

## ALTE technical committee meeting notes-PSG 2.23.2021

Participants: Mike Goldstein, Susan Oehlers, Robin Corcoran, Nick Docken, Jenell Larsen Tempel, Abram Fleishman, Trent McDonald, Patty Szczys, Jill Tengeres, Brie Drummond, Megan Boldenow, Martin Renner, Tania Lewis, Scott Hall, Jane Dolliver, Robb Kaler, Heather Renner, Stewart Cogswell, Aaron Christ, Matthew McKown, Scott Moorhouse, Jacob Pifer, Nora Rojek, Jody Van Niekerk

### **\*Action items**

#### **2020 Updates**

Susan shared summary of 2020 Annual Report-see report for details

#### **Updates from group**

- Heather hired a technician entering ALTE colony data. Their plan is to get it into a database so it can be shared. Some organization still needed (and some older data has now surfaced)-make sure people are aware it is available. **\*Heather will send a sample to Trent.**
- Robb asked about getting the database set up, hiring outside contractor with expertise? Trent agreed a contractor may have more expertise and be faster at getting this done, however cautioned that they will not have a feel for the data and how to best organize it.
- Trent asked about access to old counts from the Renner et al. paper. Heather said they are plotted in the paper.
- Abram gave update on acoustic data analysis. In 2020, 27 song meters were deployed. The diel/seasonal patterns were similar to previous years. They are working on creating a predictive model to look at 1) nest density around sensors and 2) flush counts vs call rate. No relationship between nest density and distance from sensors. There was a strong relationship between flush counts and call rates, especially during incubation. He will be testing if this method is useful for population estimates. Data at the Black Sand Spit colony showed that colony counts were within the 95% confidence interval for the model. Assessing whether there is autocorrelation between sensor sites at BSS under 2020 array (500m intervals). Working on designing ideal deployment strategy.
- Jenell along with Jill and Don coordinated 2 volunteers in Nome that put out song meters over the summer. Colonies failed and acoustic data confirmed this (Abram showed image from Nome location.) Matt M. is happy to provide data that could be shared with volunteers. Jenell asked about swag. Don should have some leftover mugs and stickers. Felt hats were going to be made for the PSG meeting until the conference went virtual. Funding is needed to make the hats, not sure how much the cost is. **Susan will look check into cost of felt hats.**
- Patty extracted DNA from all samples (n=58 birds) from Dillingham, Kodiak and Yakutat. Found good level of genetic diversity across sites, though uneven samples. No indication of structure/genetic differences across colonies (even nearing panmixia, which is typical of breeding populations that winter together and more similar to other marsh tern than to

philopatric beach nesters). She is looking to get more samples from Western/Northwestern AK and Russia. Ideal sample size = 25 per colony. More details in her presentation on Friday. **\*Patty will share the sampling protocol with the group. More follow-up discussion needed on genetics work (Megan and Heather requested being included in genetics sampling discussions).**

- Jill is requesting eggshell samples from UAM for SIA and could inquire about feather samples or perhaps foot webbing samples to be used for Patty's genetics work.

### **Publications forthcoming**

- Heather et al is working on a paper that uses drone footage for abundance estimates for the 4 largest known ALTE colonies in the world. Paper in review.
- Mike, Trent et al have a paper comparing drone counts vs direct counts in Kodiak and Yakutat.
- Jill is in the analysis phase of her thesis work looking at chick and adult diet using stable isotopes, and a nest survival model from nest camera data. She is using Mark in R and seeking feedback.
- Susan, Kelly, and Don et al. are working to publish their PTT tagging work from Dillingham.
- Mike has been tasked with updating the ALTE section in Birds of the World for Cornell (estimated completion date in August or September). He will be reaching out to folks for contributions.

