

# International Shorebird Survey

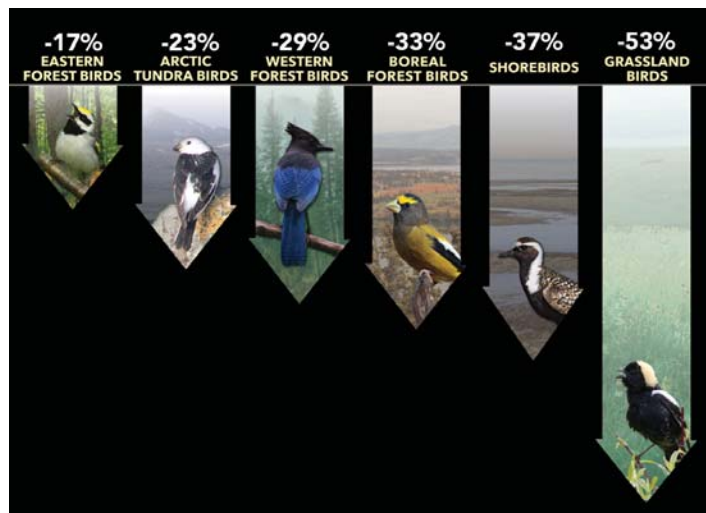
## Newsletter Winter 2020



### 3 Billion Birds Lost: ISS data shows 37% decline in shorebirds

A study published in Science last September revealed that since 1970, bird populations in the United States and Canada have declined by almost 3 billion birds. (Rosenberg, K. V. et al. 2019. Decline of the North American Avifauna. Science 365(6461))

As ISS contributors, we have known that something was up (or down) with shorebird numbers over recent decades. The rigorous analysis behind



the this study makes clear what our anecdotal observations signify. Lead author, Ken Rosenberg, Applied Conservation Scientist at Cornell and American Bird Conservancy, shared how important ISS was to the scientific paper: "Because most shorebirds breed too far north to be monitored by the Breeding Bird Survey and winter well south of traditional coverage by Christmas Bird Counts, we relied on migration counts from ISS for the most complete and reliable estimates of continental population trends for 20 shorebird species."

Co-author Paul Smith of Environment and Climate

Change Canada conducted a comprehensive statistical analysis of ISS data from 1974 to 2017 and determined that 11 shorebird species have declined by 50% or more, contributing to an overall loss of 37% across all shorebird species. These results were reported by at least 1,750 print media outlets with a combined circulation of 3.8 billion readers, as well as countless radio and television pieces. The paper was among the 50 most talked about research articles of any discipline for 2019.

Smith wants you to know, "Without dedicated survey participants, and without Manomet's longstanding leadership, there would be no national shorebird monitoring program in the United States. The ISS is the key monitoring dataset for shorebirds in North America. As people faithfully head out to shorebird stopover sites to participate year after year, and in some cases decade after decade, it's important that they recognize just how significant their contribution is."

We all thank you for your efforts to send in your ISS count data.



# 100,000th Survey in August 2019 at Winthrop Beach and Five Sisters site in Massachusetts, USA!



Thank you Laretta Woods!

## 2019 Goals for Latin America and the Caribbean

In our previous newsletter we announced our goals for Latin America. With targeted recruitment and networking led by Arne Lesterhuis we hoped to increase the reach of ISS across the continent. How did we do?

### Goal

Over 100 Volunteers

Over 100 Sites

40% of countries with ISS sites

50% of sites surveyed 3 or more

50% of WHSRN sites participating



### Results

157 Volunteers

Over 200 sites

51% of countries with ISS sites

75% of sites surveyed 3 or more

26% of WHSRN sites participating

Four out of five accomplished, not bad. The next goal is to work with our WHSRN partners to increase their participation. That and 200 volunteers by the end of 2020 in Latin America and the Caribbean would be most excellent!

## Site Highlight: The Georgia Bight

The Georgia Bight, stretching between Cape Hatteras and Cape Canaveral, is a geographic feature that allows many ingredients of great shorebird habitat to come together and create a landscape that is unparalleled. High tidal ranges, low wave energy, and numerous, productive inlets mean sand bars and mud flats are abundant. Northeastern Florida to South Carolina have seen less development and engineering compared to other parts of the eastern United States, and these areas are the focus of Manomet's Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative.

Collaborating with a variety of state, federal, and local partners such as state biologists like Georgia's Tim Keyes, and South Carolina's Felicia Sanders, we are working to protect (and count!) all the estimated 400,000 shorebirds that use this area year-round. ISS has been instrumental in documenting the numbers of shorebirds that depend on the Bight, leading to the designation

and expansion of three WHSRN sites.

Since 2013, the Georgia Bight crew has averaged around 200 ISS surveys per year, submitted by approximately 20 contributors. They have also been able to use the Mapping Tool to identify new ISS sites and reach out to partners to increase coverage. The ISS Mapping Tool has also been used by state partners to quickly pull together information about how specific sites are used to help provide support for increased protection.



