

AMOY Working Group 25th Annual Meeting - Day 2

HABITAT RESTORATION, ENHANCEMENT, AND CREATION PRESENTATIONS

Habitat Database Update- Amanda Hackney

The database allows WG members to share restoration activities and details throughout the range and beyond.

The database is now accessible from the WG website. The landing page has a dashboard that provides summary details of the projects that have been entered- such as the number of projects, average costs, etc. You can also explore projects and get specific details through the search options or the map. You can filter by select terms (e.g., dredge spoil). All data can be exported to make reviewing easier or to pull project spatial data into our own system.

Please enter AMOY restoration projects that haven't been entered yet! You will even get a sticker for your effort!

Questions

- How can projects be updated? Answer - working on creating a backdoor link that allows those who originally submitted to update the listing as needed.
- There is duplication in the entry for projects with the ACJV restoration database right now. Is there a way to streamline data?
- If a project was for seabirds in general but benefited AMOY, should it be entered? Answer- yes, there may still be benefits for others. Information won't be lost.

Shell Rake Project Update, Virginia Habitat Restoration Nesting Platforms - Zac Poulton

Started planning in 2021 and by 2024 assessed a variety of option, selecting the platform option. 27% of the population is on seaside lagoon habitat where habitat degradation occurs- i.e., erosion of features, and sea level rise leading to greater overwash and vulnerability of habitat and AMOY nests. In 2025, they focused on a handful of sites with similar habitat and easy access for a total of 30 pairs. Once selected, the Drone LiDAR was flown to get baseline elevation data.

They worked with a Sandbar Oyster Company to create artificial sandbar substrates. The material was Jute, which is a natural woven fiber. Takes about 4 people, 4 hours, and \$42 per platform. May need another \$400 or so to purchase a cement mixer, gloves, plastic to wrap the tiers, etc. About 12 could be made during the 4-hour period. They used an old tire to dry the material, which provided a nice nest shape.

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For deployment, once a nest was found, they would remove the eggs, add the platform, and cover so that it resembled the site before modification. Used the on-site materials like shell or wrack. Used trampoline stakes to secure. Cameras were placed at all nests. The majority were placed at shell rake, but also there were a few nests in the marsh and a limited number on sand. Ensured nests in close proximity were of both treatments, platform and natural to allow for comparison.

Time- some deployments took up to 30 min, but it got quicker over time, down to 8 min. Did have 6 not resume incubation after deployment. Need to assess what contributed to this.

6 out of 15 nests hatched. This was similar to natural nests. Still had some flooding 4 total. But, no real storms this year, so not able to see the extreme benefit potential of the design.

Predators- there was some worry that predators may cue in on platform nests. Both sites have peregrine towers nearby. Cameras picked up footage of AMOY chased by them on multiple occasions. Night herons were observed near nests. Had crow predate nests and had a Canada Goose trample nests. BAEA and GHOW were observed predated platform nests. The platforms did attract people to some extent.

There is still a lot to try and learn from this project. The platforms are already in the system, so they will be seeing if AMOY naturally use them. They did see FOTE use the platforms successfully later in the season. May need to determine thresholds of when to deploy the platforms. Benefits would be higher in conditions where elevation is lower.

Alex- did need to amend their state collection permit to do the egg relocation process. But, permitting requirements will be different in every state.

Chincoteague NWR Parking Lot Update - Lyn Brown and Edie Levine-Barnoff

Impact of relocating a beach parking lot on nesting and migratory shorebirds at Assateague Island, Virginia.

A 1000 vehicle parking lot overlaps with breeding, wintering, and migratory shorebirds. 1.2 million visitors currently use the parking lot. It will be moved 3 miles and will be closed to the public afterwards, providing an opportunity to assess impacts and eventual benefits.

Construction of the new parking lot should be finished next year.

Hurricane Erin reminded everyone why the parking lot is being moved. The entire parking lot was flooded, and sediments shifted. It required construction to move materials back. It provided an opportunity to see bird behavior in the absence of people. Birds responded rapidly and used the area.

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In addition to standard bird surveys, they also placed GPS trackers on AMOY. As part of the study, they also selected a variety of control locations that won't experience changes.

At each plot, counted people and shorebirds and tracked flush/disturbance events. The public beach experienced the highest human disturbance. In general, the higher number of people and vehicles resulted in higher flush/disturbance events. However, the reverse was true in areas away from the public beach.

