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The Influence of Marsh Size on Marsh Value for Bird Communities of the Lower Chesapeake Bay

B. D. Watts

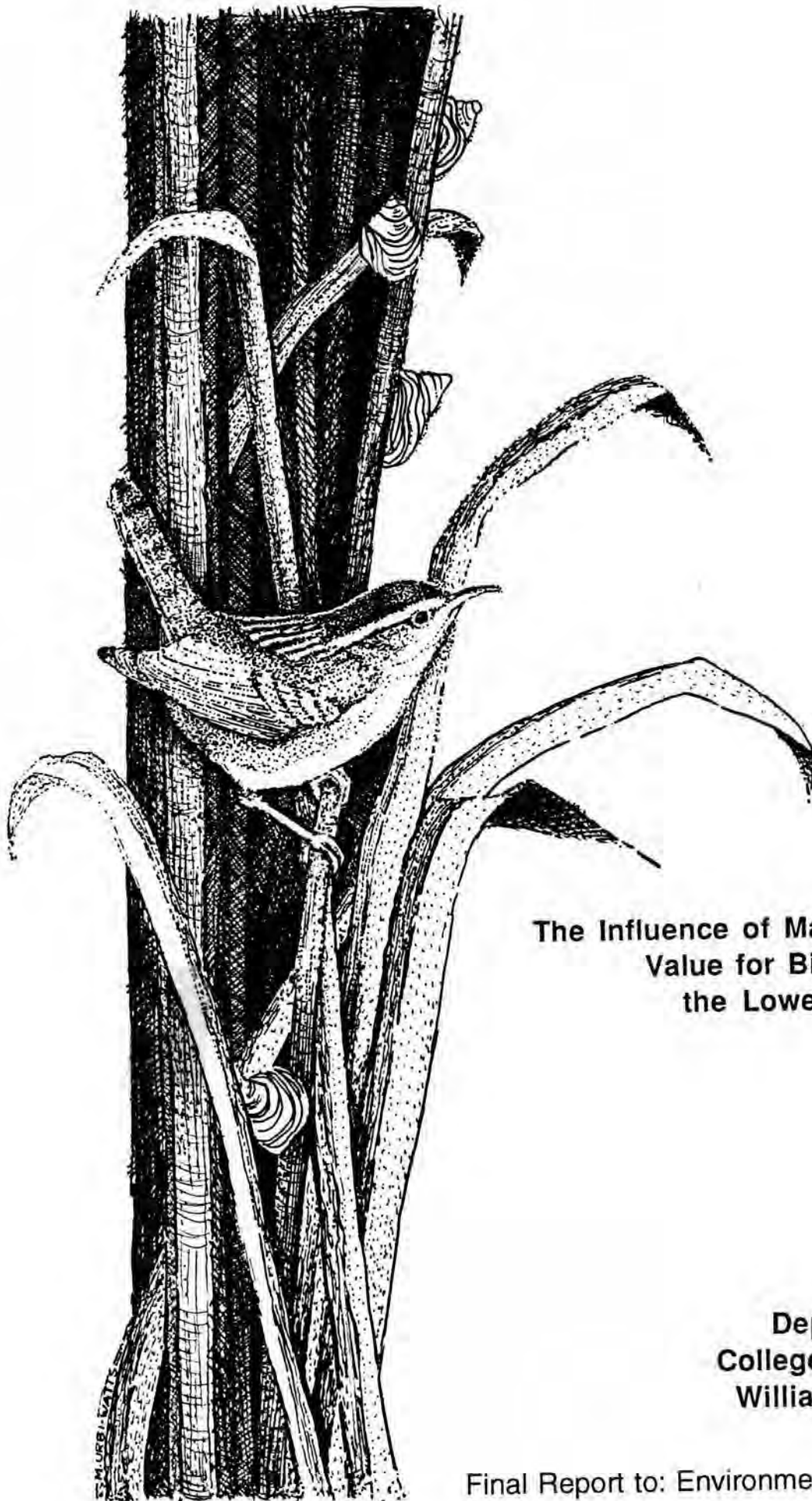
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**The Influence of Marsh Size on Marsh
Value for Bird Communities of
the Lower Chesapeake Bay**

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Final Report to: Environmental Protection Agency

**THE INFLUENCE OF MARSH SIZE ON MARSH VALUE
FOR BIRD COMMUNITIES OF THE LOWER CHESAPEAKE BAY**

November 30, 1992

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ABSTRACT

Bird abundance and species richness was assessed in 20 salt marshes located on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. Marshes were similar in vegetational composition and ranged in size from 0.1 to >100.0 ha. Over 6,800 observations were made of 105 species. Marsh area was found to be a very good indicator of species richness for all bird groups examined. The slopes of species-area relationships derived were relatively high but similar to those reported from other habitat types. The rate of species loss with decreasing marsh size was highest for those species that use the marsh directly.

Patterns of species loss were not random. Bird communities detected in small marshes were completely nested subsets of those observed in larger marshes. The obligate marsh-bird community appears to collapse between 5.0 and 1.0 ha. The frequency distribution of marsh size classes within the study area shows that large marshes are rare. This finding suggests that a fraction of the total marshes support the bulk of the individuals of certain species. However, small marshes do have value for selected species.

Bird species detected varied considerably in their use of 15 distinct marsh components. Small tidepools and saltbush supported the greatest number of species and individuals. Over 30% of all individuals detected were observed foraging in tidepools. Other marsh components also contributed to overall species richness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
STUDY SITE	4
METHODS	4
Site Establishment	6
Survey Procedure	8
Data Collected	9
Marsh Component Work	11
Marsh Composition	11
RESULTS	15
Patterns of Bird Abundance	15
Detection Type and Distance	17
Temporal Patterns	18
Effects of Marsh Size	22
Community Response	22
Species Losses and Community Nesting	28
Patterns of Vegetation Use	30
Marsh Components and Species Richness	30
Patterns in Marsh Size and Composition	38
Local Species of Special Concern	39

Sharp-tailed Sparrow	39
Sedge Wren	40
Northern Harrier	41
DISCUSSION	42
Area Effects	42
Marsh Components	45
SUMMARY	46
MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS	47
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	48
LITERATURE CITED	49
APPENDIX I	54
APPENDIX II	57
APPENDIX III	60
APPENDIX IV	63

INTRODUCTION

One of the primary threats to wildlife, and concomitantly, one of the leading causes of local, regional, and global extinction, is the loss of habitat due to anthropogenic activities. As the human population expands and natural areas are developed for residential, commercial and industrial use, critical wildlife habitat is rapidly being diminished and or degraded. Currently, some of the areas at most risk lie along the continental fringe. Greater than 52 percent of the U.S. human population now lives within 80 km of U.S. coastlines (Southworth 1989). Along the mid-Atlantic coast, development pressures are extremely high. For example, between 1950 and 1986, the number of people living along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay increased by 50 percent. This population is projected to increase by at least 2.6 million, or an additional 20 percent, over the next 30 years. How to conserve coastal resources in the face of increased human demands is an issue of interest to land planners and regulatory agencies.

The tidal salt marsh is one of the habitats most identified with the coastal plain. Although salt marshes are some of the most essential and productive ecosystems on earth they have also been some of the most frequently disturbed. Throughout most of this century, coastal wetlands have been viewed chiefly as potential sites for development. In the past 200 years over 50% of the coastal wetlands in the lower 48 states have been destroyed (Tiner 1984). Between 1954 and 1978, loss rates were extremely high primarily due to urban and industrial development (Gosselink and Baumann 1980). Outside of Louisiana, coastal wetland losses have been directly related to population density (Gosselink and Baumann

1980) and urbanization has accounted for over 90% of human-related losses (Frayer et al. 1983). Between 1981 and 1985, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers received over 27,000 proposals to alter coastal wetlands in the 14 coastal states from New York to Texas (Mager and Thayer 1986).

Although coastal wetland losses have been profound in some regions, federal and state legislation enacted in the early to mid 1970's has greatly slowed loss rates. In some coastal regions, success has been dramatic. For example, before passage of the Wetlands Act in 1973, Delaware was losing nearly 450 acres of estuarine wetland annually. After implementation of protective legislation, losses have declined to just 20 acres per year (Hardisky and Klemas 1983).

Much of the wetland legislation enacted over the past 20 years has contained foremost a mandate to protect wetlands and second a mandate to accommodate necessary economic development in a manner consistent with wetland preservation. To implement both of these mandates, requires the development of a currency or system to assess the value of individual wetlands and secondly an understanding of how these values may be altered by various user scenarios. This is particularly difficult with tidal wetlands because these habitats provide many tangible as well as intangible services to society and adequate information pertinent to many of these services is lacking. One of the poorest known and least studied of these values is that of habitat for non-commercial animal species.

Tidal marshes provide foraging and breeding habitat for a large number of aquatic and terrestrial species. Birds in particular represent a visible component of marsh communities and should be considered when assessing the value of a given marsh or marsh type.

However, to include bird communities in any comprehensive functional assessment first requires an understanding of how birds utilize various marsh types. Currently, information on bird/marsh relationships is not adequate to prepare needed guidelines. This study attempts to investigate the relationship between marsh-bird communities and two of the most dominant marsh characteristics (marsh area and marsh vegetation).

The primary objectives of the study were:

- 1) To examine the relationship between marsh area and marsh-bird communities.
- 2) To investigate the use of selected wetland components by bird communities of the lower Chesapeake Bay.
- 3) To begin building a working bibliography for those species that represent significant components of marsh-bird communities of the Chesapeake Bay region.

To accomplish these objectives, a field study designed to evaluate patterns of marsh occupation by bird communities relative to marsh area was executed within a series of tidal salt marshes. This report reviews some of the findings of the field data and provides an interpretation of the results relevant to wetland values and the management of marsh-bird communities. In addition to the field report, a current version of the working bibliography is provided.

