

Estuary and inlet sandbars: an important wildlife resource

Exemplified with counts from the International Shorebird Surveys



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The International Shorebird Surveys

**A volunteer-based program for the
study of international migrations
of shorebirds
in the Western Hemisphere**

The International Shorebird Survey (ISS) has operated throughout the Americas since 1974

More than 800
cooperators have
made some 50
thousand censuses
across virtually all
of the United States.



Each cooperator selected their site, and was asked to
make a count once every 10 days during key migration
times at a consistent time or tide.

Most cooperators followed ISS guidelines. Some sites were monitored for only a part of a single season, others for complete spring and fall migrations, and some for many years.

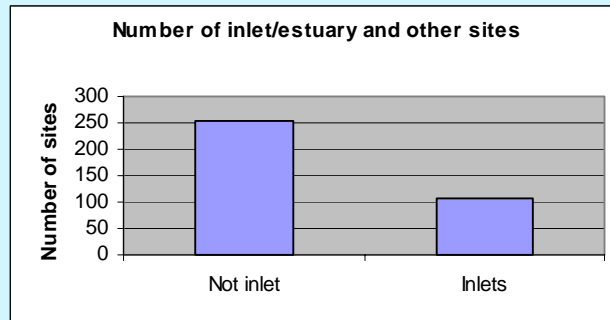
Although some sites have been monitored spring and fall for more than 20 years, most were monitored for fewer than 3 years.

In this exercise I selected ISS information from the states of **NC, SC, GA,** and **FL**. **Note:** these are not breeding season counts.

I then categorized each site as being an **estuary/inlet**, or some **other** coastal habitat. Nonmarine habitats were excluded.

107 sites were classed as **estuary/inlet**

254 sites were classed as **other**



Shorebird species were placed in one of 3 groups:

**Inlet-loving
species:**

Am. Oystercatcher
Piping Plover
Wilson's Plover
Red Knot
Short-billed Dow.

**Strongly coastal
Species:**

Black-bellied Plover
Snowy Plover
Semipalmated Plover
American Avocet
Willet
Whimbrel
Long-billed Curlew
Marbled Godwit
Ruddy Turnstone
Sanderling
Semipalm. Sandp.
Western Sandpiper
Dunlin

Other species

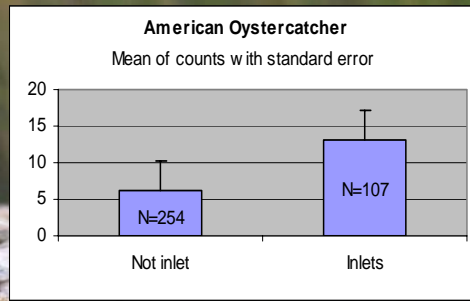
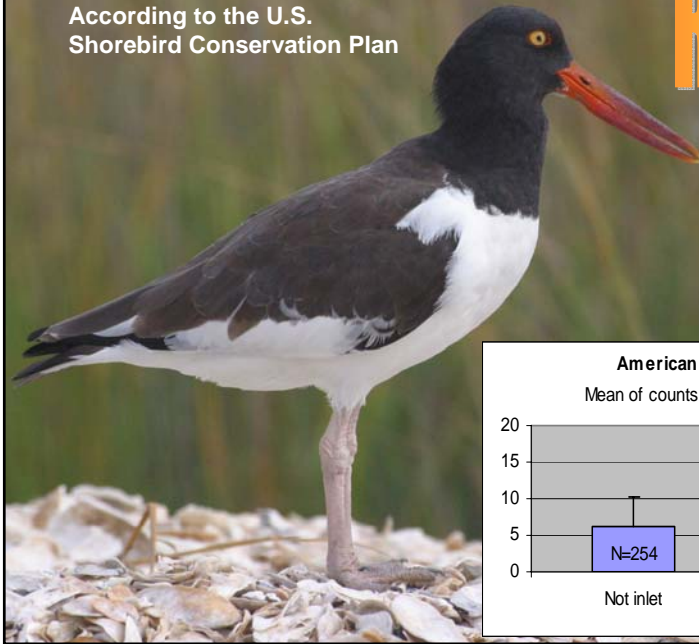
Killdeer
Bl.-neck. Stilt
Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs
Solitary Sandpiper
Upland Sandpiper
Pectoral Sandpiper
Stilt Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Long-billed Dow.

For each species I selected the single highest count made at each site.

For each species I then calculated 2 averages based on the maximum counts, one for counts made at the 107 **inlets/estuaries** and the second for the 254 **other** sites. These are the values compared in slides that follow.

