

Delaware Shorebird Monitoring Program Field Log 2004



Purpose of the Delaware Shorebird Monitoring Program

The Delaware Shorebird Monitoring Program has been undertaking research into the health and population of several species of trans-continental migratory shorebirds since 1997. The team consists of dedicated trained volunteers, staff, and researchers interested in the conservation of shorebird species.

The purpose of this research is to improve our understanding of the importance of the Delaware Bay in the life cycles of migrant shorebird populations such as the Red Knot, Ruddy Turnstone, and Sanderling particularly with regard to spawning horseshoe crabs.

About this Document

This document is a record of the work done by DNREC staff, researchers and volunteers during April, May and June 2004. Each team member wrote the Log soon after they returned from the field to provide a record of the level of activity that was undertaken. It also provides additional information to the standardized records. Much of this is anecdotal in nature but could be important in interpreting the results obtained in future years.

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Groups Represented Include:

- British Trust for Ornithology
- Wash Wader Ringing Group
- Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Delaware Museum of Natural History
- Tri-State Bird and Rescue
- Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
- US Geological Survey
- University of Georgia
- Friends of the Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Virginia Tech
- Royal Ontario Museum

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

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Saturday, 24 Apr 2004

Training session #1

The first Training session for the Shorebird Monitoring Team was held at the DNERR and Ted Harvey today. There was a good turnout with around 30 people attending. Kim Cole, Karen and Chris Bennett, Olin Allen, Rachael Coffey, Bonnie Willis, Cameron Haughey and Greg Breese took the team through an overview of the season, shorebird identification, resighting, handling and processing birds as well as a step by step cannon netting exercise at Ted Harvey where the net fired wonderfully!

Sunday, 25 Apr 2004 through Wednesday, 28 Apr 2004

Resighting commenced! Checking out old sites

Thursday, 29 Apr 2004

Rhoda Bryan and Barbara Tisdall opened size 2 bands and placed them on tubing while Rachael Coffey and Kim Cole sorted equipment for the season.

Friday, 30 Apr 2004

Rhoda Bryan opened more size 2 bands onto tubing thus completing all ringing needs for the season!

Saturday, 01 May 2004

Training Session #2

The second Training session for the Shorebird Monitoring Team was held at the DNERR and Ted Harvey today. There was a good turnout, although several groups were late arriving with over 30 people attending. Kim Cole, Kevin Kalasz, Chris Bennett, Olin Allen, Rachael Coffey, Bonnie Willis, Cameron Haughey and Greg Breese took the team through an overview of the season, shorebird identification, resighting, handling and processing birds as well as a step by step cannon netting exercise at Ted Harvey where the net fired wonderfully at least once. The first firing of the day pulled out one peg and a well briefed volunteer went running (as instructed) to the front of the net which put her smack dab ankle deep in the mud where the front of her end of the net had gone.

Resighting by Paul Brotherton at Port Mahon where we saw our first individual Red Knot, a bird that was banded in 2002 in New Jersey.

Sunday, 02 May 2004

Resighting by Lanny McDowell and Richard Cohen.

Monday, 03 May 2004

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Wayne Kirklin and Rhoda Bryan opened size 3 bands. Kevin Kalasz resighting at Mispillion, Resighting by Lanny McDowell and Richard Cohen at North and South Bowers, Slaughter Beach. Gene Hess and Wayne Kirklin resighting at Port Mahon. Brian Harrington and Bill Mauck (Manomet) arrived.

Tuesday, 04 May 2004

Early meeting with Sarah Karpanty, Danielle, Nick (VA Tech), Brian Harrington, Bill Mauck (Manomet), Heritage and DCP programs to discuss coordination of research. Gene Hess and Pat Robertson resighting at Port Mahon. Jake (Manomet) arrived. NJ flew the first aerial survey of the season.

B. Harrington: Arrived yesterday with Bill Mauck. It was foggy with rain all the way down from MA, but sunny and clear this morning. Went to Port Mahon beach with Kim Cole. Then back to the center for meetings during the rest of the morning. Off to Ted Harvey after lunch. It was clear and sunny all day, temp ca 65F, wind direction was not recorded.

Port Mahon.

Arrive ca 0745, incoming tide near high tide @ 10:01, and 5.7 ft. Very rough estimates of shorebird numbers are as follows: Willets 10, Spotted sandpipers 2, Black-necked Stilt 3, Greater Yellowlegs 5, Lesser Yellowlegs 10, Semipalmated Sandpiper 1, Least Sandpiper 25. There has been some work done on the marsh to the west of Port Mahon Rd (the part of the rd. along the shoreline). This includes piling up of marsh mud in a dike-like fashion to about 5-6 feet above marsh level. Not sure where the 'borrow' for this has come from.

Ted Harvey

12:30 – 13:30. As we arrived; flocks Of Dunlin & others were leaving the marsh areas to forage on the outside beach. They were very jumpy there. Very rough estimates as follow: Black-bellied Plover 25 (most of these were ca. ½ basic), Short-billed Dowitcher ca. 5, Greater Yellowlegs 2, Lesser Yellowlegs 9, Dunlin ca. 2000, Ruddy Turnstone 15.

Went back to DNERR to meet up with Jake Walker at 2:30, and then went to Slaughter Beach, Cedar Creek and Mispillion during the afternoon. Tide was near low and going to low. There were relatively few shorebirds on the Mispillion Bars, but lots of gulls including Laughing Gull. There are many more LAGU here on the DE side of the bay than I have seen in my earlier years work here.

Cedar Creek Beach

I estimated 25 Semipalmated Plover, 50 Black-bellied Plover, and ca 30 Short-billed Dowitcher. At Slaughter Beach there were a thousand plus Dunlin in a distant flock, and a couple hundred Black-bellied Plover at the water mud interface. Doubtless there also were some Least Sandpiper, but the tide was out so far that small shorebirds were too distant to identify.

At night went up to Port Mahon Rd to listen for Black Rail ... spent a little over an hour during the full moon high tide but did not hear any. Lots of work in the marsh has visibly changed habitat, perhaps affecting the Rail.

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Wednesday, 05 May 2004

Resighting

A slow start (getting things arranged for Hana Hermanek to get a TN Visa.)

Pickering Beach (Harrington)

We stopped at Pickering Beach about 0930. Jake spotted a white pelican flying along the Bay Shore. We then went into town to send papers to Hana, and then to Port Mahon.

Port Mahon (Harrington)

We searched for color bands on Ruddy Turnstones (lots). There were perhaps 500 Ruddy Turnstone on the beach, no more than 50 Least Sanderling, a couple of Semipalmated Sanderling and Short-billed Dowitcher, but not much else. High tide there was at about 1030. During the afternoon we returned to Mahon and took feeding rates on shorebirds and recorded disturbance. Species numbers were quite different from the morning. There were perhaps 25 Willet on the shore, often in twosomes. Yellowlegs were mostly towards the south end - perhaps 5 Greater and 50 Lesser, a couple of Spotted Sandpiper. Ruddy Turnstone seemed more abundant on the morning high tide than afternoon, perhaps 500. Dunlin were not evident during the morning, but were abundant in afternoon (perhaps 1000-1500 on the beach). Not many Short-billed Dowitchers, perhaps 25 along entire beach in the afternoon (none in morning). A handful of Semi-palmated Sandpipers, and perhaps 100 Least Sandpipers during the afternoon.

Gene Hess and Pat Robertson; resighting at Port Mahon. Jean Woods and Karen Bennett; resighting at Brockenbridge. Walk-in trap attempted at Port Mahon in search of a sample of Turnstone. Kevin Kalasz, Lorne Brousseau and Greg Breese worked on setting up the final Fixed Telemetry Stations.

Clearly many of the shorebirds are using areas away from the beachfronts as high tide roosting sites (see counts for Mahon on 4 May). Following our check of Port Mahon, we stopped in to Little Creek WMA. The south impoundment (with observation tower) is under maintenance, and so has little water in it. There are large dried mud areas in the center, and several thousand small shorebirds and a couple hundred Short-billed Dowitchers roosting in these areas, even though the tide was probably still only ½ in from low tide. I expect that most of the shorebirds we were seeing at Port Mahon were roosting here when not foraging. Alas, they were too far off to get good identifications.

Thursday, 06 May 2004

Boat survey from Slaughter Beach to Port Mahon

Dave Carter as boat captain, Ed Cervone as recorder, Olin Allen and Kevin Kalasz as observers and Nick Happenstall from VA Tech along to learn more of the Delaware Bay coast. Gene Hess and Jean Woods did some resighting at Mahon.

B. Harrington. Bill, Jake and I went off to Mispillion to catch the high tide and to monitor disturbance. It is Clear and sunny, with winds from the SW ca. 10 mph. High tide - about noon.

Walked from the parking spot (starting ca 10:00) to Cedar Beach, then crossed through the marsh to Mispillion Osprey Beach (arrive 10:45). Started out at Osprey,

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but there were no shorebirds on any of the Mispillion sand bars. Instead there was a batch of shorebirds (low hundreds) on the cement and gravel beach across the channel near the Lighthouse Point and on the north jetty (perhaps 100). On the walk out, there were very few shorebirds on Slaughter and Cedar Creek Beaches - a few Least Sandpipers, handful of Dunlin and 2 Black-necked Stilts that were evidently foraging on horseshoe crab eggs. Over at Osprey Beach there were no shorebirds, but there were a couple hundred on the jetties and a couple hundred on "cement beach".

Slack tide was about noon. We stayed until about 13:30 and then crossed back over to Cedar Beach. Wow, there were > 5000 Dunlin (perhaps closer to 7 K) and perhaps 100 knot (at least 60). We spent an hour trying (unsuccessfully) to get close. Only 2 color bands were seen: Fg,O:m,O? 1/10, Flg[?]:m?,G,X. We returned to the car about 15:00. Stopped at a few stores, and then to Bowers Beach North. There were no shorebirds there at about 1700. There were not very many gulls on Bowers as compared to Slaughter. There were high hundreds of shorebirds on flats off Ted Harvey WMA, but too far away to get any sort of id.

Friday, 07 May 2004

Hana (Manomet) arrived

Saturday, 08 May 2004

BTO / WWRG contingent arrive at Washington Dullas @ 14:30. Met by Kim and taken to St. Jones.

Phil Atkinson arrived from Montserrat overnight, minus most of his luggage.

Dave Carter welcomed us and soon out to recce:

Mispillion (Dave Carter / Nigel Clark / Simon Gillings by boat)

10 Knot, 3000 Dunlin, 1000 Dowitcher, 200 Turnstone, 3 Stilts plus another 2000 probably mostly Dunlin on mudflats in Cedar creek. Turnstone in amongst rocks and jetty poles making catching impractical.

Port Mahon (Sarah Dawkins / Graham Austin / Phil Ireland)

ca.300 Dunlin in the very first bay. There were a flock of 70 Turnstone, left of the fishing pier including one cohort bird. A further 70 Turnstone in the next bay along. Two more small flocks of 340 dunlin in total beyond the Oil Jetty. Last bay on the beach had 40 Turnstone and 50 Dunlin. No concentrations of birds anywhere on the beach and no catch option at Mahon based on the evening recce although the situation sounded very different to observations earlier in the day suggesting many Turnstone may have left for roost already.

Disturbance Crew

Mispillion (morning):

N.Jetty: Jake; Concrete: Bill

Port Mahon (evening): Bill and Jake; Very little disturbance recorded and many feeding reports completed.

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Sunday, 09 May 2004

(sunny, warm, light breeze)

Recces 8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Mahon (NAC with Bill, Hana, Olin)

Substantial numbers of Turnstone found mainly between the two piers

North Bowers (PLI; SG; GA with Paul)

600 dunlin on opposite side of river and large flocks in distance near Ted Harvey.

Ted Harvey (PLI; SG; GA with Paul)

ca. 5000 dunlin to north of observation platform; many high on beach in sand zone (i.e. good spawning)

Slaughter Beach (Phil A; with Nick, Kevin, Danielle)

2000 dunlin and 100 semi-palmated Sandpiper at north end. Nothing at fire station end due to disturbance.

Mispillion (Phil A; with Nick, Kevin, Danielle)

4000 dunlin, 50 turnstone, 10 sanderling, 50 semi-palmated sandpiper and 8 knot.

Cedar beach cove (Phil A; with Nick, Kevin, Danielle)

17 semi-palmated sandpiper, 2 turnstone, 9 dowitcher, 13 semi-palmated plover.

Brokenbridge (SD with Karen, Susan, Uday)

Few birds along the beach front although a small flock of ca. 100 Dunlin dashing back and forth. The spit at river mouth had most birds including very large numbers of gulls; 286 Dunlin and a handful of Turnstone (the most noteworthy of the shorebirds).

Decision on basis of recces to set cannon nets at Port Mahon

Advance party (Dave Carter, WWRG/BTO team plus a couple of others) went to set. Joined by rest of team and within half hour made catch (Catch time 12:20; high tide 14:25)

When the setting team arrived on site there was a large feeding flock of Turnstone beside the fishing pier and also good numbers of Turnstone (ca. 200) on the catch site which moved along onto the rocks when we arrived. During setting a flock of 200 Turnstone was further along beach but disturbed as setting neared completion, about half moving to the other side of the net. The strategy for catching was to let things develop naturally. This was successful with birds gradually coming to net bay but over half at the wrong end. Passing cars caused no disturbance until one sped by; this put many more birds in the catching area. Short delay whilst some walked further in to catching area then fired:

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9-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
LEAST SANDPIPER	3	-	3
SANDERLING	2	-	2
WILLET	1	-	1
DUNLIN	10	-	10
S.B. DOWITCHER	1	-	1
TURNSTONE	151	8	159
Total	168	8	176

This catch gave the first opportunity to use the new, lettered, leg flags which were applied to all the turnstone. Also 11 feather samples were taken from the turnstone for stable isotope work. After the team had left, Simon Gillings stayed on site and made 28 resighting of the turnstone just flagged, proving the flags work!