### **Upcoming 2021 work**

- Jill is done with fieldwork, so Robin is scaling back. She will monitor colonies on the road system on Kodiak.
- Same for Susan. She has no tech (no Janelle Lopez) this season so nest camera work will be reduced. Will still deploy song meters and do basic colony monitoring.
- Nick Docken (FS, Cordova) will monitor colonies when doing his dusky Canada goose counts. May do aerial counts opportunistically and potentially put out song meters.
- Potential to deploy songmeters in Nome again
- Pilot statewide survey season planning in development
  - Utilizing refuge resources (pilot biologists)
  - Surveying from Bristol Bay to Cold Bay
    - Based out of King Salmon, Togiak, and Becharoff National Wildlife Refuges
  - phase 1- aerial survey for white birds within grid cells
  - phase 2-return to cells with terns and ground truth for colonies
  - Start date ~June 10, based in King Salmon. Survey will last about 2 weeks and cover ground from Good News Bay to Cold Bay.

### **Funding**

- Heather acquired \$300k for the state-wide survey! Money comes from USFWS and will be put into NFWF pot for 5-year project. This is separate funding than from the pilot study.
- Scott Hall updates from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation:

- Upcoming 2021 RFP will be the last dedicated year for ALTE funding.
  - Suggests applying for support for statewide survey effort and even if we cannot pull off a 2022 field season, we could push it back by one year.
  - He estimates ~\$100k (possibly up to \$125k) available to match Heather's acquired \$300k (both could be offered under planned Pacific Seabird Program RFP, or can hold off on making FWS funds available if that is preferred, no time constraints with FWS funds but best to include in established RFPs).
  - Pre-proposal due in June and full proposal in August.
  - Service can apply but it would be awkward (Jody can provide more information). Consider what Agency funds could be leveraged. **\*Need to follow up, perhaps by forming a subcommittee.**
  - Another funding option might be the AK Fish and Wildlife Fund.
- Susan asks if anyone has available funds (surplus end-of-year, etc.) to consider funneling them into NFWF for ALTE. Best to start process in advance in order to be able to capture short-notice funding opportunities.

### Committee Business

- A few action items from last year's meeting still need to be accomplished/reassessed-Susan and Mike will follow up on. Megan can fill in where Leah Kenney has been assigned. Robb noted challenges in getting genetic samples to/from Russia.
- Need to revisit original committee goals and objectives, and update conservation synthesis. This could possibly be done through a subcommittee. Robb suggested taking a regulatory view-what information do we need relative to a potential ESA listing. **\*Mike and Susan will send original documents for review.**
- **\*Explore information sharing options (Susan)** so that documents like the committee goal and objectives and meeting notes can be shared in a collective place accessible to all. This topic has come up in a few meetings throughout PSG, and options like Slack have been suggested. There might be an option to have a communications platform/portal hosted through PSG.
- We opened the floor for discussion of possible new co-chairs and the consensus was that Mike and Susan both continue in these roles
- Suggestion for a new secretary position; consensus agreement. Jennel and Megan can help out on this

### Summary of Action Items:

**Heather** will send a sample of the Excel colony data to Trent.

**Susan** will look check into cost of felt hats.

**Patty** will share the sampling protocol with the group. More follow-up discussion needed on genetics work (Megan and Heather requested being included in genetics sampling discussions). Clarify who to include in genetics discussions

**Mike and Susan** will send out original committee documents (goals and objectives and conservation synthesis) for review.

Volunteers needed to help revise (Megan, Jenell?)

**Susan** will explore information sharing options for technical committee documents

Subcommittee to determine what agency funds could be leveraged with FWS NFWF funds

Meeting chat (yellow highlight indicates additional follow-up needed):

08:43:18 From megan boldenow to Everyone : Proposed new agenda item: maybe we can talk about a secretary or co-secretary role, so Susan is not both co-leading and scrambling to take notes at ALTE TC meetings?

08:45:04 From Mike Goldstein to Everyone : Yes, sounds great.

09:00:11 From megan boldenow to Everyone : Robin, Heather, Robb... Would Jill be able to get any input from Anna-Marie Benson or Cat Bradley, since her project is partially FWS-funded?