STUDY SITE

This study was conducted along the western shore of the lower Chesapeake Bay between Grandview Beach (city of Hampton) and New Point Comfort (Mathews County), (see Figure 1). The broad land arc within these boundaries contains some of the most extensive wetlands remaining in the lower bay including over 1300 tidal marshes with a total area of approximately 6,200 ha. Adjoining uplands remain rural with only scattered population centers. The area was chosen for study primarily because local marshes tend to have relatively balanced flora containing vegetation types characteristic of the region and because most marshes may be readily accessed from the mainland. In addition, the avifauna of the area remains virtually undocumented.

METHODS

Four replicates of marshes were chosen for each of the following general size categories including: 0.1, 1.0, 5.0, and 10.0 ha. In addition, four control marshes (marshes in excess of 65 ha.) were chosen. Control marshes were chosen as "model" marshes and were assumed to support the full complement of marsh bird species on a local scale. Wetland inventory maps and summaries (Barnard 1975, Moore 1976, Silberhorn 1981a, 1981b) were used to screen available marshes for potential study sites. The list of total marshes was initially reduced based on compliance with the size categories outlined above. Because vegetation type is likely a primary factor in determining marsh use for many bird species, vegetational composition was controlled for in the selection process. Marshes were considered for use only if they were dominated (greater than 90% coverage) by and contained

Figure 1: Map of Chesapeake Bay region. Study area was located on the western shore of the lower Bay (reach of study area indicated in black).

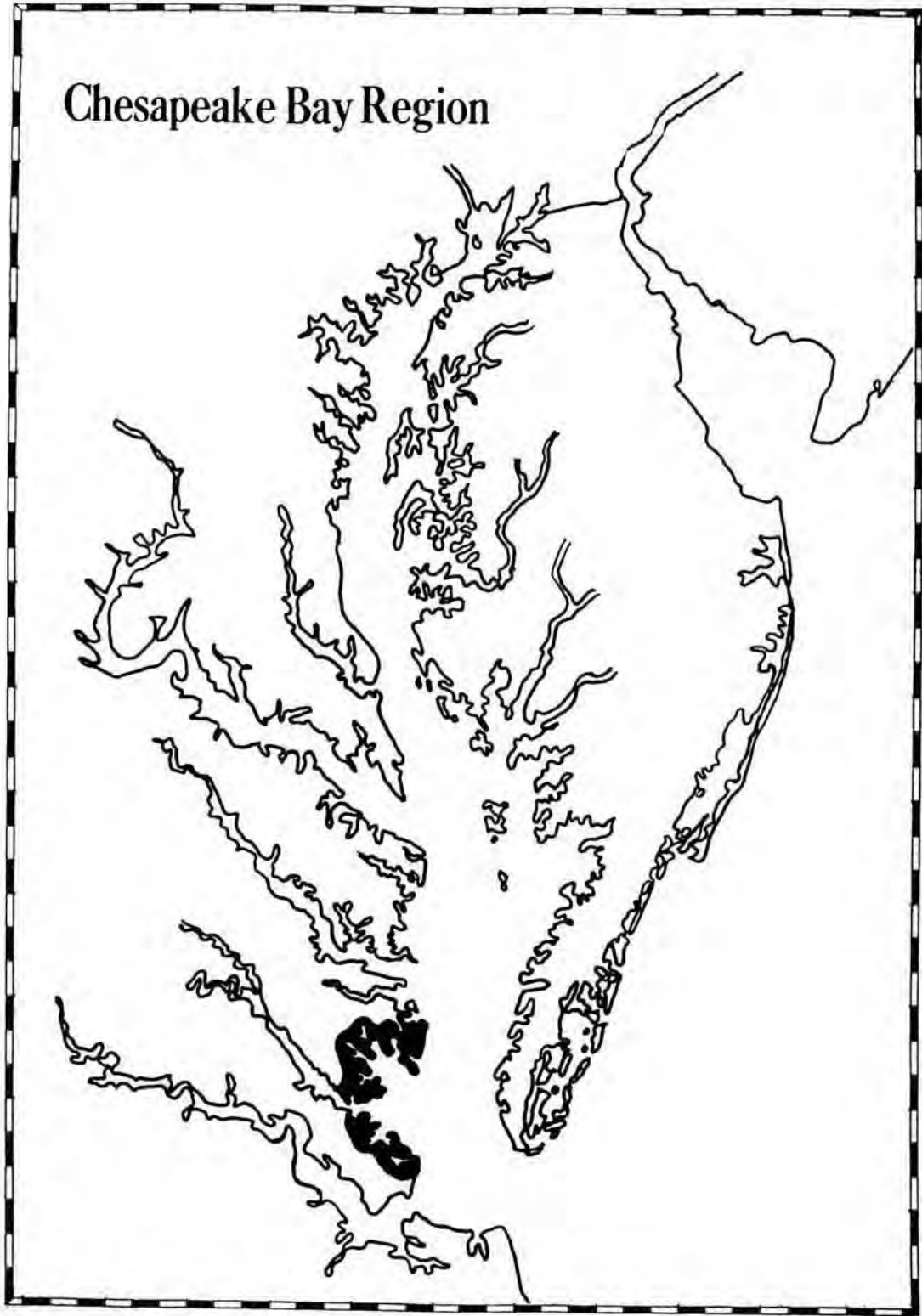


Figure 1

the five target plant forms including: smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*), black needlerush (*Juncus roemerianus*), saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), saltmeadow hay (*Spartina patens*), and salt bush (either *Iva frutescens* or *Baccharis hamifolia*). These plant forms were chosen because they were locally common and representative of marsh vegetation on a regional scale. All of the study marshes chosen met the following composition requirements: smooth cordgrass ($\geq 30\%$), black needlerush ($\geq 20\%$), saltgrass and saltmeadow hay combined ($\geq 15\%$), and salt bush ($\geq 10\%$). Controlling for vegetational composition in this way allows for the direct assessment of size effects and provides an opportunity to more closely examine bird/vegetation relationships. In addition to selecting for size and vegetational composition, an attempt was made to locate marshes on points of land extending out into the bay proper rather than along the headwaters of small tributaries.

Site Establishment

To survey birds within study marshes a combination of the line transect (Emlen 1971, 1977) and point count (Blondel et al. 1981, Morrison et al. 1981) method was used. Point counts were used to ensure even coverage of rail playbacks (see below) and to gain more accurate density estimates for appropriate passerine species. Line transect counts were used to enhance marsh coverage and to increase information relevant to bird/vegetation relationships. To set up study marshes, scale maps were first generated by tracing the outline of marshes from 1:12000 aerial photographs. Maps were then used to determine the most efficient layout of transect lines. Transect lines were established so that they extended up the elevational gradient of the marsh. This procedure ensured that all vegetational zones

within the marsh were well represented within transects and point count circles. Because a standard 30 m fixed-radius point count was to be used for density estimates, a minimum distance of 70 m was maintained between all transects. Survey points were then placed at 70 m intervals along transects with the first point tangent to the low marsh edge. This procedure continued until the marsh was saturated with survey points (all marshes except controls were saturated with points). Transects and points within control marshes were established to represent available vegetation and distances between points far exceeded the minimum 70 m. Field maps were implemented on the ground using recognizable landmarks and a 100m tape. Locations of individual point circles were marked with numbered, white flags. After all points were established the most economical route through the marsh was determined. Marsh set up began on 6 April and was completed on 5 May.

The end result of transect establishment is that nearly all of the surface area within smaller marshes was included within point counts. The same is not true for large marshes. The range of total point counts within each marsh size category is as follows: 0.1 ha. 2 points, 1.0 ha. 2 points, 5.0 ha. 6 - 10 points, 10.0 ha. 10 - 12 points, control marshes 28 points (204 total point locations). Although more area was sampled within large marshes, a much higher percentage of the absolute area was sampled for smaller marshes. This coverage bias is in favor of smaller marshes so that any observed area effects should be conservative.

Survey Procedure

Playbacks have been used successfully to increase response rates during the breeding season for many marsh species (Tomlinson and Todd 1973, Glahn 1974, Repking and Ohmart 1977, Swift et al. 1988). In this study, playbacks were used to increase detection of 4 rail species (including: Black, Virginia, Clapper, and King). Survey tapes were produced that consisted of 50 sec of male advertisement calls for each species with 10 sec of quiet space between species. Study marshes were systematically surveyed for birds by walking at a fairly constant speed (approximately 50 m/min.) along transects and stopping at each point location to broadcast tape recorded calls. Each point count consisted of a 30 sec silent period, 4 min of tape recorded calls and a 30 sec listening period.

All 20 focal marshes were surveyed 4 times over the three month study period. To reduce seasonal bias, marshes were surveyed in 4 rounds where all marshes were surveyed in each round and the survey order was randomly determined. Because many of the birds of interest in this study exhibit distinctly different peaks of calling and residency, a split approach to surveys was used. Two survey rounds were conducted between 6 May and 3 June. This early period is the time when rails of interest are most vocal on territories and when many transients utilize marshes. Because many passerines have spring migration periods that extend into early June, the later survey rounds were not begun until 11 June. Late surveys were delayed until this date in an attempt to minimize the number of birds detected that really represented transients. Two survey rounds were conducted between 11 June and 10 July.

In addition to differences in the seasonal timing of breeding, rails and passerines differ in their daily activity patterns. During the breeding season, rails call most intensively from about 12:00 to 4:00 AM. However, birds also call during the early morning and late evening, and playback studies conducted during the early morning have had relatively good response rates (e.g. Glahn 1974, Repking and Ohmart 1977). Just after dawn is the optimum activity period for most passerines and other birds of interest. For this reason, all marsh surveys were conducted within the time window between dawn and 4 hrs after dawn. This time period was believed to be the best compromise for the various bird groups of interest.

Data Collected

All birds detected during formal surveys were placed in one of three "user" categories. These included: category 1 - bird in direct contact with marsh (e.g. Seaside Sparrow perched in salt bush), Category 2 - bird not in direct contact with marsh but foraging on prey just over the marsh surface (e.g. Barn Swallow foraging over marsh), category 3 - bird flying over marsh but under 50 m in altitude (e.g. Laughing Gull milling around over marsh), or associated with water within 50 m of shoreline (e.g. Osprey foraging for fish in shallows next to marsh).

