

CRIMBI Connections

Newsletter of the Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative

Fall 2009

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The program "Viajeros sin Maleta" (Travellers without Luggage) has been a key program in raising migratory species awareness in Colombia



Joe Meade, Forest Supervisor of the Chugach National Forest and Fritz Reid, Western Regional Director for Conservation Planning for Ducks Unlimited Inc. at the 2008 CRIMBI meeting.



Shorebirds on the Copper River Delta during spring migration.



Melissa Cady of the Wrangell Ranger District during the Stikine shorebird survey.

The Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative (CRIMBI) was founded in 2001 by US Forest Service (USFS) International Programs, USFS Alaska Region and Ducks Unlimited offices. The group founded CRIMBI because they recognized that conserving the migratory birds of the Copper River Delta requires an international effort. CRIMBI has grown over the years to include other Forest Service units and now includes partners from the United States, Mexico, Colombia and Panama. In the future, it is hoped that CRIMBI can expand to other locations that share the migratory waterbirds of the Copper River Delta.



CRIMBI Accomplishments

CRIMBI Mission:
To strengthen conservation of Alaska's Copper River Delta Area's migratory bird resources through effective international partnerships and action on the ground.

Seed money from USFS International Programs and other Forest Service units has allowed CRIMBI to fund a wide variety of projects that have continued to flourish. Several CRIMBI partners were recognized for their accomplishments during 2009. Their work is summarized in the following paragraphs. These examples help present how effective this partnership has become over the years.

CRIMBI Makes Connections Throughout the Flyway

Migratory birds that visit the Copper River Delta also visit sites all along the Pacific Coast of the Americas. Since its inception, CRIMBI has worked to bring partners from areas that share migratory birds on the Pacific Flyway together through both collaborative projects and site visits. Over the years biologists, officials and land managers have visited the Copper River Delta and other connected sites along the Pacific Flyway to collaborate on Flyway-wide projects. These site visits have strengthened partnerships and demonstrated the concept of a hemispheric-wide approach to conservation and have been especially important in showing decision makers from the United States to Panama the far reaching connections between sites on the Pacific Flyway.



Mark Hummell, Jim Chu, Melissa Cady (all USFS), Fernando Castillo, and Richard Johnson (both Calidris) on the Wrangell Ranger District



Erin Cooper (USFS) and Rosabel Miro from Panama Audubon on the Copper River Delta



The Mayors of Angostura Mexico, Panama City and Cordova, Alaska at the Panama Bay, Panama Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) dedication

CRIMBI Accomplishments

Activities of Ducks Unlimited Mexico

CRIMBI has been a partner of Ducks Unlimited of Mexico (DUMAC) since the beginning of the Initiative, and has work with them on many projects that benefit bird resources throughout Latin America. In April 2009 there was an official release of the Mexican Shorebird Plan by representatives of the Mexican Government (SEMARNET). This plan was completed by DUMAC in cooperation with SEMARNET. The plan was completed following a series of meetings with over 60 Mexican stakeholders, representing 40 organizations. As part of the Plan, stakeholders identified 33 key wetland areas for shorebirds. The document will serve as the companion document to the US and Canadian Shorebird Plans. This plan will help to guide conservation priorities in Mexico and its completion is a great accomplishment by DUMAC.

CRIMBI and DUMAC have collaborated on two change detection projects from Sinaloa and Sonora, MX that examined the increase in the development of shrimp farms along the Mexican coastline in these two states. These studies will help officials focus on restoration and protection efforts.

USFS International Program has also been a partner with DUMAC and other US and Mexican government agencies in the implementation of the RESERVA course. This unique training opportunity was developed for mid-career biologists and land managers from Mexico, Central and South America. The students are trained in variety of subjects that will prepare them to be better wildlife managers in their native country.



Calidris field researchers conduct field studies on shorebirds in Colombia.

Asociación Calidris Receives 2008 Pablo Canevari Award

Asociación Calidris (Calidris Association) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental conservation organization formed in 1989 by students of Dr. Luis Germán Naranjo at the Universidad de Valle in Cali, Colombia. The group's accomplishments include conducting long-term waterbird and shorebird studies, completing surveys for the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) site nomination in Colombia, and capacity building efforts in local communities. The Forest Service has worked with Asociación Calidris since 2008. Two representatives visited San Francisco Bay and Alaska to review restoration and education projects, and to discuss future projects with Forest Service biologists. Subsequently, Calidris was invited to join CRIMBI while meeting in Cordova, Alaska. Calidris has continued work with CRIMBI on capacity building projects and recently one of their sites was designated as the first WHSRN site in Colombia. In 2008 they received the Pablo Canevari Award from Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences for their work with shorebirds in Colombia.