09:04:14 From Heather Renner to Everyone : info on phenology from way up there is helpful

09:04:57 From Jane Dolliver (she/her) to Everyone : **Olivia Townsend could make you all a logo...**

09:05:19 From Patty Szczys to Everyone : That would be great for we newbies too!!

09:05:35 From megan boldenow to Everyone : Agree, Patty! Newbies need swag!

09:05:51 From Jill Tengeres to Everyone : I like that idea!

09:13:44 From Martin Renner to Everyone : Patty, could you restate which markers you used? Mitochondrial, I presume? Cool stuff!

09:14:45 From Susan Oehlers to Everyone : SWAG: we were going to order felt tern hats for the planning meeting but did not go through since it was a virtual meeting. Need funds to pay for (pretty sure agency funds are not appropriate)

09:15:39 From Jenell Larsen Tempel to Everyone : that would be awesome Susan! Hmm how much was the cost?

09:19:51 From megan boldenow to Everyone : Good question, Jenell! I was just wondering the same.

09:19:56 From Susan Oehlers to Everyone : I can check into the felt hats, I think Heather has the contact for who was making them

09:20:18 From Susan Oehlers to Everyone : I don't think the felt hats were too expensive

09:21:13 From Jenell Larsen Tempel to Everyone : Patty- not sure if you already sent out a sampling protocol but could volunteers collect feathers found on the ground or do the feathers need to be pulled?

09:23:21 From Trent McDonald to Everyone : Trent: I need to step away for a separate short meeting. I'll return in asap. Hope to catch the discussion of statewide monitoring.

09:29:21 From Heather Renner to Everyone : Arctos database has list of specimens available at UAM

09:29:43 From Robb Kaler to Everyone : Thanks, Patty! Let's catch up with Megan et al. in the next few weeks

09:31:13 From Patty Szczys to Everyone : Yes, I dropped the ball with field collection protocols. I will do that in advance of this season.

09:31:28 From megan boldenow to Everyone : Yes, I was going to ask to be looped into future conversations surrounding this topic. Thanks, Robb.

09:31:35 From megan boldenow to Everyone : Patty, I messaged you on Whova.

09:32:59 From Heather Renner to Everyone : Please loop me in on genetics discussions, would like to talk about Adak and Russia

09:43:00 From megan boldenow to Everyone : The transparent purple boxes on the larger survey area just indicate areas that are zoomed in on the figure, not focal areas

09:45:36 From Abram Fleishman to Everyone : for the pilot project, what are peoples gut feeling of how many of the grid cells will have "white birds"? Seems like it could be a lot no?

09:46:24 From megan boldenow to Everyone : Abram, there are old Migratory Bird Management surveys in the area that give a bit of a feel for this

09:46:54 From Jenell Larsen Tempel to Everyone : Could be a lot of white gulls

09:48:35 From Heather Renner to Everyone : The pilot/biologist I talked to was pretty sure they could tell terms from gulls, but not necessarily ALTE from ARTE reliably

09:48:40 From Patty Szczys to Everyone : If you are willing we are appreciative of your service!

09:50:24 From megan boldenow to Everyone : I agree, thanks for the continued service, Susan and Mike!

09:51:44 From megan boldenow to Everyone : Jenell, I did NOT take great notes today, since you volunteered. Just fyi. ; )

09:54:35 From Jenell Larsen Tempel to Everyone : No prob Megan, I've got that covered today :)

09:55:02 From megan boldenow to Everyone : Thank you!

10:00:23 From megan boldenow to Everyone : Susan, it would be good for you and I and maybe others from FWS to touch base about this funding strategy

10:01:11 From Susan Oehlers to Everyone : make sure to catch Jill and Patty's presentations!

10:01:38 From Trent McDonald to Everyone : Don is in charge of swag.

10:01:58 From Patty Szczys to Everyone : I messaged Don about mugs- he says ping him in a couple of weeks