Moving the parking lot will restore 6 miles of habitat, and the observations this year indicate the potential benefit for birds. This research will help justify future decisions for closing the parking lot instead of keeping both open. The new location was selected because it has lower bird and turtle impacts.

Northeast Florida Habitat Grant - Hailey Dedmon

Oyster rake enhancement for breeding AMOY on the S. Amelia River.

AMOY nesting has been documented since at least 2013 on shell rakes along the river. The river is part of the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW), contributing to wake and overwash with vessel traffic. They recently got a Conserve Wildlife Tag (CWT) Grant. Received \$28,000 for the project, including shell and transport.

The project will target a shell rake that supported the majority (73%) of known nests along the river. The goal is to restore and raise the elevation of a portion of the shell rake. Will be using recycled and/or commercially available shell. Shell will be offloaded by buckets and barge.

The resulting elevation should be above the normal tidal stage for the river. 1.3m NAVD88 target elevation. POSH modules will be placed at the MWH roe raise elevation at the base, with loose shell on the crest to raise elevation of nesting substrate. 40 cubic yards of shell needed for the loose shell, 120 POSH modules needed to create 3 rows.

Did need a variety of state (ERP) and federal permits (ACOE). Hopefully, it will be in place by the 2026 breeding season.

Massachusetts habitat restoration project update - Jamie Infanti

Snake Island Update- Located near the Logan Airport. Did small-scale targeted vegetation management, particularly invasive Phragmites and other invasives. Selected locations AMOY were present historically, but were pushed out by vegetation encroachment. Nesting was closer to the shoreline, where they were vulnerable to overwash. The goal was to create AMOY apartments throughout the habitat (areas of low veg- open areas). Hand pulling occurred early in the season before AMOY were on territory. Veg was expected to regrow, but the timing

should allow a window for nesting. Veg management was successful and AMOY moved into cleared areas. Work could be accomplished with a small crew of 2 or 3 people. Had immediate benefits, improving hatch rates and productivity.

Dead Neck Sampsons Island- Cape Cod area. Habitat is eroding over time. Over a 5-year period, dredge spoil was placed on the beach, creating more open suitable habitat for AMOY. AMOY moved in quickly. Had the first successful AMOY fledge in 17 years. Since that first year, productivity has been mixed with heavy coyote predation.

Button Island, Hingham Harbor – Lots of invasive vegetation pushing birds closer to the shoreline with high overwash. Worked with the town conservation commission to remove 270 square feet of hand-veg removal. Management occurred mid-March. Didn't see the immediate effects like Snake, but will continue efforts, possibly focusing on different areas of the island.

Takeaways- small-scale veg removal can have a big impact. Didn't require a lot of equipment or funding. Large scale like dead neck can also have benefits. Partnerships are critical to get approval and getting projects completed.

Questions

- Did you consider herbicide or fire? Answer - yes, but it was easier to get permits to focus just on hand pulling, but we will consider it in the future.

Georgia Update - Tim Keyes

Is continuing to collaborate with the ACOE for the beneficial use of spoil. Also having conversations with the Navy about issues of running out of places to put spoil. This allows more extensive conversations about beneficial use. Excited for future projects. Created a wooden frame for shell rake restoration. The idea is similar to what Hailey presented, with a goal to raise the elevation of existing shell rakes.

INTERNATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Habitat creation (Gravelly Shores Project) and non-lethal nest protection measures for Eurasian Oystercatchers - Mike Short

A two-year project between 2023 and 2025, and financed by the government. ~240k pounds for the project. The goal is to boost the population and test non-lethal predation management. Focal species included Ringed Plover (fewer than 1700 pairs remaining in England). The Eurasian Oystercatcher population is large but declined by 22% 1995 to 2000. More than 10,000 in England.

The biggest issue is coastal squeeze and the reduction in available habitat. Predation is also a major issue when birds are concentrated in smaller areas. Similarly, generalist predators population are often out of balance due to supplementation of food by human development and human food waste.

North Solent NNR - The area is protected by legislation and closed to the public during prime breeding periods. SLR has led to narrow strips of available habitat, simultaneously creating easier access for predators. Predation via camera included greater black backed gulls and foxes.

