

AMOY Working Group Meeting Notes  
*All meeting sessions were recorded on Zoom and are available for viewing*  
Thursday February 4, 2021

**PREDATOR MANAGEMENT SESSION**

**Mikayla Call, Virginia Tech – Assessing drivers of oystercatcher reproductive success on Metompkin Island, VA using cellular tracking technologies**

- PPT available
- Metompkin Island, VA very important for AMOY, remote, dynamic
- Recent declines in productivity due to unknown reasons and seemingly low mammalian predator pressure
- 2019 camera project to ID causes of nest loss
- Lead to objectives of this study to use cellular radio tags to track chicks and document causes of chick loss as well as investigate nest success

**Q&A**

- How are tags being attached?
  - Scapular region with surgical glue. Expect that they will fall off and will require relocating as necessary. Sue Heath used stitches as well on older chicks to help retain tags.
- Caution that this can be a labor-intensive process of keeping track of tags. Mikayla – this equipment allows for remote monitoring so you can tell which tags have stopped moving, hopefully that will help.
- Nick Vitale has feedback from Florida study as well
- Any evidence over the years that chicks on Metompkin are impacted by specific weather events/environmental conditions? (in addition to possible effects to habitat). Storms, tidal events impact chicks in MA. Have even seen PIPL chicks being blown down the beach.
  - Uncertain on Metompkin. Anecdotally it seems that there are areas of refuge for chicks to take cover in big storm events and we don't have the scenario where the entire site goes under water. But only weekly monitoring visits really doesn't allow us to determine causes of chick loss.
- Kaitlyn Parkins- NYC Audubon – We've used sutures with nanotags on plunge-diving species as well and it was really helpful
- From Ezra Thompson – What length of perch deterrents are planned to be used on top of nodes? We have documented GHOW perching in between shorter deterrents in Florida and would recommend at least 7 inch length if possible to deter GHOW.
  - Sarah Karpanty – Still determining perch deterrent details but we will use extensive perch deterrents and plan to monitor the tower and nodes to make sure they are effective. We are very cognizant of that issue.
- From David Carson - Have you seen harassment/predation by fish crows?
- From Kaitlyn Parkins- How far from the nests did you place the cameras?

- 3m typically. Details of camera demo project are available here:  
[https://www.atlanticflywayshorebirds.org/documents/Supplement\\_Demonstration\\_Project\\_Reports\\_Camera\\_Guidance\\_final.pdf](https://www.atlanticflywayshorebirds.org/documents/Supplement_Demonstration_Project_Reports_Camera_Guidance_final.pdf)
- From Hen Bellman - You briefly mentioned chick starvation. Could you speak to how you might assess this?
  - Planning on quantifying provisioning rates and comparing with other known info.

### **Scott Coleman and Kate Tweedy – Little St. Simons Island – A case study in adaptive predator management on Little St. Simons Island**

- PPT available

#### **Q&A**

- Are you planning to maintain this level of control every year or every few years?
  - Planning to do every year when funds available. Lower coon populations now after initial trapping but thinking the same amount of effort will be needed every year.
- Any pushback from the public about trapping/sharp shooting?
  - Private island so not much concern over PR issues but they have talking points about protecting these threatened species.
- Have coyote remained off the island since the earlier removal or are you (USDA) continuing to control them too?
  - Probably a good chance of more finding their way over but they are prepared now.
- Maintenance trapping – how to make those decisions?
- Are live trapped animals relocated?
  - No lethal control.

### **RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS**

#### **Katie Maffett – Monitoring the effects of human disturbance on American Oystercatcher nesting behavior on beaches in New York City**

- PPT available

#### **Q&A**

Lots of specific camera equipment related questions and chat items:

- Guidance for using cameras in nesting shorebird work as well as demo project reports:  
[https://www.atlanticflywayshorebirds.org/documents/Supplement\\_Demonstration\\_Project\\_Reports\\_Camera\\_Guidance\\_final.pdf](https://www.atlanticflywayshorebirds.org/documents/Supplement_Demonstration_Project_Reports_Camera_Guidance_final.pdf)
- Pam Denmon – beach debris can help camouflage cameras and deter theft/vandalism
- Kris Vagos - Trophy Cam with WiFi very convenient

