



## Racetrack Lake Shorebird Migration Survey Protocol

**Purpose:** Assess shorebird usage of Racetrack Lake after ODFW habitat restoration efforts were implemented (to specifically attract shorebirds) with funding support from Audubon.

**Objectives:** Estimate shorebird abundance, species composition, and seasonal use trend at Racetrack Lake during the fall migration period

**Survey Period:** Late July, 2015 – Early October 2015

**Survey frequency:** at least **once per week** but **2-3 surveys per week are ideal**

**Survey timing:** conduct the surveys during the **high-tide period**. It is assumed shorebirds use Racetrack Lake most intensively when it is high tide on Sturgeon Lake. Because the tidal flow from the Columbia River up the Multnomah Channel is delayed, high tide at Sturgeon Lake is **6.5 hours after the high tide at Tongue Point** on the Columbia. A high tide table with the 6.5-hr conversion will be provided to you.

### Survey Method:

- Record the number of each shorebird species that you see while conducting **three 15-minute surveys** from “**North**”, “**Middle**”, and “**South**” observation points (see table and map). Total combined survey time for each visit is **45 minutes**.
  - There are a total of 6 observation points (see map), **choose only 3 observation points to survey at a given visit**. You **must choose one each of the “North”, “Middle”, and “South” observation points** (doesn't matter if you choose the west or east side of the lake). For late day surveys you will likely choose to observe from the west side points because the sun will be at your back, vice versa for morning surveys.
- During the timed surveys **ONLY RECORD the same individual shorebirds once**. If you strongly suspect you are viewing the same individual shorebirds, do not count again. Try to keep track of shorebird groups as they may sometimes fly to different sections of the lake during your visit. This will help avoid double counting.
- While walking between timed survey observation points, record any additional shorebird species detected under the “**incidental observations**” section of the data form. If these birds are subsequently detected on a timed count on the same visit, remove from the incidental list

- Only record shorebird species that are actually in the lake habitat. If shorebirds are seen **flying over** during timed counts, **circle the number on the data form**. If these birds eventually settle in the lake, remove the “fly over” designation.
- Please do not do a lot of unnecessary walking near the lake to limit disturbing the birds and causing them to flush.
- The data sheet lists the species that you are most likely to see in this area. If you see any shorebird species that are not listed, please write them in the “add other species” section.
- Please fill out and submit a data form **even if you do not see any shorebirds during your survey**

**Data Sheet:** We are using a modified version of the International Shorebird Survey (ISS) data sheet designed by the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences. Please report any banded birds you may encounter on the back of the form.

**Survey accuracy:** *Taken directly from International Shorebird Survey protocol:* We would like to know if your tally is actually a **count**, an **estimate** made by a more or less methodical procedure, or an outright (albeit educated) **guess**. A systematically-made estimate is one where you actually have a chance to count one or more portions of a flock and then extrapolate the total number from the count(s). An educated guess (“guesstimate”) is when you look at a flock and estimate the number of birds in it — it’s the method most of us use. **If your tally is a count, please place an asterisk (\*) next to it; if it is a figure extrapolated from a count, please place two asterisks(\*\*) next to it, and if it is a “guesstimate,” please place three asterisks (\*\*\*)**.

**Species Identification:** *Taken directly from the International Shorebird Survey protocol:* It is not practical to look at a large flock and identify each of the 5,000 Semipalmated Sandpipers. Most of us check a portion of the flock, and make our identification, brushing over the possibility that one or two Western Sandpipers may be present. Please record as “identified” **ONLY** the birds that you **HAVE** identified. Thus, if you identify 100 Semipalmated Sandpipers from among 5,000 peeps please record them as 100 Semipalmated Sandpipers and 4,900 peeps. If you did not identify any of the sandpipers but presumed they were all Semis, please record them as 5,000 peep. If you are not sure whether a flock was comprised of Sanderlings or a mixture of Sanderlings and Sandpipers, please make a new row labeled “peep/Sanderling?” or even “shorebird sp.?” In short, resist the temptation to present accuracy that does not exist!”

**What to bring on a survey:** Scope, data forms, pen or pencil, ODFW permit (Contact Joe Liebezeit to get one), suitable outdoor clothing, water/snacks

**Data Submission:** Please return your completed data sheets to: **Joe Liebezeit** at [jliebezeit@audubonportland.org](mailto:jliebezeit@audubonportland.org) or via snail mail: Audubon Society of Portland, 5151 NW Cornell Road, Portland, OR 97210. If you have any questions about the survey or data form please contact **Joe Liebezeit** via email (see above) or at 971-222-6121.

If possible, please enter your survey data into eBIRD (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird>).

**Location of observation points to conduct 15-minute counts from:**

<b>Observation point name (see map)</b>	<b>Description</b>
East side - north	on levee (north hunter blind directly across lake)
East side - middle	Where road intersects top of levee
East side - south	on lake shore on land jutting out into lake (south hunter blind directly across lake)
West side - north	northernmost hunter blind
West side - south	southernmost hunter blind
West side - middle	at hunter blind across from “east-side middle” observation point

**Directions to Racetrack Lake & permit info**

- We do have permission from ODFW to drive our vehicles to the cattle fence just below the levee on the east side of Racetrack Lake.

At the Stutzer parking area (0.8 miles north of the ODFW observation platform on the right side of Reeder Road) take a left onto the gravel road directly opposite of the parking area. Drive along the gravel/dirt road (~1/2 mile) keep to right at fork and then you will quickly come to a cattle fence - park here. Let yourself in the cattle gate (be sure to tie rope to secure fence) and climb up road to the top of levee. This route is depicted on the map below.

If you park at the levee be sure to carpool in if there is more than 1 vehicle (leave other vehicle at Stutzer parking area off Reeder). Be sure to place the ODFW permit parking/access pass on your windshield dashboard (at either parking area). ODFW also has magnetic placards that say “ODFW visitor” that you should pick up at their office prior to your survey (ODFW office: 18330 NW Sauvie Island Road).



Map of site. Yellow thumbtacks indicate the 6 observation points for conducting timed counts. Red line indicates driving access route from Reeder Road to the parking area at Racetrack Lake (must have permit displayed on dashboard).