Measures were taken to ensure a conservative estimate of bird numbers for each marsh survey. For category 1 species, all birds detected were plotted on field maps to reduce opportunities for recounting. The number of category 2 and 3 species observed was recorded for each point count. After the survey was completed, the highest point count for each species was used as the marsh total. In many instances this procedure resulted in a

substantial underestimate of the individuals present. However, this was necessary because these species course back and forth across the entire marsh very rapidly making it difficult to track individuals.

Several descriptive parameters were recorded for each bird observation made during marsh surveys. Parameters included:

Observer Location - location of observer during observation (e.g. point 1, transect 1).

Detection Type - How bird was initially detected. Three categories were used including: aural, visual, and flushed.

Detection Distance - Estimated distance between observer and bird. Because of the difficulties with unreferenced distance estimation (Scott et al. 1981) a stratified approach was used. For birds believed to be within 30 m of the observer distances were estimated to the nearest 5 m. For birds believed to be between 30 and 100 m away, distances were estimated to the nearest 10 m and for birds greater than 100 m away distances were estimated to the nearest 50 m.

Activity - Seven categories were used to describe the activity of category 1 species. Categories included: singing, roosting, foraging, courting, incubating, feeding young, territory defense.

Before the beginning and after the completion of each survey, several environmental parameters were measured. These included: time of day, ambient temperature, estimated wind speed, percent cloud cover, and current tide height. A full analysis of these variables and their influence on survey results will not be presented here.

Marsh Component Work

In order to examine how species used the marsh and, in addition, how different marsh features contributed to overall species richness, marshes were subdivided into 15 "marsh components" (description and code name given in Table 1). Marsh components were then grouped loosely according to hydrology and topography (marsh zones and associated components shown in Table 1). It should be noted that these groupings were established as a convenience for presentation and that many marsh components may be located in various places within a specific marsh. A generalized marsh profile illustrating the approximate location of marsh zones is given in Figure 2. Figure 3 illustrates, in more detail, the various components included in each marsh zone. All observations of birds considered to be using the marsh directly were placed in 1 of the 15 marsh components.

Marsh Composition

Data concerning marsh composition were compiled for the entire study area from the various tidal wetland inventories (Barnard 1975, Moore 1976, Silberhorn 1981a, 1981b). This data base includes marsh size and the percent coverage of plant groups present. The data were used to investigate any relationships between marsh size and the 5 target plant groups. In addition to exploring trends in coverage for individual plants, a dominance index (see Simpson 1949) was calculated using values for all five plant groups. The dominance index was used to test for relationships between marsh size and the tendency for marshes to be dominated by one or a relatively few plant species. Simple linear regression was used to examine size/component relationships. It should be noted that all of the inventory data used

Table 1: Descriptions of marsh components and sections.

Marsh Section	Code/ Name	Component Description
Water Components		
	OW	- Open Water: Open water along margin of marsh.
	MF	- Mudflat: Exposed mud along margin of marsh.
	TG	- Tidegut: Narrow tidegut extending into marsh.
	TP	- Tidepool: Permanently or regularly filled depression with no direct connection to tidegut.
Low Marsh		
	TC	- Tall Cordgrass: Tall, dense form of <u>Spartina alterniflora</u> .
	LC	- Low Cordgrass: Low, sparse form of <u>S. alterniflora</u> .
	SL	- Wet Slew: Regularly inundated low depression typically surrounding a shallow tidepool or terminus of a small tidegut. Depression is dominated by sparse, mixed stands of <u>S. patens</u> , <u>Distichlis spicata</u> , and <u>Salicornia virginica</u> .
	BN	- Black Needlerush: Dense stands of <u>Juncus roemerianus</u> .
High Marsh		
	SG	- Saltgrass: Dense upper stands of <u>D. spicata</u> .
	SM	- Saltmeadow Hay: Dense upper stands of <u>S. patens</u> .
	SB	- Saltbush: Live standing plant of <u>Iva frutescens</u> or <u>Baccharis hamilifolia</u> .
	SN	- Dead Pine Snag: Dead standing pine snag.
Marsh-upland Transition Zone		
	WM	- Wax Myrtle: Shrub of <u>Myrica cerifera</u> .
	DS	- Deciduous Saplings: Hummock or clump of small deciduous saplings.
	LP	- Live Pine: Live pine (<u>Pinus taeda</u>) along marsh edge.

Figure 2: Illustration of general marsh profile showing the relationship between hydrology, topography and marsh zones.

GENERAL MARSH PROFILE

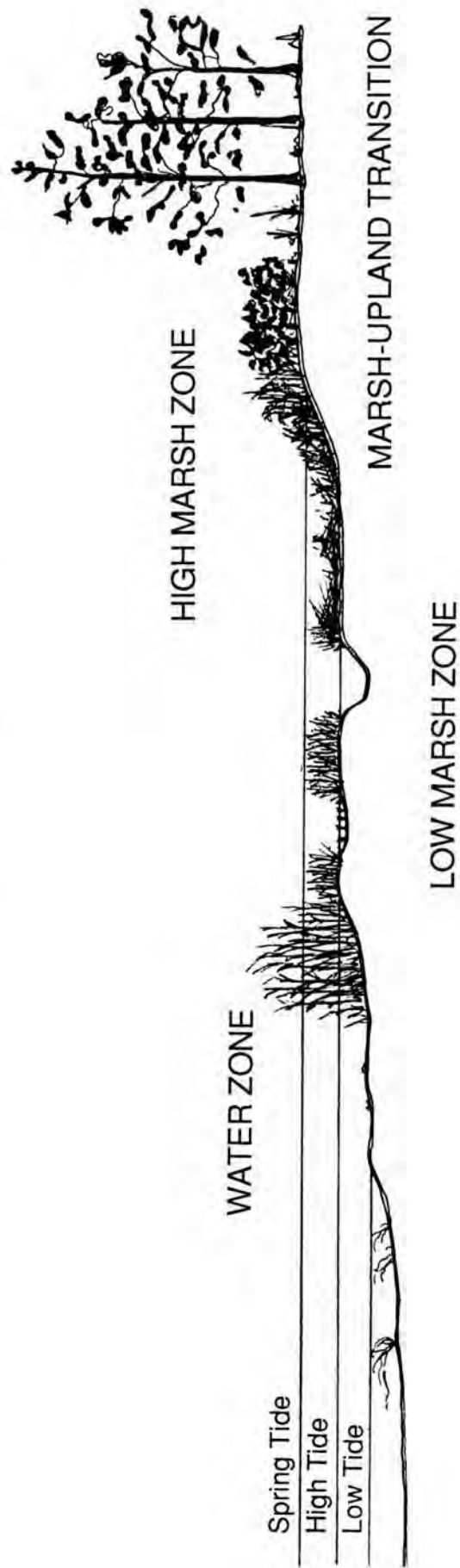
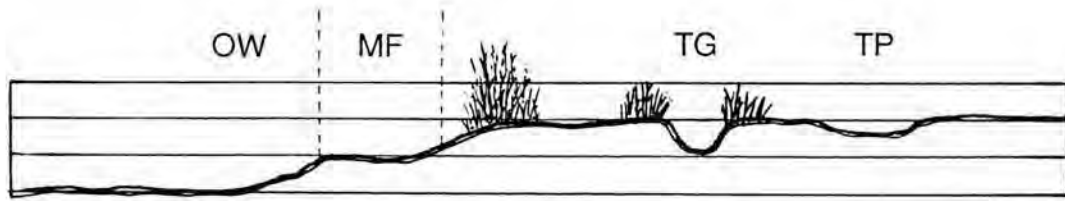
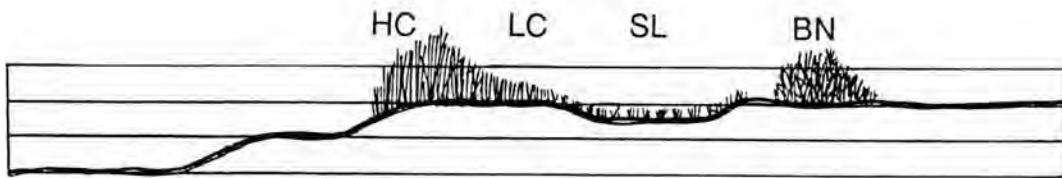


Figure 2

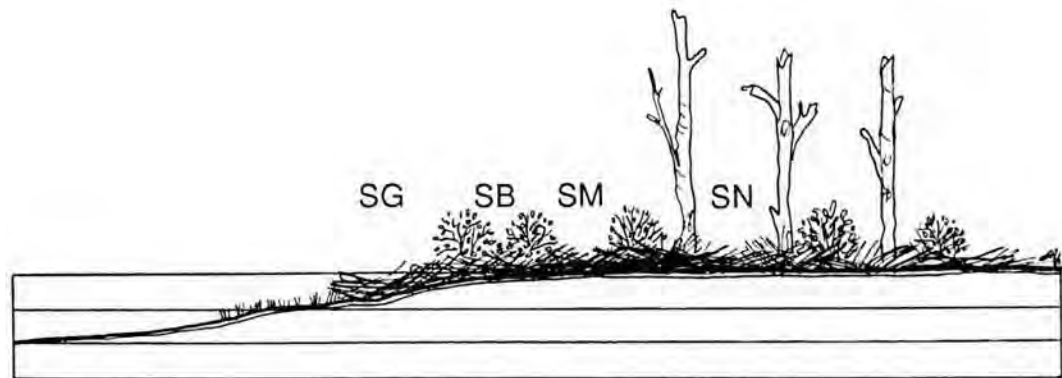
Figure 3: Illustration showing the 4 marsh zones and their respective marsh components. Key to marsh component codes is given in Table 1.



