

morro bay
volunteer monitoring

Morro Bay Volunteer Monitoring Program

Shorebird Monitoring Update

Spring 2005

Background

The Morro Bay Volunteer Monitoring Program (VMP) conducts shorebird monitoring events each spring and fall. The bay, sandspit and strand are divided into 15 regions. Volunteers head out to their regions and conduct counts via land or kayak during a two-hour period.

This monitoring effort was begun in the late 1980s in coordination with the Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO). In an effort to monitor conditions along the Pacific Flyway, PRBO organized a study that spanned from Alaska to Baja California. The VMP has been coordinating this event locally since 2003.

The goals of the study were to identify wetlands of significance for shorebirds, to identify threats to these wetlands, to synthesize threat and bird use data into a comprehensive picture of the future of the Pacific Flyway, and to help develop

conservation and management practices for shorebirds and their habitats.

The spring census, typically scheduled in April, is timed to try to capture the peak occurrence of arctic nesting shorebirds as they concentrate at staging areas south of their breeding grounds. The fall survey is typically conducted in late-August to mid-September and is intended to capture the peak of fall migration.

The counts are scheduled for the morning time to avoid the winds later in the day. This is mostly to make things easier for those conducting counts from boats.

The counts in all of the sectors are conducted in the same one to two hour period to try to capture a snapshot of birds on the bay. See below for site maps.



Shorebird Results for Morro Bay

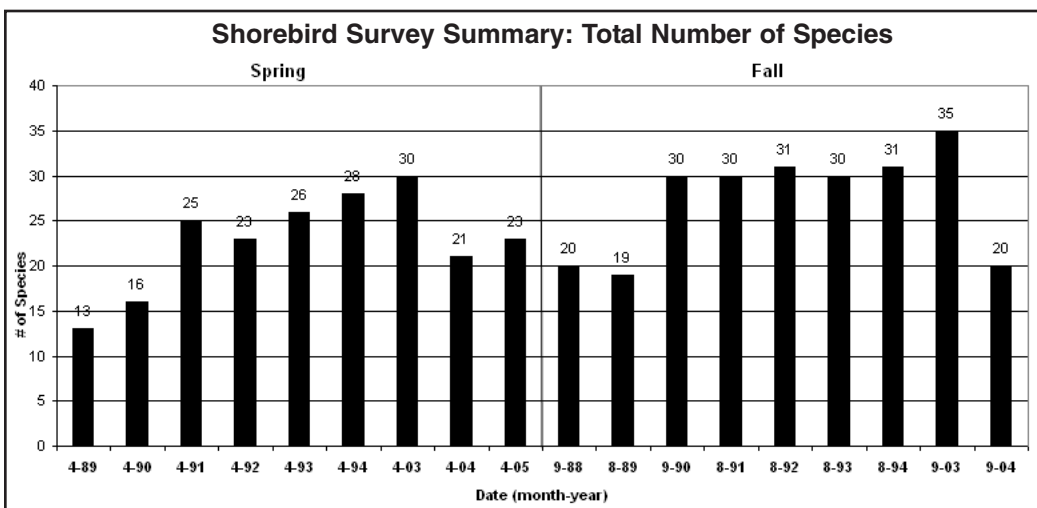
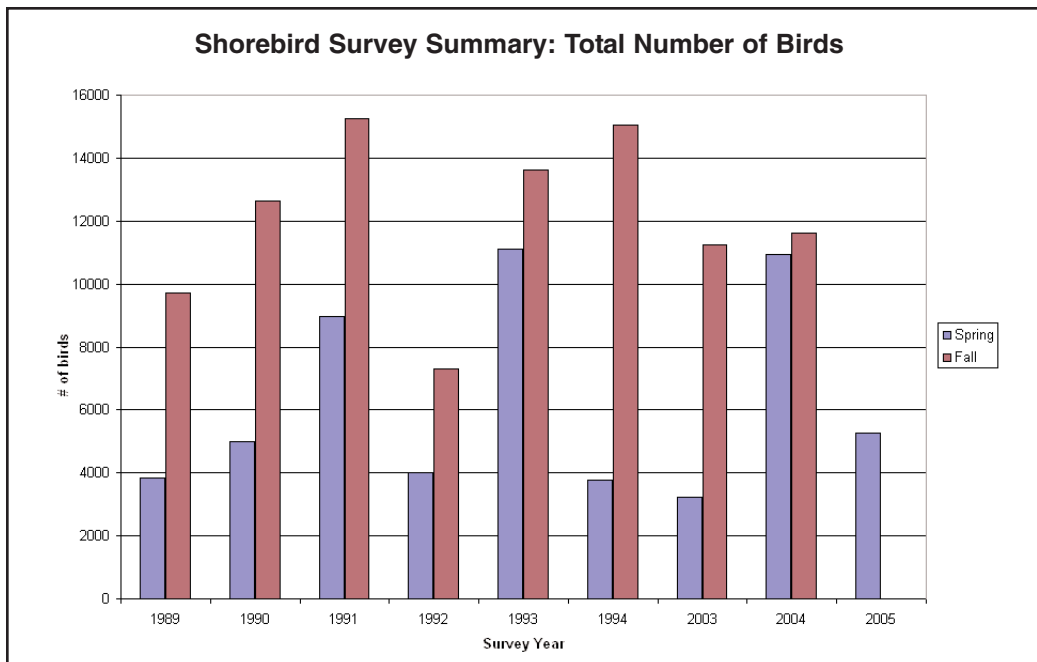
The charts show the results from shorebird surveys conducted from 1988 through the present. Surveys conducted prior to 2003 were coordinated by the PRBO and local birder Marlin Harms.

The charts plot the total count of all shorebirds during each of the surveys as well as the total number of species observed during each event.

The average count for the spring for all of the survey events was 6,236 shorebirds of 23 species. The average count for all of the fall surveys was 12,120 shorebirds of 27 species.

Upon review of the spring 2005 data, Marlin Harms had a few observations in relation to past year's survey numbers:

- Number of Sanderling and Snowy Plover were higher than in any other year
- Number of Semipalmated Plover and Whimbrel were higher than in any year except one
- Number of Black-bellied Plover was lower than in any other spring except one
- Number of dowitchers was lower than in any other year on record



A special thanks to our volunteers!

Many thanks to the volunteers who participated in our spring 2005 survey. We'd like to recognize the following volunteers: Jodi Isaacs, Alan Schmierer, Tom Edell, Judy Szamos, John Perkins, Maggie Smith, Henry Pontarelli, Regena Orr, Greg Smith, Annie Gillespie, Marlin Harms, David Schurr, Jack Beigle, Freeman and Worth Hall, Dave Lawrence, Bryan Brown, Mike Stiles, Marc Couacaud, Keith Miller, Mike Multari, Denise Fourier and Jay Bonestell. And a special thanks to Marlin Harms for assisting in coordinating and planning the survey.