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PRESS RELEASE

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Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences Awarded Major Grant for Shorebird Monitoring and Conservation

PLYMOUTH, MA, July 14, 2010—The U.S. Department of Interior's South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative recently awarded a \$198,000 grant to Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences (Manomet) and Cornell Lab of Ornithology for shorebird management and conservation.

Funding from the grant will support a two-year project to increase the capacity of the International Shorebird Surveys (ISS). In the 1970s, little was known, and few people cared, about shorebird populations and the wetlands they use. In 1974, Manomet organized ISS to encourage and enable volunteers to gather the missing information. It was a revolutionary idea. Since that time, almost 80,000 counts have been completed at 1,200 locations, by hundreds of volunteers, with the majority of the counts coming from states along the Atlantic Coast. Volunteers entered datasheets for most of those 80,000 counts by hand.

Enhancing the usefulness of data collected through ISS was recently identified as the highest priority data-management need for shorebirds. ISS data are used principally for conservation and management initiatives during shorebird migration. During the last five years, ISS evaluations have helped formulate practices in federal agencies as varied as the U.S. Forest Service, the Department of Defense, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as state agencies. This led to the creation of the Program for Regional and International Shorebird

Monitoring (PRISM). PRISM is a multinational effort focused on providing reliable information on the distribution, abundance, and population trends of shorebirds at the local and regional levels. It is integrated with ISS and other longstanding shorebird monitoring efforts. Over the years, at least 1,500 volunteers have contributed their time conducting surveys for this initiative.

ISS data are the only broad-scale information available for many shorebird populations in the hemisphere. Building a fully featured ISS data-management system by Manomet and Cornell will provide conservationists and managers with local, regional, and flyway information. The long time series of ISS data will allow on-the-ground managers and policy-level administrators to evaluate potential conservation actions needed to be taken in response to changing climate. However, insufficient funding in the past and the enormous amount of data the volunteer network has collected since 1975 has made it difficult to transition to a more efficient on-line data entry and management system through Cornell's eBird and Avian Knowledge Network.

The purpose of the project is to increase the utility of the ISS for shorebird management and conservation decisions within the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative. A secondary goal is to create a single, effective data management system that can serve all partners along the Atlantic coast (e.g., National Wildlife Refuges, South Atlantic Migratory Bird Initiative, and State Wildlife Areas).

One of the key discoveries made through the ISS data was that many species of shorebirds depend on strategic, perhaps irreplaceable, staging sites while on migration. This discovery led to the formation of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN), a program that builds protection for strategic migration sites. ISS data also have been used in identifying sites in North and South America that qualify for inclusion in WHSRN, for charting migration timing at key sites, and for developing an atlas to provide conservation and wildlife professionals with basic information needed for strategic decision-making. To learn more about WHSRN, visit www.whsrn.org.

"The ISS has been personally important to me—my first connection with Manomet was as an ISS volunteer in eastern Maine almost thirty years ago," said Dr. Charles Duncan, Director of Manomet's Shorebird Recovery Project. "In the absence of sound shorebird data, our conservation efforts would be like a blindfolded archer—we couldn't know when we've hit the target. This award is pivotal to sustaining shorebird monitoring programs for the long-term. We are extremely grateful for this support and the outcome it will have for shorebird recovery."

"The South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (SALCC) is committed to funding projects that meet priority science needs of the geographic area and our partners—the ISS project does both," said Ken McDermond, Coordinator of the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative. "It is critical for the South Atlantic area to have all shorebird data in a single, assessable location in order for us to make planning and management decisions about climate change and other stressors to our coastlines. Many times thousands of dollars are spent collecting data and we fall short of making sure the numbers are in one place for the next

steps in the adaptive management cycle; a goal of the SALCC is to make sure quality research and monitoring is in place in order for the best management decisions to be made in the future.”

Brian Harrington, retired Manomet senior shorebird scientist, founded the International Shorebird Survey, and serves as a volunteer and advisor. "The conservation of shorebirds depends on a high level of cooperation on the part of many partners and volunteers across the globe," he said. "More than ever there is an increasing need for quality, long-term shorebird data and commitment by the birding and conservation communities to sustain and expand our efforts to halt the decline of shorebird populations.”

About the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative: The U.S. Department of Interior’s South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative is one of 22 cooperatives envisioned by the U.S. Department of Interior to address unprecedented conservation challenges, headlined by climate change. Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) are envisioned as broad-based partnerships that will provide the science necessary to undertake strategic conservation efforts across large geographic areas. A coordinated network of these LCCs across the United States are the most effective way to address major environmental and human related factors that limit fish and wildlife populations. The science provided by these partnerships will: Inform biological planning and conservation design; help direct assumption-driven research and monitoring; and ensure future conservation decisions are made in an adaptive management framework.

About the Shorebird Recovery Project: Manomet has played a leadership role in shorebird research and conservation for nearly 40 years. Its long-term commitment to understanding populations of shorebirds and the factors that affect them has revealed dramatic decreases for many species. Manomet’s Shorebird Recovery Project strives to rebuild populations with a three-pronged approach: (1) building the science foundation, (2) advancing site-based conservation, and (3) using explicit success measures to evaluate and demonstrate progress. Read more about this initiative at www.manomet.org.

About Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences: As one of the nation's oldest non-profit environmental research organizations, Manomet is dedicated to conserving natural resources for both humans and wildlife. Through science and public engagement, Manomet works to integrate society’s social, economic, and environmental values to create sustainable systems for present and future generations. Manomet’s headquarters are in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and it also has offices in Maine, Vermont, and Chile. Learn more about Manomet at www.manomet.org.