CRIMBI Accomplishments



Panama Audubon RARE campaign in Action.

Panama Audubon Society (PAS) Receives Grant

This year the National Audubon Society received an 18 month grant in the amount of \$230,000 from the Packard Foundation to establish a long-term shorebird habitat management plan for Panama Bay. CRIMBI has worked with PAS since 2005 when we assisted them in their designation ceremony of the Upper Bay of Panama as a WHSRN site. Past CRIMBI partnerships with PAS included assisting with the RARE pride campaign, a program for changing awareness, attitudes and behaviours toward conservation at the local level. CRIMBI has also worked to expand education and outreach efforts in the Upper Bay of Panama.



Dan Logan (USFS) and Alaska Governor Sarah Palin during the Migration Science and Mystery broadcast



“Migration Science and Mystery” receives national awards

“Migration Science and Mystery – a Distance Learning Adventure” project, received top honors in 2008 from three prestigious U.S. professional associations – the Annual Communicator Awards, Hermes Award and the Videographer Awards.

This innovative education program was developed in partnership by the USFS and the Prince William Network, an educational institution in northern Virginia. The program used Web and satellite-broadcast technology to bring the science and mystery of shorebird migration to elementary school students throughout the Western Hemisphere – more than 500,000 in total throughout the 2006-2007 school year! Students learned about shorebirds and their wetland habitats, chatted with biologists and researchers, and participated virtually in various live field trips from Panama to Alaska. The program was funded in part by several units of the Forest Service including; Forest Service Region 10, Chugach NF and International Programs. For more information, and all the archived online field trips, visit <http://migration.pwnet.org>. The USFS and the Prince William Network have worked on three previous web-based education projects, including one in 2002 that featured the shorebirds of the Copper River Delta.

CRIMBI Accomplishments



Graduate students from Loyola and Michigan State Universities sample invertebrates in a Copper River Delta pond

Pond Ecology Work on the Copper River Delta Gains Momentum

Since 2005, the Cordova Ranger District has worked in collaboration with Loyola, Notre Dame and Michigan State Universities in understanding the dynamics of the ponds on the Copper River Delta. The purpose of this ongoing study is to determine pond habitat characteristics, productivity and the amount of change occurring in ponds created in the uplifted marsh as a result of the 1964 earthquake and subsequent uplift.

CRIMBI has supported this program as it was expanded to investigate pond relationships to waterfowl and other migratory birds. Due to wide ranging support, momentum for this project continues to expand through the exploration of food webs and bird-productivity relationships in 2010. Recently, researchers have expanded invertebrate work to include rusty blackbirds on the Delta. Methods used on the Delta have been adopted state wide in the studies of rusties and their relationship to pond productivity. In 2010, the USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station expects to receive significant funding to study climate change on the Copper River Delta as an expansion of this project.

2009 Projects

In 2008 and 2009, CRIMBI agreed to fund several projects that help increase the body of knowledge regarding migratory waterbirds in the Western Hemisphere. They included research, education and monitoring projects. The goal is to conserve birds of the Copper Rivera area locally and in other areas where they stopover and winter. CRIMBI is not a granting group or agency; our limited funds support projects that are important to the mission. Listed below is a brief summary of the completed projects.



Rusty blackbird capture on the Copper River Delta

Promoting Conservation Leadership Bocana de Iscuandé:

Sponsor: Asociacion Calidris – Luis Fernando Castillo: calidris@calidris.org.co

Project Type: Capacity Building

CRIMBI Request: \$15,028, Matching/in-kind: \$23,462, Project Total: \$38,490

Summary: Funds were requested to; improve the accuracy of estimates of Western Sandpiper populations along the north coastal zone of Nariño Bocana de Iscuandé (Bocana de Iscuandé and Sanquianga National Park, contribute with development of local-based initiatives to face environmental threats through capacity building of focal groups in the villages of the municipality of Iscuandé, and increase awareness at the national scale of Bocana de Iscuandé as an important site for people and shorebirds.