Disturbance Crew

Mahon-Bill and Hana. The cannon net explosion startled Hana, making it difficult to hold binoculars steady. She recorded disturbance and then went to help the crew collect birds and data.

Monday, 10 May 2004

(sunny, warm, moderate breeze)

NAC/PA with Dave and Kim to liaison meeting with New Jersey team at ferry terminal in NJ.

Morning activity for rest of team reccees / flag resightings

Port Mahon (SG with Gene and Wayne)

Resightings mainly of birds marked the day before to compare weights with profiles in the field.

Ted Harvey (GA; PI with Jim)

Departure delayed by the Jeep having a dead battery. Jumped with Jim's car and then he took his car, which proved to be a good move as the procedure had to be repeated again at Ted Harvey. 6-7000 Dunlin visible from the observation point at Ted Harvey. Approx half of these were feeding at the bottom of the beach rather than being at tide edge which was well out. All looked very promising for a catching attempt with walk in traps later in the day. Conversely, the mist net site did not look promising with the whole area either under water or previously sandy areas grassed over. No muddy edges and GA walking out confirmed no evidence of wader presence. Just 12 dunlin and 2 Black-bellied Plover in whole area.

Later in the afternoon, GA/PI/SD with Jim and Gene took the walk-in traps to Ted Harvey. Arrived about 17:30 to find the tide just about to uncover the mudflats. Only 2-3000 dunlins present. These did not behave as on the recce and tended to stay in flocks and not want to feed. Gave up 19:15, only to find 3 Least Sandpipers in the trap and a further two trying to get in.

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Brockenbridge (SD with Rachael and Nancy)

The storm the night before had changed the complexion of Brockenbridge quite considerably. The beach front is now quite cliffed in places with lots of exposed peat and root matter. The spit has changed shape too with a lagoon forming at the landward end, suggesting the spit may separate to form an offshore island in time. Very few birds along the beach front – but included one Red Knot and 10 Turnstone, 11 Least Sandpiper, 6 Dunlin and 1 Sanderling. Again, most birds on the spit but fewer shorebirds (only 50 Dunlin, 4 Turnstone 2 Black-bellied Plovers and 5 Sanderling) and more gulls (c1000 Laughing Gulls) than the day before. A flock of 20 Red Knot were on the beachfront on the way back along.

South Bowers (SD with Rachael and Nancy)

Very few shorebirds at South Bowers but evidence of quite a lot of spawning: 10 Dunlin, 3 Sanderling and 7 Least Sandpipers along the beach front. Laughing Gulls everywhere with very high numbers at the river mouth.

Boat recce (SG/PI)

Mispillion; Here 30 knot were located with a flock of 300 dunlin. Beached the boat and SG approached to scan for flags. One previous Delaware bird and one New Jersey bird seen in the flock. Flock of ca. 200 Turnstone also seen.

10-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
LEAST SANDPIPER	3	-	3
Total	3	-	3

On the way back from the meeting NAC et al. called in at: - Slaughter beach. Here they found 15,000 Dunlin and 2000 Dowitcher. Also in the Mispillion region they saw 3-400 Dunlin and 200 Turnstone.

Disturbance Crew

Port Mahon (morning): Jake, Hana and Bill.

Tuesday, 11 May 2004

(Another hot, sunny day)

Resighting work

Port Mahon (NC)

800 Turnstone (mainly roosting), 300 Least Sandpiper, 100 Dunlin and 2000 Laughing Gulls, 15 of the flagged Turnstone seen.

North Bowers (Kim)

South Bowers (SD + Jean)

Very few shorebirds at South Bowers, but another beach with lots of laughing gulls – 600. 64 Turnstone in total, many were checked for color rings but light conditions not helpful. 9 Semi-palmated Plovers, 5 Black-bellied Plovers (of which 4 were in extensive winter plumage still) and 91 Least Sandpipers.

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Mahon (Phil A, Sarah and Jean)

17:30 went to Mahon to look for flagged Turnstone. 13 flags seen and all birds plumage scored and abdominal profiled. Significantly more Turnstone (ca. 900) at Mahon than on our previous trip to the site. A count of approximately 675 Dunlin and 105 Least Sandpipers too. Also very large numbers of Laughing Gulls – ca. 2200 in total. Again, significant levels of spawning.

Nigel's departure to Mahon was delayed by the Jeep failing to start despite charge most of yesterday. Consequently SG and Bonnie went to WalMart to get replacement.

Mispillion (Karen and Bob)

Bennetts / Bigstone (Kevin, Nancy)

Catching attempts

Ted Harvey 09:00

GA, PI, NAC with Gene and Jim to try walk-in traps again. This time birds behaving more as the Monday morning although fewer birds in total. Some twinkling necessary to get birds in front of cages. Four got caught fairly early but despite birds being by traps no more got in. Once these taken out and ringed, a further trap set and 10 birds quickly entered it. By 12:00 fewer birds about; picked up traps.

11-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
DUNLIN	11	-	11
LEAST SANDPIPER	3	-	3
Total	14	0	14

Slaughter 17:00

GA/PI/Jim to try to catch dunlin in walk-in traps, partly to provide Mike Haramis with a sample of 10 dunlin for feeding work. Dunlin did not appear to be behaving as previous day and those that were feeding were mainly doing so on wet mud where it was impractical to put traps. Traps were set but never looked promising.

11-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
LEAST SANDPIPER	2	-	2
Total	2	0	2

Weekly boat survey

Crew this week, Nigel, Simon, Tim, Gene, Bill. Captain Tim had his fine crew with navigation specialist Nigel, Laughing Gull counter Simon, Log specialist Gene, and bird flight tabulator Bill. This fine crew made an eventful 4hr tour of the DE shore line from Misfillion. Events such as, being lost at sea and living on an island did not occur but many just as interesting events did. Close to 60 Red Knot were observed, many Ruddy Turnstone, Dunlin, and an exurbanite number of Laughing Gulls. The weather was wonderful along our jaunt and the only major problem was the late arrival of the truck and trailer at Woodland Beach. Bighting flies and no-seeums seem to have a very strong breeding population in this area. With the Pint of blood

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taken from each of the 5 boat crew members we have inadvertently helped perpetuate the biting insect population in the area. For future note make sure that the pickup crew arrives prior to the boat crews' arrival!

The boat crew was transported to the Mispillion start point by Sarah and Jean who then went on to count Slaughter beach and Cedar Creek. Momentary excitement when it was thought that a flock of 200 Knot were on the south side of the Jetty at Mispillion Harbor Mouth but these were almost certainly Dowitchers. Slaughter Beach had in the order of 2200 gulls – mostly Laughing Gulls but also ca. 100 Ring Billed Gulls. The only shorebirds were 10 Turnstone and a major flock of 5 Red Knot. Significant levels of spawning.

Disturbance Crew

Concrete (afternoon): Jake and Hana. Tide near high rising.

Wednesday, 12 May 2004

Aerial Survey

Seen flying over Ted Harvey ca. 08:30.

Walk in traps

Ted Harvey 0800: (PI, GA, Nick, Gene, Nancy):

Birds at bottom of beach but fewer than previous day. Traps set but many birds towards tide edge. Gave up at 12:00

12-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
LEAST SANDPIPER	1	-	1
DUNLIN	1	-	1
Total	2	0	2

Resighting

Mahon (Sarah D)

Arrived at Mahon at 06:30 (1.5 hours after tide). Very large flock of dunlin in the first bay ca. 1500, plus at least 500 further up the beach. All Dunlin flocks contained a few Sanderling. Lots of Turnstone in the rocks and, as tide began to fall off, a good number of color rings and flags to check. 32 Lime flag combinations read, one white flagged bird seen briefly, lots of cohort birds about. Turnstone flock definitely increased in numbers – easily ca. 2000 birds around and possibly more. Aerial survey passed overhead at 08:30 lifting flock. Road grader caused a bit of disturbance too.

Mispillion bay front (Tim, Simon G, Phil A, Nancy C W)

Arrived on the rising tide. On entering the back beach area we found several large concentrations of Dunlin and Red Knot, mostly in the peaty areas at the extreme south and north end of the back beach. We estimated around 300 Knots. They were rather flighty and flocks kept coming and going, sometimes feeding, sometimes heading off towards the roost and Cedar beach area. At c.1625 there were 125-150 knot feeding actively with dunlin at the north end of the back beach. Here we had 2 individual Argentinean knot (one inscribed) and one each of Delaware and New Jersey inscribed flags. Abdominal profile scores were mostly 2s and 3s (a few 1s) and many birds were in advanced breeding plumage. As we left several hundred

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Turnstone were present on the marsh edge and landings by the road but scans found no individuals. These birds can be scanned well from a vehicle on the road if approached slowly. One immature Peregrine (south) briefly flushed all waders and gulls in the harbor area.

Mispillion Harbor (from Osprey) (Kevin, Pete Z/Marie)

Approx. 150 Red Knot in harbor totals. Boat traffic disturbed flock several times.

- Point: 76 Red Knot with 4 Green Flags and 1 lime flag-code could not be read). 2000 Dunlin, 1 American Oystercatcher, 200 Ruddy Turnstone, 3 Sanderling, 1 Dowitcher.
- Island: 1500 Dunlin, 70 Ruddy Turnstone, 50 Red Knot
- Osprey: 300 Dunlin, 12 Sanderling, 30 Ruddy Turnstone, 1 Dowitcher.

South Bowers / Brockenbridge (Sarah, Jean)

Very few birds at South Bowers, and Laughing Gull numbers also much reduced. Flock of 70 Sanderling flying south. 53 Least Sandpipers, 58 Turnstone. At Brockenbridge 350 Dunlin, 100 Turnstone, 5 Knot (all unringed but plumage scored) 1 Whimbrel.

N.Bowers (Kevin / Pete Z/Marie)

Several people on beach. 4 Black-bellied Plover, 4 Willet.

Ted Harvey (Kevin/Pete Z/Marie)

200 Dunlin, 100 Ruddy Turnstone, 120 Black Skimmer.

South Bowers (Kevin/Pete Z/Marie)

250 Ruddy Turnstone (2 w/green flag), 2 Red Knot (unmarked), 4 Dunlin, 1 Willet.

Slaughter beach / Cedar creek (Karen, Jean)

Port Mahon (Gene, Sarah D, Jean)

Start 1518 at south end; immediately found a lime flag Knot from 2003 NJ (FL(YK)/- and G/-) with 3 other knot. Feeding in peaty area before first rocks with 75 Dunlin. Most at tide line but about 20 Dunlin higher on shingle feeding frantically. Joined there by 4 birders who spooked the birds 4 times and 2 knot eventually flew off south. 514 turnstone scattered along shore, mostly loafing as it was approaching high tide. 9 Sanderling, 256 Dunlin, 104 Least Sandpipers and 1 more Knot; Dunlin flying around a lot. 1059 Laughing Gull and about 5% of that number Ring-billed Gull. Seems like more Ring-billed Gull than before. One pre-2004 individual Turnstone and 2 (2004) lime flag Ruddy Turnstone.

Bread baking (Jim)

Superb fresh baked bread for lunch!

Evening mist netting / Birds for Mike Haramis

Various options for getting samples of ten Dunlin, Least Sandpiper or Semipalmated Sandpipers for captivity studies considered. These included walk in traps at Mahon, mist netting lagoons at Mahon or a lagoon at Ted Harvey. Nigel and Graham did recce of the latter, losing Graham thigh deep in mud at the first attempt to find a suitable place to put nets. Second attempt more successful. On the lagoon were 3000 Dunlin, 2000 Semis, 500 Dowitchers, hundreds of Least Sandpipers, and good numbers of Spotted Sandpipers and Yellowlegs. Although this was the obvious place

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to try catching, still looked at Mahon but no place where walk in trapping would have worked.

Two lines of 4 single shelf nets set by small team after evening meal. Small tape lure out at dusk. This however coincided with rest of birds on lagoon departing seaward. Took the two shelf nets to the shore and set parallel to the coast. Tape lure also transferred to coastal nets. Lots of dunlin near the nets but landing with stranded horseshoe crabs towards tide rather than feed on shore where nets were. They were going to shore by peat which was beyond nets. No birds caught on the shore but meanwhile the lagoon nets had caught just one Dowitcher before being taken down.

Disturbance Crew

Port Mahon (Morning): Jake

Back Beach (Morning): Hana and Bill watched the Horseshoe Crab survey stir up the birds.

HSC egg sampling @ Mispillion:

First time in the Back beach blind. Got to love the biting flies that live in this blind. I only wish that I had brought some pants since bug dope does not seem to have any repellent properties for flies. HSC sampling was quick (~30min) and disturbance did not seem to impact the birds a great deal. Captain Wes relinquished the helm to First Mate Susan who was increasing her handling of the boat and its maneuverability at low tide. Many Red Knots were located along Point and the small island that forms just off point at low tide. Very good day!

Thursday, 13 May 2004

(Weather continues hot and sunny; threatened thunder storm did not materialize)
Graham Austin assembling components for a more powerful tape lure system

Resighting

Mahon (early; Sarah D)

Arrived ca. 07:30, 1.25 hours after tide. Dunlin feeding in exactly same location on the first bay of the beach and behaving exactly the same as the previous day – should have had those walk-in traps with me! More Sanderling (ca. 200) in with the Dunlin (ca. 2000) and Turnstone (ca. 2000) than in previous days. Very little human activity along the beach. Lots of spawning. Turnstone mostly roosting for first 30 minutes after arrival then alternating between feeding frenziedly and roosting. 23 lime flagged birds seen of which I think 12 were different birds to those seen by me yesterday morning. One bird persistently pecking at flag for 5 minutes. Very few cohort birds seen in flock today.

Mispillion (boat; Phil A/Simon G/Phil I)

Initially intended to be early morning visit but boat engine problems delayed departure to 11:00. Up to 500 knot now present but well scattered within the several thousand dunlin present. Boat beached on shingle low tide island and leg flag scans made from here, birds coming to within a few yards of the boat. Observation finished at 13:00 when peregrine disturbed all birds.