The project's aim was to create new nesting shingle habitats, develop and test non-lethal management approaches. Shingle habitat= shell habitat. Habitat would be created by removing vegetation in areas. Looking for non-linear features that were still tied in and connected to the existing nesting habitat. Half of the habitat was scraped with an excavator; the other half was not. They then set up several treatments with different shell densities. An electric fence surrounded the habitat to reduce predation threats.

Unfortunately, shortly after restoration work, a major flood event occurred. Parts of the fence came down, and debris was shifted around by the water, but the materials were distributed more naturally, so not necessarily bad. By the end of the year, the scraped side had 10% veg, where the unscraped side was already at 85% and too vegetated for use. This showed how necessary this action was. In 2025, they had both species nest, in addition to a little ringed plover and a lapwing. Restoration was successful!

Non-lethal nest protection measures.

Nest Cages - measured the body of oystercatchers to make sure they could enter and exit the cages. 1m x 1m x60cm. It is lightweight and easy to move around. Before starting, they tested to see how foxes would respond. They are generally wary of cages. They didn't approach baited cages, so it looked like they avoided them. Randomly assigned oystercatcher nests, adults readily accepted them. All had cameras. Cameras revealed that foxes were interested but stayed out until around hatch day. Banders and hedgehogs entered and depredated eggs. Cages were not predator-proof, but did improve hatch rates (3x higher in their study).

Gallagher electric fencing - it is a solar power system. One set allows a 25x25m square. Used regularly with curlew in the UK. 16 nests with fencing in 2025 with high hatch rates. 94%

Nesting platforms - used successfully in the Netherlands in farmland. They used a wire nest basket that attaches to a scaffold pole. Placed 2m high, allowing for survey access and easy camera placement. Placed 40 in 2025 along the length of a river corridor. 12 of the 40 were quickly occupied.

Interestingly, the methods above improved hatch rates, but didn't improve fledge rates. Pilot tested radio tagging oystercatcher chicks. They were able to determine outcomes, for example, tags were found in fox scat. 85% of hatched chicks died within 25 days. Will be developing a 3-year chick survival study to assess chick health, collaborating with a specialist to assess pathology and pollutants.

Have a list of questions that remain for platforms: where to site them, intertidal vs saltmarsh, whether individuals will continue to use them in subsequent years, and whether chicks that hatch from platforms will use them as well.

Question

- Are there problems with chicks falling off the platform? Answer - No, they tend to leave the platform after 1 day, but have had them stay up to 10 days. Likely, the amount of predation pressures influence how long they stay. The adults call them down, and the chicks jump down.
- Were chicks predated from the platform or away? Answer - all lost chicks were off the platform. The only predator interaction at the platform was from a crow predated an egg. There is some concern that predators may use the platforms as a perch, given the flat landscape.
- Were dead chicks found individually or from the same brood? Answer - a bit of both.
- Are you collecting condition assessments when found dead? Answer - yes, several were sent it for necropsy. Will try to learn everything they possibly can about each individual to figure out what is going on.
- How tall was the electric fence? Answer - You can adjust the wires as desired. There was no evidence of a predator entering or jumping. They aren't fox-proof, but are minimizing impact. It is a sufficient deterrent.

Central American Oystercatcher update - Salvadora Morales

Strengthening Latin American participation in the AMOYWG

Gulf of Fonseca- Compiled all of the band resights observed to assess where they came from. They note strong winter site fidelity. One US banded AMOY has been resighted for 13 years. 47 banded AMOY have been resighted. Also seeing local movement. Banded an individual AMOY in Nicaragua that now lives in Honduras.

Banding details and migration help promote ecotourism and conservation outreach in Costa Rica and festivals in Colombia. Nest monitoring is now occurring in Peru for AMOY. Looking to increase collaboration and effort in the country.

This year, there are 3 projects funded through Manomet to improve knowledge and address data gaps in Latin America. Looking to build a directory of research and partners in Latin America and the Caribbean to identify gaps, needs, and opportunities. Goals included the availability of selecting Latin American locations in the AMOYWG banding database. Review the AMOY business plan to include needs specific to the region.

Between Eggs and Chicks: A Weekly Marathon Following Oystercatchers - Jesús Díaz-Morales

The sites he covers are important to many species, particularly those that are threatened. AMOY are found in high numbers during the winter, for example, flocks of 1000. Breeding season is September to March. Nests have 1-5 eggs, but typically 1-3. Fledglings are observed from November to June.