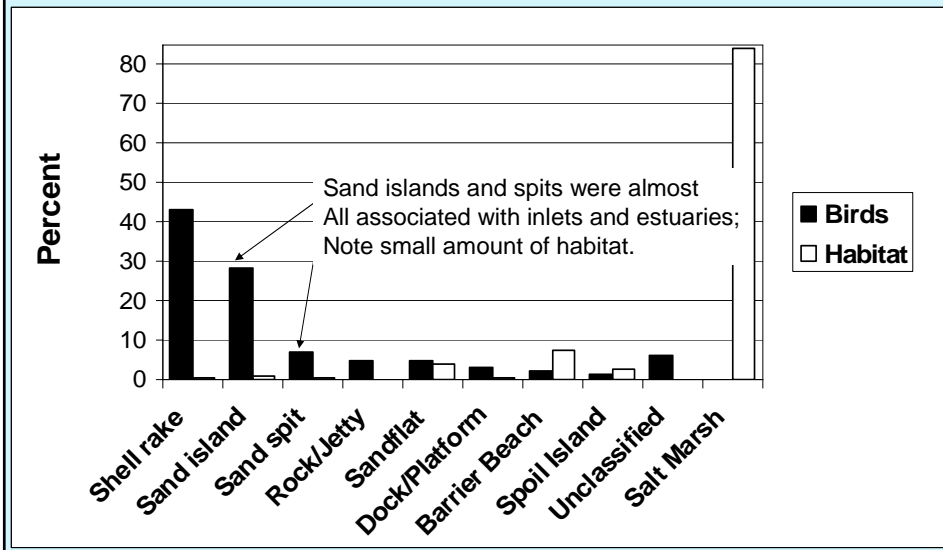
A highly imperiled species
 According to the U.S.
 Shorebird Conservation Plan

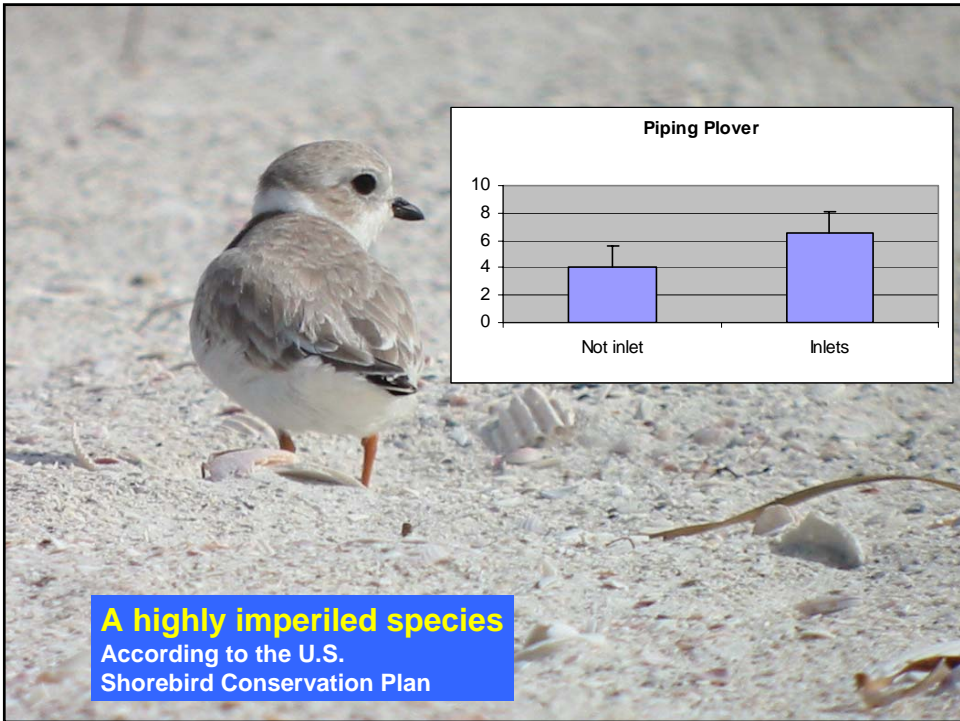
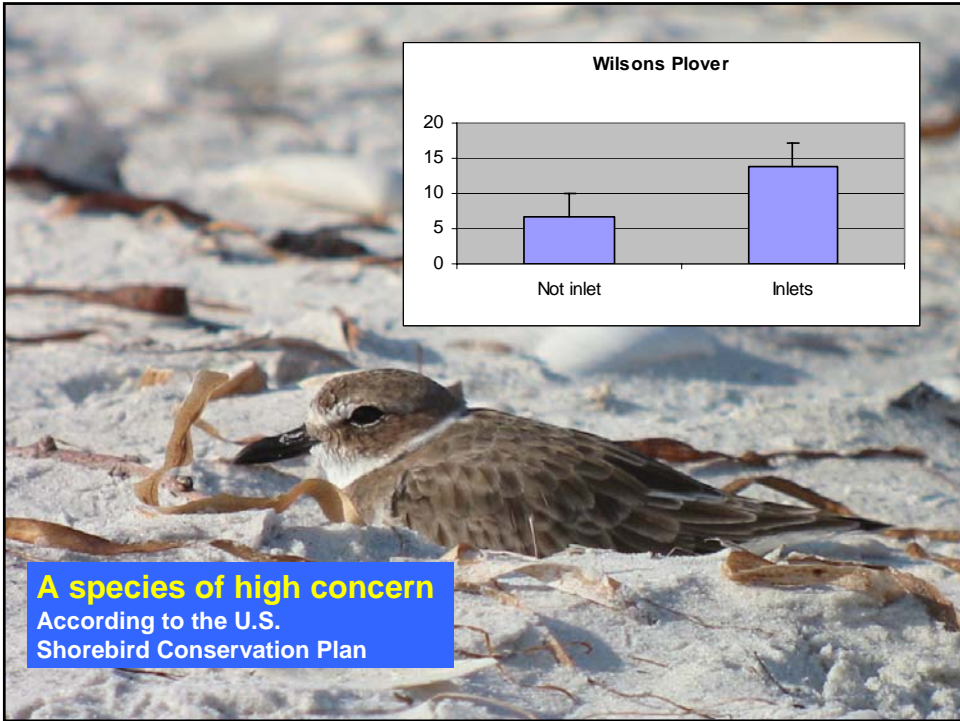
Results



