

PRISM:

FULL SPECTRUM SHOREBIRD MONITORING

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Shorebirds, the marathon fliers of the bird world, are in trouble. Numbers are declining for many species, some of which have ranges that include the entire Western Hemisphere. Such vast territory, combined with relatively isolated and uncoordinated monitoring efforts, have left an unclear picture of the status of most shorebird populations.

The Program for International and Regional Shorebird Monitoring (PRISM) was originally established to meet the monitoring needs of national shorebird plans in Canada and the United States, but it anticipates other nations joining as the program develops. It aims to answer some of the critical questions needed to direct shorebird conservation. How many shorebirds are there? Are their numbers going up



The white-rumped sandpiper is an ambassador for international bird conservation as it travels through virtually all countries of the Western Hemisphere. /Garry Donaldson

or down and how fast? Where exactly do they breed and where do they spend the winter? Although we have some of this information for a few species there are many more that need the efforts of PRISM biologists.

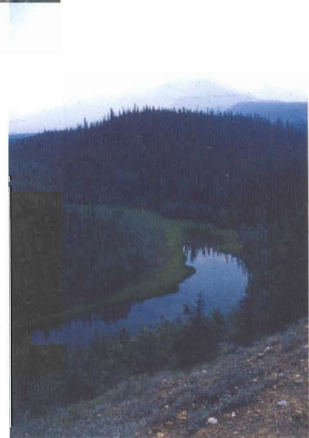
Meeting PRISM's goals means coordinating existing shorebird survey

programs and establishing new programs to fill information gaps that exist in current programs. There are four program components:

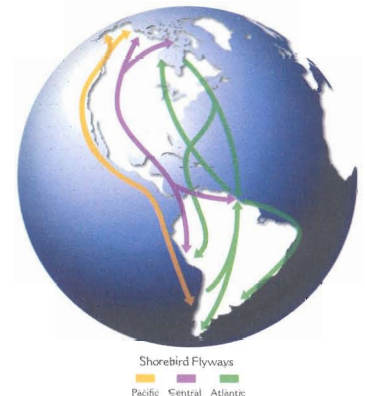
- Conduct comprehensive surveys in Arctic and Boreal Regions of North America to determine population trends, distribution, and abundance.
- Conduct surveys of temperate breeding shorebirds in the United States and southern Canada.
- Conduct surveys of migrating birds by building on existing programs, such as the U.S. International Shorebird Survey and the Canadian Maritimes Shorebird Survey, to determine shorebird population trends.
- Conduct surveys of shorebirds on their wintering grounds, primarily in countries south of the United States, to gain a better understanding of wintering ranges and to survey species that may not be well covered in the other three components.

Thus, by using this spectrum of different survey types at different stages of the shorebird's annual cycle, a more complete understanding of their populations will be gained.

In keeping with the comprehensive approach to conservation promoted by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, PRISM will use a coordinated approach among bird groups. The Arctic and Boreal breeding component will take an all-bird approach because there is scant information on any bird species in these remote areas. At temperate latitudes, the Breeding Bird Survey for landbird



Boreal wetlands, like this one in the Nahanni National Park Reserve, Northwest Territories, provide habitat for breeding shorebirds. /Garry Donaldson



Shorebirds are renowned for their lengthy migrations that can span the entire Western Hemisphere.

species is useful for shorebird species that occur in habitats monitored by this survey. Because most declining shorebirds breed in the Arctic and travel to South America for the winter, international partnerships developed through PRISM's southern component will be of utmost importance.

The program operates through partnerships among agencies and organizations involved in monitoring shorebird populations in Canada and the United States. The program is currently run by the PRISM Committee which is co-chaired by the chair of the monitoring sub-committee of the U.S. Shorebird Plan Council and the chair of the Canadian Shorebird Science Support Team. This bi-national team will become multinational as other countries become partners in PRISM.

With the implementation of PRISM, conservation decisions throughout the Western Hemisphere will be based on a stronger foundation of knowledge about the status of shorebird populations.

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