A weekly marathon- to make the most of each day, need to maximize field work, and the more kilometers covered, the more birds and nests discovered and monitored.

Sites vary with disturbance. Some with no apparent disturbance except for feral dogs, others have small coastal communities. During each survey, the data is collected on birds and disturbances. It is difficult to estimate the number of breeding pairs because of the density and specific sites, and the variation in counts from week to week. Found nearly 250 nests in the area. The number of fledglings produced is lower where human disturbance is highest. Threats include gulls, climate extremes, and human disturbance, but the biggest threat is feral dogs. This threat was confirmed with tracking observation and game camera evidence.

During each survey, all species are counted. Non-breeding whimbrels appear to be in decline in the area.

American Oystercatcher Work in Peru - Emil Ludwin Rivas Mogollon

Spatial Distribution of AMOY

Threats and resulting habitat conditions can influence the distribution of AMOY in Peru. Dogs and people have major impacts, particularly north of Lima. In 2022, participated in a study to look at the influence of a local oil spill. Proposes a study on the abundance and distribution of AMOY and the conservation status of foraging and nesting areas in the La Pampilla refinery oil spill that occurred in 2022.

The study area is north of the Lima coastline. Will census AMOY in areas over a 6-month period. Will characterize the habitat based on type, disturbance, and management type. Will be capturing and banding adults. Lastly, will be assessing nest site selection and comparing use vs unused habitat using a variety of habitat metrics.

GROUP PROJECT UPDATES

Winter aerial surveys publication and future planning update - *Stephen Brown*

To honor Shiloh's legacy, an effort to publish the data and effort from the winter aerial surveys is underway. A core team was formed to pull everything together. Shiloh would be the lead author, Jim Lyons will serve as the data analyst. The core team is Stephen, Tim, Lindsay, and Janell. Other state leads have also agreed to assist. Everyone who participated in the surveys would be included as coauthors.

The next survey is planned for 2028. However, a funding proposal would need to be submitted in 2026.

Integrated population model update - *Tim Keyes*

At the George AMOYWG meeting, Dan Gibson presented on preliminary efforts for an Integrated Population Model using data from the banding database. Currently, we have 1 year of funding and a good chance of receiving NFWF funds for a 2nd year. The key data/information we will need is productivity data for states. If you are familiar with IPM, reach out to Tim; otherwise, keep an eye out for a data request.

RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT PRESENTATIONS

Consequences of climate-driven ecosystem state change on availability of oystercatcher nesting habitat in Virginia - Mikayla Call

For the past 6 years, she has been working with the VA TNC to understand what is influencing the declines in productivity for AMOY at the VA barrier islands. What is causing the decline, and what does it mean for management?

Reproduction is influenced by flooding and a complex predator community. In particular, May storminess is influencing peak nesting. Early nests are lost, and later nests are exposed to predators like ghost crab, greater disturbance, and hot weather. So what about top-down drivers? Climate is the primary driver of change. SLR, storm magnitude, and frequency. From 1940-2002, there was no directional change in beach, but.... Over the last 30 years, there has been a 29% reduction in island area and an increase in woody shrubs due to warmer winters. There should be pendulum swings between ecosystem states, with the sporadic changes allowing island migration. But what happens when it stops swinging back and forth?

1) assessing spatial-temporal patterns of landcover change

2) nesting habitat selection function. Second-order RSF (use vs. availability).

3) map patterns of habitat availability based on RSF output

There were patterns of landcover change, but temporal and spatial variability influenced patterns. Islands need disturbance and recovery for resilience. Even if overall habitat availability stays the same, spatial distribution changes. Similarly, given the high site fidelity AMOY shows, even subtle changes can influence productivity. Habitat availability is not the same as habitat quality.

Questions

- Have you considered your results and how they might apply to PIPL? Answer - There is a lot of overlap between the two species, so it can almost be implied that if AMOY habitat availability is declining, so is PIPL.

Home range variation in AMOY across breeding seasons - Trevor MacLaurin

Why does home range matter? Need to understand the ecological implications of management.

Larger birds will generally have a larger home range. But the availability and distribution of resources can also influence size. It can also vary within a species, due to sex, territory quality, and social structure. It can also vary for an individual depending on the time of year (e.g., breeding vs non-breeding) or resource variability.