Yakutat Area Birding Trail Map

Sponsor: Susan Oehlers, USFS, Yakutat Ranger District: soehlers@fs.fed.us

Project Type: Conservation Education/Outreach

CRIMBI Request: \$7,000, Matching/in-kind: \$5,000, Project Total: \$12,000

Summary: Funding was requested to develop a Yakutat Area Birding trail Map, with goals a) to increase ecotourism and, thereby, stimulate the local economy, b) educate the local community on migratory and resident birds, the importance of their habitat, and conservation issues, and c) enhance future education efforts and development of a birding festival. The resulting model can be used by CRIMBI partners at other locations in the US and abroad.



The Aleutian tern is just one of the many species visitors can see on the Yakutat birding trail.

Rusty Blackbird Ecology

Sponsor: Erin Cooper, USFS, Cordova Ranger District: ecooper@fs.fed.us

Project Type: Research

CRIMBI Request: \$19,000, Matching/In-kind: \$148,820, Project Total: \$167,820

Summary: The Rusty Blackbird has suffered one of the steepest declines of any bird species in North America, with populations reduced by 90-98% since 1966. CRIMBI supported the first year of this two year study on the Copper River Delta including: habitat selections, foraging ecology, reproductive success, and potential limiting factors.



The Stikine River Delta during shorebird migration.

Estimating Size of Migratory Shorebird Populations

Sponsors: Melissa Cady, USFS, Wrangell Ranger District mcady@fs.fed.us, Rick Lanctot, USFWS, richard_lanctot@fws.gov

Project Type: Research

CRIMBI Request: \$13,000, Matching/In-kind: \$9,500, Project Total: \$22,500

Summary: The Stikine River Delta is a critical migratory stopover for shorebirds and waterfowl, but managers have very little current, reliable population data to substantiate its importance. In 2009, photographs of shorebird flocks were taken on the Stikine River Delta. These photographs are currently being analyzed for population estimates.

2009 Projects continued



Wetlands Connection (Distance Education)

Sponsor: Erin Cooper, USFS, Cordova Ranger District ecooper@fs.fed.us

Project Type: Education

CRIMBI Request: \$5,000, Matching/In-kind: TBD, Project Total: \$5,000

Summary: The USFS Cordova Ranger District used CRIMBI dollars to start the process for developing a satellite wetlands broadcast, similar to Migration Science and Mystery. District personnel met with Prince William County school personnel and developed project themes, objectives and potential partners. This program will focus on the Pacific Rim. Topics that could be address in the broadcast are the wetland food web, wetlands as critical habitat, wetlands across the Pacific Rim, and habitat loss.

Pocket Guide to Coastal Birds of California

Sponsor: Melissa Pitkin, PRBO Conservation Science, mpitkin@prbo.org

Project Type: Outreach

CRIMBI Request: \$7,346, Matching/In-kind: \$14,000, Project Total: \$21,346

Summary: California's coast provides important habitat for many species of wildlife, yet they are threatened by development, recreation, and habitat alteration. PRBO developed the Pocket Guide to Coastal Bird of California. This guide was modeled after two other pocket guides that have developed for birds in the San Francisco Bay area. The guides provide information about birds found in coastal California, but also contain a conservation message. The pocket guide will be distributed to beach users, beach educators, coastal habitat managers and others at no cost.

Central Oregon Shorebird Education

Sponsor: Paul G. Thomas Siuslaw National Forest, pgthomas@fs.fed.us

Project Type: Conservation Education/Outreach

CRIMBI Request: \$10,000, Matching/In-Kind: \$10,000, Project Total: \$20,000

Summary: The Siuslaw National Forest requested funds to support environmental education efforts at the Cape Perpetua Visitor Center and to support and expand USFWS Shorebird Sister Schools Program.



Black Oystercatcher

Evaluation of the Population Status of the American and Black Oystercatchers in Northwest Mexico

Sponsor: Eduardo Palacios, Pronatura Noreste, A.C., epalacioo@cicese.mx

Project Type: Research

CRIMBI Request: \$25,000, Matching/In-kind: 33,500, Project Total: \$58,500

Summary: Northwest Mexico provides critical habitat (wintering, nesting, and stopover) for 47 species of shorebirds. Among them are the American and Black Oystercatchers. The objectives of this project were to; a) document the distribution and abundance in NW Mexico, b) document key breeding sites and critical habitats for and conservation measurements c) coordinate and enhance knowledge from existing conservation plans in the United States, and d) strengthen coordination among partners within the Shorebird Recovery Project for Northwest Mexico.