Oystercatcher Roost Site Habitat Use and Availability

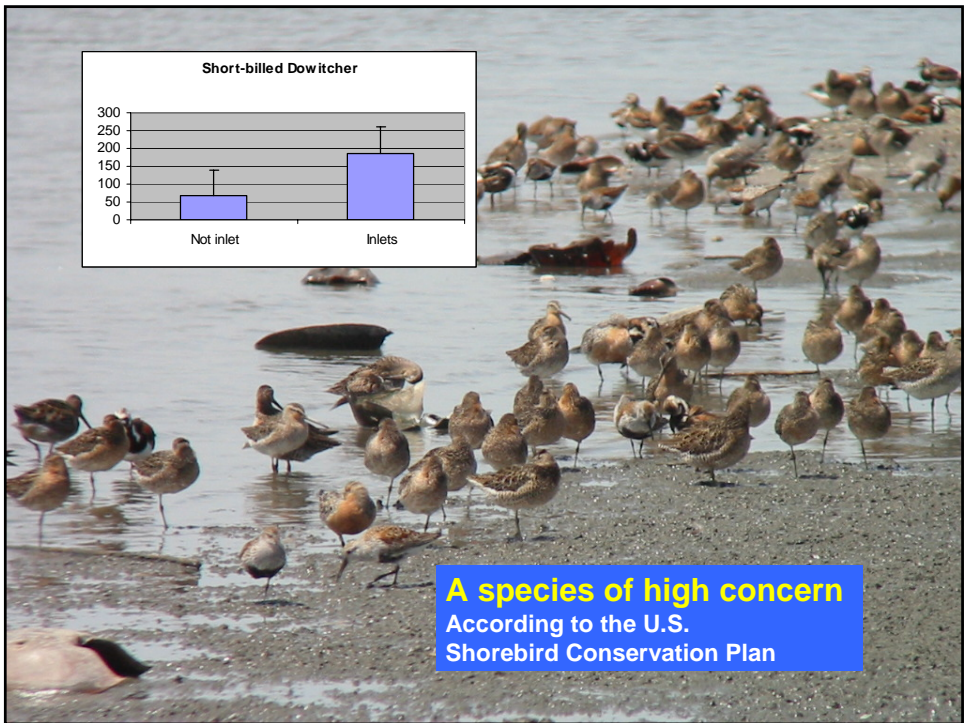
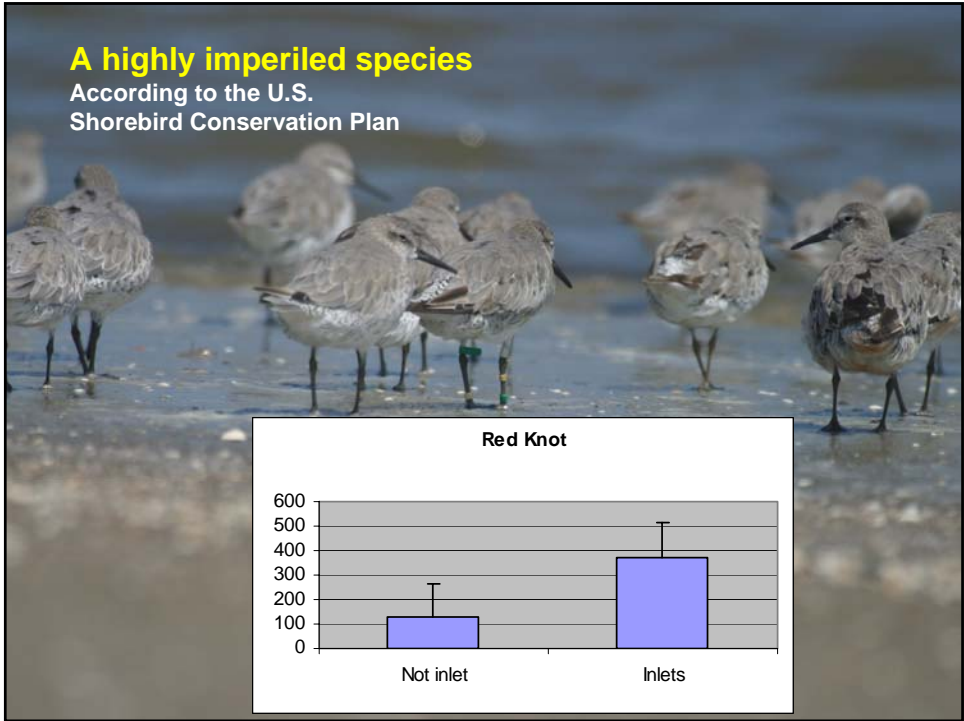
Based on a dedicated aerial survey, winter 2002-03, Brown *et al.*, in press