Pickering (Karen/Marie)

Arrived at 1300 @low tide. About ca 2200 Dunlin present, also ca 75 SESA. More horseshoe crab spawning than I've seen anywhere else this year.

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

North Bowers and South Ted Harvey (Karen/Marie)

Now that we have permission, we were able to park outside the gate at the two new houses at N. Bowers. Walked through the gate around south house out to beach. Around toward the inlet, there were 14 Knots and 62 Turnstones feeding and loafing, including a turnstone with a lime flag = AMT. Across the inlet (South Ted Harvey) on the spit west of the osprey nest platform, there were 95 Knots and 400 Turnstones. Of these, 75 Knots and 150 Turnstones were in a tight flock at the foot of the slope feeding and milling about. Potential catch area? There was one Knot with a lime flag, but the bird was too distant to read the two-character code.

Osprey beach (Jean/Nancy)

Arrived approx 0930h at Cedar Creek, tons of small birds and Dunlin on mud flats both south and north, ca 3300, lots of flying around. Also some dowitchers. Not carefully counted b/c of distance and sun glare. Walked through to blind. Initial counts for harbor are 430 Turnstones, 20 Knots, 800 Dunlin, 95 Dowitchers, but lots of birds flying around among beaches in harbor and probably to Cedar Creek. Knot well mixed with Dunlin in small groups of ca 5 on point. 1050h Peregrine Falcon came through and flushed many birds in harbor and about 4500 on other side of jetty. 1115h recounted knot and now 60 on point and 30 on island (1 hr before low tide). Nick joined us about 1030h and Nick and Hana came 1130h so we left. On arrival no shorebirds on Osprey beach but some gulls present. Dunlin and a few Turnstone and Dowitchers came on the beach in numbers of 30-50 but usually didn't stay long. Throughout time there continued to be lots of birds, mostly dunlin moving around in harbor. Birds generally to either side of blind and not frequently just in front.

Brockenbridge / Bennets / Bigstone (Kevin/Bob)

Big Stone Beach (0942-0951): Approx 2000 Laughing Gull, 6 Spotted Sandpiper, 20 HEGU, 4 Killdeer. Bennets Pier (1014-1021): 30 Turnstones that flew N to Brockenbridge gut, 6 Willet, 8 Spotted Sandpiper, 20 Semipalmated Sandpiper. Brockenbridge Gut (1027-1149): 130-150 Knots, 400 Turnstones, 75 Sanderling, 100 Dunlin, 20 Least Sandpipers, 10 Willets, 3 Black-bellied Plover, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper.

Cedar beach / Slaughter (Karen + Marie)

Laughing Gull, lagu and more lagu(!) between Bridgeham Ave. and fire station. No Ruddy Turnstone or Red Knot. From Cedar Beach, we could see Turnstones (ca. 1200) on the jetty, rocks and pilings. Too distant to scan. Many gulls (mixed species; ca. 1500) on the sandy edge near jetty.

Ted Harvey (@ 14:00 to 16:30 GA)

South 30 least sandpipers, 10-20 dunlin.
North 1000 dunlin, 1500 Semipalmated Sandpipers plus odds and ends. As tide came up some dunlin spread southwards along shore although most dunlin and semis flew over into lagoons. Between 16:00 & 16:30 many small parties plus a few larger flocks seen throughout the lagoons.

Brockenbridge (@ 17:00 near high tide; NAC, SLD, PLI)

Just 50 Turnstone and 200 Dunlin which then flew off.

South Bowers (@ 18:00; NAC, SLD, PLI)

400 Turnstone, 100 Sanderling and 25 Knot (8 unmarked)

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

North Bowers (@18:20; NAC, SLD, PLI)

On the Ted Harvey side of inlet, 160 Knot and 500 Turnstone. People on beach may have affected position on beach but confirmed this location looks good for possible catch.

Disturbance Team

The crew followed the meandering, tick infested otter path through the phragmites to Mispillion. Bill stayed on Cedar Creek while Hana and Jake observed Osprey and Point from the Blind.

Friday, 14May04

(More hot, sunny weather)

Main effort for day - catching; aim to get sample of at least 50 of each; knot and turnstone.

B-B-Q meal back at St. Jones.

Mispillion, Back beach area (@ 19:00) Thanks to Kim, Jim, and Graham, Nick and Danielle were able to fix 9 radio transmitters to knots.

Morning

Falling tide site at south of Ted Harvey used, leaving St. Jones at 08:30. Logistics complex as equipment had to be ferried from South Bowers. Initial boat load set nets whilst rest of team collected in two boats. Three observers (Nigel C, Karen, Olin) looking at nets with base other side of spit. Soon had the required number of Turnstone but only about 30 Knot, together with samples of dunlin, leasts and semis. Prospects looked good for gaining some more knot but in practice birds started walking out of area. Phil tried to twinkle further birds, as did the disturbance crew from North Bowers beach but with rapidly falling tide birds were out of reach. Tried resetting the net but never got anywhere near the required numbers of birds. Decided to move to Mispillion Team ferried back to South Bowers, grounding on the way. Equipment ferried to Scotts landing and all back to the reserve for lunch.

Afternoon

Setting at Mispillion done by small team from 16:00, being joined by rest of team later. Both nets set on the back beach. Nigel, Phil A, Olin in the hide. Soon became very encouraging with birds in good numbers below the nets. Just cases of waiting until these were properly in range of the nets. This stage was reached by 17:35 when both nets were fired. About half birds in vicinity of nets were caught as most of the knots were not in Mispillion at the time of firing. Large catch which had to be extracted from nets quickly due to rising tide. Wind break set and processing done behind this, finishing just as it got dark. All birds ringed; Knot, Turnstone, Stilts fully processed; sample of Dowitcher and Dunlin processed; knots leg flagged and feather samples taken; radio transmitters fitted to some knot.

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

14-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
STILT	3	-	3
RED KNOT	120	14	134
WILLET	4	-	4
DUNLIN	146	4	150
S.B. DOWITCHER	173	6	179
TURNSTONE	2	1	3
Total	448	25	473

Three boats used to ferry the team and equipment back to the Mispillion launch pad in darkness.

Resightings

Mispillion (Simon and Phil A)

Disturbance crew (Hana and Jake)

Disturbance: From the blind, Jake and Hana surveyed the disturbance created by the cannon netting on Back Beach. Note: sky light would be a useful addition in the blinds to spot those disturbance causing peregrine falcons!

Saturday, 15May04

(weather hot and dry again)

Dover base air show in progress which caused local road closures and traffic jams! Reinforcements in the shape of Jacquie Clark, Mark Collier and Dennis Elphick arrived late afternoon.

Resighting work

Mahon (Sarah, Paul)

Arrived at Mahon about an hour after tide. Again, good numbers of Dunlin in the first bay. Turnstone more evenly spread than on other days although largest numbers still around the catching beach and the last bay. Bird numbers appeared to be slightly lower than on previous days with c1700 Turnstone and c1500 Dunlin but this may be more a factor of time relative to tide rather than birds not around. However, Red Knot numbers were up to 20! Two color banded Knot – one individual Argentinean. 17 lime flagged Turnstone including one New Jersey bird. Less evidence of crab spawning than on previous site visits. Potential catch options for either Turnstone or Dunlin.

Ted Harvey / North Bowers (Karen, Uday, Chava)

Entered Ted Harvey at the observation platform and walked south along the top of the dune all the way to the south to the St. Jones. (Who said this walk was shorter than Brockenbridge????? It's a quite a hike!). Just before arriving at the Osprey platform at the southern end of Ted Harvey, we saw about 100 Knots and about 30 Turnstones at the edge of the mudflat as the tide was approaching low. Upon arrival at the southern end, Hana was hiding among the Phragmites conducting disturbance observations. Looking west up the St. Jones, we saw large numbers of Knots and Turnstones feeding at the spit and the beach meet. The birds were crammed into a small area about where we set the nets yesterday. Today there were far fewer Dunlin (@40) compared to yesterday when Dunlin outnumbered

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

Knots and Turnstones. Karen walked slowly along the Phragmites toward the birds, which remain unaware or at least undisturbed by observer presence. Uday and Chava joined Karen without causing disturbance. We stayed about 30-40 m from the birds and could easily read coded flags from there. We conducted scans for approximately 50 minutes before all birds flew away at once and large flocks of Knots headed due south. At first we were uncertain what caused the birds to flush and leave, but soon discovered an unleashed dog romping all over the sand spit. Karen walked back toward the river only to discover a boat and a man calling the dog. As he saw me approach he rallied the dog back to the boat and took off. The disturbance occurred at 1358 hrs, and by 1415 hrs, none of the birds were around (not on the mudflat or North Bowers), presumably continued heading south. We left disappointed after sighting at least 20 marked birds, including Knots $F_{L(AAL)}$ and flagged birds from Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Also, several lime flagged Knots from last year. North Bowers had only a few Turnstones.

Mispillion (Nigel, Simon, Phil I)

On arrival (9:30) about 1000 Turnstone in front of houses and on back beach were caught the night before, there were dunlin. Disturbed by peregrine at 10:20 which caused all waders to leave Mispillion. After 8 minutes 100 waders returned and after 10 minutes 500 were back but only 50 knots. It took about half an hour until large numbers of knots returned to the harbor. Near low tide beached on the central island and undertook more resightings. Peregrine returned with similar result. Left 14:00.

Pickering / Kitts Hummock

South Bowers / Brockenbridge / Big Stone (Kevin, Becky)

Disturbance

- Ted Harvey (Hana) crouched at southern point surveying East and South shores
- N. Bowers (Bill)
- Slaughter-scoped out in the afternoon but very few shorebirds were present

Sunday, 16May04

(weather hot and dry again but some cloud cover)

Second day of Dover base air show in progress causing more local road closures and traffic jams!

Morning activity divided the team between catching and resightings: -

Catching

Advance party consisting of Olin, Sarah D, Nigel, Jacquie, Phil I and Gene to Mahon at 08:30 to quickly set two nets. Traditional site used although numbers of birds in area seemed to have increased and other sites would have been possible. Firing position in car very close to nets. A nearby flock of ca. 50 turnstone on rocks were encouraged to move towards the catching area but otherwise things left to develop naturally. This happened quickly and soon the catching area had the target 50 Turnstone required with a good collection of sandpipers. Fired (at 09:37) before numbers grew further.

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

16-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
LEAST SANDPIPER	32	1	33
RED KNOT	2	-	2
DUNLIN	10	-	-
SESA	70	-	-
TURNSTONE	72	6	-
Total	186	7	193

All birds processed with the turnstone and knot additionally being flagged. Feather samples taken from the knot and 20 of the turnstone. Radio transmitters were put on all the knot and 4 (?) turnstone. Finished 12:30 and returned to St. Jones for lunch in order to avoid the flies!

Meanwhile a small team consisting of Graham A, Mark C, Dave N, Paul B, had taken the walk in traps and set them further along the beach. Receding tide and disturbance meant this was not very productive but four birds were caught.

16-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
DUNLIN	1	-	1
LEAST SANDPIPER	3	-	3
Total	4	0	4

The morning resighting team was Phil A, Simon, Dave C, Sarah K, Nick and Chris B. This team went to the Mispillion area with two boats, part of the team intending to scan in the usual areas and Dave C to take a party to check Brockenbridge. However as this log is being typed it is reported that Dave C is stuck on a sandbank somewhere off Slaughter beach waiting for the tide to come in!

Resightings

Mispillion (Phil A, Simon G)

Simon and Phil A made scans in the Back Bay until the VA group had to take sediment samples. This coincided with a natural lift off. In this flock we found the White flagged (Arctic) bird caught last year to which we had added a Lime flag (7C). Next we scanned a large roosting flock of Knot (with many singing Dunlin) on the bay front. Just as we were leaving Dave phoned to say he and Chris were marooned on a sand bank by the Mispillion channel so we went and collected Chris from the rocks and left Dave to snooze the afternoon away. The Iceland Gull was again on the pilings of the channel. Before leaving we scanned from the island and the horseshoe shaped beach. In total we had 18 Limes (2004), 42 Limes (2003), 7 US individuals, 10 inscribed oranges and 4 Chilean individuals (inc. 2 inscribed birds). Abdominal profiles (by SG) were predominantly 2s (29%) and 3s (56%). Breeding plumage scores (by PWA) were predominantly 7s (59%) with some 6s (24%) and 5s (10%).

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

Brockenbridge & S. Bowers (Karen, Rebecca, Paul)

Arrived at north end of Brockenbridge @ 1530 hrs at low tide; few Turnstone and about 400 gulls present. Beach was torn up by surf fishing vehicles all the way to the north, including a fresh set of tracks out on the sand bar at the north end, which may explain why there were so few shorebirds. As we started to leave @1615hrs, about 60 Knots flew in from the north, with an additional 40 Knots and nearly 70 Turnstones arriving in small groups of a few at a time. Scanned these birds, only one lime flag from last year but was too distant to read. No shorebirds on sand bars or beach at the south end of South Bowers.

Slaughter beach & Cedar (Karen, Chris)

S. Ted Harvey & North Bowers (Uday & Kim)

Big Stone (Kevin & Eric)

Big Stone Beach (1500-1610): 1Knot, 81 Turnstone, 21 Sanderling, 24 Dunlin, 40 Semi-palmated Sandpiper, 3 Spotted Sandpiper, 13 Willet, 7 Least Sandpiper, 5 Black-bellied Plover.

Mahon (Gene, Nigel, Sarah D, Graham A)

4000 Turnstone and at most 1 in 100 individually marked. Sarah got a wolf whistle!

Disturbance Team

Port Mahon (morning): Bill and Hana watched cannon netting.

Ted Harvey(morning): Bill

Mispillion-Back Beach (afternoon): Jake

Kitts Hummock(afternoon): Hana

Monday, 17May04

(still dry and sunny but cooler and some high cloud cover)

Resightings / Recces

All team out doing resightings / recces for catch tomorrow except for Jim who made more of his wonderful homemade bread and Kim who was working back at the Reserve.