2008 Projects



Migratory bird education in Colombia.



USFS Biologist estimating shorebird flocks on the Stikine River Delta



Rivers and ponds on the Copper River Delta

Asociacion Calidris – \$20,000

The core of this proposal was to strengthen the structure of Colombian Shorebird Conservation Plan. The main activities during 2008–2009 were (1) A communitarian-based research of shorebird concentration sites, (2) developing of Migratory Species Festival and (3) campaign to achievement of the WHSRN designation of Sanquianga National Park and Iscuande Rivermouth, and (4) the preparation of a Draft National Action Plan.

Characterization of Habitat Use Patterns of Wintering Western Sandpipers in Ensenada Pabellones, Sinaloa, Mexico – \$26,152

Western Sandpipers (*Calidris mauri*) are the most abundant shorebird along the Pacific Flyway and in the Ensenada Pabellones, with over 330,000 birds widely distributed among a mosaic of habitats during the winter (Engilis et al. 1998). A better understanding of Western Sandpiper habitat use and habitat-selection patterns in Ensenada Pabellones will allow biologists and land managers to make informed decisions and influence land-use practices. A major goal of this project is to increase our understanding of shorebird winter ecology and wetlands connectivity at local and international level. The objectives for the non-breeding season of 2008–2009 were to determine the population structure of Western Sandpipers during the southward migration (August–September), winter (November–January), and northward migration (March–April), and to use radio telemetry to examine spatial distribution, movement patterns, and habitat preferences of individual Western Sandpiper of known sex and age at local and regional scales during the winter.

Pond Ecology on the Copper River Delta, Alaska - \$20,000

Since the 1964 earthquake and subsequent uplift, the Copper River Delta ponds have gone through dramatic changes, many of which have been diminishing in size. These ponds are used by nesting waterfowl, loons, grebes and passerines on the Delta.

Graduate students from Michigan State University, and Loyola University conducted preliminary research on some of the basic limnology and trophic organization of these ponds on the Copper River Delta. There are two types of ponds on the Copper River Delta; outwash plain and uplifted marsh. Samples were taken from ponds in both areas in order to differentiate characteristics of each type and determine the relative levels of productivity. Samples looked at water chemistries, invertebrates and macrophytes. The samples were taken in both vegetated areas and open water areas. Data from these studies will be compared to look at pond productivity across landscape types on the Delta.

RARE Campaign Continuation: Panama Audubon Society - \$20,000

The grant allowed PAS to hire an environmental educator who acted as the campaign coordinator and continue working for a year and a half to engage more people in the conservation of the Bay of Panama.

Stikine Shorebird Survey Work – \$5,000

The objective of this project was to develop methods to obtain current information describing the abundance and distribution of shorebirds on the Stikine River Delta during spring migration. USFWS and USFS personnel conducted foot, boat, and aerial surveys for shorebirds in the area and captured western sandpipers in support of David (Dov) Lank's Western Sandpiper Migratory Connectivity Study. This project established methodology to obtain information to provide a basis for evaluation of the relative importance of this region to migrating birds along the Pacific Coast of North America.

2008 Projects continued



Satellite image of the Colorado River Delta

North Cascades Institute support - \$5,000

This project funded an outreach program with North Cascades Institute for Latino youth (most from Mexico) in Skagit County, Washington to learn more about shorebirds in Skagit Bay. Many of these migrating shorebirds are the same birds that travel from Mexico to the Copper River Delta. This project is an expansion of the existing outreach program. The hope would be eventually to get the parents out in the field to look at birds.

Continuation of WHSRN project - \$10,000

Following the designation of the Stikine River Delta as an Important Bird Area, efforts to designate this area as a WHSRN site were pursued. In 2008, the Wrangell Ranger District continued efforts toward a Stikine River Delta WHSRN nomination through inter-agency networking and support building.