Limited studies on home ranges for shorebirds. Similarly, shorebird studies that do exist look at a single stage, such as breeding or non-breeding, but not the stages in between. Tagged 14 AMOY and assigned behavioral stages and movement.

- 1) Describe the home range for AMOY
- 2) Investigate how sex influences
- 3) Determine if post-hatch dispersal for a semiprocial species results in larger home ranges

AMOY have the largest home range during the non-breeding season and the smallest during incubation and chick rearing. No difference in size, though, during the incubation and non-breeding. The post- and pre-breeding movements are in the middle. There was no difference between sexes at any stage during the cycle. AMOY home range varies across time.

Tradeoffs used during reproduction by the American Oystercatcher in North Carolina - Kate Goodenough

400 pairs in NC on a variety of habitat types. Barrier beaches, natural and marsh islands, and artificial features. In addition, a lot of variation in threats such as avian or mammalian

predators, overwash, or human disturbance. When it comes to tradeoffs, birds have choices (e.g., foraging, incubation, etc.).

AMOY have spatiotemporal limitations as benthic foragers. For example, they are constrained by the tide. For example, chick survival is lower for broods without direct access to foraging habitat. Do AMOY alter their foraging strategy during reproduction? Do foraging tradeoffs vary across the nesting landscape? Is forage adjacency an important factor in chick/brood survival?

Tagged 31 AMOY and assessed foraging parameters (distance, time, etc) and compared to annual productivity data. 28 individuals had full-season data. No difference in movements between sexes. Foraging distances varied by nesting habitat, with barrier-island breeders traveling the furthest. Night movement occurred more frequently during the non-breeding season. The moon phase influences night foraging. Birds not tied to nests at night were foraging further distances than those tied to a nest. Foraging distances tended to be larger for nesting areas with no forage adjacent to the nesting territories, but did not have a direct impact on productivity.

AMOY on the beach habitat have larger territories. Forage territory overlap was greater for birds that bred on the same habitat. E.g., spoil nesters forage adjacent to spoil nesters, but not with marsh nesters. AMOY were also very active at night...an important part of the energy budget.

American Oystercatchers in Boston Harbor - Beth Howards and Lyra Brennan

The habitat is quite varied, with lots of rock and cobble beaches in addition to more typical habitats. A lot of human activity in the area. Historical and archaeological significance to the area with large amounts of ruins in the area, including islands with unexploded ordinances, which makes them unsafe to survey.

Individual AMOY often try out the various habitat types. Data from the last 8 years shows relatively high productivity, but a few years have sharp dips. This is partly because productivity isn't consistent across islands from year to year. Instead, one or two islands each year have success. In particular, Snake Island has a lot of fledglings. So if it does poorly, the area does poorly.

The goals were to assess sites that are not producing young and to address site-specific threats. Some threats have been addressed; for example, they were able to put a stop to a local firework display and switch to a drone show, which caused less disturbance to AMOY. The AMOY noticed the drones initially, but then settled down and didn't respond to the show. Do need to consider predation management. Continued vegetation management will also be considered.

Movements of banded AMOY breeding in GA - Kristen Johnson

Dispersal and breeding movement allow assessment of adaptation to change. GA has 100 miles of coastline and 120 pairs

Banding in GA started in 2001. In fact, an AMOY in GA was captured in 2001 and recaptured in 2025 to replace bands. ~50% of total banding in GA is non-breeding (>500 individuals). Non-breeding AMOY from GA have dispersed throughout their range. 386 banded chicks were included in GA, allowing assessment of natal dispersal. In addition, assessing how natal dispersal differs by breeding habitat type. Only data up to 2023 were used to allow for time for individuals to reach breeding age. Of them, 90 individuals were confirmed breeding. There was no difference in return rates between sites. Most birds left their natal site but did return to GA and bred somewhere along the GA coast. The proportion of breeding individuals and return rates did not differ by habitat type. However, individuals were mostly staying within the same landscape type but not the same site.

Dispersal distances were calculated with Geosphere R package. Birds displayed a wide range of dispersal distances. Average dispersal was 70.28 km. Within GA staying 98 km and out of GA up to 666 km. Distances vary but are rather large. Most birds are dispersing from natal sites but staying in the same natal habitat type.

