**Partners in Flight/Shorebird/Waterbird Working Group**

**Chair: Sara Schweitzer, NC Wildlife Resources Commission**

**Vice-Chair: Eric Gardner, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife**

**North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference**

**Norfolk, Virginia**

**Thursday, March 29, 2018**

**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Meeting Room, Fusion**

19 people attended the meeting representing 8 state agencies, 5 federal agencies, and 2 NGOs.

**Goal 1: Integrate outcomes of landbird (PIF), shorebird (USSCP), and waterbird initiatives**

* 1. Presentations on managing species conflicts – coordinated effort among agencies by Laurel Barnhill (USFWS) and avian predation on fish species by Jim Fredericks (IDFG) were provided to demonstrate the urgency of this issue and need for collaborative work.

Sara Schweitzer (NCWRC) offered the following **motion**:

*“I make a motion that a joint ad hoc work group on Bird and Fish Conflicts be established between the AFWA Bird Conservation Committee and AFWA Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee to provide a framework within which bird and fish experts will discuss and address these unique cross disciplinary conservation challenges moving forward. The work group should include a representative from each Flyway's Nongame Technical Committee and social science expertise. I further recommend that this joint ad hoc work group be populated with state and federal experts by the respective committee chairmen and formally report to both committees on updates and actions of relevance.”*

The motion was seconded (Amy Tegeler, SCDNR), and after discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

The following are **information items** presented at the WG meeting.

A presentation on the **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture’s Coastal Marsh Initiative** was provided by Amy Tegeler (Chair of Black Rail WG) and Aimee Weldon (by phone; ACJV Coordinator, USFWS). The presentation focused on the Black Rail and its precipitous decline, goals set for stabilizing its population at 300 pairs, and thereafter, increasing the regional population to 2,500 pairs. The species is proposed for listing within the ESA and the decision should be known by fall 2018. Several state and federal agencies, academic institutions, and NGOs are working together on a conservation plan for the Black Rail. A one-page information sheet will be produced by the Black Rail WG.

Geoff Geupel of Point Blue Conservation and immediate past chair of the **PIF** Steering Committee gave an overview of the projects underway by partners of this **initiative**. Highlights include: outcomes from PIF VI in Costa Rica where Central and South American partners further developed full annual cycle models for several species within regional conservation plans; decision support tools to USFS, BLM, and other federal agencies to help meet agency priorities; engagement with private landowners and corporations to promote habitat conservation; promotion of World Migratory Bird Day; and contributions to the 2018 State of the Birds Report highlighting states’ emphasis on bird conservation.

The **US Shorebird Conservation Partnership** accomplishments were highlighted by Sara Schweitzer: the USSCP Council met at the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Group meeting in Peru where several papers were presented and a workshop was held to address impacts of shrimp aquaculture on shorebird species. The document, “standards for monitoring nonbreeding shorebirds in the Western Hemisphere” is being reviewed and the “shorebird populations and trends” document is being revised. Projects that are part of the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative focusing on shorebird hunting in South America have obtained funding from USAID, and similar work in the Caribbean is continuing. The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network US Committee is actively reviewing site nominations and building communications among US sites.

**Goal 2: Clearly identify significant threats to landbird, shorebird, and waterbird populations**

Discussed threats to migratory birds within their flight space – buildings, glass windows, communication towers, light arrays, solar panel arrays, and wind mills. We formed a group to summarize threats to migratory birds in their flight space, actions underway to address threats, and those that need further attention.

**Goal 3: Evaluate new strategies for bird conservation action and make recommendations to AFWA leadership**

To address needs and concerns about avian data collected by numerous agencies in the past and present, a one-day Avian Conservation Data Management Workshop was organized by Ruth Boettcher (VDGIF) and Sara Schweitzer (NCWRC) and held on Monday, March 26th, in Virginia Beach. Twenty-one people attended and 12 others joined by webex. State and federal agencies, academics, and NGOs were represented. Existing databases such as the BISON, BBL database, Avian Conservation Assessment Database, USFWS Colonial Waterbird database, and Mid-Atlantic New England & Maritimes (MANEM) database were described as were a couple data collection systems. The AKN was described as a database management and analysis system. The group agreed to use the MANEM and Colonial Waterbird databases as a case study, and will upload the databases into the AKN for further data management and to analyze the data for trend analyses, distribution, and population estimates at regional scales. A team was formed to begin work this spring and present first results by September 2018. A second workshop will be organized in 2019.

**Goal 4: Support policies, legislation, and funding initiatives that favor landbird, shorebird, and waterbird protection and restoration.**

The MBTA opinion and interpretation was discussed and questions arose about states’ regulations relative to federal law. The WG participants felt more clarity was needed about how they could assist with the work begun by AFWA’s legal staff. Once it was clear what help was needed, participants would determine if they could help or not.

**12:00 PM Adjourn**