



Terms of Reference

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group

December 2015, Revised January 2018

I INTRODUCTION

The Western Hemisphere provides breeding habitat for 80 of the world's 214 shorebird species, including 51 in the USA/Canada, 11 in Mexico/Central America, and 33 in South America. Each of these regions also has a number of nonbreeders and vagrants, so the total number of species that can be found includes 92 in the USA/Canada, 51 in Mexico/Central America, and 77 in South America (B. Andres, unpubl. data).

Shorebirds are some of the world's longest-distance migrants, with birds traveling between the Arctic regions of North America and southern portions of South America. Some Arctic-breeding species leave the Western Hemisphere to winter in East Asia, Europe or Africa. More temperate breeding species migrate shorter distances and some South American migrants travel northward to spend the non-breeding season. Virtually all shorebirds rely on several disjoint areas for breeding, staging, and nonbreeding, often under different legal jurisdictions. Some of these sites are part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, although many sites have no legal (or non-legal) status. The shorebirds of the Western Hemisphere provide international links between every country in the Western Hemisphere.

Perhaps because of the challenges of this highly-migratory life history, many shorebird populations are in decline. In Canada and the United States, shorebirds are declining more than most other bird groups. In North America, there are six endangered species, including one which is possibly extinct and four others whose small populations are likely still declining (IWSG 2003). In South America, there are six globally threatened species, including one which is likely extinct and four that are in active decline. The trend of the fifth species is unknown (IWSG 2003). Compared to North America breeding species, the status and trends of South American breeders is much less known. Recent trend analyses indicate that 9 of 66 breeding species in Central and South America are declining, and 30 of 70 breeding species in North America are declining (P. Smith, unpubl. data).

Based on these facts, as well as the moral fortitude of many people that are passionate for conserving shorebirds, the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group (WHSG) is hereby formed. It will operate under the following tenets and structure:

II GOALS

- A. To raise the public's awareness of shorebirds and their habitats.
- B. To promote research, monitoring, management, conservation and education/outreach relevant to shorebirds in the Western Hemisphere, and integrate the goals and objectives of the WHSG with regional, national, and international programs.
- C. To provide a structured forum to facilitate, coordinate, and enhance the exchange of shorebird information among interested parties.
- D. To promote the range-wide management and conservation of shorebirds and their habitats in the Western Hemisphere.

III OBJECTIVES

- A. To encourage the implementation of shorebird conservation / business plans throughout the Western Hemisphere.
- B. To facilitate the development and implementation of monitoring, research, conservation, and outreach programs directed at shorebirds.
- C. To foster applicable goals and objectives of international and other national-based shorebird programs.
- D. To identify and prioritize current and emerging shorebird conservation, management, research and outreach/education issues and opportunities in the breeding, migration and nonbreeding areas.
- E. To advise on regional and national conservation plans focused on shorebirds, including determining species, habitats, conservation priorities and action items for species and habitats.
- F. To foster a collaborative community of shorebird scientists and conservationists by holding biennial meetings.
- G. To maintain a WHSG listserv and website.

IV ADMINISTRATION

A. Participation

The WHSG includes representation from a wide variety of public and private entities, which support the conservation of shorebirds. Membership in the WHSG is voluntary and open to all individuals from within and outside the Western Hemisphere.

B. Chair

A Chairperson administers the WHSG. The Chair is responsible for coordinating biennial meetings with the Local Committee, leading executive committee meetings during biennial meetings and when necessary via teleconferences between meetings, overseeing the WHSG's business between meetings, helping to develop long-term goals and objectives for the WHSG, and reporting on the activities of the WHSG at biennial meetings to other state, national and international entities. The Chair will serve as the Chair of the WHSG's Executive Committee and be a representative to other international shorebird groups (e.g., International Wader Study Group, Western Australia Wader Study Group, Russian Working Group on Waders). Other members of the Executive Committee can serve as a proxy for the

Chair when necessary.

C. Executive Committee and Secretary

The Executive Committee (hereafter also as Committee) will be responsible for (1) assisting in organizing and planning meetings of the WHSG, (2) soliciting and assembling agenda items from group members to be presented at WHSG meetings, (3) collectively prioritizing needs and seeking ways of getting work accomplished, and (4) providing written recommendation on advisory or policy issues presented to the WHSG from non-members or on advisory or policy issues deemed pertinent to the WHSG interests. For issues to be considered by the WHSG, a member of the WHSG must present information on a particular issue at an annual meeting (or in writing to the Committee). A majority vote of the members present at the annual meeting or of the Committee is needed to pursue an issue. Ad-hoc and Standing Technical Committees will be formed on an "as-needed" basis to assist the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee will be composed of eight individuals and a Chair, representing various diverse backgrounds and interests in shorebird conservation. Besides the Chair, the Executive Committee will include a Secretary, Treasurer, the past Chair, a MS or PhD graduate student studying shorebirds, and a representative from each of the following portions of the Western Hemisphere: Canada and the United States, Mexico and Central America, Northern South America and the Southern Cone of South America. Should members from a particular geography not be available, up to two people from a different geographic location may serve on the Executive Committee. The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer can be from any geographic location. The Committee will also strive to have representation from non-governmental organizations, private organizations, and state and federal agencies.