- Sue Heath - My cameras were lower to the ground and I covered them with a 5 gallon bucket spray painted to look like trash. I never had a camera stolen or stop working, but I wasn't using a new fancy model either and no solar panel. We used car batteries to power them.
- From Shiloh Schulte In the arctic we stopped using motion capture and switched to capturing a photo every second to create a video. Too many missed events with motion capture. With a large enough card you can leave a camera like this capturing images for weeks
- From Kylie Wilson It doesn't make it less conspicuous per say but I wrote Live Feed on the top of the camera lock box so people would think twice about taking it. Also used on a very busy beach here in FL also normally attached it to the posting around SNPL nests and then would wrap the cable lock around a few times.
- Cape Lookout AMOY work early on used buckets also.
- From Melinda Averhart - Bushnell's will get the job done, but photo quality of a Reconyx is much better, but also more expensive.
- From Elizabeth Colhoun - We use small signage that states they are part of a wildlife study and highlight they are state property and outfitted with a tracker to deter people from taking them. That has worked well for us.
- From Lindsay Addison - If you haven't encountered this before, you can cheaply buy lids that go onto the top of 5-gallon buckets that are watertight.
- From Elizabeth Colhoun - If you have the funds, Reconyx is worth it!
- From Todd Pover - In NJ, one of our partners went totally the other way on a recreated beach and used a sign to indicate why the camera was placed there in hopes that would persuade anyone thinking of tampering with or taking it from not.
  - From Kaitlyn Parkins- NYC Audubon - Todd how did that work out? We've discussed and have concerns about drawing attention. Once of sites is a community that specifically does not like the birds or even in-person monitoring
    - Highly effective but no 100% - decide by site
- From Emily Heiser - In NJ partners used buckets with cameras a few years ago. We do think that crows cued into them after a couple of weeks at one site. We removed them after we thought they caught onto them. Just one site though - several others did not have issues.
- From Ezra Thompson - If not needing eggs in view of game camera, placing lower to the ground is less visible. attaching dried vegetation to the sides and back (or beach debris as previously mentioned). oftentimes the front face of game cameras is the most visible, but pointing away from people can add to cryptic nature. Second the use of 30-second time interval and No-glow infrared (>850nm wavelegnth, avoiding red-glow or white flash). an 18 amp hour 12v battery can power a camera with 30 second time interval for 6-8 weeks. For security, look into installing an earth anchor (work well in sand)
- From Melinda Averhart - We also run a python cable from our camera stands to a cinder block and bury the cinder block in the sand. It can be laborious, but it does prevent theft.
- From Raya Pruner - I thought I heard you say the camera you were planning to use was 'low glow'. I might be wrong. No glow is recommended when cameras are placed near nests to reduce nocturnal predators cueing in on cameras.

## **Kate Robb and Amber Krauss, Town of Hempstead – NY: Urban American Oystercatchers of Long Beach Island**

- PPT available
- Interested in other stories of AMOY/PIPL interactions and trio nesting

### **Q&A**

- Are nests at these sites roped off at all?
  - Yes – almost all
- From Kylie Wilson - When you say moved the egg, do you mean they picked it up and took it to a new scrape? or they lost the clutch and re-nested elsewhere?

### **Entanglement comments/questions**

- From Kaitlyn Parkins- NYC Audubon – did you notice an increase in entanglement this year? I meant to mention during the state update, we seemed to get more reports of entangled birds (dead and alive) this year than ever before. Not sure if there were just more people on the beaches paying attention or there was actually an increase.
  - From Katharine Parsons - do you attempt to re-catch banded birds with tangled line?  
No, all live birds were too mobile to catch, not all the tangled birds were banded.
- From Emily Heiser - NJ has had a lot of entanglements over the years. We have had success with bow nets on nests to capture, hand nets, and even beach towels/blankets have also been successfully used. We also used a whoosh with chicks in a loose mesh cage to attract entangled adults as well. We did try a net gun last summer but did not have success. A lot of hours have been put into capturing the handful we have been able to help. Several have evaded us.
- From Lindsay Addison Like Emily, we've had some success at recapturing entangled AMOY using long-handled hand nets. If they're recently fledged, if you can approach them from the front and have multiple other people encircling from other sides (holding up towels to make more of a barrier), sometimes you can get lucky.
- From Susan Heath We have had a lot of entanglements in Texas. I've used a bow net, a CO2 air gun and Koda net gun successfully, but many evade us. We have started doing annual fishing line focused clean ups in areas where the most entanglements occur.
- From Ezra Thompson we have had success with recapturing entangled AMOY with whoosh net but agree with extended time requirement

### **AMOY interactions with other species questions**

- From Alex Wilke - We documented an AMOY adult killing a PIPL chick during 2019 camera project
- From Emily Kelderhouse - We have observed AMOYs pecking holes in the plover eggs, but not directly killing chicks
- From Emily Heiser - We have documented PIPL nest loss to AMOY
- From Abby Sterling, Manomet - We observed an AMOY predate a WIPL nest

- From Janell Brush In FL we documented an oystercatcher and chick take a black skimmer nest. They oystercatcher (banded) had been nesting at the site for a decade and this was the first year the skimmers showed up to nest.
- From Jeff Liechty - Also in FL, I had an AMOY pair attack an adult LETE on a rooftop.
- From Tami Pearl - I did observe the AMOY chasing the PIPL at Fort Tilden - Tony called them Oystersnatchers
- From Lindsay Addison - Interesting an AMOY took on the skimmer nest. I've watched skimmers kill LETE chicks and other skimmer chicks. Tossing the chick repeatedly in their bills. Mostly I see LETE swooping at AMOY and the AMOY ducking and appearing quite harassed.
- From Susan Heath - I witnessed an ongoing battle between a Wilson's Plover and an American Oystercatcher adult. The oystercatcher must have been near the plover's nest. There was no oystercatcher nest and it eventually left after much harassment from the plover.
- Hi! I work at the Town of Hempstead w/ Kate, Amber, and Rob. We have been exclosing our plover nests earlier the past few years, once we find the first egg. This has helped the hatching success of PIPL "A" nests dramatically, as the AMOY pair numbers have increased, and territorial disputes between the two species have increased. We still do see some PIPL nest abandonments due to territorial disputes after the PIPL nest is exclosed.