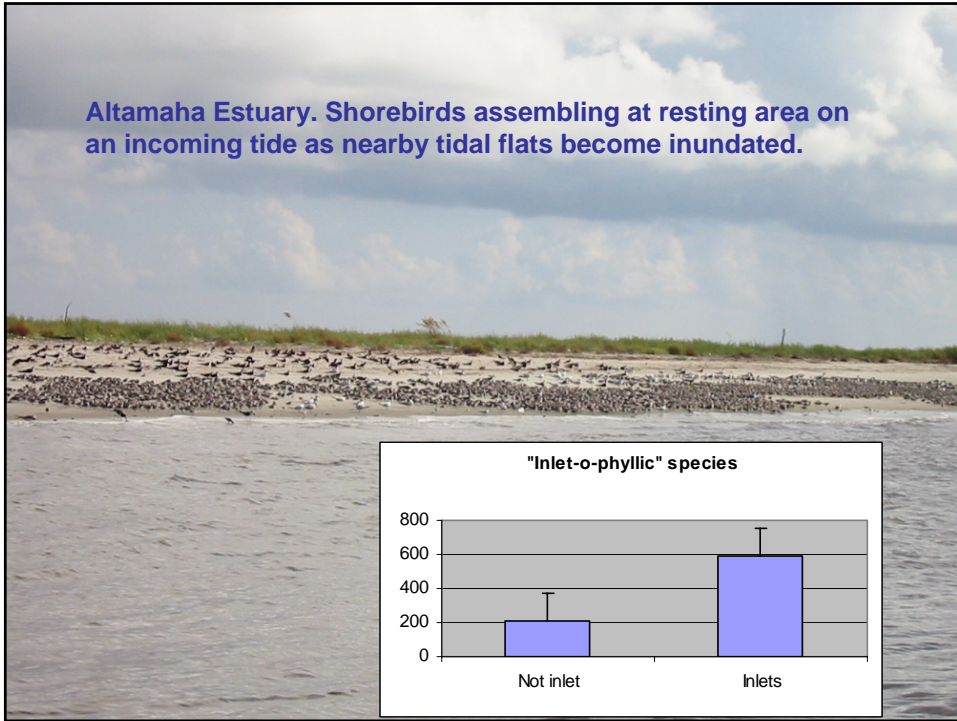
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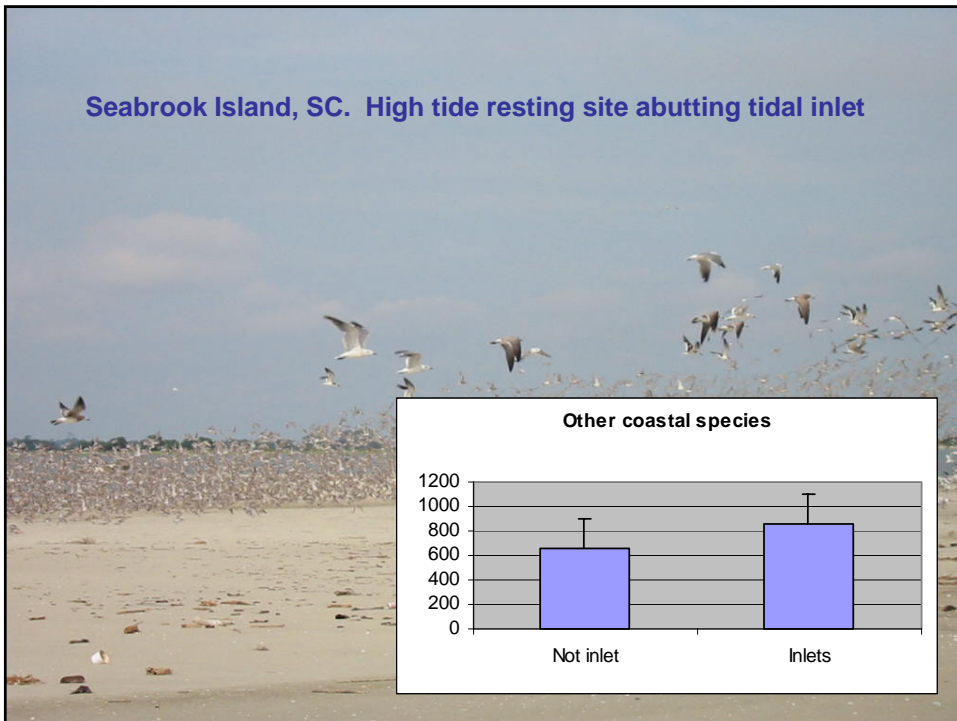