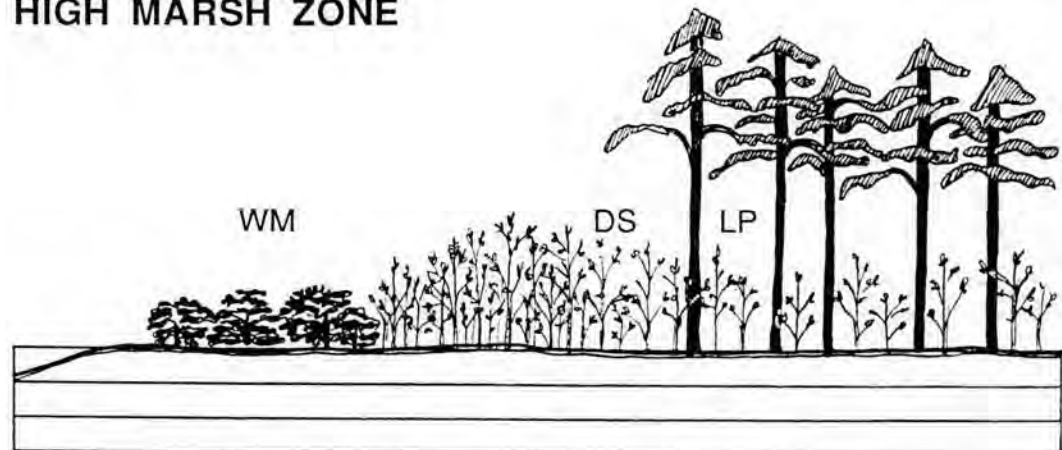
WATER ZONE



LOW MARSH ZONE



HIGH MARSH ZONE



MARSH-UPLAND TRANSITION

to investigate these relationships (data available for the area included in the study area) were taken from reports presented between 1975 and 1981. Although these data may not represent the size distribution or vegetational composition of marshlands in the area today, they are adequate to examine the general size/composition relationships.

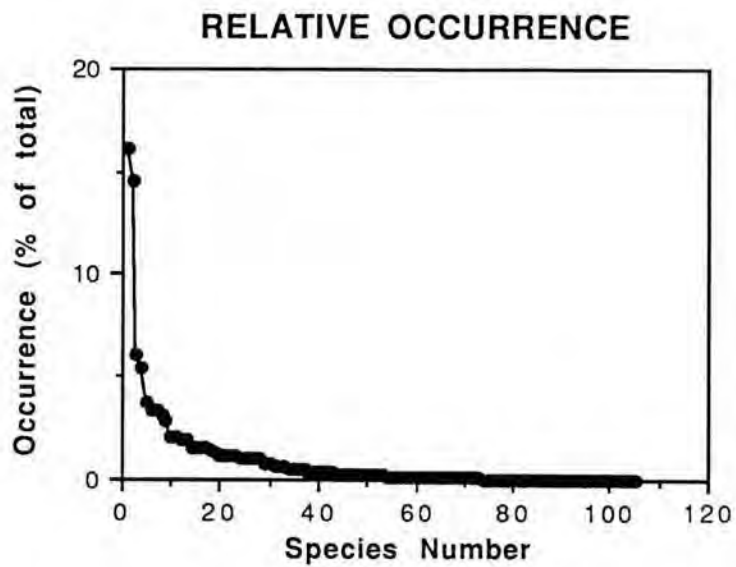
RESULTS

Patterns of Bird Abundance

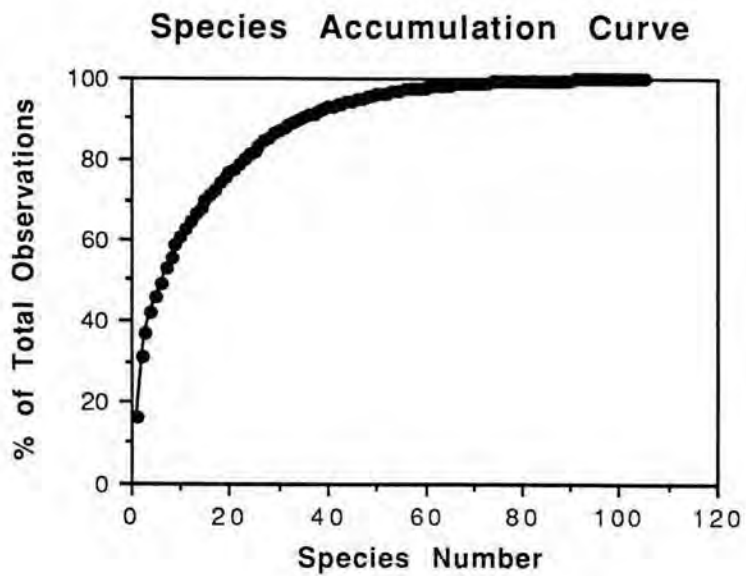
Over 6,800 observations of 105 species were made during marsh surveys (full species list with associated scientific names is given in Appendix I). Frequency of occurrence varied widely among species. Figure 4a illustrates the variability between species in relative contribution to the total observations. The result of this abundance pattern is that relatively few species accounted for the majority of observations (see Figure 4b). For example, just two species accounted for over 30% of the overall observations, 7 species accounted for over 50% of the observations, and over 75% of the observations were accounted for by only 18% of the species observed.

The majority of species observed used the study marshes directly (i.e. were category 1 species) as nesting and or as foraging habitat. Using a criterion of $\geq 50\%$ to place species in user categories, 69.5% of the species were classified as category 1, 11.4% as category 2, and 19.1% as category 3 (Appendix II gives a complete breakdown of marsh use by species). For all species combined, 78.8% of the total observations were of birds directly contacting the

Figure 4: (a) Relative abundance of individual species arranged in descending order ($N = 6800$). (b) Species accumulation curve showing the relative contribution of individual species to the total observations.



a



b

Figure 4

marsh, 5.7% were of birds foraging over the marsh surface and 15.5% were of birds associated with the marsh.

Overall abundance, temporal patterns of occurrence (see below), and user categories (given in appendix II) were used to develop lists of those species most identified with tidal marshes of the region (henceforth called "core" species). Four functionally different lists were compiled including: Resident Breeder - (those species actually breeding within the marsh), Resident User - (those species that breed locally outside the marsh but use the marsh as a foraging area), Transient User - (those species that do not generally breed locally but use the marsh during migration), and Associated - (those species that are frequently above or around the marsh but generally do not contact the marsh proper, category 3 species). Table 2 gives a listing of the individual core groups. The core species listed represent over 88% of the total observations. These core species will be the focus of much of the following analysis.

Detection Type and Distance

The majority of resident breeding species were initially detected aurally (Table 3). Most of these species attract mates and maintain territories by using advertisement songs. Clapper and Virginia rails typically called in response to broadcast calls but also gave spontaneous calls depending on time of day, season, and weather condition. In addition to these target species, other species seemed to respond positively to rail tapes. Seaside Sparrows, Marsh Wrens, Common Yellowthroats, Song Sparrows, House Wrens, and Red-winged Blackbirds were all excited by rail tapes and would often begin singing or approach

the observer during broadcast periods. Virtually all species that did not breed in study marshes (e.g. resident and transient users) or do not typically maintain distinct territories were, for the most part, detected visually.

The Sharp-tailed Sparrow was the only species that was primarily detected by flushing from the ground. Most of the Sharp-tails observed within marshes of the lower Chesapeake Bay during spring and early summer are transients. Individuals forage in wet sward areas and roost in black needlerush, cordgrass, and saltbush. Males are not typically vocal during the day and most birds are detected by walking through foraging areas and flushing them from the ground.

Detection distance patterns varied considerably between species. In only 11 of 25 species were the majority of individuals detected within 30 m (see Table 3, % detected within 30 m). Larger species were rarely detected within 30 m of the observer primarily because minimum flushing distances were greater than 30m. However, for many of the more common passerines a high percentage of the individuals were within 30 m.

Median detection distance was similarly variable ranging from 15 m in Sharp-tailed Sparrows to 150 m in Great Blue Herons.

Temporal Patterns

Within the entire marsh system, species richness declined steadily over the three month study period (Figure 5a). This general decline reflects the loss of transient species from the system before early June. In fact, 32 (30.5%) of the 105 species detected were only

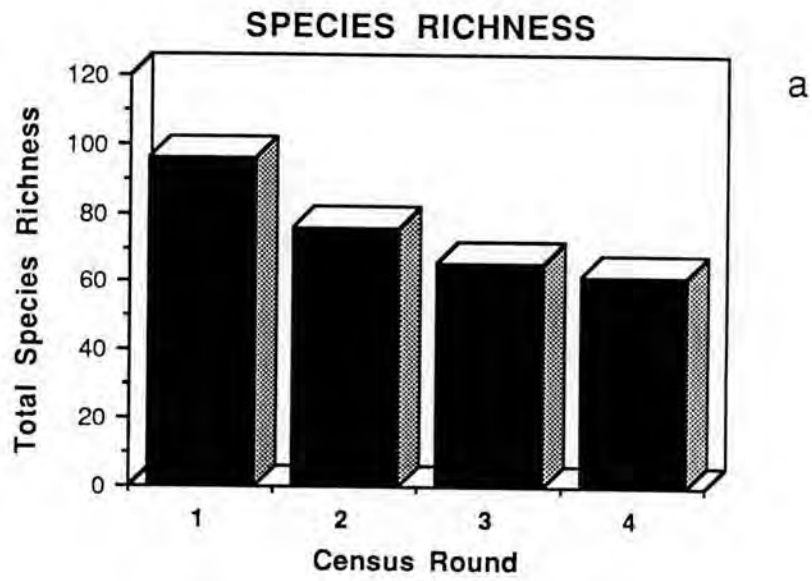
Table 2: Species placed within the four core groups. Species within groups are listed in descending order of abundance. Scientific names are provided in Appendix I.