Slaughter beach & Cedar creek (Phil I, Dennis)

Arrived on site 08:45. Tide already turned. Huge numbers of gulls stretching south as far as the eye could see. Waders confined to part of beach with peat on the tide edge. Most knot and turnstone confined to southern most flock with semis more northerly. Dunlin widely distributed. Disturbance from person almost immediately after our arrival but most birds returned. Estimated numbers, 500 knot, 500 turnstone, 2-3000 dunlin and at least 3000 Semipalmated Sandpipers. Scans for flags done until 10:10. Also looked at beach near fire station but apart from small flock of ca.50 turnstone, no waders. Finally looked at Cedar creek beach from a distance. Substantial flock of waders on mudflat out from it.

Mispillion (Simon G, Mark C)

We scanned from the Point beach where conditions were perfect. We found several individuals but best of all a bird bearing both a white flag and an inscribed yellow flag (AC code), both on the same leg above the joint. Subsequent enquiries revealed that the bird was initially white flagged and metal banded on Southampton Island

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

(Nunuvut Territory) in 2001 (we think as an adult). It was then re-caught in on the nest in 2003 where the yellow flag was added.

Brockenbridge (Phil A, Sarah D)

Arrived at 0930hrs. Walked along the beach – 80 Turnstone, 2 Sanderling, 4 Knot and about 20 Least. Fifteen Knots flew south. Arrived at river mouth where we saw an additional 40 Turnstone, 6 Knot and 20 Least, a scruffy-looking Red-breasted Merganser, two Least Terns and 20 Forsters Terns at the edge of the river. Spent three hours watching the tide go down, very pleasant but no major movements of shorebirds. Only one fly! Checked 80 turnstone and all the Knot but no individuals found.

North and South Bowers (Jean, Wayne)

Arrived S Bowers just after tide at 0930. Knot (200) and Turnstones (500) spread from beach access north to jetty. Most feeding at tide edge or slightly above but a good number of Turnstones roosting higher on beach. Knots and Turnstones well mixed. Few smaller birds although hard to see in the crowds of bigger birds. 4 Least Terns throughout visit. Impossible to resight without disturbing birds, but they just moved north as we did. Saw 1 Chile and 1 Argentina knot and 2 marked Sanderling but only a few lime flag knot and Turnstones. Not many gulls (150). Some crabs spawning. Some disturbance from planes. A quick check of N Bowers at 1320 found only 10 Least Sandpiper, 1 Turnstones, 1 Dunlin. Several people and dogs on beach.

Ted Harvey (Nigel, Jacquie)

Arrived at 0900 hrs (approx high tide) and walked down the back of the beach to the south end. 800 Turnstone, 2-3,000 Dunlin and at least 1,000 Semis on front of beach as we walked down. The impoundment had at least 3,000 Dunlin and 2,000+ Semis roosting. No birds on the spit at the mouth of St Jones but a flock of 250 Turnstone and up to 50 Knot were at the mouth of St Jones on the seaward edge. 150 Turnstone and 30 Knot feeding up the shore on the beach over the next three hours. Another 200 Knot stayed on North Bowers together with 1,000 Semis and small numbers of Dunlin. Only four individual Knot recorded.

Kitts Hummock and Pickering (Kevin)

Kitts Hummock (1330): 5 Knots, 50 Turnstones, 750 Dunlin, 1500 Semipalmated Sandpiper

Pickering Beach (1430): 20 Knots, 100 Turnstones, 1200 Dunlin, 500 Semipalmated Sandpiper

Mahon (Gene, Graham A)

Arrived 0930 (approx high tide). Few birds feeding, most on rocks or high shore. Totals 4500 turnstone, 3000 dunlin, 750 semi-p sandpipiers & 500 least sandpipiers plus odds and ends. Heavy spawning of crabs. Scanned from north end working south. Half an hour spent to get metal band number of Chilean red knot. 22 turnstone flags read. Local color in the form of an old guy on a motorized tricycle pulling a cart and cursing the condition of the road.

Gathered information and made decisions for catching. The outcome was that there would be no mist netting this evening (threat of thunder storms) and to go to Ted Harvey shore – but on the outer edge rather than the previous catch attempt site – in the morning.

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Boat loaded with cannon net gear ready for the morning; Dave C, Sarah, Jacquie, Phil A to Sam's Club for more shopping; Jean, Phil I and Dennis to Ted Harvey to see if lost bird bags could be found, dropping off Simon to do some birding.

VA TECH

Somewhat unproductive day. Only able to successfully track one radio-tagged Red Knot, flag #ACM, at Cedar Creek. Dogs continuously flushed beaches before we were able to locate them. Nick assaulted by ungrateful turtle while attempting to rescue aforementioned reptile. Ironically, while searching for two knots at Port Mahon, Nick was tracked by his grandparents' ex-neighbors from the 1950's.

Disturbance Team

Ted Harvey: Jake " at least several hundred REKN at platform."

Cedar Creek: Hana found nearly 500 REKN at start of stint.

Osprey: Bill had no REKN to start with but nearly 100 appeared as tide fell.

Port Mahon(catch site): Jake

Tuesday, 18May04

(Dry despite thunder storms and showers predicted, warm and variable cloud cover)

Plan for the day was largely a rerun of Friday 14th May! i.e. Set at the south end of Ted Harvey, this time on the main shore, with the aim of getting a reasonable sample of both knot and turnstone, and should that fail, go to Mispillion.

Resightings

Mispillion (Simon and Phil A)

Got up early and took the boat to Mispillion to do more Resighting, spending the entire day there. Got up at 0500 and got down there early to avoid heat haze. Resightings went well and by 0900 got c. 40-60 sightings so decided to go back for a cup of tea. After a couple of cups of jolly nice tea headed back to Mispillion to do some more resightings. In total got over 80 individuals scanned. Towards the end of scanning the catching team arrived as predicted and set on the horseshoe beach. Being knackered we headed back to the reserve before they caught.

Catching

The catching crew got up at a more reasonable hour and left at 08:30 by boat to Ted Harvey. Three nets set there with the aim that birds would come in to feed on the falling tide. This they duly did with the turnstone built about 700 and up to 200 in catching area from time to time. More problematical were the knot. Samples of at least 30 were required but with a maximum of 100 in the vicinity, never more than 25 were counted in to the catching area. Also present were 100 peeps and 300 dunlin; with a proportion in the catching area. Also Snowy Egret, a Starling and an already radio tagged knot were possible captures. Various twinkling attempts were tried to push more birds in front of nets. An added complication was a stranded large dogfish which thrashed about from time to time disturbing the flock. Having failed to get the requisite number of knot, the attempt was aborted about mid day.

Team then returned to the North Bowers launch ramp, had lunch and departed to Mispillion. Advance setting party launched as soon as possible having phoned Phil A and Simon for advice. We settled on the beach at the junction of the rivers. Quickly set a single net well back from the tide edge. Rest of team waited in boats ready to

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

come in after net fired. Initially birds a bit unsettled but gradually gained confidence and numbers increased but all at tide edge. Eventually surged up the beach and entered the catch area. Difficult to judge how many knot – the priority species - were in the catching area but decided this was at least 50 so fired, accepting there would be a large by-catch of dunlin. At time of firing 1000 Dunlin, 200 semis, few Turnstones, and ca.850 Knots were on the beach.

All knot, turnstone and samples of other species processed. Radio tags added to some knot and feather samples taken.

18-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
REDKNOT	70	6	76
TURNSTONE	23	2	25
DUNLIN	205	4	209
SEMI P. SANDPIPER	31	1	32
S.B. DOWITCHER	10	-	10
SANDERLING	3	-	3
Total	342	13	355

Finished processing in required three hours and whole team ferried back to the launch point in the three boats available.

VA TECH

After an unsuccessful rescue attempt for Gene's hat, we radio-tagged five Red Knots at Mispillion. These are the last of the VA Tech radio tags to be put on in Delaware. All remaining tags will be sent to New Jersey where they will be epoxied to mist netted birds in marsh areas ... *maybe*. Memorial services for Gene's hat will take place in Mispillion Harbor. In lieu of flowers, please re-sight Ruddy Turnstones and Red Knots.

Disturbance Team

Sitting on North Bowers, Bill, Jake and Hana used 3 pairs of eyes to monitor Ted Harvey and North Bowers simultaneously. 3 eyes per disturbance....we've got talent.

Wednesday, 19May04

(Dry initially but largely overcast and rain forecast – little materialized)

Weekly boat survey

Crew consisted of Tim (Driver), Ed (Recorder), Nigel (Counting Red Knots, Turnstones and Dowitchers), Jacquie (Counting Dunlin and Sanderling), Sarah (Counting peeps and gulls) and Kevin (Searching for radio birds). Left the reserve at 0715 and launched from Cedar Creek at about 0800 hrs. Boat trip went smoothly with good weather, the threatened rain never quite materialized but it stayed overcast and not too hot. Evidence of heavy spawning (upturned crabs on the shore) right up to Bombay Hook.

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Resightings

Prime Hook (Karen)

Slaughter beach & Cedar Creek (Karen)

@ 08:00

Cedar Creek (Dave C, Phil A, Karen B, Molly Murray)

@ 12:00

Mispillion (Simon G, Phil A)

Arrived on site a 0900 and met Allan Baker, Patricia Gonzalez and Ines de Nascimento from Canada, Argentina and Brazil respectively. We chatted about various things to do with resightings. Resightings were going well on the other side with visits made to most sites on a daily basis. We sent over our complete data at lunchtime yesterday and NJ needs to deal with various issues before sending over their resightings. We were all in agreement that the new flags are working well and also the need for future standardization of all flags to ensure the Resighting frequency is standard across flag cohorts. After seven years of marking, we finally have a system that we think will work for the long term.

Phil, Hana, Simon, Allan, Patricia, Ines went out to the back beach where 1,500-2,000 Knots were present. Started scanning but Dave asked us to use the blind. He put it up and scared off half the birds doing so. It is much less disturbing to just walk slowly from the boat and approach the birds and sit on the beach. In other scanning sessions this approach has worked well and has not caused lift offs. However Peregrines do cause lift offs and at noon the bird came through and scattered everything causing all the Knots to fly back to the bay front - scanning session over.

Took the others back to the dock and met with Molly Murray and a photographer from the news journal. Karen & Dave & Molly came out and we discussed the work in progress – banding, isotopes, weights, modeling etc. Photographer asked if a bunch of birds on the shore were shorebirds. After replying in the affirmative a few desultory shots ensued and then Dave took him back. After a good chat with Molly about the work and issues Dave, Hana, Molly & Karen went back and Simon & Phil worked on the horseshoe beach to get resightings. 65 individuals recorded today. Better than expected given the various comings and goings.

South Bowers (Dennis, Jean, Pat)

Arrived about 0900h (high tide about 1030), lots of birds both north and south. SESA were very flighty, moving both north and south. Total est 1800 SESA. 250 knot and 1000 RUTU mostly spread along beach to north, not as far as breakwater. Disturbed most in attempting to resight. Saw several flag lime birds of each species but very few for amount of birds checked. About 600 Dunlin flew south partway through scan; not positive if they were from the north end of our beach or from N Bowers. With about 600 SESA. Saw boat survey go by. Finished 1205h just as rain started. Good amount of crabs spawning.

Pickering (Phil I, Mark C)

Arrived just before 09:00. Flock to right of beach access. Approximate numbers present were 600 turnstone, 200 Semipalmated sandpiper, 100 dunlin, 50 knot and odd ones of killdeer, willet and black-bellied plover. A few flag sightings made but mainly cohort birds rather than individuals. Radio tracking team appeared but failed

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

to find any marked knot. Two marked horseshoe crabs recorded. Lots of eggs being washed up in the tide.

Mahon (Graham A, Pete)

Arrived 0900 hrs. Approx 3000 turnstone, 2000 dunlin, up to 1000 Semi-palmated sandpipers, 150 Dowitchers, 14 Knots and one Sanderling. Plus odds and ends. There had been a heavy spawning with piles of eggs on beach. Gulls dominating where eggs were especially dense. 15 resightings of turnstone, virtually all from north of the second pier. High human activity as per usual plus Gene and Dick surrounded by bus loads of young female students.

Also at Mahon (Gene Hess, Dick Weber & UD class)

Dick & Gene talked to the students (education majors doing a semester of science) about crabs and shorebirds. Some students did not take the warnings about the biting flies seriously as they were dressed in shorts and short sleeved shirts. One covered her shirt over her head then quickly had to pull it down to protect her mid-section. The class was in two groups. The second group had the good fortune to see a Short-billed Dowitcher in the hand. Nick found an injured bird along the road. The bird was taken to Tri-State Bird Rescue by Pat Robertson.

Later at Mahon (Nigel, Jacquie and Sarah)

Arrived at about 1700 hrs and worked along the shore from the entrance. Lots of Turnstone around and plenty of legs to look at. Did a return run back from the bait shack. Got a total of 38 individual Ruddy Turnstones and one Knot. Total birds around: 50 Knot, 4,000 Turnstone, 2,000 Dunlin, 3,000 Semis and 250 SB Dowitcher. Although the light was poor, as it was raining most of the time, it proved very easy to read the flags. The rain did appear to affect the profile of the birds. A Turnstone seen early on in the rain was scored as profile 5, but when we returned towards the end of our time it was no longer raining and the profile was three. Presumably the bird had 'fluffed up' in the rain. Finished about 1900 hrs.

VA Tech

The VA Tech team searched for radio tagged knots. One was seen at the northern end of Port Mahon. It was flushed when a tour bus passed. Also at Port Mahon, Nick rescued a Short-billed Dowitcher. He gave it to Gene who was talking to a class. A second bird was located at Slaughter Beach. Unfortunately it was so far out on the mud flat that we could not see well enough to collect data. Gnats drove us from the beach at a run. The third bird for the day was heard at N. Bowers but could not be found anywhere on the beach, in the harbor, or anywhere in the VA Tech HSC mansion.

