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## Site Assessment Tool

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### Introduction

**The Site Assessment Tool** (.xls, 499KB) enables WSHRN sites to systematically review their state of conservation, the threats they are facing, the responses needed and the effectiveness of site management. The results of the assessments will lead to priority setting and strategic actions for WSHRN to respond effectively to the main needs and issues of the network, with the ultimate goal of conserving healthy shorebird populations.

Sites enrolled in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network are key places for shorebirds in the Western Hemisphere, and having their landowners commit to their conservation is a great achievement. Unfortunately, shorebird conservation is not guaranteed with this, and the steady decline of shorebird populations can attest to that. Despite their protected status, virtually all sites face problems: from tourism pressures to climate change. By having a network-wide picture of the status of the sites, WSHRN will be better placed to set priorities for network-wide conservation action and have more reliable information for targeted advocacy and fundraising. But to do this a systematic approach is needed. Therefore, WSHRN has designed the **Site Assessment Tool**, a useful instrument for conservation planning processes of individual sites as well as for the whole network.

The site assessment tool has the following main goals:

- Review the state of conservation of WSHRN sites.
- Identify the critical threats at the sites and the conservation actions in need.
- Assess the effectiveness of site management and conservation efforts.
- Help sites engage in adaptive management by identifying priorities for action, information gaps, monitoring needs, and successes and failures in management and conservation actions.
- Provide standardized information for a network-wide analysis of the status of sites, for use in priority setting, conservation action planning and advocacy.
- Contribute to wider protected area monitoring schemes, especially the Important Bird Area monitoring in the Americas and the assessment of status of Ramsar Sites.



Photo Credit: Tom Vezo

Just like WSHRN, many organizations are developing and implementing frameworks to monitor and evaluate conservation efforts around the world. The effectiveness of protected areas is one of main areas of concern, given that many of them are losing the values for which they were set aside. The science of these evaluation frameworks is still evolving, being tested and refined in different areas. The WSHRN Site Assessment Tool has been built by incorporating approaches constructed by IUCN, BirdLife, TNC and WWF with feedback from our network and site partners; thus contributing to develop this critical aspect of conservation science and monitor the state of protected areas around the world. It was tested in September and October 2005 by the pilot sites of Copper River Delta, the Upper Bay of Panama, and the Fraser River Estuary. The WSHRN assessments will contribute directly to the monitoring of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the Americas promoted by BirdLife International and to the evaluation of the status of Ramsar sites.

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**More Site Assessment Tool Information**