Resident Breeder	Resident User	Transient User	Associated
Seaside Sparrow	Barn Swallow	Semipalmated	Laughing Gull
Willet	Great-blue Heron	Sandpiper	Fish Crow
Clapper Rail	Snowy Egret	Least Sandpiper	Forster's Tern
Red-winged	Green-backed Heron	Short-billed	Osprey
Blackbird	Great Egret	Dowitcher	Herring Gull
Song Sparrow	Purple Martin	Sharp-tailed	Double-crested
Boat-tailed		Sparrow	Cormorant
Grackle		Dunlin	Least Tern
Marsh Wren		Greater Yellowlegs	Royal Tern
Common			
Yellowthroat			
Black Duck			
Virginia Rail			
Eastern Meadowlark			
Mallard			
Prairie Warbler			
Eastern Kingbird			
House Wren			

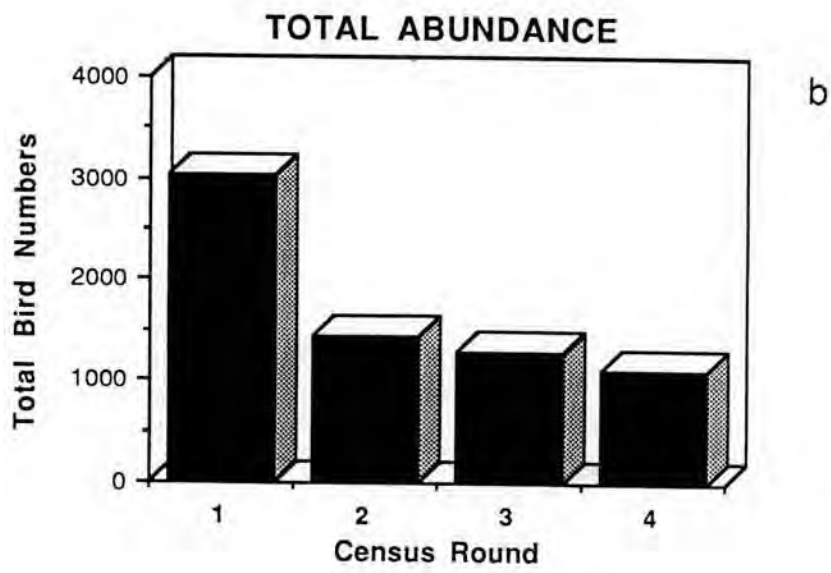
Table 3: Summary of detection information for core user groups. Data are presented for category 1 species only.

Species	Det. Type			Det. Dist	
	Visual #(%)	Aural #(%)	Flush #(%)	<30m (%)	Med. (m)
Resident Breeder					
Mallard	54(88.5)	-----	7(11.5)	14.8	100
Black Duck	61(75.3)	-----	20(24.7)	0.0	100
Clapper Rail	8(3.2)	212(85.8)	27(10.9)	46.6	50
Virginia Rail	5(6.7)	64(85.3)	6(8.0)	46.7	40
Willet	264(71.7)	40(10.9)	64(17.4)	56.8	40
Eastern Kingbird	39(88.6)	-----	5(11.4)	50.0	40
House Wren	7(16.3)	36(83.7)	-----	25.6	50
Marsh Wren	18(13.2)	107(78.7)	11(8.1)	82.4	20
Prairie Warbler	3(6.5)	43(93.5)	-----	28.3	70
Yellowthroat	10(7.7)	119(91.5)	1(0.8)	57.9	40
Seaside Sparrow	167(15.2)	727(66.5)	200(18.3)	78.5	20
Song Sparrow	18(8.6)	187(89.0)	5(2.4)	65.2	30
Meadowlark	7(9.6)	62(84.9)	4(5.5)	26.0	60
Red-winged Blackbird	95(40.9)	110(47.4)	27(11.6)	64.7	40
Boat-tailed Grackle	148(83.1)	3(1.7)	27(15.2)	41.6	60
Resident User					
Green Heron	29(47.5)	10(16.4)	22(36.1)	39.3	60
Snowy Egret	47(85.5)	-----	8(14.5)	25.5	100
Great Egret	33(89.2)	1(2.7)	3(8.1)	0.0	100
Great Blue Heron	78(78.0)	-----	22(22.0)	0.0	150
Transient User					
Greater Yellowlegs	26(86.7)	-----	4(13.3)	60.0	40
Short-billed Dowitcher	128(100.0)	-----	-----	78.6	20
Dunlin	51(100.0)	-----	-----	60.8	20
Semipalmated Sandpiper	939(99.2)	-----	8(0.8)	24.0	40
Least Sandpiper	28(93.3)	-----	2(6.7)	39.9	25
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	8(7.5)	34(32.1)	64(60.4)	95.3	15

Figure 5: (a) Species richness for survey rounds (all marshes included). (b) Total number of individuals observed for each survey round.



a



b

Figure 5

observed during the first two census periods. This is compared to only 6 (5.7%) species that were exclusive to the late census periods. However, species richness for the early period as a whole was not significantly different from that of the late period (G-statistic < 3.0 , $P > 0.05$, testing the null hypothesis that early = late).

Overall bird abundance was significantly higher (G-statistic > 100 , $P < 0.001$) during the early period when compared to the late period. Abundance declined over the study in a way similar to species richness (Figure 5b). This decline reflects the loss of transient species between the two time periods and, in addition, the decline of resident species.

Twelve of the locally resident species exhibited a 50% decline in numbers between the early and late time periods (complete data is given in Appendix III). This is compared to only 2 species that increased by 50% between the two periods. Species that are locally resident during the breeding season may decline on surveys for two different reasons. The first is that, early in the season, when breeding pairs are returning from wintering areas, all individuals observed within a given marsh may not actually breed there. Many of the resident species showed a decline in abundance after the first census period likely because a portion of the birds detected were transients. The second reason for a decline is that detectability may change with season. For many species, the frequency of singing changes with breeding stage. For example, calling in rails peaks in mid spring and then declines throughout the summer months. The detection of both resident rail species declined with season. Many of the other vocal residents exhibited similar declines.

Effects of Marsh Size

Community Response

Less than 15% of the 105 species detected within the 20-marsh system were detected within or associated with the smallest (0.1 ha) marsh category. This may be compared to over 28% in 1.0 ha marshes, over 60% in 5.0 and 10.0 ha marshes and over 90% in control marshes. The general relationship between species richness and marsh size was significant for all species groups considered (Table 4), (i.e., greater species richness is found in larger marshes). As with many other communities the form of this relationship depends somewhat on the pool of potential species (see Figures 6 and 7). This effect is particularly prominent for the smaller groups of species, some of which nearly reach the full complement of species at a relatively small marsh size of 5.0 ha. However, in general, the pattern shows a relatively steep species gain up to marshes of 5.0 ha and then a gradual reduction in slope between the remaining marsh sizes.

To evaluate the species-area relationship in more detail, data for the various bird groups were fitted to a Log Log model (Figures 8 and 9). This power function is commonly used to evaluate species-area relationships. Significant models were derived for all species groups tested (i.e., number of species increased with increasing marsh size). R-squared values ranged from 0.67 to 0.92 and all slopes were significant. Model equations and statistics are presented in Table 5.

The species-area slopes found here (ranging from 0.46 to 0.25) were similar to those reported from other patch studies done with different animal communities and habitats (see Connor and McCoy 1979). As expected, slopes were much higher for species using the

Table 4: ANOVA results for species categories (testing between size categories).

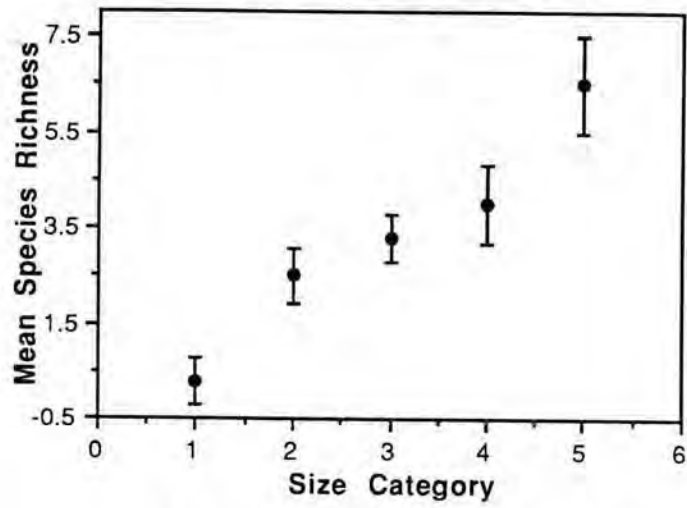
Species Group	F-value	P
Total Species		
Total User Species	73.24	<0.001
Category 1 Species	66.96	<0.001
Category 2 Species	18.59	<0.001
Category 3 Species	15.87	<0.001
Core Species		
Breeding Species	117.93	<0.001
Resident Users	10.68	<0.001
Transient Users	15.14	<0.001
Associated Species	18.49	<0.001

Table 5: Results of Log/Log regressions for various species groups. Core Resident and transient users were not included because of the small species pool.

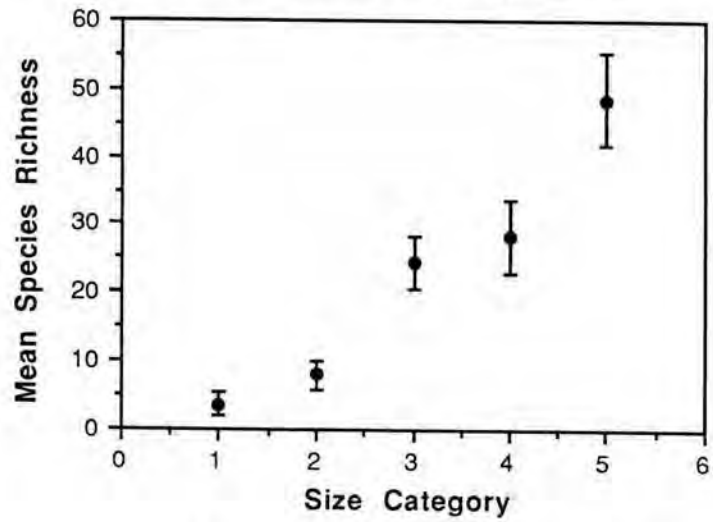
Species Group	Regression Equation	R	F	P
Total Users	LSpecies = Log2.36 + .42LogArea	.92	205.5	<.001
Category 1	LSpecies = Log2.12 + .46LogArea	.86	106.3	<.001
Category 2	LSpecies = Log0.77 + .25LogArea	.72	35.6	<.001
Category 3	LSpecies = Log1.84 + .35LogArea	.67	28.6	<.001
Core Breeders	LSpecies = Log1.71 + .29LogArea	.77	48.0	<.001

Figure 6: Average accumulated species richness for all species, broken down into species categories. Data points are means of four replicate marshes \pm 1 S.E. unit. Size categories include: 1 - 0.1 ha, 2 - 1.0 ha, 3 - 5.0 ha, 4 - 10.0 ha, and 5 - > 65 ha.