Disturbance Team

The Disturbance team maximized their numbers and covered Ted Harvey (Bill), Kitts Hummock (Jake), and Back Beach at Mispillion (Hana) in the morning. Not too much going on at Ted Harvey except the explosion of No-Seeums that attached in great numbers. Kitts experienced the same for high tide and Mispillion got good data of Simon and Phil resighting birds. In the pm Jake checked Ted Harvey on the falling/low tide, Hana entered data, and I spent 1hr at Kitts Hummock to check the falling tide and traveled to Slaughter Beach to check for Red Knots. Knots were present and according to Karen REKN are present at high tide as well. Time to begin our beach nourished vs. non-nourished beaches.

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

Only catch of the day, one Northern Mockingbird caught by Jim in the back porch of the reserve.

Thursday, 20May04

A day for recces and resightings.

Recces and Resightings

Slaughter Beach (north end) Nigel and Jacquie

Arrived at 0945 having dropped Bills car at Bennets Pier and Bill, Simon and Pete at Bigstone to walk back to the car. There were 12,000 Semis, 4,000 Dunlin both largely roosting on the peat. At the end of the peat to the south, there was about 800 Dowitchers and on the sand, 700 Turnstone and 1500 Knot. Bulk of Knot between Jerkes and Cohee stretching up to last night's high tide line. The area looks good for a catch. Got six sightings of individual Knot, but difficult with the angle and lots of birds together. Several people on the beach caused disturbance.

Slaughter Beach (south end) Graham and Jean

Cool, windy and cloudy. We started at the firehouse. Man and dog on far south beach before us had scared off most of the birds. Some Turnstones around. Came across USGS crew at their enclosure. Walked down and resighted a few Turnstone. Then drove up to next road (north) where there were more knot and turnstone. Did resighting there and to next road north. Total 1000 Turnstone, 500 knot, 200 Sanderling, 300 dunlin and 1500 semi sandpipers. It worked well to sit in dunes at top of beach to scope birds. By about 1430 tide was too far out for birds to be seen with heat haze as it had cleared by then.

Mispillion (Phil A, Mark, Karen)

Bennetts – Big Stone (Simon G, Pete, Bill)

Nigel and Jacquie dropped us off at Big Stone Beach and we walked north to Bennetts Pier where we had already left Bill's vehicle. We found a flock of ca 250 Knot to scan with a mixture of Turnstones and Sanderling which included several individuals. Continuing north another 250 or so Knot flew south but we found few other individuals to scan.

South Bowers (Sarah D, Phil, and I)

Arrived at 0850 and viewed initially from the access track to the south. There were lots of birds, mostly Turnstone, on a point about halfway along the beach (where the houses started) and more birds south of South Bowers. Sarah went to the breakwater end and viewed from there (without a watch or radio contact with Phil which was less than helpful). Bird numbers on the beach in the bay which was not visible from the south were very impressive with two concentrations feeding high up the beach near last night's tide line. The most southern was almost entirely Turnstone whilst the northern patch was primarily Knot. Most birds were immediately in front of the first four houses. As time and tide progressed, more knot arrived, mostly from North Bowers (?). Eventually ca 600 knot on the beach and every new arrival coming in at the northern end of the flock. A few birds resighted including one New Jersey turnstone from this year.

Mahon (Gene, Barbara) a.m.; (Dennis, Eric) p.m.

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

Mispillion (Sarah D, Kevin, Pete) p.m.

Quick trip into Mispillion to try resighting again. Lots of birds on beach that we caught on the 18th. Tide meant it was difficult to get in on this beach so we headed for the flocks feeding towards the back beach. A very frustrating evening with lots of birds around but very few sightings achieved.

Afternoon

Feather preparation

Visit to S. Bowers for decision on Friday cannon net

Early meal prior to mist netting.

Mist netting done at same pool as earlier in week since lots of birds present. Line of 7 single shelves set as T but parallel to bay front; partly as this was seen as a good place last time and in any case these lines had dried. During setting flocks of peeps going round, over and under nets. Round to put tape lure out found 5 birds but first round in dark disappointing with just 2. NAC and others went to look at previous mist net impoundment. Final net round found 9 further birds to their surprise! Nets down and back to base 23:30

20-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
DUNLIN	2	-	2
SEMI P. SANDPIPER	10	-	10
BLACK B.PLOVER	2	-	2
TURNSTONE	4	-	4
TOTAL	18	-	18

VA TECH

Observed and sampled two Red Knots. Frequencies 151.047 and 151.059, both tagged in Mispillion on May 14, 2004, were located in Port Mahon and North Bowers respectively.

Disturbance Team

Ted Harvey am: Jake

North Bowers am: Ana

Slaughter beach (nourished) pm: Hana

Cedar Creek pm: Bill

Slaughter Unnourished pm: Jake

Who has heard what makes a bird so disturbed?

Friday, 21May04

(Overcast, rain threatened, but warm)

Kim and Phil spent all day in a "bunker" weighing out feather samples – 186 done.

André arrived late afternoon preceded by a UPS van delivering the goods he had ordered in advance.

Meal out at Olive Garden restaurant.

Catching

South Bowers

Setting team rather after appointed time of 07:45. Three nets set on beach.

Semipalmated sandpiper was first to arrive and numbers built up rapidly. Turnstone and knot used beach towards the access point and further birds well south. Various

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

attempts to bring birds in to the area did not work, being frustrated at various times by Peregrine and dog walker. Eventually seeing lots of birds behind hide moved nets. Some twinkling but numbers gradually built up. Fired 13:27.

21-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
REDKNOT	1	1	2
TURNSTONE	80	6	86
DUNLIN	1	-	1
SEMI P. SANDPIPER	5	-	5
LEAST SANDPIPER	1	-	1
SEMI P.PLOVER	1	-	1
SANDERLING	1	-	1
WILLET	1	-	1
SPOTTED SAND	1	-	1
TOTAL	92	7	99

All catch processed with turnstone and knot being flagged. Butt swabs taken from the turnstone too. Finished and back to base for late lunch 16:00. Nigel present for first attempt but went off with Dave C to Mispillion to talk to PR people and then subsequently did resightings there.

VA Tech

We found one radio tagged knot chillin' in Mispillion (freq 151.858). At the S. Bowers catch we fixed one knot with a transmitter and heard freq 151.059 in the area. We finished off our day wading through muck at Jetty Island to collect data on knot with transmitter 151.339. Nick ended his day getting high on ethanol fumes while preserving samples.

Disturbance Team

Kitts Hummock (am): Hana
 S. Bowers catch (am/pm): Jake
 Ted Harvey (am): Bill
 Slaughter (nourished/unnourished): Bill/Hana

Saturday, 22May04

(hazy, hot & humid) A day for reccees, resightings and flag making

Recces and Resightings

Mahon (Sarah, Phil A, Gene)

Did scans in both directions. Sarah's last morning here. About 1600 Turnstones and 7200 Semipalmated Sandpipers around, 3 Knots and 12 Dowitchers.

Mispillion (Kim, Simon, Graham, André)

Initially we beached on the Point but as the tide was rising birds did not remain for scanning. All was not lost since the departing pilot boat caused a large wake that succeeded in soaking Graham's posterior and washing away his sandals! We moved to sheltered shores in the back bay where we were able to scan the flock of 1500 knot before most departed towards high tide (ca 25 individuals located).

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

South Bowers (Dennis, Mark, Paul B.)

First checked beach by the stilts with no house. Then went back to sandy road access midway along beach to walk south towards Brockenbridge Gut. Most birds were along this stretch up to and including peaty spit.

Slaughter (Nigel, Kevin, Jacquie, Phil I)

Arrived at Yerkes at 10:30 am there were about 12000 semis and 1000 dunlin on the peat to the north and a flock of 600 turnstone 800 Dowitchers and 300 knot on the beach just north- one individual flag read. Large numbers of Semis moved south to the beach and settled in dense flocks. There was a lot of disturbance from people on the beach and the VT plane putting the birds up.

About 11 am another 600 Knot appeared from Mispillion direction and half landed on the flock near Cohee before being disturbed by people on the beach. After leaving went into Mispillion where there were a maximum of 1000 Knot. Back to the reserve at 1230 for Phil to have lunch before leaving with Sarah back to the UK.

North Bowers (Karen, Chava)

Pickering (Karen, Chava)

Flag making (Bonnie & Sally)

Flag making is a wonderful endeavor. While not very glamorous, it is ESSENTIAL to a lot of the work that we do – Bonnie and Sally went to work on making more flags today.

Mist Net Training

Ted Harvey Wildlife Management Area

Talks were given by Phil and Simon starting at 4 pm The aim was to give an overview of some of the work that has been done recently on resighting the individually marked birds, using stable isotopes to identify wintering populations and feeding experiments in the field to look at the way eggs are taken. After a pizza supper the nets were set on Ted Harvey only a few birds on the first net round but the next two rounds produced 70+ each. There was plenty of time to train extractors, and processors and all were back at the reserve by midnight.

22-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
TURNSTONE	1	-	1
DUNLIN	7	-	7
SEMI P. SANDPIPER	157	-	157
LEAST SANDPIPER	5	-	5
SANDERLING	1	-	1
SPOTTED SAND	1	-	1
TOTAL	172	0	172

Blood sampling/Butt Swabs (Debbie)

Took one sample from a Ruddy Turnstone during the mist netting training. Helped with processing of other birds.

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

VA Tech - not finding knots

Our 11 am flight revealed that even more of the knots with radio transmitters moved to the NJ side of the bay. This was no surprise to Nick and Danielle who spent the morning not finding knots at Port Mahon and Bombay Hook. In the early afternoon we did not find knots radio tagged knots at Slaughter Beach. Knot transmitting at frequency 151.858 was located on Cedar Beach around 1300. After taking data on the Cedar Beach knot we spent the afternoon not finding knots at Prime Hook and Broadkill beach. At 1800 we located two knots at the south end of the Ted Harvey beach. One of these knots had been located in Port Mahon several times in previous days; the other eluded the cannon net team in south bowers yesterday afternoon.

Disturbance Team

Bill and Hana went down to Slaughter in the morning. Jake went out to Osprey blind to observe birds on Point. There wasn't a single shorebird on Point, but thick masses of exposed horseshoe crab eggs on Osprey beach attracted many birds in close to the blind. Hana returned to the Osprey blind in the afternoon, while Jake and Bill watched the two deserted study areas at Slaughter.

Sunday 23May 2004

(very hot, light breeze and lots of bighting things – High Tide 1300)

Recces and Resightings

Slaughter Beach (Cohee)

Equipment loaded at 08.00 with setting team leaving at 08.30 (Kim, Nigel, Mark, Kevin, Graham, Paul B and Karen). Base camp crew left at 09.30.

Things looked good early on with Dowitcher forming ranks along the tide line in front of the nets and Turnstone, Knot, Grey Plover and Semi-Ps appeared to gradually come into the catching area. However, the required minimum of 50 Knot never seemed to be able to organize themselves to all be in one place at one time – i.e. within the catching area. Kim was in position further south along the beach to make sure no birds went past her. But they did - and Karen was dispatched further south to try and bring birds north again. Nigel then requested that Kim send up various species to order - but that didn't work either! Stumps were pulled at about 13.00 and lunch was partaken. As usual, André helped to keep the troops amused during yet another morning on a beach somewhere in Delaware. Dr A & Dr G joined base camp from their daily trip for re-sightings to Mispillion.

Nigel & Dave went off to check sites by boat but already there was a whisper that we would all be in Mispillion harbor again tomorrow morning – probably early. Base camp dis-assembled, took up nets and returned to St Jones empty handed yet again, but sure in the knowledge that Mispillion would come up with the goods next day!!

Mispillion Harbor (SG/PWA)

From around 9 until 10.30 spent scanning in the back beach and osprey beach areas. Around 1000-1500 Knot in the back bay area, some feeding some loafing as usual. About 30 individuals were located but the flock gradually reduced in size towards high tide and we left when we kept resighting the same individuals. Abdominal profiles were still dominated by 3s but a good number of 4s and a few 5s.

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North Bowers (SG/PWA)

After leaving Mispillion/Slaughter area we called in at North Bowers but virtually all the birds were on the Ted Harvey shore and impossible to scan in the heat haze.

Slaughter Beach (JLW/DMB)

Still 100 or so Knot around after cannon net attempt. Too much disturbance while picking up net to get good looks. Stayed after pickup for about an hour in area north of Cohee. Saw 2 marked birds and both had peat on bands and flags. After about half an hour most of the Knots and Turnstones had disappeared. Several hundred Black-bellied Plovers and Dowitchers, as well as many peeps.

North Bowers (SG)

From around 1730 until 1830 spent scanning at the top end of North Bowers. After carefully creeping into position I managed to find 3 individual Turnstones and 1-2 individual Knots. The flock comprised 150 Turnstones roosting on the waters edge and 100 or so feeding quite high up the beach with a small number of Knot. A boat load of irksome youths sped past the shoreline shouting and waving their arms at the birds specifically trying to scare them off. In this respect they were very successful! The birds joined those on the south Ted Harvey beach where numbers totaled c1500 Turnstone and 200+ Knot. All that remained were 10 Spotted Sandpipers on North Bowers. On route back to the vehicle 1 Merlin north pursued by a Purple Martin.

Port Mahon (André)

Only a short visit to Port Mahon to try and do a few resightings. The number of Turnstone present was not very high, in total about 450. Was able to spot four different lime Turnstones and a fifth was offered to me by a passing member of the public. One flag could not be read, because of dirt (peat?) on the inscription. Besides a number of cohort banded Turnstone, there was also a Semi present with a humongous long white leg flag, at least 2 cm long. The bird was clearly irritated by it, as it kept shaking the leg with this flag. As it was a Sunday, lots of people were present or just visited for a short time. Therefore the birds were scared up quite often, also by the local Osprey (breeding in a tower next to the jetty).

Port Mahon/Ted Harvey (Uday)

A good number of turnstone resightings at south of Ted Harvey. Towards the end of the resighting a speed boat came by and disturbed everything. There was too much human activity (at Port Mahon in the evening (6.30-7.30 pm)).