A species of high concern
According to the U.S.
Shorebird Conservation Plan

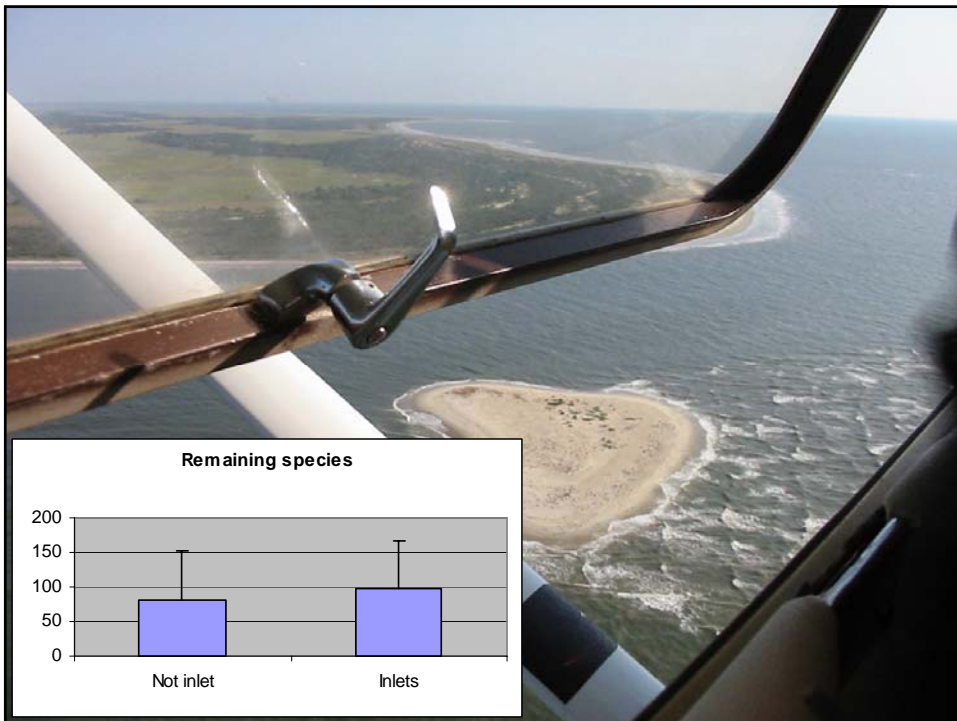
Altamaha Estuary. Shorebirds assembling at resting area on an incoming tide as nearby tidal flats become inundated.



Seabrook Island, SC. High tide resting site abutting tidal inlet



Southeastern USA estuary/inlets with the highest counts of shorebirds.





Thank you

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