CATEGORY TWO SPECIES



CATEGORY ONE SPECIES



CATEGORY THREE SPECIES

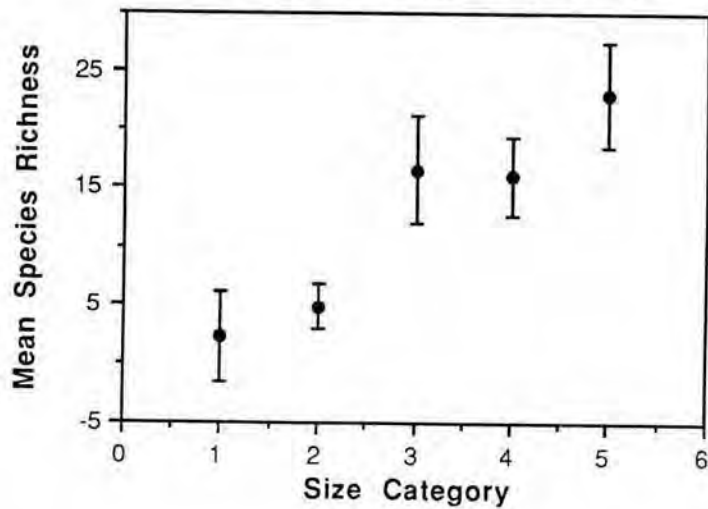


Figure 6

Figure 7: Average species richness (for core species only) broken down into core groups. Data points are means of 4 replicate marshes \pm 1 S.E. unit. Size categories include: 1 - 0.1 ha, 2 - 1.0 ha, 3 - 5.0 ha, 4 - 10.0 ha, and 5 - > 65 ha.

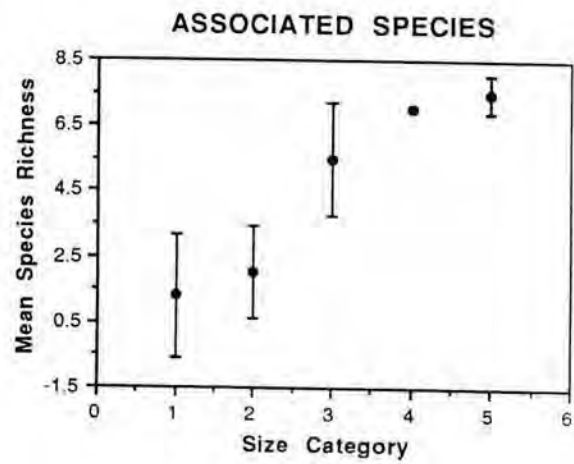
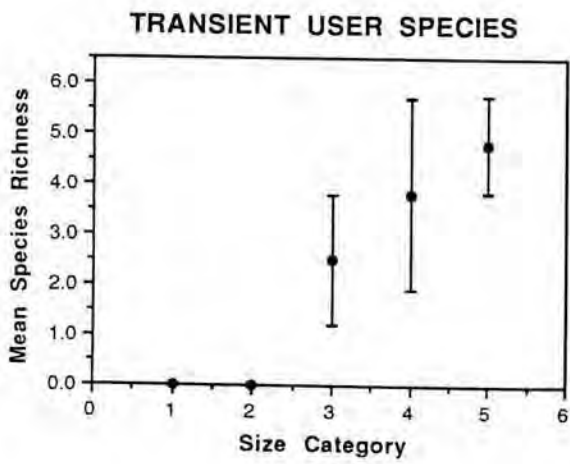
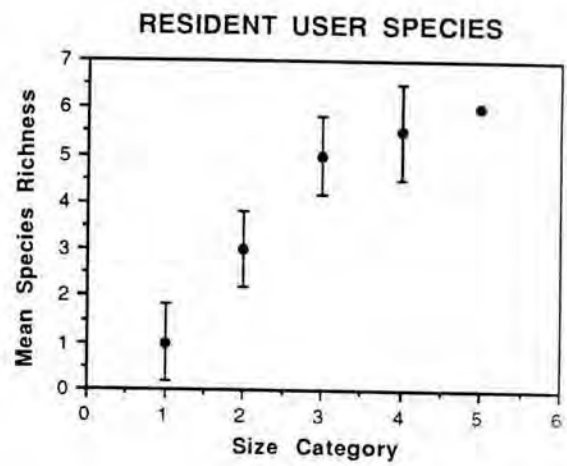
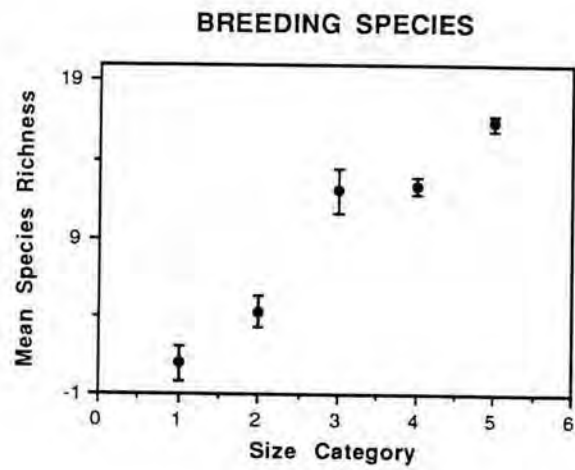


Figure 7

Figure 8: Species-area relationship for all species using study marshes (category 1 and 2 species included). Data points were derived from total accumulated species richness values for each study marshes.

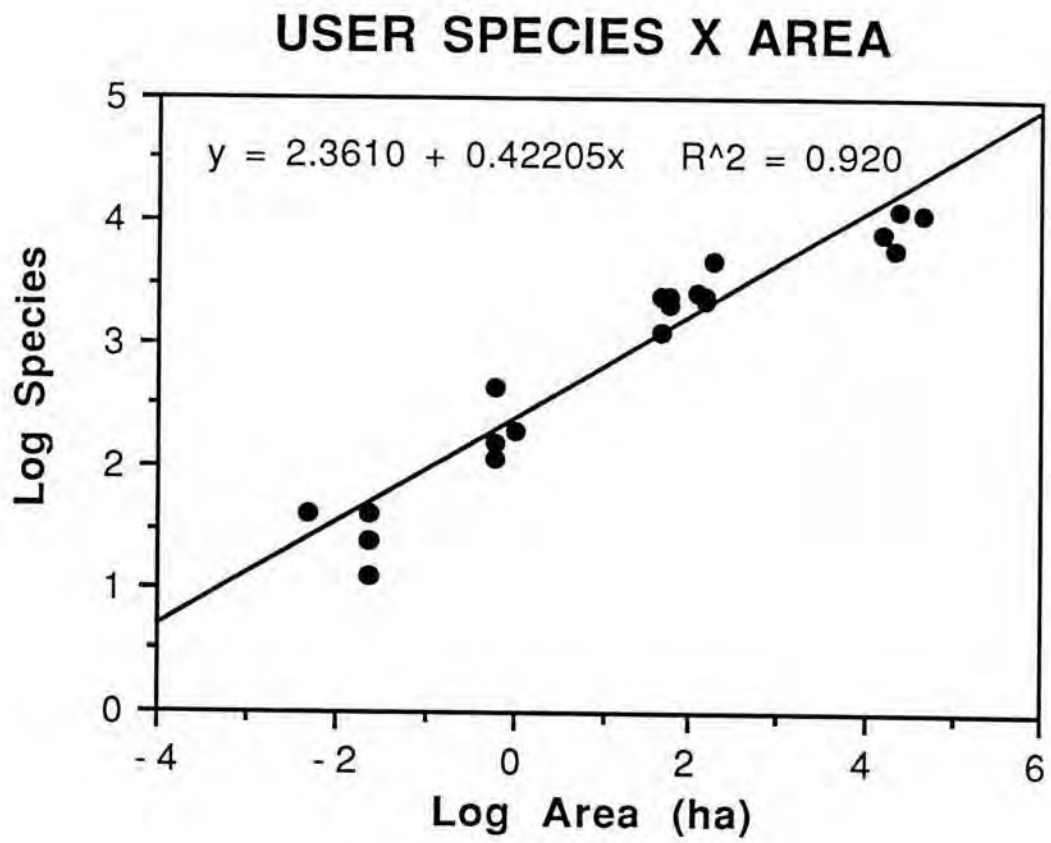
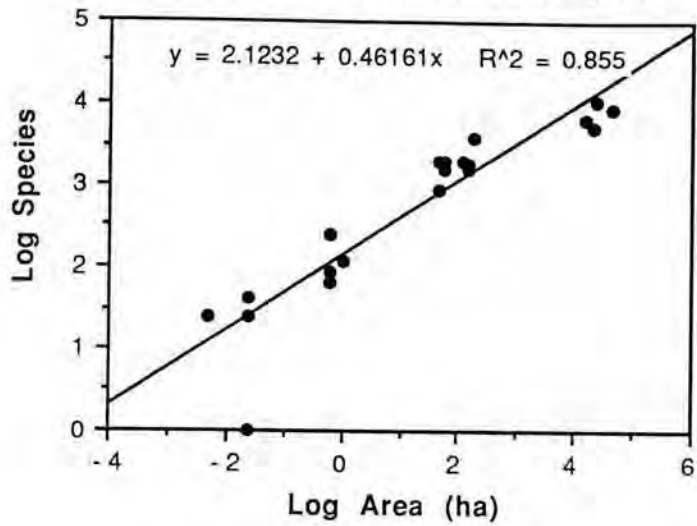


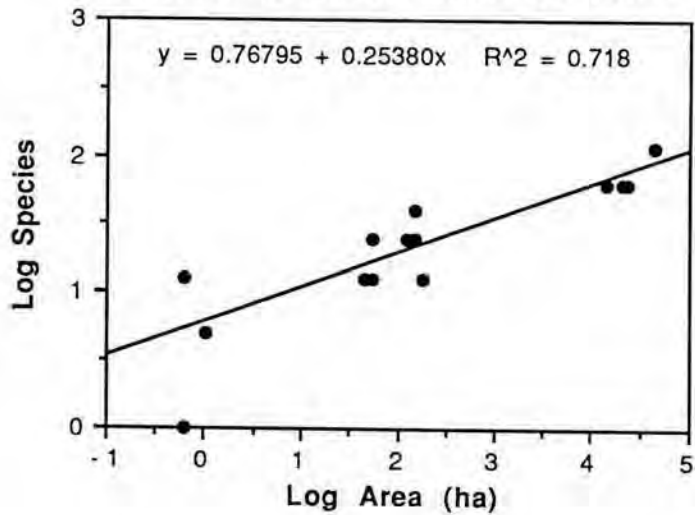
Figure 8

Figure 9: Species-area relationship for each of the user categories. Data points were derived from accumulated richness values for each user category within each study marsh.