# Volunteer Highlight: Martha Cartwright, Bahamas



I came late to the discovery of the intriguing world of bird watching; I was past 65 years of age. My skills and eyes were not as sharp, my ears not as attuned to nuances. However when a dedicated group of local birders, under the tutelage of Erika Gates, welcomed me to the flock, I quickly became “addicted.” I birded at every opportunity, with the group and on my own. With the aid of a digital camera and a core of seasoned bird experts (my Bird Gurus, I call them) willing to answer my email queries and take me out in the field, I became a regular contributor to eBird.

Two years into my eBird career, I received an email from them asking if I would consider becoming an International Shorebird Survey volunteer. What? Little old me, shorebirds? They were the hardest, most challenging, most impossible birds I tried to ID! Impossible. But it was the very challenge of these subtle, off-in-the-distance, migratory group of birds that led me to agree to be an ISS volunteer. Why not? I was out in the field anyway, I had a camera, and I wanted to improve.

Today, I’m getting better at shorebird ID. With lots of practice, pictures, books, eBird on-line courses, and ID help from my gurus, I have improved. A weeklong workshop in 2019 in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico sponsored by BirdsCaribbean, eBird, and Manomet boosted my skills, knowledge and enthusiasm for shorebirds. The workshop lectures showed first-hand the value my sightings have for the scientists and organizations that are working every day to protect our shorebirds.

For me, this is fun, exciting, and rewarding. I celebrate that on May 29, 2019 I finally, finally, spotted a Red Knot in the local Grand Bahama Island landfill. I celebrate that immediately after Hurricane Dorian I spotted two Hudsonian Godwits on the Reef Course passing south. I celebrate being part of ISS. I am grateful for the support, encouragement and friendship of Arne Lesterhuis, my ISS guru and mentor. If you’ve been wondering if you’re skilled enough to make contributions as an ISS volunteer, take my story to heart. You are. Together, piece by piece, we make a difference in protecting these fun to watch, hard to ID, winged travelers of our planet.

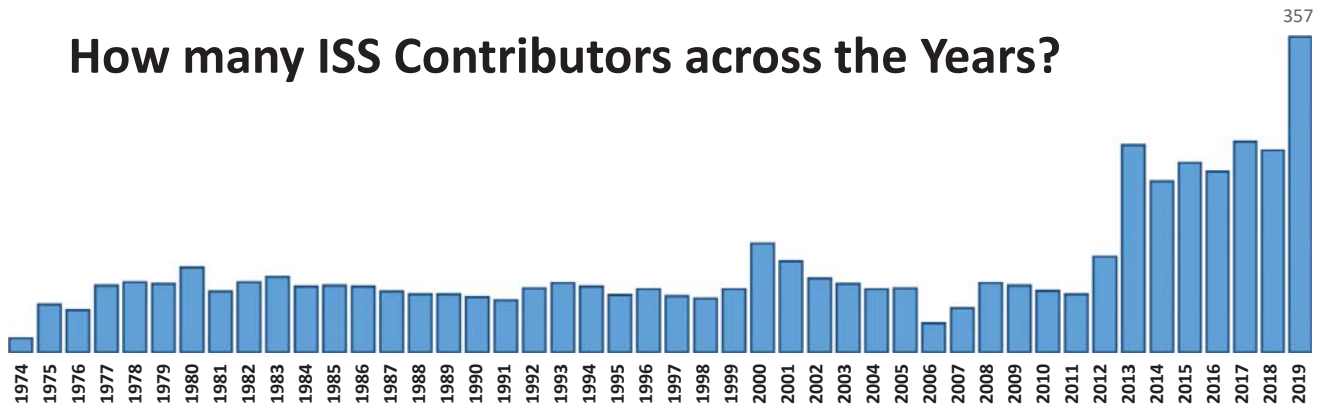


## Stickers!

We are so grateful to all our contributors. Send your mailing address to [lschibley@manomet.org](mailto:lschibley@manomet.org) and we’ll send you a sticker in appreciation. Thank you!



# How many ISS Contributors across the Years?



## A New Tool at [manomet.org/iss-map/](http://manomet.org/iss-map/)

### Introducing the Polygon Download Tool

After you render your data using the “show map” button, a set of icons appears at the top of the map. The middle Polygon Download Tool lets you select a group of ISS sites and download the data from all those sites. Select the tool, single click at the start of your desired polygon to create your starting vertex then repeat the single click for as many vertices as you wish. Finish the polygon with a single click over the original vertex. Hit the download button and a .csv file that holds all the ISS data within that polygon will be downloaded to your



### There is always more to explore

Explore your (and all of ISS) data at [manomet.org/iss-map](http://manomet.org/iss-map)

Review the protocols and the “how-to”s at [manomet.org/project/international-shorebird-survey](http://manomet.org/project/international-shorebird-survey)

Join the Facebook Page  
[facebook.com/InternationalShorebirdSurvey](https://facebook.com/InternationalShorebirdSurvey)

Enter your data at [eBird.org](http://eBird.org) or the eBird App

### Contact us

Arne Lesterhuis - Latin America and Caribbean  
[alesterhuis@manomet.org](mailto:alesterhuis@manomet.org)

Lisa Schibley - North America  
[lschibley@manomet.org](mailto:lschibley@manomet.org)

Brad Winn - Director  
[bwinn@manomet.org](mailto:bwinn@manomet.org)

Juliana Almeida - Brazil  
[juliana.almeida@savebrasilorg.br](mailto:juliana.almeida@savebrasilorg.br)



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