

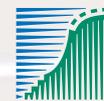
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Waterbirds around the world

A global overview of the conservation,
management and research of the
world's waterbird flyways

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Using national plans in North America to conserve shorebirds at an international scale

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A recent report on the status of shorebirds breeding in Canada and the United States indicated that there were 35 species with enough information to determine population trends and 18 species with insufficient information (Morrison *et al.* 2001a). Of those species with trend indicators, 28 showed negative trends (19 were statistically significant) and seven showed positive trends (one was statistically significant). This information illustrates the need for immediate management action to reverse the large number of negative population trends. However, effective conservation efforts will be challenging given a dearth of information on some of the most basic biological parameters for shorebirds in North America. The most recent report on shorebird population numbers indicated the following accuracy ratings: high (accurate and precise), two species; good (estimates on which confidence limits can be placed), five species; moderate (within 50% of true number) 13 species; low (estimate within correct order of magnitude) 21 species; and poor (based on educated guess) 12 species (Morrison *et al.* 2001b).

Recognizing that implementing conservation actions is best done using national or regional instruments, in Canada and the United States it was decided that planning for shorebird conservation at the national level was most appropriate. The Canadian (Donaldson *et al.* 2000) and US (Brown *et al.* 2001) shorebird conservation plans were developed in parallel and contain the framework necessary for regional implementation while recognizing the importance of international collaboration. Given the mobility of shorebirds among nations, it was also noted that a high level of communication was needed to ensure that the two plans were compatible and would support a high level of collaboration. Subsequently, when Mexico began development of their national shorebird conservation plan, the two established plans were used as tools and it is expected that the final version of the Mexican plan will also describe a framework for regional implementation and international collaboration.

Just as the national plans allow for stepping down to regional actions or up to international efforts, shorebird-specific implementation of habitat monitoring and research occurs at the various levels through three different programs. The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) was established in 1985 and is working in a growing number of countries in the Americas to address shorebird habitat issues. The Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring (PRISM) is designed to tackle monitoring for shorebird species during breeding, migration and non-breeding periods of the year using a variety of methods in a coordinated manner at all scales. The Shorebird Research Group of the Americas (SRGA) facilitates communication among

researchers by promoting the establishment of species specialist working groups that tackle information gaps for species and those that relate to determination of conservation needs and direction for conservation actions. It is important to note that all of these initiatives have been designed to be inclusive of shorebird conservation needs in all parts of the Americas, so while they may have had their initiation in the north, all aim to be inclusive of all countries of the Western Hemisphere. All recognize that incorporation of additional conservation needs may be warranted as more countries become involved.

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Waders over Mispillion, Delaware Bay. Photo: Rob Robinson.