Interestingly, natal dispersal was similar between GA and NC.

Foraging trip parameters in Charleston Harbor, SC - Amber Litterer

Are PFAS accumulating in biota within the avian food webs? How does avian space use differ with PFAS exposure? What are the foraging patterns for AMOY in SC, how do the trips from the nest differ by site, and what factors influence patterns. Tagged 27 AMOY in the Charleston Harbor area

Trip distance and defined as 250 m for at least 5 min, track2kba package, nest fate determined by NestR. Compared movement data alongside files of oyster reef spatial data. Also looked at the influence of conspecific nests in the area and density.

Found that the trip distance was not equal between the study areas. More trips were taken when oysters were closer. Nests were closer together with a more even distribution of oysters. Overall, there were more trips to the more aggregated oyster habitat. The number of nearest nests was not significant. The number of foraging trips was based on oyster distribution and layout.

Partners are looking at PFAS in AMOY eggs and found differences between populations in the ICW vs the Charleston Harbor, with the harbor closer to the point source. More info soon.

WORKING GROUP UPDATES AND DISCUSSION

AMOY Band Database update - Lindsay Addison

Just under 128k records in the database right now. 1500 more public records in the database in 2025 compared to 2024. Lindsay has the most records, followed by Pat and Doris Leary!!

Currently working on getting other sources and adding to AMOY, e.g., inaturalist and ebird.

Data transfer to the BBL is underway!!

