

NORTHEAST REGIONAL CONSERVATION NEED GRANT

Abstract

Summary of Progress:

We completed the second survey season of the BCR 30+ / USFWS Region 5 tidal marsh bird inventory and monitoring program and have QA/QC'd all the avian and vegetation data. We have integrated the sampling frame as well as the field sampling protocols with state and federal partners such that all the data from VA – ME is based on the same probabilistic sampling frame and uses the same field protocol. We have finalized SOPs (standard operating procedures) that clearly outline how to access the points within each hexagon (boat launch to use, tides to follow, tidal creeks with deep bottoms, etc.) making access to these points more efficient. We are also generating SOPs for all aspects of SHARP data collection that will be posted on the SHAPR website (www.tidalmarshbirds.org). In the 2011 – 2012 field seasons (April – July) we visited over 1600 points where we conducted secretive marsh bird surveys. In 2011, we surveyed 797 points from New Jersey to Virginia and revisited these same points in 2012. These data will provide the first comprehensive and standardized tidal marsh bird data set throughout USFWS Region 5 that will be used to assess effects of sea-level rise on tidal marsh birds. In 2012, our USGS partner provided an RTK gps unit that can measure the elevation of location to sub-centimeter accuracy. Using this equipment we were able to measure the elevation at 245 locations from NJ – VA. These data will aid in modeling the effects of sea-level rise on tidal marshes. We presented a session and hosted a working group at the Northeast Bird Conservation meeting 2012, Plymouth, MA.

NORTHEAST REGIONAL CONSERVATION NEED GRANT

QUARTERLY REPORT

Grant Number: 2010-03

Grant Title: "*Identification of Tidal Marsh Bird Focal Areas in BCR 30*"

Grant Receipt: 15 January 2011, University of Delaware

Grant Contact Name: W. Gregory Shriver

Report #- 2012 3rd Qtr

Were planned goals/objectives achieved last quarter? Yes.

Regional Conservation Need Addressed: RCN Topic 4: Identification of Regional Focal Areas and Corridors for the Conservation of Species of Great Conservation Need in the Northeast

Progress Achieved: (For each Goal/Objective, list Planned and Actual Accomplishments)

- 1) Identify regional population centers for tidal marsh birds within BCR 30 from New Jersey to Virginia,
 - >> We've completed the 2012 survey of over 700 locations (NJ – VA) that were also surveyed in 2011.
- 2) combine these survey results with existing surveys for the northern states in BCR 30 (New York – Maine) to identify tidal marsh bird focal areas and produce population estimates for all bird species found in the high tidal marsh (including a global population estimate for saltmarsh sparrow),
 - >> We continue to work in partnership with the University of Maine and University of Connecticut to coordinate surveys, data collections, field tech. training, protocol development, and data entry for all sampling locations from VA - ME. We hold weekly conference calls, we meet in Connecticut for our annual meeting, and we presented a session and hosted a working group at the Northeast Bird Conservation meeting 2012, Plymouth, MA.
- 3) provide all states in BCR 30 with a detailed description of their regional responsibility for tidal marsh bird species,
 - >> We have drafted our second annual report that will be submitted to all state partners 1 Dec 2012 and the USFWS on 31 Dec 2012. We are continuing to

communicate with state partners as we develop a decision support tool to assist in tidal marsh conservation planning.

- 4) identify the most critical areas for the long-term preservation of the tidal marsh bird community within each state, and

>> We continue to work with state and NGO partners to identify where the data from this project can inform coastal adaptation plans. Specifically, we are collaborating with Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge and their partners to identify specific areas around the refuge where marsh migration may occur. We have also developed a working relationship with USFWS Private Lands in NJ and the Natural Lands Trust to identify sites where sea-level rise adaptation management could benefit tidal marsh birds.

- 5) relate the regional focal areas to past management actions.

>> We continue to acquire management information from survey sites.

Summary of Progress: (Provide a paragraph describing progress, work to come, and timelines)
We have completed our second (2012) field season of sampling and we have completed the QA/QC of both the avian and vegetation data. This includes working with state and federal partners to ensure that we are all using the same protocols, developing standard operating procedures, integrating the sampling frame into state and federal monitoring programs, and coordinating field efforts to secure boats, boat training, housing, and field technicians. We have presented our preliminary findings to the Northeast Bird Conservation meeting 2012, Plymouth, MA where we also hosted a 2-day workgroup to identify priority management actions that need to be tested to ensure the long-term persistence of tidal marsh birds in response to rising sea levels.

Difficulties Encountered: None encountered during this quarter.

Activities Anticipated Next Quarter: For Q4 2012 we will initiate formal analyses to estimate tidal marsh obligate breeding bird abundance throughout the study region that accounts for variation in detection. We will extrapolate the abundance estimates from our sampling points to the primary sampling units (hexagons) and make estimates to marshes within hexagons that were not sampled. These estimates will provide the foundation for identification of avian focal areas. We will couple the identification of avian focal areas with NOAA sea-level rise models to identify where marsh transgression may occur in the future. We will identify specific parcels of land in areas that are both avian focal areas and adjacent to areas that have a high probability of allowing for salt marsh transgression. We will estimate the extent of unprotected tidal marsh in each parcel and conduct a cost / benefit analysis to determine which parcels would provide the greatest conservation of tidal marsh bird habitat into the future.

Expected End Date: 15 January 2015

Costs:

Funds Expended to Previous to this Report: \$69,109.99

Amount of RCN Funds Requested within this Report: \$4,779.40

Total Approved Budgeted RCN Funds: \$76,301.00

Are you within the approved budget plan? Y

Are you within approved budget categories? N

Signature: 

Date: 11/15/12