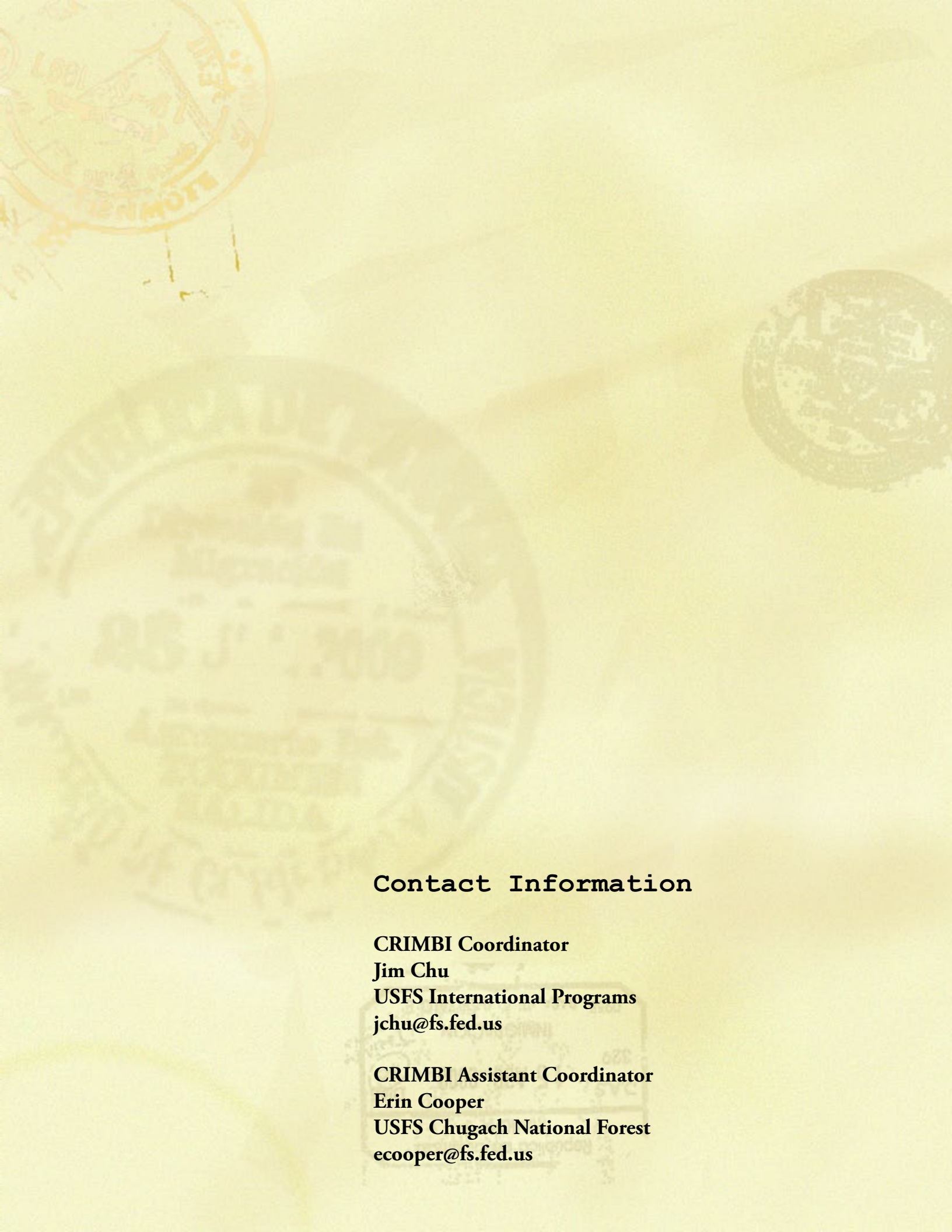
Shorebird Surveys – Bay of Colorado (So. California) - \$5,000

The Colorado River Delta is an important wintering and stopover area for western sandpipers and many other shorebird species. As many as 200,000 birds use this area. While the delta was formerly an extensive wetland complex, diversion of water upriver for agriculture and urban areas has reduced water levels to a fraction of their historical flows. These changes are impacting shorebird numbers in this area. In addition, housing developments are increasing rapidly, adding additional demands on water use and habitat.

Biologists at the Colorado River Delta are attempting to estimate shorebird numbers on the Colorado River Delta using aerial surveys. This information will serve as a benchmark for future surveys and will document the number of shorebirds that use this area.

Continuation of WHSRN/Ramsar project - \$10,000

This project would pursue the effort to designate the Copper River Delta as a Ramsar site (The International Treaty on Wetlands of International Importance), and the Stikine area as a WHSRN site. There will be an update on the current efforts at the CRIMBI meeting. Funds were used to pay for staff time and travel.



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