Boat Trip (Dave C, Nigel, Kevin, Gene)

Arrived at 1700 hrs and stayed until 1915 doing resightings on a cool pleasant evening in the harbor, back beach and inlet. Obtained about 90 resightings (not sure how many individuals) including at least one radio-tagged bird.

VA Tech (Danielle & Nick)

After the catch was called off the Vtech crew drove from Bowers to Mispillion by boat. They located one tagged knot south of Big Stone beach and several more in Mispillion. Some of the HSC team came along for the ride.

Disturbance Crew (Hana, Bill & Jake)

Bill was burnt to a crisp waiting for the net that never fired. Hana and Jake split up to try to catch some weekend beach-goer disturbance at Kitts Hummock and North

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

Bowers respectively. Unfortunately, Bowers held few birds to be disturbed, and Kitts had mostly Semipalmated Sandpiper which tends to disturb themselves. In the afternoon, Bill dug a hole in the blind at Osprey so he could see out the window without breaking his back. Jake and Hana went down to Slaughter to the nourished and un-nourished parts of the beach. Neither section had many birds. There were periods of time with no sandpipers at all in the study area.

Monday 24 May 2004

(Bright and clear but with a breeze, becoming very hot with less of a breeze)
Dennis went food shopping.

Catching

Misphillion

Setting team left 06.15 and processing team 06.30. Volunteers arrive at/after 08.30. Two nets were set on back beach near the high tide mark. The Birds stayed down the beach (about 15 m) so we moved one net. After the reset the birds concentrated just to the side of the area. Eventually, we caught a knot. Base camp remained afloat in Misphillion Harbor. Finished catching mid-day. Weights of Knots show peak at 180gms (take-off weight) with a much smaller peak at 130 gms; suggesting new arrivals.

24-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
REDKNOT	60	5	65
TURNSTONE	3	-	3
DUNLIN	71	1	72
SEMI P. SANDPIPER	249	2	251
BLACK B. PLOVER	1	-	1
S.B. DOWITCHER	17	1	18
TOTAL	401	9	410

Blood sampling & Butt Swabs (Debbie)

4 blood samples taken. 17 cloacal swabs taken during the catch at Misphillion.

Re-Sightings:

North Bowers (am)

George O'Shea & Wayne Kirklin attempted scan approx 2 Red Knots, 350 Turnstones, and 248 Semipalmated Plovers mostly loafing but they flew south of the inlet.

South Bowers (am)

George O'Shea & Wayne Kirklin attempted re-sight but again birds were very flighty probably due to a lot of ATV and other off-road vehicle traffic over the weekend. Also airplane and garbage truck flushed birds. Estimated 2 Knots, 900 Turnstones, 50 Semipalmated Plover and 2 Black-bellied Plover.

Ted Harvey (Harrington)

Back again, arriving at the St. Jones Estuarine Reserve at about 5:30. I went to Ted Harvey for about an hour; I stayed in the vicinity of the viewing platform.

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Temperature is in the low 90's, sunny, with stiff SW winds. I "guestimated" the number of shorebirds (16,500); virtually all of which were Dunlin and Semipalmated Sandpiper. Most were feeding in the sling mud on a falling tide (HT was ca 15:00), and still close to 'shore'. I estimated that 2/3 of the birds were Dunlin. A series of small ratios from different sections of the beach yielded 120 Dunlin: 62 Semipalmated Sandpiper, which may be closer to the true ratio. Among the peep, I counted a sample of 99 Semipalmated Sandpiper and 1 White-rumped Sandpiper. Also on the beach: ca. 5 Black-bellied Plover, 10 Short-billed Dowitcher, and 10 Willets.

In contrast to my recollection from earlier in the month, there were virtually no Laughing Gulls along the beach. Maybe this is characteristic of Ted Harvey, or perhaps it is related to the tidal stage. But there also may be lots of small shorebirds at this beach because there are few Laughing Gulls.

Mahon

Uday (am); Graham, Mark, André & Dave C (pm) to try out whoosh net. There were few birds, mostly turnstone, and even fewer opportunities for a catch. A maximum of 500 Turnstone only along the entire shoreline (Uday reported only 300 in the morning) and all but about 50 of these were roosting on the rocks. We set a net anyway and gave it about 45 minutes in the one spot where there were birds along the strandline. Birds largely ignored the net but the bungees did act as a barrier when a bunch of crabs got under the one side. Test-fired whoosh net anyway and then reset. No birds returned and so we gave up after about 30 minutes. Birds present; about 1500 Semipalmated Sandpipers and one Red Knot.

Mispyllion

Nigel, Jacquie and Simon returned (pm) arriving at the back beach at 1750 hrs. There were about 1,000 Knot present. Resighted there for an hour before moving to the island opposite the restaurant that had about 100 Knot and a large number of big gulls on it when we arrived. Bringing the boat ashore removed the big gulls and the number of Knot rapidly increased to in excess of 1,000. Excellent scanning in glorious evening light.

VA Tech

Cannon netting in the morning. We toured the Mispyllion jetty to Cedar Creek with the VA Tech horseshoe crab people in the afternoon. We collected data on two knots in the jetty area.

Disturbance Crew (Hana, Bill, and Jake)

Hana spent a grueling morning in the blind at back beach waiting for the cannon net to fire. Jake and Bill staked out Port Mahon to monitor disturbance caused by the horseshoe crab egg surveying team. Few birds were present other than ~600 Semipalmated Sandpiper. We escaped the heat midday and caught up on data entry. In the afternoon, Hana and Bill caught the falling tide at Slaughter, while Jake observed the ill-fated whoosh-net attempt at Port Mahon. ~500 Turnstones never returned in any significant number after being flushed initially.

Tuesday 25May 2004

Recces: made for cannon-netting later in the day:

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

Slaughter: (Phil & Kevin)

N Bowers: (André & Pat)

The recce at North Bowers revealed reasonable numbers of mainly Turnstone to be present at both North and South Bowers. On North Bowers ca. 200 Turnstones and only a handful of Knots were present and regularly disturbed by walkers on the beach. On the northern part of South Bowers larger groups of ca. 300 Turnstone were present with Knot in small groups along the beach. Birds were present along the entire length of the beach to Brockenbridge Gut, but never in big concentrations. Through the scope we could see Allan Baker and Patricia Gonzales present on South Bowers scanning the birds present.

Kitts Hummock: (Rachel & Bob)

Pickering: (Rachel & Bob)

Mahon: (Graham & George & Debbie)

Approx 650 – 700 turnstone, several thousand semi-p sands and 500 dunlin. Turnstone mostly on the rocks and those feeding along sand were thinly distributed along the water edge. No turnstone on catching beaches. Loads of crab eggs - attracting no birds.

Boat Survey: (Nigel, Jacquie, Gene, Kevin & Tim)

Left the boat ramp at Cedar Creek at 1135 hrs. Went very well until we stopped for lunch at Lewes Ditch at 1415 hrs when the wind got up. Almost immediately after leaving Lewes Ditch, saw 17 Whimbrel. It then got too rough to count with waves coming in the back of the boat with 1-3 foot waves and a chop. Ran into Mahon and had to ask Mark del Vecchio to come and collect us. Unfortunately the truck with the boat trailer had been left at Woodland Beach for us rather than someone having to come and fetch us – that didn't work out well. Mark had to collect the truck from Woodland Beach and pick us up at Mahon. During counting, birds were spread along the beaches with few concentrations. Best numbers on the outer island at Mispillion. Kevin found 9 of the crab radio birds.

Slaughter/North Bowers

Attempt to catch abandoned as no birds. Moved on to North Bowers where two nets set and then reset but with no catch made. The first attempt was right on the end of the beach opposite Ted Harvey. Dave C took Simon over to Ted Harvey by boat to do some scanning and to move birds when necessary. Birds were very skittish (Grackles, Blackbirds, Ospreys and Count Plane) and although some were moved into the catching area from both sides of the river mouth, they did not settle. Net two was then moved four net lengths south where the birds were mostly congregating. However, by this time most birds were down on South Bowers beach

Mispillion (late pm)

Nigel Jacquie and Dave went in during evening to check for birds. Phoned in to request a 04.30 start tomorrow to set in the dark and make a catch of Turnstone and knot!

Brockenbridge (Harrington)

Sunny with winds starting out NW and then coming to SW in the afternoon. Temp ca. 80. At Brockenbridge I went north to the mouth of the creek. There were

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

roughly 800 knots at maximum, but I had the impression that there was a fairly steady turnover of birds moving in and out whilst I was there. Also perhaps 700 Turnstones, 3 Spotted Sandpiper,, perhaps 1000 Semipalmated Sandpiper, 50 Sanderling, 100 Dunlin, 2 Oyster Catchers (across creek), and 10 Black-bellied Plover.

Cedar creek/Osprey (Harrington)

There were few shorebirds on the afternoon incoming tide (HT at 15:00), possibly higher than normal with an onshore wind. I stayed at Osprey until 18:00 (there rarely were more than a few hundred shorebirds at any one time, but turnover was high). Took lots of photos. Then at 18:00 went back to Cedar Creek, where I stayed until 19:10. Perhaps 2000 Knots there, and possibly 3-400 Short-billed Dowitcher, scattered Dunlin (< 200), and ca 2000 Semipalmated Sandpiper with a few White-rumped Sandpiper heard [WRSAs are much less abundant here this year versus last year, perhaps 10% the number of last year]. Between 18:30 and 1900 I watched a half dozen flocks of SBDO depart, all with a northeast heading. Most of the flocks were between 15 and 20 birds ... lots of 'migration calling' on the ground beforehand. In addition there were a half dozen Semipalmated Sandpiper flocks that were on the same heading. These were typically 20-30 birds per flock.

Blood sampling & Butt Swabs (Debbie)

No samples taken

VA Tech

Our morning flight revealed that radio tagged knots were in Delaware as of 8 this morning. Manual telemetry tracked five of them to one flock at the end of cedar beach near the jetty. A sixth bird was heard in the Mispillion roost area but could not be seen anywhere. Danielle uncovered a large black snake that made here scream. No transmitters could be heard in the Bowers area around 1700.

Disturbance Crew (Bill, Jake and Hana)

Kitts Hummock: HSC survey (am)-Jake

Slaughter, catch site (am): Bill

Ted Harvey (am): Hana- I made an attempt at drawing a stick Glossy Ibis. Maybe I should have taken that art class in highschool.

Slaughter Beach (Nourished) (pm): Hana-these birds are fearless of chainsaws.

Cedar Creek (pm): Hana

Mispillion, Osprey(pm): Jake

Slaughter unnourished (pm): Jake

N. Bowers (pm): Bill

Wednesday 26May04

Mispillion

04.15 start to set before dawn! Setting on a shingle beach at the end of cedar creek Nigel in the firing position on the next island! Throughout the season this beach had over 50 Knot and 100 turnstone every time it was visited but today it had a maximum of 6 turnstone! Moved the net in the rain to by the osprey hide and eventually caught just over 50. This was after base camp had been told that we were packing up and the net had been disconnected! It turned out that the knot that came in were the poor quality ones with deformed bill and two with damaged feet in the catch - It did stop raining just before the catch.

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

26-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
REDKNOT	23	2	25
TURNSTONE	6	-	6
DUNLIN	15	-	15
SEMI P. SANDPIPER	2	-	2
S.B. DOWITCHER	8	-	8
TOTAL	54	2	56

Recces and Resightings

Mahon, Pickering and Kitts Hummock (Rachael and Debbie)

There were about a hundred Turnstone mostly on the rocks at Mahon and about 400 (too far to see or scan) to the far south, two green flagged turnstones resighted. Also a few Dunlin, Black necked Stilts, Yellowlegs, Black-bellied Plovers, Willets and a lot of Semipalmated Sandpipers. A few Knot and Turnstone at Pickering and one green flagged Semipalmated Sandpiper. Nothing at Kitts Hummock.

South Bowers (Dennis & George)

Checked the beach from the incomplete house ca 1,000 Turnstone there and up towards the jetty with 150-200 Knot and ca 1,000 Semis. A further 1,000 Turnstone to the south towards the track to the beach. Birds very skittish largely because of Blackbirds and one low flying prop plane. Good numbers of birds to south of track towards Brockenbridge were largely Turnstone but included Semipalmated Plover and Knot. An estimated 3-4,000 Turnstone and 400 Knot overall. 12 Least Terns between houses and track to beach were not happy about DE walking the beach – re-sighting abandoned at this point in favor of getting past the terns quickly without treading on nests.

Brockenbridge (Harrington)

Start out at Brockenbridge, at 08:10, ca. 60 degrees with light rain at start, but knots there. Spent 2 hr scanning through them. They were quite settled, only a few flushes (barn swallow and Red-wings caused 3 flushes, C5A jet caused 2 flushes.)

Ted Harvey (Harrington)

In afternoon I went down to Ted Harvey for an hour. Tide was incoming and about an hour from high. Small shorebirds were transiting the shore from south to n., evidently heading for roost sites in the N end of the Harvey impoundments. I tallied Spotted Sandpiper/ Dunlin in flocks as they passed. My tally was 2945 Semipalmated Sandpiper: 117 Dunlin, a substantial change in ratios from a couple of days ago! The larger shorebirds (Turnstones/ Dunlin) were staying on the outside beach, and there was a group of smaller shorebirds far to south that I did not check for species ratios.

Cedar Creek/Osprey (Harrington)

Not much action, so I quit at 1800. At Cedar Creek I saw a marked Semipalmated Sandpiper from the 2000 that were there, IG,M:Fw,X. There were 2 others that had metal upper right. I also read most of the band from a Laughing Gull,?-24479.

VA Tech

0930—We located two tagged knots at N. Bowers

1141—Three knots found around Mispillion. One could not be pinned down and probably flew from back beach out to the bay-front.

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1300—Time to leave and freshen up before the beer drinking starts

1630—"The best boat ride in America"

Disturbance Crew

Jake hitched a boat ride out to the back beach blind at Mispillion. There, he watched intently as the HSC egg survey team took to the beach. They promptly scattered all the birds. A fishing boat setting drift nets put those that returned up repeatedly. Bill and Hana went to Slaughter. Everyone came back early to catch the ferry to Cape May.