The Secretary will take and prepare typed minutes of the meetings. Minutes will include items that were discussed and any actions that were agreed upon. Minutes will be distributed to all WHSG members and others interested in the conservation of shorebirds via the website, listserv and Facebook page. Minutes will be prepared within one month of a meeting's occurrence, and will be available at the following year's annual meeting. The Secretary will also work with others to update and populate the WHSG's website and maintaining a current list of contact information of WHSG members. The Treasurer will keep track of the WHSG's finances, administering funds associated with any WHSG awards, and ensure funds are kept in a safe location. This may entail working with a non-profit group or other formal organization. The Treasurer will also help receive and transfer funds related to registration fees and other expenses associated with biennial meetings of the WHSG unless other arrangements are made.

Subcommittees may be formed as necessary to help with particular issues, and might include Conservation, Science, Financial, Facebook/website, Publications, Fund Raising/Travel Award, Meeting, and others as needed. Subcommittees may be long-term or be disbanded at

the discretion of the Executive Committee as their objectives are met.

D. Meetings

General Meeting

The WHSG will meet at least every 2 years or as often as necessary to fulfill the objectives of the WHSG. Meetings are open to all, but there is a registration fee. The Chair is responsible for locating potential venues for future meetings and based on consensus of the Executive Committee determine the time and location of meetings. The WHSG representative(s) in the Local Committee will be responsible for meeting arrangements and determining meeting expenses. The Local Committee will attempt to raise funds locally to support the meeting and will work closely with past meeting organizers and the Executive Committee to hold the best meeting possible.

Executive Committee Meeting

A quorum of five of nine members of the Executive Committee is required to conduct business. If an Executive Committee member is unable to attend a meeting, a proxy may be designated to serve on their behalf. The proxy must be approved by the Executive Committee and if approved will be authorized to participate fully in the WHSG discussions, including voting. All WHSG members are welcome to attend Executive Committee meetings, but voting is limiting to Committee members. Notification of an Executive Committee meeting will be sent to all WHSG members prior to the meeting. The Executive Committee may meet in person or through teleconference or other digital means.

F. Expenses

Unless there is prior agreement, anyone attending WHSG or Executive Committee meetings are responsible for their travel and per diem expenses.

G. Decision-Making Protocols

The WHSG will strive to obtain consensus on all issues and to work cooperatively to advance the goals of shorebird conservation plans throughout the Western Hemisphere. The WHSG may comment on issues they deem relevant but will do so only by providing factual information. The WHSG will not make direct statements in support or against a given issue, but may imply a position based on the facts alone. In situations where consensus is not possible, but a decision or action is required, the WHSG will take official action only with approval of five of the nine Executive Committee members. Each member, regardless of the positions held, is allotted one vote. Between WHSG meetings, the Chair will make administrative decisions, while the Executive Committee will make advisory or policy decisions. At annual meetings, official decision or action will occur only after receiving a two-thirds majority vote of members present at the meeting. The WHSG is not under the auspices of any government organization, and thus the positions and recommendations stated in its working documents should not be construed as those of any government agency.

H. Election of Chair, Executive Committee, and Secretary

The Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Graduate Student, and other Executive Committee members will be elected by the general membership at annual meetings or by electronic means if necessary. Election to all positions will be decided by simple majority vote. An effort should be made to have the Chair rotate from among members representing different geographic regions, as well as non-governmental, state, and federal organizations. The Chair and other Committee members, except for the Graduate Student representative, will serve for a six year term. One-third of the Committee members will be elected every two years, by electronic vote in March of odd years, resulting in a complete turnover of the Committee every 6 years (aside from the Chair who will automatically become Past Chair when their term expires). The Executive Committee will fill unanticipated vacancies by a majority vote of the Committee, and the identified person will serve the remaining portion of the term. The Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and other Executive Committee members may serve for more than one six-year term if the general membership approves. However, the Graduate Student representative will serve for a two year term and then the position must rotate to a new individual.

I. Amendments to the Terms of Reference Bylaws

Changes to Terms of Reference will occur by a simple majority vote of the members present at a biennial meeting or by electronic vote.

J. Logo and Stationery

The WHSG will have an official logo and letterhead stationery. Changes to the logo and stationery are only possible by a two-thirds majority vote of people attending a particular meeting when the subject is discussed.