



WHSRN: An international strategy for saving SHOREBIRDS and their habitats.

Shorebirds are among nature's most ambitious and amazing long-distance migrants. But their numbers are dropping rapidly, with some species projected to go extinct within our lifetime. Protecting these birds is a high international conservation priority—and one that requires proactive, coordinated efforts within and between the countries these birds fly through during their vast pole-to-pole migrations.

What is WHSRN, and why was it created?



By the mid-1980s, scientists throughout the Americas were documenting serious population declines in shorebirds. Shorebirds' seasonal migrations are perfectly

timed to occur just as their food resources become available at very specific locations across the hemisphere during a very short window of time.

Understanding this, in 1984 the science community developed the framework for a site-specific, hemisphere-scale shorebird conservation strategy—the **Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN)**.

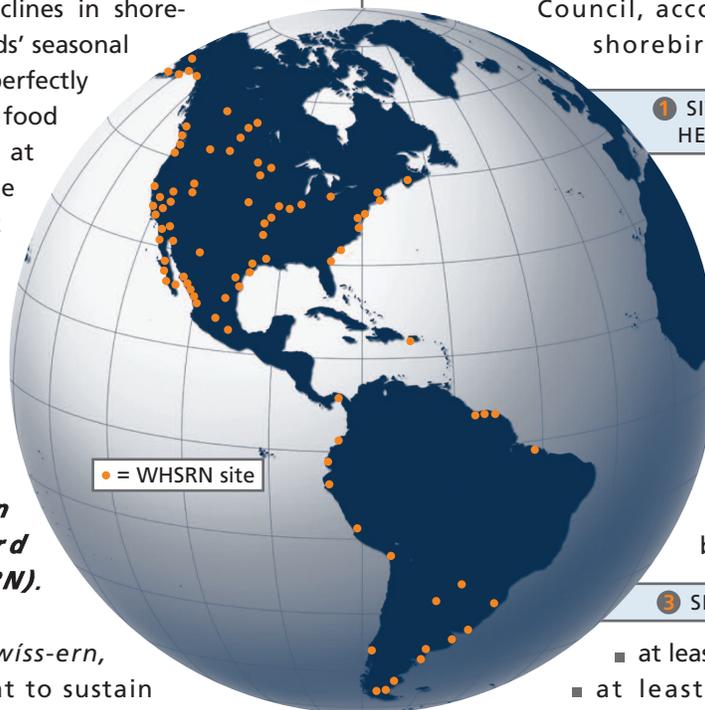
This strategy, pronounced *wiss-ern*, follows the simple idea that to sustain healthy populations of shorebirds, we must maintain the ecological integrity of key sites—those specific locations—that provide the habitats and nourishment they need for survival.

How extensive is WHSRN, to date?

There are currently 87 sites in 13 countries, from Alaska in the northernmost United States to Tierra del Fuego in southernmost South America. More than 32 million acres (almost 13 million hectares) of shorebird habitat have been designated and are being conserved by WHSRN partners.

How does it work?

A partner or landowner nominates an area for one of three categories of designation by the WHSRN Hemispheric Council, according to its importance for shorebirds:



1 SITES/LANDSCAPES OF HEMISPHERIC IMPORTANCE:

- at least 500,000 shorebirds annually, or
- at least 30% of a species' biogeographic population

2 SITES OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE:

- at least 100,000 shorebirds annually, or
- at least 10% of a species' biogeographic population

3 SITES OF REGIONAL IMPORTANCE:

- at least 20,000 shorebirds annually, or
- at least 1% of a species' biogeographic population

Additionally, to qualify for a WHSRN designation, the site's landowner(s) must agree to:

1. make shorebird conservation a priority;
2. protect and manage shorebird habitat; and
3. keep WHSRN informed of any changes at the site.

Many site partners choose to display the certificate of designation, post WHSRN signage, host a dedication ceremony, and/or develop educational material and programs to raise local awareness about the site's importance.



Who can participate in WHSRN?

Site landowners and stewards include government agencies, non-profit organizations, indigenous peoples, academic centers, businesses, and any other individual or entity committed to advancing WHSRN’s mission.

Who administers WHSRN?



Administrative and technical support is provided by Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences (Manomet) in Massachusetts, USA, through its WHSRN Executive Office. Manomet has a long and respected history of initiating collaborative, science-based conservation. For three decades, its senior scientists have been pioneers and steady leaders in deepening our understanding of shorebirds’ needs and in guiding conservation actions.

A Red Knot may fly the same distance as the Earth to the Moon before its 13th birthday—provided it overcomes natural and human-imposed threats to its survival each year.



The Strength of Partnerships

From the Arctic tundra to the tip of Tierra del Fuego, WHSRN sites are more than just dots on a map. Each makes up the overall constellation of willing partners across the hemisphere committed to doing their part to help sustain healthy shorebird populations.

An effort of WHSRN’s magnitude cannot be accomplished solely by the talent of any one group. WHSRN’s leadership finds win-win intersections with the goals and agendas of other local, national, and international entities and individuals, from all sectors of society. In business terms, by conducting highly leveraged activities like helping other groups incorporate shorebird-conservation needs into their work or practices, WHSRN achieves a very large return on investment.

The Power of Science

The combination of biological and environmental factors at play in the annual lifecycle of a shorebird is very complex; in turn, so is the work of scientists in determining if or how a natural or human-induced impact to any one factor may be causing or contributing to a population’s decline. This we do know: nine shorebird species have rates of decline so sharp that their total population sizes will be half what they are today in just 10 to 20 years (Bart et al, 2007). If not reversed in time, they will become extinct.

Science informs and empowers our actions within WHSRN. As research continues to refine our understanding of shorebirds, we are simultaneously adjusting the scientific questions asked and the conservation actions taken.

The Importance of Your Support

As a site partner, researcher, donor, business owner, educator, birdwatcher, landowner, or resource manager, your support for WHSRN—in whatever shape it may take—helps to advance our shorebird conservation goals. If you have questions, or want ideas on how you can best contribute, visit www.whsrn.org or contact us at:

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The Bar-tailed Godwit breeds in Alaska and “winters” some 7,150 miles away in New Zealand—and gets there by flying non-stop for up to 9 days.