Trip to New Jersey:

Almost everyone went over to visit the New Jersey team and to partake in an excellent BBQ at the NJ house at Reeds beach. Greg, Jacquie, Debbie, Jean and Dennis returned that evening, as did Phil and Simon.

Thursday 27May04

Resightings

Brockenbridge (Brian)

Started out at Brockenbridge, and then went to Ted Harvey, followed by a quick visit to Kitts Hummock & Port Mahon. At Brock. I arrived ca. 0845. There were lots of Turnstones (500-1000) on the sodbanks, and then about a thousand Knots (thinning out to <500 while I was there) at the mouth of Brock. Creek. There were perhaps 2000 peep in the area. Ratios were 297 Semipalmated Sandpiper:2 Dunlin: 1 White-rumped Sandpiper. It is still clear that there are very few WRSA this year.

Ted Harvey (Brian)

At Ted Harvey there were a good number of Turnstones and Knots at the south end, < 500 knot and perhaps three times as many Turnstones. One of the knots had been marked on Southampton. Ratios for Semipalmated Sandpiper : Dunlin was 2500:35. Knots were leaving as I was in the area, and by the time I left I could see only about 46 (more around the bend) 38 alt:8 Basic ... a higher fraction of basics than I have seen to date.

Kitts Hummock (Brian)

I got to Kitts Hummock at about 1330, just as the tide was reaching the sandy part of the beach. Towards the north end there were roughly 20,000 Semipalmated Sandpiper (guestimate), with flocks peeling out towards the roosting area in N. end of Ted Harvey; I checked 1300 for Semipalmated Sandpiper: Dunlin ratio, which was 1300 Semipalmated Sandpiper: 6 Dunlin. Then I checked out Port Mahon.

Port Mahon (Brian)

Aside from a few hundred Semi-palmated Sandpiper, there was not much here.

Mispillion (Phil & Simon)

Went out into Mispillion around mid morning on the rising tide. Relatively few Knot around. 150 or so on Osprey, another c.100 in front of Charlie's and then only 250 in the back bay area. Checking the bay front we found 1000-1200 Knot on beaches and peat banks plus c1000 Sanderling and thousands of Semis. Some of the Knot were coming up on the beach into a depression where eggs were presumably concentrated and we thought this a good catching location (time will tell...). On returning we found

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

50-100 Knots on the pool on the top of the back beach and managed to find a handful of 2003 and 2004 lime birds. Abdominal profiles were dominated by 3s with some 1s and some 5s.

Ted Harvey

Nigel, Karen, Kim and Dave returned from New Jersey early next morning to prepare for a catch on North Bowers. Mark, André and Graham in the afternoon after visiting Cape May Bird Observatory. They intended to take the 13:00 ferry, but were confronted with a delay of one hour (apparently for security reasons) and therefore arrived only at 16:00 to find the team on Ted Harvey wrapping up things after a partially successful catch.

The Setting Team went out to set at 11am and the processing team followed later. A BBC cameraman joined us in the hide and he set a camera in the catching area. Unfortunately although 150 turnstone moved into the catching area to feed we got relatively few Knot eventually fired on 100 Turnstone and 35 Knot but a strong wind held one net up sufficient for the bulk of the Knot to escape and one of the cannons on the second net misfired (the one near the camera!!) although 66 Turnstone and 6 Knot were caught.

27-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
REDKNOT	5	1	6
TURNSTONE	61	5	66
TOTAL	66	6	72

Blood sampling & Butt Swabs (Debbie):

13 blood samples and butt swabs taken.

Disturbance Team

After an early ferry ride back from NJ, Hana and Bill went up to the Dogfish Head Brewery to pick up some supplies for their stint at Slaughter Beach. After Slaughter, they hit up Mispillion for stints at Osprey blind and Cedar Creek Beach. Jake went from the ferry to N. Bowers to observe the catch about to ensue at Ted Harvey. There were surprisingly few disturbance events during the 6 hour episode at Teddy H. It was probably due in part to a lack of birds during the net set-up and the absence of birds during the processing.

VA Tech

0730—"The best boat ride in America" again

Noonish—we located one knot in Mispillion after wasting an hour learning our receiver wasn't working. Around 4 pm we try to leave Mispillion to find knots north of the harbor. Upon hearing a *pan-pan* distress call on our radio we decide that the swells are looking much larger and we turn back, pull the boat and take a nap.

Friday, 28 May 2004

Mispillion (Bayside)

Setting Team (Nigel, Phil, Dave & Olin) left 09.30 followed by processing team at 12.30. Or so was the plan...At 10:45 Nigel phoned back to the Reserve and requested a team head out immediately as there were about 400 birds and they could possibly catch anytime. Firing time actually came at 15.10...

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28-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
REDKNOT	39	2	41
TURNSTONE	2	-	2
DUNLIN	1	-	1
SEMI P. SANDPIPER	657	5	662
BLACK B. PLOVER	1	-	1
S.B. DOWITCHER	8	-	8
TOTAL	708	7	715

Blood Samples & Butt Swabs:

At the catch 39 cloacal swabs and 15 blood samples were taken. This was a huge success thanks to the help of Jacquie and Simon.

Resightings

N Bigstone

1,000 Turnstones & Semipalmated Sandpiper; 500 Knots

Brockenbridge (Brian)

2-3,000 Semipalmated Sandpiper; 300 Turnstones; 800 Knots with several 100 on Sandbar Pt.

South Bowers (André)

The situation at South Bowers was very fluid upon arrival (at 10:00 hrs). About 1,000 Turnstones and 50 Knots were present, but were taking flight and landing a lot. A group of 250 Turnstones were feeding higher up on the beach while the rest were resting on the tidal edge. Constantly small groups of mainly Turnstones with some Knots were flying northwards. At 11:05 a big liftoff happened without a clear cause and cleared the whole beach, most of the birds flew north. About 150 Turnstones returned and flew south towards BBG, later followed by 300 more. After some time 250 Turnstones and 50 Knots were back on the beach and some bands were spotted. Originally only 2 to 3 cohort-banded Knots were spotted, but shortly before leaving FO(IC); -/*; O and W; -/*; OFR were spotted. During the visit it became evident that a small colony of breeding Least Tern was present, about 10 nests were estimated to be present. Fortunately the beach owner could be persuaded to allow the Delaware Fish and Wildlife Service to mark the colony to try and prevent disturbance.

North Bowers

1,500 Turnstones

Mahon (Uday)

Not a lot!

Ted Harvey (Brian)

Started out at Brockenbridge, then to Ted Harvey, the south end. Cloudy with slight rain at the start, and then hazy with clouds for the rest of the day. There were about 800 knots at Brock., but numbers diminished whilst I was there. Very few at Ted Harvey, and most at far distance. At Brock. Saw one Semipalmated Sandpiper with Canadian white flag. I checked about 500 peep and none were Whit-rumped Sandpiper.

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

After Ted Harvey, I checked the north pool impoundment. This was about 2 hr before high tide, and there were some 50,000 Semipalmated Sandpiper, 200-300 Dunlin, 500 Knots, 250 Short-billed Dowitcher, 500 Turnstones, 25 Greater Yellowlegs, and 5 Black-necked Stilt. Really impressive numbers! Clearly this is a key roost site for this part of the coast. This also was clear from the flight lines of birds leaving the beach on the incoming tides.

VA Tech

After a well-earned eleven hours of sleep last night, Danielle was ready to go track Red Knots this morning. Following this week's trend, the scanner is still not functioning properly making radio-tracking near impossible. Nonetheless, Nick did manage to locate several tagged Knots with the manual receiver. Nick heard two at North Bowers and two more at Big Stone. Originally we planned to continue south towards Mispillion. However, nasty weather forced us to return to Bower's boat ramp prematurely.

Like usual, we had a handful of mishaps. Due to sizable swells, our boat managed to fill-up with water during our observation at BS. After finally getting the boat out Nick realized he forgot the receiver on the beach causing us to turn back. Throughout the duration our boat was continuously pummeled by waves. Of course the bilge pump was broken forcing Danielle to bail water with empty sample bottles for the duration of the trip back to Bowers. Miraculously, while enduring temporary salt-water-blindness after being repeatedly blasted in the face, Danielle managed to return approximately 75-100 Nalgene bottles full of water to their home in the DE Bay. Thanks to Nick's amazing skippering abilities we narrowly avoided becoming another hulk in Delaware Bay. We returned to the Bowers boat ramp wet and salty as a sea dog.

Disturbance Crew

Bill went to Port Mahon. Hana went to Ted Harvey. Jake went to Kitts Hummock. Then, Bill went to Ted Harvey, Hana went to Kitts Hummock, and Jake went to Port Mahon. Confused? So are we. Kitts Hummock and Ted Harvey were full of Semipalmated Sandpiper at low tide. There were at least 50,000 on both beaches combined. Several White-rumped Sandpiper were mixed in with the Semipalmated Sandpiper at Port Mahon. Only several hundred Turnstones were seen at Mahon. Knots were hard to come by. A handful at Mahon, and Kitts, and about 40 at Teddy H.

Saturday, 29May 2004

Yet more feathers were processed.

Sally, Gene, Susan, Trish, André & Brian went to the Horseshoe Crab Festival at Milton and manned our brand new Delaware Shorebird Monitoring Program's display. André bought a carving of a Snowy Plover and was very pleased!

Phil & Kevin took Mark and Graham who were both leaving for Dulles Airport and collected Sharon.

Recces and Resightings

South Bowers (Dennis & Margaret)

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North end – 200+ Turnstone with 2 Dunlin, 2 Knot, 1 Spotted Sandpiper, ca60 Semipalmated Sandpipers, 1 Killdeer, 1 Black-bellied Plover and 16 Willet. The Least Tern nesting area had been flagged for protection.

South end – ca100 Semis, 5 Knot, 2 Dunlin and ca 400 Turnstone – these may have included birds from North end which had been disturbed by the time we had left that end of the beach. 2 individual birds were sighted as well as several co-hort birds. Max 15 people on the whole length of the beach at any one time caused some disturbance. Margaret had camera problems (battery?) Brian was sighted out on the sandy spit at Brockenbridge shimmering in the haze.

Slaughter (Karen & Manomet)

Arrived at Slaughter Beach, Evans Ave, at 0600 hrs. North of the access road there were 2000 Semipalmated Sandpiper loafing on the mud/peat area at high tide and nothing else. Next stop Marvel Ave. There were 2 fishermen on the beach plus a dog off the leash. No birds here. Next stop North Delaware Ave. South of the access road there were 3000 Semipalmated Sandpiper feeding and flushing repeatedly for no apparent reason. Next stop Firehouse. In front of the access area and just to the south there were 10 Knots and 50 Turnstones, and to the north there were 1500 Semipalmated Sandpipers. The Semipalmated Sandpipers were skittish and source of disturbance was undetermined. Next stop South Delaware Ave where there were 45 Knots, 140 Turnstones, and 1000 Semipalmated Sandpipers. All birds were spread out evenly north and south of the access area and at the water's edge. Next stop Maryland Ave: 75 Turnstones, 10 Knots, 500 Semipalmated Sandpipers. And finally, Simpson Ave had 10 Turnstones. Finished by 0643. No scanning, birds difficult to scan at close range without disturbing birds.

Mispillion (Simon Jacquie, Kim & Debbie)

Most birds were on the Osprey beach so we beached the boat well down the channel and crept through the phrag and scrub to the hide. We soon discovered that most of the birds were out of sight so Kim and Debbie headed back to scan from the boat. Simon and Jacquie found some birds, including an arctic Turnstone individual but eventually left to continue scanning from the boat. Nice boating antics when the engine cut-out and we drifted perilously close to the wooded pilings prompting some rapid paddling. Once Kim and Debbie arrived at the boat, they were able to scan and get some combinations from the flock.

Bombay Hook (N End) (Dave, Nigel, Glenda, Barbara & Telemetry)

A strong onshore wind meant that we went out to the bay front through the cut at Bombay hook. There were several hundred turnstone feeding on eggs just bellow the tide line and about 30 knot – 2 individuals recorded. In total about 2500 Turnstone and 200 Knot between Bombay hook and South of Kelly Island. On route north went up the simons river due to the swell on the bay and Dave beached the boat (again) within seconds of Barbara asking whether the channel was deep enough!

Big Stone/Greco (Karen & Chris B)

About 200 Knots and 50 Turnstones in front of first house to south of access road. Wind blowing excessively hard, difficult to stand upright...i.e., us and the birds! Sand blowing...abort, abort!

Brockenbridge (Brian & André)

Arrived ca. 0900 for a great session of color-band searching. Wind was from the NW ca 10-15 mph, cool and sunny. There were about a thousand knots in the area,

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perhaps 5000 SESA, 100 DUNL, 1000 RUTU, and a few WILL. Left at about 14:00. The majority of the birds were feeding on the sandy spit, but a good number of both REKN and some RUTU were consistently feeding on a concentrated HSC egg spot and returning there very rapidly after being disturbed. An excellent site for a catch! Between the two of us we identified lots of individuals.

Mist Net Training commenced 20.00 following a meal prepared by Chris and Karen. The catch was small but there were plenty of birds on the shore this was probably due to the raised water levels (for maintenance!)

29-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
DUNLIN	1	-	1
SEMI P. SANDPIPER	35	-	35
TOTAL	36	0	36

VA Tech

Mud triumphs over man. Our push pole sinks to the bottom of Mispillion Harbor.

Disturbance Crew

Bill and Rachel went to Mispillion Osprey and Jake and Hana went to Slaughter Beach. Then Hana switched places with Bill and Rachel and Jake stayed at Slaughter. Jake and Hana went to Port Mahon in the afternoon at high tide. Very little birds (semi's) present.