CATEGORY 1 SPECIES X AREA



CATEGORY 2 SPECIES X AREA



CATEGORY 3 SPECIES X AREA

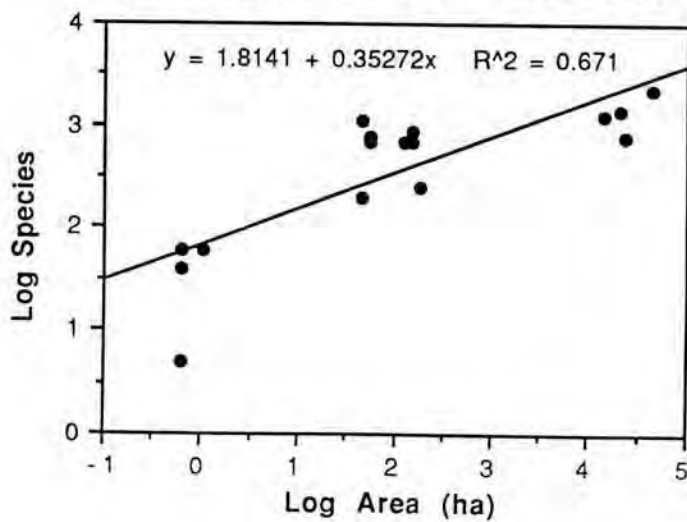


Figure 9

marsh directly when compared with associated species. A greater slope indicates that the rate of increase in number of species with increasing marsh size is higher. The high percentage of the variation in species numbers explained by all models suggest that community breadth for marsh birds is highly linked to marsh size (i.e., increasing species richness with increasing marsh size).

Species Losses and Community Nesting

The reduction in species richness with decreasing marsh size, does not, in and of itself, indicate a reduction in marsh function due to size effects. This is true because species losses may be directional (decline in species richness coupled with specific species or species groups systematically lost with decreasing marsh size) or nondirectional (decline in species richness coupled with no general pattern in the distribution of species between marsh sizes). A systematic loss of species with decreasing marsh size would suggest a general reduction in marsh function with marsh size for lost species. A random pattern of species loss would suggest that marsh size was unrelated to marsh function. The random pattern suggests that if we were to sample enough small marshes we would eventually observe the full complement of species seen in large marshes. A systematic loss suggests that lost species will only be observed in larger marshes because small marshes do not meet some requirements needed for occupation.

To differentiate between these alternate sources (random and directional) of species losses, the pattern of marsh occupation for core species and species groups was examined (see Table 6). Two general patterns emerge from the marsh occupation data. The first is

Table 6: Occurrence of species within marsh size categories. Numbers indicate how many marshes held birds of each species. (each size category had four replicate marshes).

Species	Marsh Size				Contr
	0.1	1.0	5.0	10.0	
Resident Breeder					
Red-winged Blackbird	2	4	4	4	4
Yellowthroat	2	2	4	3	4
Song Sparrow	1	4	4	4	4
Eastern Kingbird	1	1	2	3	3
Clapper Rail		3	4	4	4
Mallard		2	3	2	4
Marsh Wren		1	4	4	4
Willet			4	4	4
Seaside Sparrow			4	4	4
Boat-tailed Grackle			4	4	4
Virginia Rail			3	4	4
Black Duck			2	4	4
House Wren			2	2	4
Prairie Warbler			2	2	4
Eastern Meadowlark			2	2	4
Sedge Wren					3
Northern Harrier					2
Resident User					
Great Blue Heron	2	2	4	4	4
Barn Swallow	1	4	4	4	4
Green-backed Heron	1	1	4	4	4
Purple Martin		2	4	4	4
Great Egret		2	2	3	4
Snowy Egret			2	4	4
Transient User					
Greater Yellowlegs			3	3	4
Semipalmated Sandpiper			3	3	4
Sharp-tailed Sparrow			2	3	4
Least Sandpiper			1	3	4
Short-billed Dowitcher				2	3
Dunlin				1	2
Associated					
Laughing Gull	2	3	4	4	4
Fish Crow	1	2	4	4	4
Forster's Tern	1	1	4	4	4
Least Tern	1	1	1	1	2
Herring Gull		1	4	4	4
Osprey		1	3	4	4
Cormorant			1	4	4
Royal Tern			1	3	3

that species are systematically lost with decreasing marsh size so that species that occur in small marsh categories also were detected in all larger marsh categories. This nested pattern suggests that smaller marshes do not have the same functional significance as larger marshes. However, as indicated with the species richness patterns, the loss of species is not a simple linear function. For example, there are only minor changes in the core marsh bird community as marsh size is reduced from 10.0 to 5.0 ha. However, the marsh bird community appears to collapse as marsh size is reduced from 5.0 to 1.0 ha. This is not to say, that smaller marshes have no value to birds.

The second pattern observed is an increase in the proportion of marsh replicates occupied for most species with increasing marsh size. Although it was not of value to calculate incidence functions with so few replicates, the general pattern is fairly clear by inspection. Nearly all species in the four core groups exhibit an increase in incidence with an increase in marsh size.

Patterns of Vegetation Use

Marsh Components and Species Richness

Species richness and total bird numbers were compiled for the four marsh zones (Figure 10a). Species richness was found to be highest in the high marsh zone. Nearly 50% of the 105 species detected were found in this zone at least once. The low marsh zone had the lowest species richness (less than 25%) and the remaining two zones were relatively even. Overall, bird abundance was highest in the water zone with low and high marsh zones having nearly equal bird numbers. However, it should be noted that the high bird

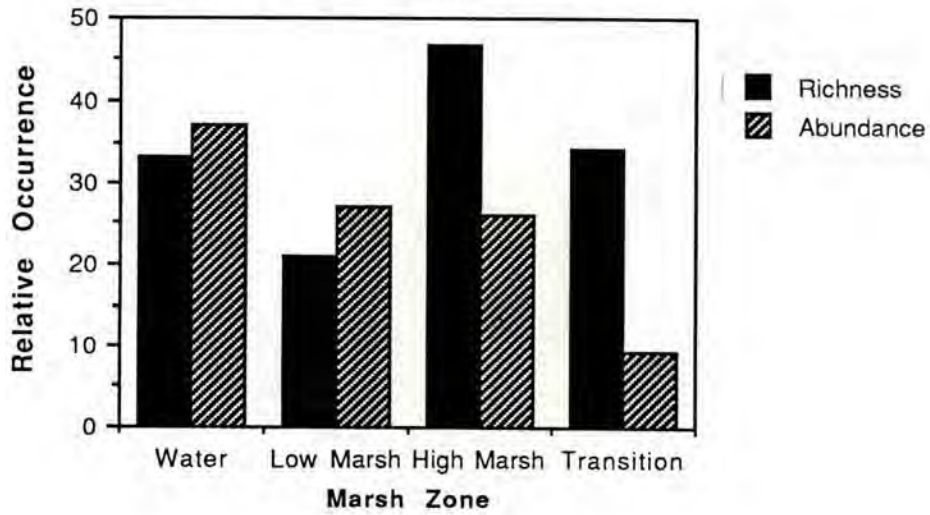
abundance for the water zone was the result of the very large number of shorebirds using tidepools for foraging during migration. If shorebirds were removed from the sample, the water zone would fall to third among the marsh zones in overall bird abundance.

Nearly 60% of the total species detected were associated with either tidepools or saltbush (Figure 10b). These two marsh components individually were associated with nearly 40% of the species detected. Other components with over 25% of the species were dead snags, wax myrtle, and deciduous saplings. However, these three latter components combined accounted for less than 15% of the individual birds detected. An opposite pattern was observed for black needlerush. Although only 9 species were associated with black needlerush, this marsh component accounted for the third highest number of total birds detected. This is because 4 of the most abundant, obligate marsh breeders reach their highest densities in this vegetation.

Patterns of marsh use were compiled for individual species. Information will be presented for core species only (see Figures 11 through 14). As mentioned earlier, although this group accounts for less than 25% of the species detected, they account for nearly 90% of the observations and represent the species most identified with local marshes. A gradient of marsh use was observed for those species considered to be core breeders. This gradient ranged from species that primarily used the water zone (e.g. Mallard, Black Duck) to those that exclusively used the high marsh and marsh-upland transition zone (e.g. Song Sparrow, Eastern Kingbird). Between these extremes were species that primarily used the low marsh (e.g. Clapper Rail, Marsh Wren) and those species that used nearly the entire marsh (e.g.

