers is going to be less in 2021 than normal. I'm hoping to have some volunteer bird stewards but we have limits on the number of people who can be in the boat at one time.

From Emily Kelderhouse to Everyone: 11:46 AM

For NYC Parks we were unable to host any formalized outreach events and worked with NYC Audubon to create chalk messaging on the boardwalk

From Susan Heath to Everyone: 11:47 AM

We normally do outreach with beach goers for nesting Wilson's Plovers and we could not do any of that last summer. The beaches were completely packed with people (much more than normal) and I think

that impacted nesting more than the lack of outreach though the combination of the two was likely significant.

From Ashley Dayer (she/her) to Everyone: 11:47 AM

Cool workaround to use chalk messaging.

From Emily Heiser to Everyone: 11:47 AM

I would say that is hard for NJ to measure if less outreach had impacts due to the sheer increase of disturbance on our beaches in 2020 due to COVID.

From Maureen Durkin to Everyone: 11:47 AM

Our largest AMOY site typically gets covered for outreach by a refuge intern, that was reduced in 2020, less coverage seemed to result in locals/regulars "knowing" there wasn't a presence out there and more negative behaviors like dogs, parties, etc.

From Kaitlyn Parkins- NYC Audubon to Everyone: 11:48 AM

We don't have formalized data on outreach effectiveness but it seemed that the lack of seasonal staff had the biggest negative impact on the birds in some areas we worked

From Tyson Dallas to Everyone: 11:48 AM

FWC in Florida did not use volunteers in 2020. I believe we are still not using volunteers.

From Lindsay Addison (she/her) to Everyone: 11:48 AM

Yes, anecdotally, lack of staff and volunteer outreach at sites had an impact on compliance with postings (staff didn't do as much engagement with the public due to the pandemic).

From Tim Keyes to Everyone: 11:48 AM

Very limited Beach stewards - but enclosures still seemed to be functional for the most part.

From Janell Brush to Everyone: 11:49 AM

'official' FWC volunteers were not used but Florida Shorebird Alliance partners are not all official FWC volunteers.

From Tim Keyes to Everyone: 11:50 AM

We had much more boaters on the water - mid-week numbers looking like normal weekend numbers,

Beth Wright – in the panhandle Audubon couldn't even have techs in 2020 so probably not much going on with stewardship

Predator relocation in Mississippi – question about more information for Mississippi folks. No one on the call, revisited by email from Melinda Averhart: "I want to clarify that this is a draft proposal that has not been funded yet. In a nutshell, we are choosing relocation vs. lethal control for two reasons: 1) mainly because of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' policy. They do not support lethal control of native species, however they do support relocation and have appropriate preserve parcels

where this can safely and responsibly be done. 2) it's a dicey issue for Audubon to be involved in lethal control, especially an area with some historical connection to the raccoons and landowners supporting the raccoons (the island was named Cat Island for the raccoons). Raccoons are the primary target because they are probably the most prevalent nest predator for both beach-nesting birds and sea turtles on the island. Trapping will be done by experienced consultants who have worked with MDMR before. Methods would not be determined by Audubon staff, but by the consultants.”