



Terms of Reference

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group

December 2015, Revised October 2022

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 conferences.
- 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 conferences with the Local Committee, leading Executive Committee meetings during biennial conferences and when necessary via teleconferences between conferences, overseeing the WHSG's business between conferences, helping to develop long-term goals and objectives for the WHSG, and reporting on the activities of the WHSG at biennial conferences 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

The Executive Committee will be responsible for (1) assisting in organizing and planning conferences of the WHSG, (2) soliciting and assembling agenda items from group members to be presented at WHSG conferences, (3) collectively prioritizing needs and seeking ways of getting work accomplished, (4) for regional representatives, acting as a liaison of information between their region and the Executive Committee, and (5) 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 a biennial conference (or in writing to the Executive Committee). A majority vote of the members present at the biennial conference or of the Executive 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 nine individuals and a Chair, representing various diverse backgrounds and interests in shorebird conservation. Besides the Chair, the Executive Committee will include a Secretary, Treasurer, Conference Coordinator, the past Chair, a Graduate Student representative, 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, Treasurer, Graduate Student representative, and Conference Coordinator can be from any geographic location. The Executive Committee will also strive to have representation from non-governmental organizations, private organizations, and state and federal agencies. The Executive Committee will be assisted by a Staff Member (if available), which is a non-elected position that serves the Executive Committee but does not have voting authority.

The Secretary will take and prepare typed minutes of the conferences. 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 conference's occurrence, and will be available at the following biennial conference. 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 conferences of the WHSG unless other arrangements are made. The Conference Coordinator will solicit groups to host the biennial conference, and work with the Executive Committee to help determine the best host for future conferences. Once identified, the Conference Coordinator will work with them to implement the Conference Manual guidelines. The Staff Member will work with others to update and populate the WHSG's website with new information (especially Conference information), maintain the WHSG listserv, and provide

general assistance to all members of the Executive Committee.

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. Conferences

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 Conference Coordinator and other members of the Executive Committee are responsible for locating potential venues for future conferences and based on consensus of the Executive Committee determine the time and location of conferences. The WHSG representative(s) in the Local Committee will be responsible for conference arrangements and determining conference expenses. The Local Committee will attempt to implement the Conference Manual guidelines, raise funds locally to support the conference, and work closely with past conference organizers and the Executive Committee to hold the best conference 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 Executive 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 conferences, the Chair will make administrative decisions, while the Executive Committee will make advisory or policy decisions. At biennial conferences, official decision or action will occur only after receiving a two-thirds majority vote of members present at the conference. 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 the Executive Committee

The Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Conference Coordinator, Graduate Student, and other Executive Committee members will be elected by the general membership at biennial conferences 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 most members of the Executive Committee will serve six-year terms. The only exception is the Graduate Student representative, who will serve a two-year term. One-third of the Executive Committee members will be elected every two years, by electronic vote at the beginning of odd years, resulting in a complete turnover of the Executive 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 Executive Committee, and the identified person will serve the remaining portion of the term. The Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Conference Coordinator, 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.

WHSG places special care and emphasis on provisioning and ensuring a safe, hospitable and productive environment for everyone participating in the Executive Committee and attending its biennial conference, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, physical appearance, gender, age, or sexual orientation. We take this aspect of our mission very seriously and expect all Executive Committee members and conference attendees to behave courteously, respectfully, and professionally to each other, to WHSG representatives, to conference volunteers, exhibitors and local conference venue staff. The Executive Committee has the right to determine a person is unfit to be a candidate in future elections for the Executive Committee if two-thirds of the current members concur. A process for engaging with and resolving any negative incidents among existing Executive Committee members or WHSG attendees is outlined in the Conference Manual.

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 conference or by electronic vote.

J. Logo and Stationery

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