

# Shorebird Observer Protocol

## Minimal Disturbance Is of Maximum Importance

While each report of a color-marked shorebird adds to our understanding of critical habitat needs throughout shorebird migration routes, protecting the birds as they stop over to feed and rest during their journeys is our top priority. To minimize disturbances, please proceed with patience and caution and observe the following guidelines:

### **KEEP YOUR DISTANCE—USE A SPOTTING SCOPE TO READ BANDS.**

Binoculars require you to be too close.

### **APPROACH FLOCKS FROM A DIAGONAL, WALKING SLOWLY AND INCREMENTALLY.**

Walking straight at a flock may be perceived as a threat by the birds.

### **MINIMIZE MOVEMENT AT ALL TIMES.**

Any sudden motion, even small ones, may spook birds or cause them to fly.

### **WATCH BIRDS FOR A REACTION AND STOP IF YOU NOTICE ONE.**

If you see raised heads, wing stretching or birds beginning to walk or fly away, stop your approach. If the flock flies and does not immediately land again, retreat. Allow the birds to land and return to a relaxed state (e.g., actively feeding, preening) before you attempt

another approach. If a second approach causes birds to fly again, stop and return another day. Predators in the area may be causing birds to be extra vigilant.

### **TREAT ROOSTING BIRDS WITH EXTRA CAUTION.**

When birds are gathered and not actively feeding, they are “roosting”. Roost sites are especially critical to migrating shorebirds and are highly vulnerable to disturbance.

### **ANTICIPATE RISING TIDE AND BIRD MOVEMENTS WHEN CHOOSING AN OBSERVATION POINT.**

Retreat slowly from your observation point, if necessary, so your presence does not keep shorebirds from moving to favorable areas above the tideline.

### **PREVENT “SQUEEZING” BIRDS BETWEEN MULTIPLE OBSERVERS.**

Position yourselves so birds can move freely along and above shoreline without being hemmed in, otherwise you will force the birds to relocate.

### **BE ON THE ALERT FOR RAPTORS; IF ONE APPEARS, REMAIN MOTIONLESS—EVEN IF IT IS THREATENING SHOREBIRDS.**

Allow shorebirds to take evasive action without adding to the perceived threat with your movement.

### **Shorebird Stewardship Etiquette**

When you are observing shorebirds, it is reasonable to explain to beach walkers and drivers what you are doing and why. Then politely ask them to walk/drive higher on the beach to avoid disturbing birds.

Learn more at

[www.bandedbirds.org](http://www.bandedbirds.org)

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