

1977 FALL SHOREBIRD SURVEY OF SWAN CREEK MANAGEMENT AREA  
DECATUR, ALABAMA

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This survey is being done in cooperation with the International Shorebird Survey conducted by Manomet Bird Observatory in Manomet, Massachusetts.

Purpose

To prove that a small number of "stopover" areas will support a very large number of migratory shorebirds and to determine what habitat changes occur in these areas.

Sandpipers and plovers gather in almost unbelievable numbers at favored sites. While visiting these areas, the shorebirds feed and fatten in preparation for their upcoming transatlantic flight. The main concern is that the welfare of several North American shorebird species is increasingly threatened by habitat changes in these migratory stopover areas. There is concern that change of shorebird habitat does not allow the birds to prepare properly for their rigorous migration routes and that this lack of preparation is causing a higher migration fatality rate.

Methods

The survey area was usually visited every two to seven days and date and time of each visit was recorded. For census accuracy, all numbers recorded are counts, except those which are underlined. All underlined numbers are "guesstimates," i.e., an educated guess. For accuracy of species identification, only birds that were individually identified were recorded as a specific species. For example, in a flock of 100 Semipalmated Sandpipers, it is very possible that 1 or 2 Western Sandpipers could be overlooked. Therefore, if only 50 of the birds were identified as Semipalmateds, even if all appeared to be, they were recorded as 50 Semipalmated and 50 peep species. This applies mainly to peeps and dowitchers. All dowitchers were identified by call.

Results

A large number of shorebirds do use Swan Creek Management Area as a migratory stopover, and habitat changes detrimental to shorebirds do occur. The July 1 through Sept. 7 portion of the survey was done of the Dewatering Area of Swan Creek. The Sept. 25 through Nov. 30 portion was done along the shore of the Tennessee River in the Swan Creek Management Area. During the period of Sept. 8 through Sept. 24, while the Dewatering Area was being flooded and the Tennessee River was being lowered, there was no significant shorebird habitat available and no shorebirds were seen!

On October 28 the mudflats along the Tennessee River were flooded due to excessive rain, and no shorebirds were seen. During the Nov. 9 through Nov. 30 period, the gates of Swan Creek were locked to protect incoming waterfowl, thus the mudflats were inaccessible. However, the month of November produced a record rainfall by over six inches, and it is fairly safe to assume that the mudflats were flooded during most of this period. With the opening of duck hunting season, so came the opening of the gates on Dec. 5, and the winter portion of the survey was resumed.

Date Time	July							August					
	1 7am	4 6pm	6 6pm	11 6pm	18 5pm	20 6pm	24 4pm	5 5pm	10 9am	13 10am	15 1pm	18 11am	19 9am
Semipal Plover								3	1	4	5	7	7
Killdeer	<u>32</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>10</u>
Am. Golden Plover													
Black-bel Plover													
Common Snipe		2	3										1
Spotted Sandp		2	1	4	<u>10</u>	3	2	5	1	1	2	1	2
Solitary Sandp	4		1		2	2	3						
Willet		1											
Gr Yellowlegs	1	1		1	<u>18</u>	8	12		<u>10</u>	<u>12</u>	7	12	10
L Yellowlegs	1	1			<u>9</u>	3	5	9	5	5	2	6	4
Pect Sandpiper					<u>16</u>	5	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>30</u>
White-r Sandp				2									
Least Sandpiper	4	9	12	14	38	21	17	12	45	20	12	20	28
Dunlin													
Sh-b Dowitcher	2	1					3				10	1	5
Long-b Dowitcher				2							1		
Stilt Sandpiper					4					10		6	9
Semipal Sandp		5					7		3	1	7	12	21
Western Sandp						5			1	2			7
Buff-br Sandp													
Sanderling													
Am Avocet													10
Wilson's Phalar									2	2	1	2	2
Phalarope sp.													
Peep species				<u>25</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>80</u>
Dowitcher sp.			2	1	4	5			4	4			

Observations were also made on 9/10, 9/17, 10/28, 11/9 and 11/12 but no birds were found.

2013 Park Street SE  
Decatur 35601

September						October						Nov.			
22 1pm	28 6am	31 5pm	3 9am	5 9am	7 3pm	25 10am	1 9am	2 4pm	9 3pm	14 3pm	15 7am	19 4pm	22 12n	23 3pm	5 2pm
3	11	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>10</u>	1										
<u>10</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	5	9		12	8	10	<u>20</u>	7	<u>10</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>40</u>
									17		3	3			
	1									2	4	6	8		10
						1			5	2		<u>30</u>	5		
2	1		1	1	1	1					1				
7	13	21	18	21	15	25		12	7	15	12	12	7	1	11
1	8	25	7	17	12				5		4	10	1		
<u>30</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>30</u>	15				3	1	1		10	10	3
		3	5	2											
10	18	32	21	35	18				53	161	122	216	98	32	89
									1		3	<u>30</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>40</u>
						1							4	2	
	5	13	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>	1				4		1	1	2		
17	12	47	35	42	22		1		1		1	5	7	10	16
		3	8	3	9	3									
	7	3		3											
		1	5	3							1				
2	3	2	2	3	2										
	1	1													
<u>20</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>140</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>80</u>					<u>150</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>25</u>
	4	15	7	6	22										

### Acknowledgments

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