#### From David Carson Has anyone seen AMOY rejecting their own chicks?

- From Emily Kelderhouse We have had several instances of one pair of AMOY "adopting" chicks from another pair
- From Tim Keyes In GA there was a incubated chick attacked by its parent when being returned later than planned due to weather.
- From Tiffany VanWyck, USFWS We witnessed a pair killing their own chick.
- From Susan Heath - We had a pair adopt another pair's chick as well but usually adults will attack another pair's chick if it gets in their territory
- From Susan Heath - I have still camera photos of chicks attacking their siblings.

#### AMOY response to disturbance

- From Rob Longiaru – we have nests that are surrounded by people on the forebeach and the adult will sit tight
- From Tami Pearl –Assateague our AMOY are very sensitive to disturbance - they will bump off their nest even if we are 200 m away. While at Gateway (West Beach), I actually had an AMOY fly at my head and chase me away from it's nest.
- From Kaitlyn Parkins- NYC Audubon – we've had beachgoers on blankets at Riis about 4 feet from a nest. The nest gets about 5x5' of symbolic fencing and is surrounded by people on all sides
- From Lindsay Addison - General thought for Kaitlyn's project: Some pairs have very different "personalities" than others, as in some being more reactive than others to disturbance. So individual variation in behavior is also possible for AMOY.

#### METRICS DISCUSSION – Lindsay Addison and Pam Denmon

- Past efforts resulted in Google Docs to collect productivity information
- More recent efforts brought in statisticians from USFWS who developed PIPL breeding protocol and discussions started about how to apply what has been done with PIPL metrics to AMOY metrics. They joined us at our meeting last year (2019) in Virginia.
- Steering committee has worked on this behind the scenes since then but have hit stumbling blocks in terms of adapting PIPL protocols for AMOY. Looking at rebooting and revisiting the whole concept.
- Pam's region has designated AMOY as an "at risk" species so there is a chance that USFWS will develop a formal protocol for AMOY but that won't be for a long time.
- Lindsay's slide about what they don't want to cover
- Still looking for other perspectives on the current status of things
- Several comments that using the metrics discussion to move forward with "upgrading" the Google Sheet method of collecting rangewide basic reproductive success information is a good path forward

### **Q&A and Discussion**

What is status of definitions?

- Pretty good but some still need a little work. For example, how to handle pairs that are documented but no nesting is confirmed.
- Now it's about bringing these things forward in the context of using the collective database. We're operating under the lens of the USFWS/PIPL concept but now that is changing a bit and the future of this might change a bit.
- Definitions will be sent out again to the group again with objectives of this initiative.

Several people mentioned various tools that are used for data collection like Nest Story, Survey123, etc. It was emphasized that this effort is not meant to standardize the tools but the metrics and their definitions.

Question about state reports, who does them and to what extent. Sample of answers:

- MA DFW publishes a state-wide report periodically on AMOY abundance and fledgling production.
- From Janell Brush – we report abundance but not productivity (yet). This is a link to the FL Annual Report (FYI):  
[https://flshorebirdalliance.org/media/1219/2020\\_fsa\\_monitoringdataatwork\\_final.pdf](https://flshorebirdalliance.org/media/1219/2020_fsa_monitoringdataatwork_final.pdf) We are continuously expanding what we report each year.
- From Kaitlyn Parkins- NYC Audubon NY DEC does every 3 years (pair count not productivity)
- From Tim Keyes GA summarizes annual pair count and nest productivity for program reports.
- From Todd Pover NJ does an annual summary report and/or table for AMOY of the pairs it monitors, abundance and productivity.
- From Susan Heath - I write a report at the end of the season every year but I haven't published them anywhere. I'd be interested to know what data I should be including in these reports based on what other people are doing.

- From Todd Pover - One issue for NJ will be the confirmed nesting vs. territorial pairs, we only report or properly monitor those with confirmed nests.
  - Several comments about how this is treated differently by different states/observers.

From Jessica Peacock - Gulf of Mexico Avian Monitoring Network (GoMAMN) is working toward a similar goal for multiple taxa groups, but this conversation is well ahead of where they are. Going forward, this process could potentially be a very helpful template for them and many others.

Overall consensus that getting to a final version of the metric definitions and determining how/where to enter and archive this information is a worthwhile effort that the group (and species) will benefit from. Should not be a heavy lift for states/observers.

Little Egg Foundation - the minds behind NestStory - have several items for sale that benefits the funding of NS. Visit <https://www.little-egg.org/shop/buffs.php?fbclid=IwAR1QsQww076M136UFe29COecbbNYGLalFOyuGvaNiNGWPzv4Ngv908M31EE>