Future of the Working Group and leadership updates - Steering Committee

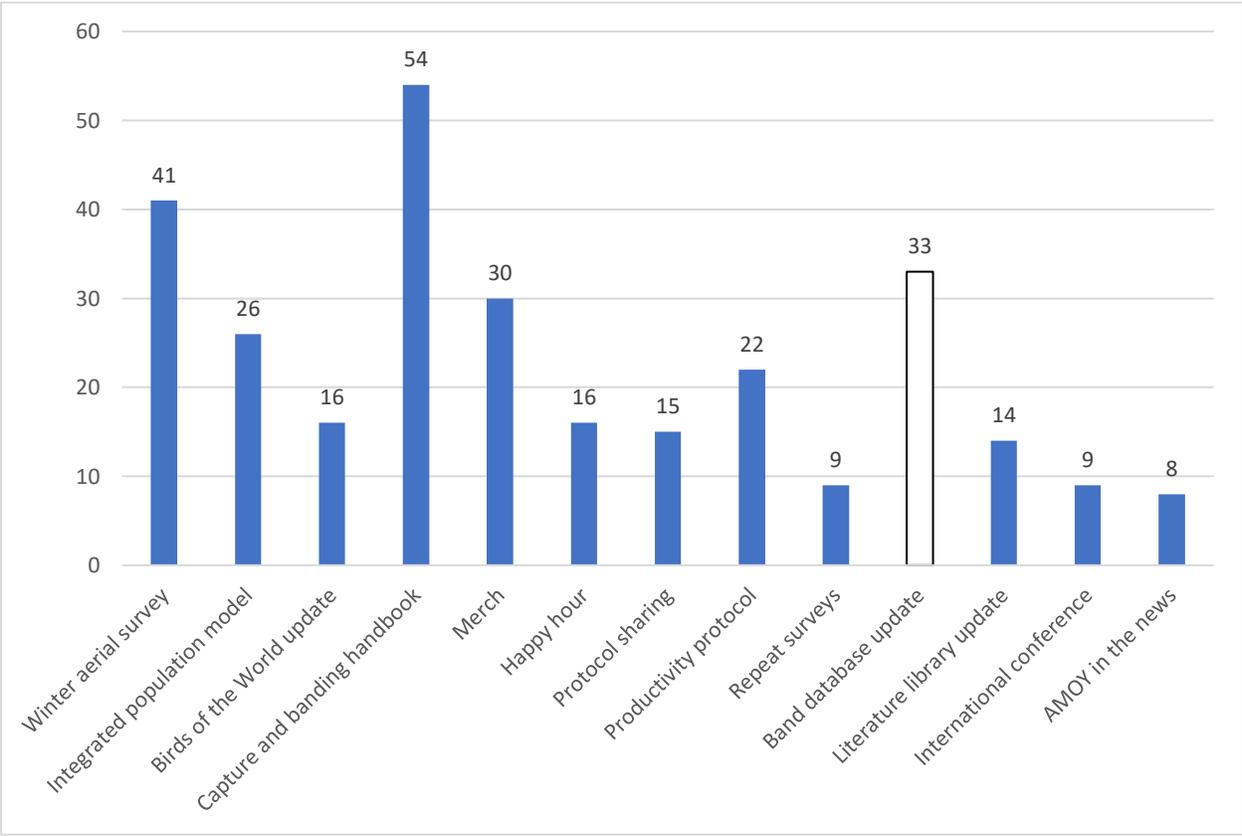
See Poll Info separately

- AFSI Council could fund the database upgrade. We would need to develop and submit a proposal for them to review.
- Lots of funding ideas, such as opening a store selling AMOY swag on the website. Could also partner with BirdCollective.
- Hosting a library on the WG page would be beneficial. Could have literature and script or suggested packages for analyses, or protocols. Could also include AMOY in the news. Could also host a analysis/coding happy hour for folks in the WG to share information. Hosting specific workshops could also be a possibility.
- If anyone knows WordPress, let us know, we could use the help with the website!!
- One of the ways other societies fund travel and other expenses they have professionals pay slightly more. This would allow the extra funds to be saved and used to fund future travel grants.
- If you are interested in participating in the steering committee, let us know. NFWF partially funded Shiloh's role as WG leader. The steering committee has discussed potential WG leads, including Pam Denmon, Debra Reynolds, who are in the Zoom!

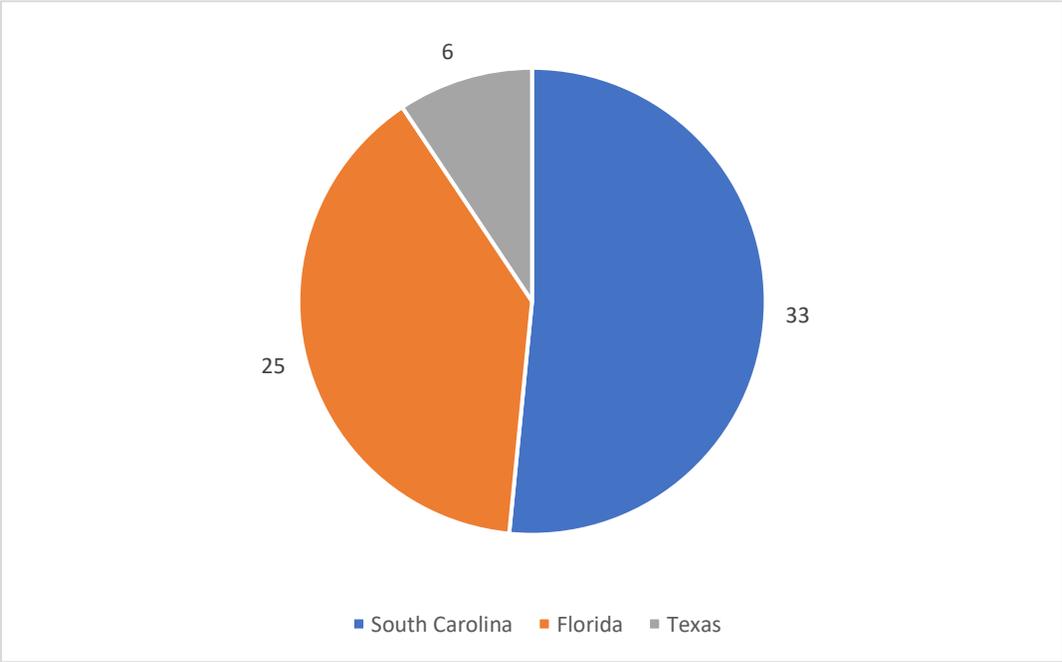
Poll Results

Includes votes from in the room, from the Zoom, and a Google poll later for people who didn't get to vote.

Project Prioritization: could pick up to 4 (band database kind of has to happen regardless so the Google people were mildly discouraged from voting for it, so it's not colored in)



State preference for 2026 meeting: There were no write-in states.



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To raise funds for travel grants, the Steering Committee is considering creating two payment tiers, the existing one and a more expensive one for organizations who can afford it. This is what other professional groups do to support travel (thanks Stephen Brown for the idea!). Would people be willing to pay more?

Yes, I could pay more: 41