



Saint John Naturalists Club
Shorebird Conservation and Education Project
Weekend Report for August 19 and 20, 2023

Saturday, August 19:

- A public "Talk and Walk" was held at the Irving Nature Park gazebo. Twenty-four participants learned about the various species frequenting the INP as well as their amazing migration stories. The walk on the beach yielded excellent views of roosting and flying shorebirds.
- Erin Brown was the leader on the Beach and Brian Comeau and Brigitte Greene were the volunteers.
- 37 people were noted on the beach; 32 were engaged in conversations about the birds and their conservation needs. All seemed intrigued and the information cards were received with interest.
- Only one of 10 dogs was unleashed. One group reversed direction when advised of the roosting birds.
- During surveys over the previous two weeks, very few birds were recorded roosting on the beach despite counts of the feeding flocks on the flats that ranged up to 5,800 birds. This continued today with just four Semipalmated Sandpipers and 18 Semipalmated Plovers. Some 200 "peeps" overflowed the beach in small flocks as did a single Greater Yellowlegs.
- The few birds were put in the air a few times by a dog walker but soon resettled higher on the beach.
- It has been noted many of the feeding birds appear to be roosting in the marsh with others heading to unknown destinations in a variety of directions. Visits to a number of high-potential beaches over recent two weeks has only turned up two locations with any number of roosting birds.

Sunday, August 20

- Ashley Brown, Vanessa Whalen, Nancy Hamilton, Lyra Suppa and Vicki Cowan were the volunteers today. Hank Scarth was the leader.
- 74 people were noted on the beach. 64 were engaged by the volunteers. All but six of those yielded very positive interactions with enthusiastic feedback about the birds and the work of the volunteers. The remaining six were indifferent (4) or even negative (2). A number of visitors were well aware of the birds and the need to minimize disturbances from previous years' conversations with the volunteers.
- 12 dogs were noted with seven unleashed. One dog walker leashed his dog when seeing the blue pinnie and scope of the volunteer; acknowledging that he was aware of the rule and the need to protect the roosting birds from disturbance.
- Only six "peeps" were recorded on the main beach (2 each of Sanderlings, Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers). Several small flocks of "peeps" totalling 350 birds overflowed the beach but appeared to divert to other locations due to human and dog presence.
- Three small roosting flocks were located on the far end of the eastern portion of the beach comprising of 30 Semipalmated Sandpipers and 60 Semipalmated Plovers.
- On the Saints Rest Marsh, there was considerable activity with many small flocks of "peeps" intermittently in the air often as a result of Peregrine and Merlin activity. Among other species, eight Great Egrets and several Yellowlegs (sp) and a Dowitcher (sp) were noted in the shallow ponds.

Hank Scarth