Sunday, 30May 2004

Brockenbridge

Setting team (Kim, Nigel, Jacquie, Karen André, Olin) leaves 05.45 going in by Polarcraft with equipment, etc. The sea was dead calm and a school of Dolphins was seen jumping out of the mirage- a magical sight. On arrival at the beach there were already several hundred knot and turnstone on the point. We set 50 yards up the channel so that the net would cover an eddy of eggs that appeared as the tide fell the previous day. Firing position was the beached polarcraft up river. Processing team leaving at 07.30 to walk in from Bennet's Pier taking own H2O and snacks. As the tide fell 1500 semis arrived in the catching area but these were pushed out by the 100 or more Laughing gulls that feed in the area. Eventually a few knot joined the gulls and just as base camp arrived substantial numbers of knot and some turnstone started to land in the vicinity of the nets. It was not possible to catch due to birds in the air and judging numbers was very difficult as the knot and turnstone could not be seen between the gulls! There was a brief gap in the landing birds and Nigel took the catch without telling the people in the boat. Afterwards they all said that they expected the bang! Rapid extraction of over 100 gulls - one just missing Simon but liberally covering his white T shirt! All birds processed under shade using three processing teams. Polar craft loaded but beached for 2 hours before we could leave so lots of time for resighting.

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

30-May-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
RED KNOT	208	32	240
TURNSTONE	27	-	27
SEMI P. SANDPIPER	8	-	8
WILLET	2	-	2
TOTAL	245	32	277

Butt Swabs:

Took 74 cloacal swabs at the Brockenbridge catch. Many thanks to Jacquie.

Mispillion/Osprey Beach (Brian):

VA Tech

N. Bowers – Sunday slowly started searching for several sizable knots at North Bowers. We found one bird and lost one pair of glasses.

Mispillion – After a morning of mucking in mud we managed to locate one misplaced transmitter near the back beach area as well as find the push poll I dropped overboard yesterday.

North of Mispillion – It would be much easier to track down our birds if they could not fly away.

Disturbance Crew

Hana arrived at Brockenbridge at 5:45 as the sun was rising and sea trout were biting fisherman's lines. Hana spied on the shorebirds from the frag. awaiting the cannon crew. The stealthy cannon crew arrived causing no disturbance. Bill and Rachel arrived once the catch was made and we all help collect data from the cannon netted birds. As the crews were leaving, we recorded the of disturbance (or lack of!). Meanwhile, Jake was at Kitts Hummock. No REKN in sight. Jake went to Mispillion, Osprey in the afternoon (low tide). He saw 200 REKN on Concrete and non on point. Lots of boat disturbances.

Monday 31May04

Feather Washing & Data Checking

Simon & André went to Prime Hook to watch birds. Did not see a whole lot. Besides the Semis one or two White rumps were present, both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and some skimmers. Planned to resight at Brockenbridge but atrocious weather made us think better.

Debbie left for NJ with Alan & Patricia – Bye Debbie!

VA TECH

Concluded that the transmitter, frequency 151.730, previously thought to be misplaced, actually belonged to a Red Knot which is now dead. Probably yesterday's lunch for a hungry fox in Mispillion Harbor. Happy Memorial Day.

Another unproductive day for VA TECH. Checked for Knots at Kitts Hummock impound and North Bowers. Collected two random point samples at Ted Harvey and Slaughter Beach. Due to foul weather we were not able to take the boat out ... again. Hoping for better luck tomorrow.

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Disturbance Crew

The foul weather gave us a chance to catch up on data entry and do a stint at Bombay Hook!

16.30: A whole bunch of folk headed for Dave & Marg C's for BBQ.

Tuesday 01 June 04

Jim leaves today. Au revoir - good to see you again.

Feather washing, drying and clipping continues.

Kim to Rehoboth Beach 19.00. Anyone for outlets? – No.

André, Phil & Sharon spent the day at Cabelas, Hamburg PA. The trip to Hamburg took three hours, mainly because of some difficulties taking the right turnoffs and because we opted for a bit of scenery. The trip back was done in two and a half hours. Cabelas is great, a must see for everyone. It is huge and situated on a hilltop just outside Hamburg along the highway. We all spent 4 hours shopping in total, going for neat stuff, and browsing ourselves silly in the bargain cave. Great deals to be had there (if you happen to find something you like in your size). It is mainly very small and very big sizes. We finally decided we had done enough shopping and left to protect ourselves from having to restrain ourselves from buying more stuff. A must!

Boat Survey (Ed, Nigel, Jacquie, Karen & Kevin)

André transported boat and people to launch site at Mispillion before going on to Slaughter for counting and re-sighting. Starting at Cedar Creek and ending at the fire station total numbers were: 9 Willets; 13 Spotted Sandpiper; 3280 Semi's ; 34 Knot; 335 Turnstone; 3 Dunlin and a lot of gulls. Present were approximately 580 Laughing Gull; 100 Herring Gull; 70 Ring-billed Gull. Contrary to 2003 the whole length of Cedar Creek was covered with a thick layer of peat without any sandy patches. No 'limeys' were seen.

Very few birds in Mispillion but good numbers north of Bigstone Beach– no birds at Brockenbridge which seemed strange until the adult Bald Eagle was spotted on the duck blind! Lots of semis everywhere still ca. 3,500 Knot and 8,000 Turnstone present.

Resighting

Brockenbridge (a.m. Simon)

Walking north towards the gut found a concentration of knot and turnstone feeding and loafing on the beach by the dead cedar stuck in the beach (half way north). Fortunately arrived at the gut about an hour after tide and the boat crew's Bald Eagle had gone and plenty of birds building. By 10am 100+ knot on north side mostly loafing with turnstones but as the tide dropped knot increased to 400+ on both sides of the gut including at least 50 individuals. A merlin flushed everything but they came back almost immediately. Generally, birds were roosting on the point on the north side and feeding on the south side, especially where the nets were set and boat was beached for the catch on 30th, plus on the sand/shingle flats as the tide receded. Turnstone numbers seemed to have dropped off markedly since the catch on the 30th.

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Mahon/North Bowers (Gene & Bob)

Not much at North Bowers. Port Mahon had about 1000 Semi-palmated Sandpiper, 25 Red Knots, 375 Ruddy Turnstones.

Mispillion/Ted Harvey (Manomet – Bill, Jake & Hana)

Big Stone (Karen & Kevin)

Brockenbridge (p.m. Simon & Nigel)

Simon and Nigel returned to Brockenbridge to recce the site for a possible catch the next day. We battled first with ravenous flies (ankle-biters) and then a thunder storm which provided cool refreshing relief from the bites. More resightings were collected and we decided the north side of the gut was the best bet for an early catch of roosting birds. Turnstones seemed decidedly edgy and may have been on the verge of leaving.

VA Tech

Spent three hours following NJ-tagged-bird (AHH) from North Bowers to Ted Harvey ... back to North Bowers ... then back to Ted Harvey. After agreeing frequency 151.059 needs to get the @%&* out of Delaware, we headed south to Brockenbridge Gut where we heard 151.461. Thanks to a Peregrine Falcon flushing the flock, we were not able to locate the tagged Knot. On our way back to the boat we noticed storm clouds to the northwest and decided to return to the Bowers boat ramp.

Disturbance Team (Hana, Jake & Bill)

Jake and Hana were at Slaughter Beach while Bill was at Osprey. Jake went to Ted Harvey in the afternoon and noticed a curious rapid disappearance of birds and darkening of sky. When 2 lightning bolts collided above his head, he sprinted off to the car for shelter.

Wednesday 02June04

Brockenbridge (Nigel, Kevin, Simon, Karen, Olin & Dave)

Setting Team leave 07.00. Processing Team leave 07.30. The setting team set, so that the tide would come to about 5 yards from the net where it was hoped that there would be a large roost as the day before. Surprise - surprise only about 100 turnstones came to the beach and we never got over 25 in the area. When the tide turned we decided to reset about 50 yards along the beach. Turnstone immediately started to come into the catching area until there were about 30 catchable at this point another 70 landed together with 50 knot. Just as the last one landed the first took off until we were back to about 50 Turnstone. A few Semis joined them and it was decided to take a sample of Turnstone. While processing, Knot were observed the other side of the channel so Dave and Nigel went to set one net. By the time they had finished the polarcraft was high and dry. A large Dutch man was called to the amusement of the team. He saved the day but no Knot came near. When processing was finished the team was given the option of staying and seeing if the Knot came back later or walking back- most of the UK had seen it all before and thought the chance was zero so left the rest spent the day in the shade discussing names for Nigel and Jacquie's new puppy- they kept coming back to Semi. Eventually out of boredom a second net was set- this did the trick as Knot started to feed in the catching area of the first one! Just as we got to double figures a

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thunderstorm appeared. Nothing for it but to sit it out. The rain was not too bad and as soon as it lightened we realized we had a catch- unfortunately the firing box was still being kept dry in Dave's rucksack- fired as soon as possible and got a nice sample of Knot and our first sample of Sanderling for the year. Back for sunset to a very surprised UK contingent- celebrated a successful end to the catching for the year. Total for the day:

2-Jun-04	New	Control/Retrap	Total
REKN	63	11	74
RUTU	58	4	62
SESA	49	-	49
SAND	51	1	52
TOTAL	226	14	240

VA Tech

First we drove to Lewes to pick up more sample bottles. Then we drove back to St. Jones to pick up data sheets. After lunch we drove to back to Mispillion to find birds. We launched our boat in hopes of finding a bird in Mispillion harbor. We found a bird. Near the jetty we located one transmitter bird roosting on a small island that quickly disappeared underwater as the tide came in. We collected data as quickly as we could and were rather thankful that the bird flew away mid sample as a very large thunderstorm was bearing down on us. Finally, we took a leisurely walk down Kitts Hummock beach to collect core samples.

Disturbance Team

Bill covered the cannon netting at Brockenbridge in the early morning. Hana went to Ted Harvey and Jake went to Kitts Hummock. After scanning the whole beach and walking out towards Ted Harvey, Jake found no birds and headed to Port Mahon to try his luck there. In the afternoon Jake and Hana went to Mispillion, Osprey. The REKN teased us by consistently flying by the blind and landing around the bend. We laid down our bins after an hour of waiting in anticipation.

Thursday 3June04

Jacque & Nigel – Day Off – That's official

Went to Bombay Hook birdwatching- still 3000 semis and tens of White-rumped Sandpipers. Before supper, Nigel went to the beach to try and record semis- they were all on the lagoon and a tape was made.

Resightings

Brockenbridge (Simon, pm)

Before heading north found a small flock of c70 knot just to the south of Bennett's Pier road. At the gut another 400 - I thought they were supposed to leave in late June! Also c600 turnstones, a significant reduction over the last few days. Abdominal profiles of knot were mostly 3s and 4s with a few 2s and 5s. At 1600 385 knot, at 1715 165 knot. During the course of the evening at least 3 obvious departures of turnstones. In each case the noise from the flock would change markedly and a bunch of birds would take off from the spit and fly directly off slightly out into the bay, climbing at an angle of 25°. Typically a small percentage would veer back,

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

presumably deciding it wasn't yet time to go (or they had left the cooker on or something). Whilst walking back to the vehicle noted a flock of 220 knot flying in a long line/loose v formation. They were high up and well out over the water heading north. (Notably, AGD et al. had 200 knot in Mispillion this evening but they were gone the next morning).

Mispillion (Andre, Karen & Chris)

Launched the johnboat at approx. 19:30 and left for the harbor. A group of 100 Red Knots were feeding on the first beach on the seaward side. We tried to get close in by drifting slowly but with no luck. Subsequential beaching of the boat yielded three indy's before the birds flew away. We then proceeded to the back beach to find a fishing boat there putting out nets and continued to the Osprey nest farther inwards Mispillion River. This turned out to be still occupied, still tilted at 45 degrees, with one bird on the nest and the second resting (with a fish) on the blind.

We then moved on to Osprey Beach where 150 REKN were feeding on the shelled bank and got some more indys (mainly Karen and Chris). Still 1,5 hours before high tide the water almost was level with the quay, and after resighting the same indys frequently we called it a day and left. During our short but very agreeable stay, at least two large flocks of Semi-palmated Sandpipers passed over head in a northerly direction at moderate altitude, but calling frantically.

South Bowers (Jean W)

Ted Harvey (?????)

North Bowers (?????)

VA TECH

Pulled a mini "Dave Carter" today ... stuck for three and a half hours on the mudflat during low tide. Blame is being placed on the incompetence of the New Jersey crew. If they knew how to attach radio-transmitters properly ... On a positive note, after recovery ANOTHER stinkin'-NJ-dropped-tag, we both had a nice nap and Nick collected previously inaccessible core samples.

Disturbance Team

We all went Concrete to see how many birds were at Osprey (and around the bend). About 20 turnstones and red knot flying around but nothing was landing. Slaughter beach had been taken over by a bus load of school kids and all but Gulls were feasting on the beach. A good day for data entry.

Friday 4June04

Dave Karen, Kevin, Olin, Nigel, and Phil spent two hours discussing the future development of the monitoring program. Later Kim and Karen spoke at the Green eggs and Sand workshop and in the afternoon Nigel showed shorebirds to Green eggs and Sand at North Bowers. They found 4 Knots – two thin, one fat and a winter plumage bird and a small number of Turnstone. So... they have not all gone!

Mispillion (Andre, Karen)

Brockenbridge (Simon)

2004 SHOREBIRD SEASON LOG

Surely they have gone today... Nope. Arrived at 1145 to find 74 knot on north side of gut (inc. 5 SYs). At around 1200 numbers swelled to 400 and still 325 present when I left at 1500. Found ca 25-30 individuals. Abdominal profiles mostly 3s and 4s again but a couple of 2s and even 1s. Left to drive aimlessly around Rehoboth looking for Dogfish outlet before heading back for supper.

VA TECH

We ended the field season on a positive note. On our way to South Bowers to collect random point samples, the truck mysteriously died on Thompsonville Road. Fortunately, we had a case of cold beer to keep us occupied until the tow truck arrived. After being unhitched from the truck and deserted on the side of the road, Danielle waited for the reconnaissance team (aka Kim and Karen) to arrive and return the boat to the reserve. Later that afternoon, we were informed the fuel pump crapped-out which will cost VA TECH \$666 to repair. That cannot be a good sign.