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Position description:

Shorebirds are one of the most imperiled groups of birds, with overall declines of around 70% documented over the last fifty years. The Georgia Coast has about 30 species that can be found regularly on our shores- a testament to the incredible conservation legacy and unparalleled habitat that exist along this 100-mile expanse. In 2018, Manomet launched the Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative to help increase capacity, protect valuable habitat, and work proactively to alleviate threats in Georgia and South Carolina. Headquartered in Massachusetts, Manomet is a science-driven conservation organization with deep roots in bird banding. We have teams across the Western Hemisphere focused on improving the health of flyways and ecosystems challenged by climate change and human activities. Our goal is to reverse the decline of shorebirds, promote coastal resilience, and educate and empower the next generation of conservationists.

Working with the Georgia Bight Shorebird Conservation Initiative, this fellowship opportunity will have two principal areas of focus. First, it will offer an immersive experience in shorebird conservation and fieldwork, and associated data entry, management, and community-based social marketing. Projects include long-term wildlife disturbance monitoring, shorebird and seabird band resighting, nest monitoring, and environmental data collection. Second, the fellowship will assist with efforts to convene volunteers and work with partners, conduct outreach and education related to shorebird conservation, and promote the messaging to reduce disturbance to our coastal birds at key stopover sites along the Georgia Coast.

This fellowship will incorporate community engagement activities like tabling events and providing outreach programs virtually and in-person for volunteers, community groups, and the public. The fellow will work with our team to design materials to contribute to steward resources (field guides, pamphlets, polls, articles, blogs, posts on media platforms). They will engage with the public through presentations, tabling, and leading bird walks to educate about nesting birds using tools including optics, various printed materials, and citizen science apps. The fellow will also contribute to, and participate in, virtual training for stewards and new site partners as we expand surveys and steward program resources. They will also hold a supporting role with hosting the Coastal Awareness and Responsible Ecotourism (CARE) certification course, which is offered on an annual basis from February to March through the UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant, Manomet and other coastal partners to educate guides.

Projects that the fellow will be involved with include developing social media posts, written pieces for local news, collection of data at beach sites, outreach and collaboration with schools, partners, and state/federal agencies. The fellow will work to maintain and increase the number of volunteers involved with our beach stewards' program, improve nesting success for species that use the beach, and carefully document ongoing problems that reduce nest success. The fellow will collect and organize data from volunteer shift reports to document volunteer impacts as well as collect biological data that will support future management decisions using established protocols. They will work in partnership with Manomet staff to increase the public's awareness of shorebird and seabird disturbance issues on the coast through interactions on the beach, at events, and on social platforms.

In addition to working at key sites along the Georgia Coast where volunteer activities occur, the fellow will join in opportunistic field work with Manomet staff and partners to monitor seabird colonies and shorebird nesting sites at various islands along the coast. They will provide support with remote field work which may include set-up/break-down of bird trapping and banding efforts with partners from GA DNR, posting signage at remote and public sites to protect nesting shorebirds and educate recreational boaters and beach-goers, and keeping record of all activities in a notebook for data collection as well as relaying data to inform managers. During the spring and fall seasons, the fellow will conduct International Shorebird Surveys, with support and training from Manomet, at key sites along the Georgia coast. They will also participate in horseshoe crab monitoring and on-going monitoring of key shorebirds using nocturnal roosts.

The expected outcomes are for the fellow to gain skills with volunteer management, community engagement, biological data collection, conservation planning and collaboration. They will act as a lead for our volunteer group, the Coastal Bird Ambassadors, managing and engaging with the current volunteer group, and supporting the recruitment of volunteers for the Georgia Coastal Bird Ambassador Program to expand this program to other barrier islands on the Georgia coast. The fellow will encourage volunteers to interact positively with the public and help to prioritize timing steward shifts to coincide with the heaviest use of the beach with emphasis on weekends and holidays. Our work on the Georgia coast is interdisciplinary- this fellowship will provide the opportunity to conduct management focused biological work and integrate social science principles to alleviate significant conservation challenges for imperiled wildlife.

Throughout the fellowship, the fellow will be part of a collaborative team working to promote beach-bird friendly messaging with ongoing research and outreach projects to highlight important bird areas and shift human behaviors to interact more positively with wildlife. The fellow will get hands-on experience, training, and field time. A successful candidate will commit 40 hours/week to this position, although hours might be flexible during peak seasons. Work is expected outside of the typical business hours and can occasionally include weekends to accommodate events or fieldwork. A successful candidate will have reliable transportation and home office set-up. While training will be provided, we are looking for a candidate with experience in coastal ecological systems. Preference will be given to candidates with knowledge about coastal wildlife, avian identification skills, and previous experience monitoring, tagging, or conducting surveys, especially if it pertains to shorebirds. The ideal candidate will be organized, self-motivated, collaborative, and eager to learn with good written and expressive language skills.

Commitment to equal access and opportunity

Manomet condemns all forms of racism. We are committed to creating more open, inclusive, and equitable spaces in the science community, in nature, and our organization for all races, genders, ethnicities, and abilities. We will do everything we can to create a more equal world for all by celebrating diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) and encouraging collaboration in everything that we do.

With support and guidance from external DEIJ consultants, we aspire to integrate inclusivity across all that we do. This will be an ongoing effort, but we have already begun working to incorporate DEIJ internally and externally. In addition to building and strengthening relationships with diverse partners, we have also increased the diversity of our educational programs and commit to increasing representation across our organization.