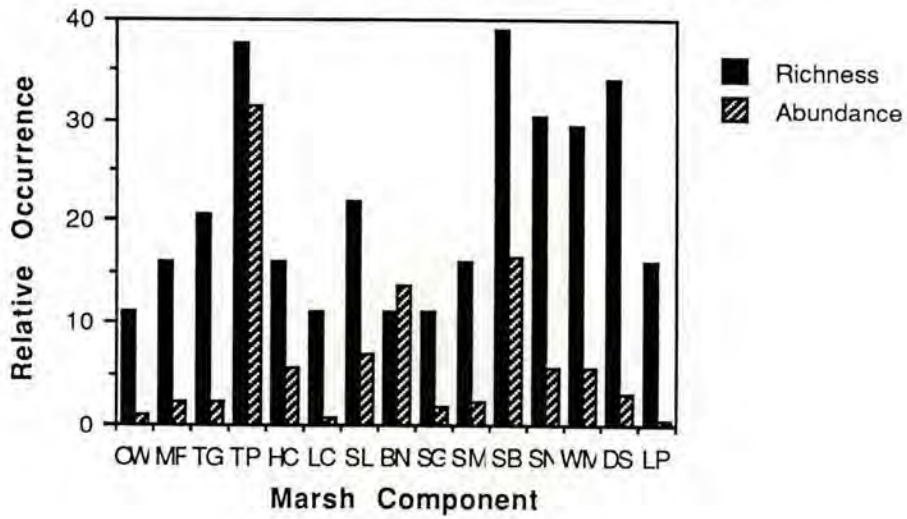
Figure 10: Relative species richness and abundance for individual marsh zones (a) and marsh components (b). Relative species richness values calculated as accumulated richness/105 (total species detected within marsh system). Relative abundance values calculated as total individuals/N (total individuals observed within the entire marsh system).

OVERALL USE OF MARSH ZONES



a

RELATIVE USE OF MARSH COMPONENTS



b

Figure 10

Figures 11 - 14: Relative occurrence of individual core species within the 15 focal marsh components. Values indicate number of individuals observed within specific marsh component/total number of individuals observed directly using study marshes. Only category 1 species (those species with greater than 50% of individuals observed directly using the marsh) are presented.

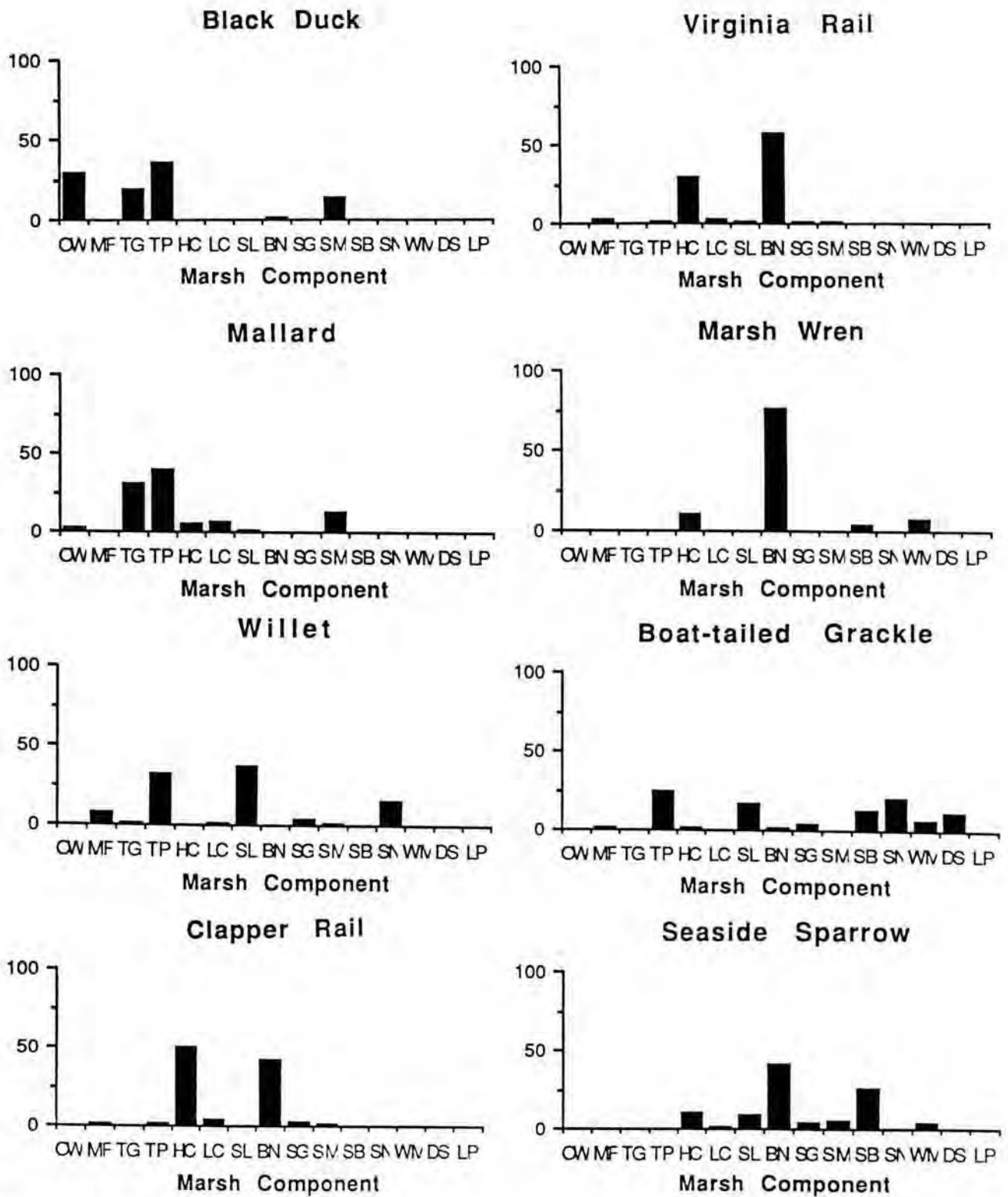


Figure 11

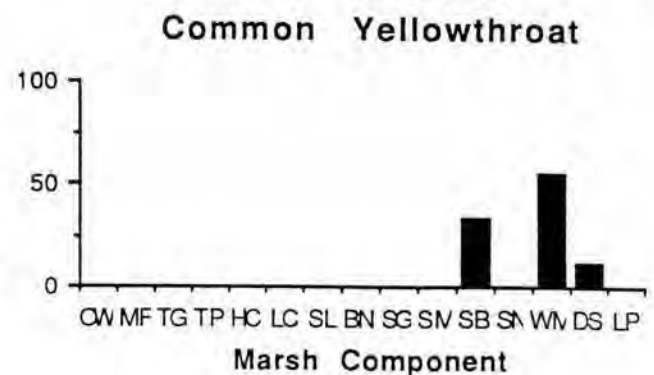
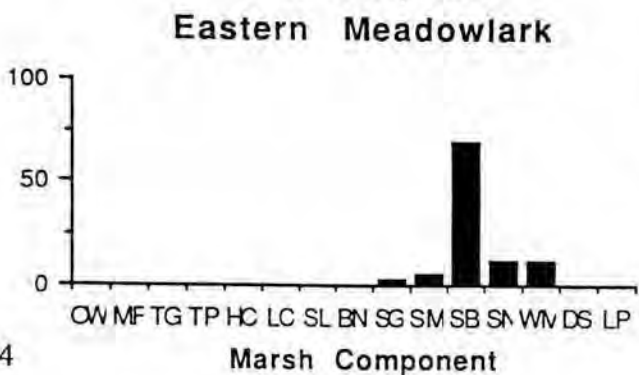
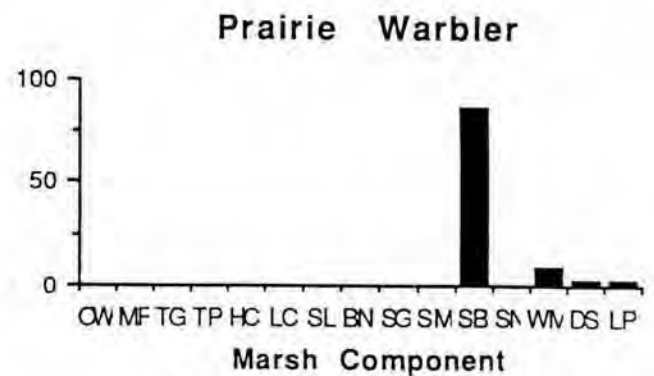
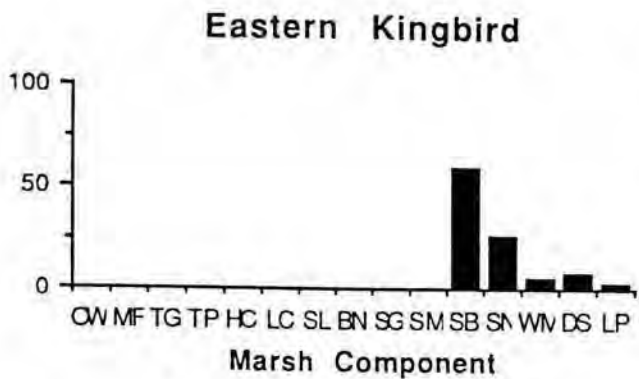
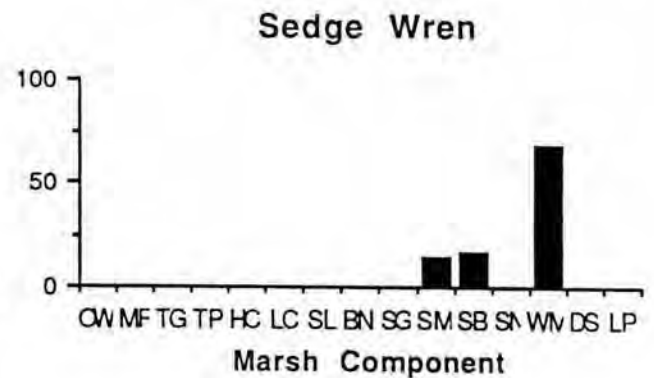
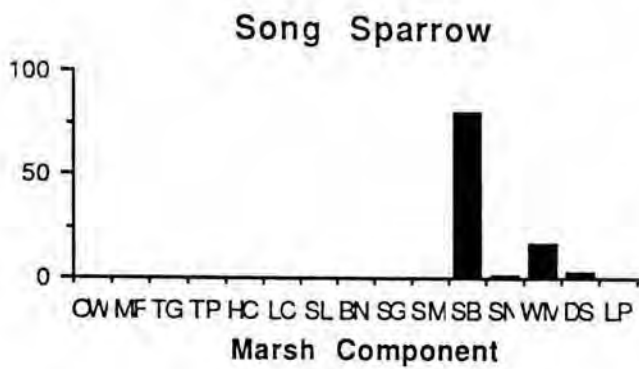
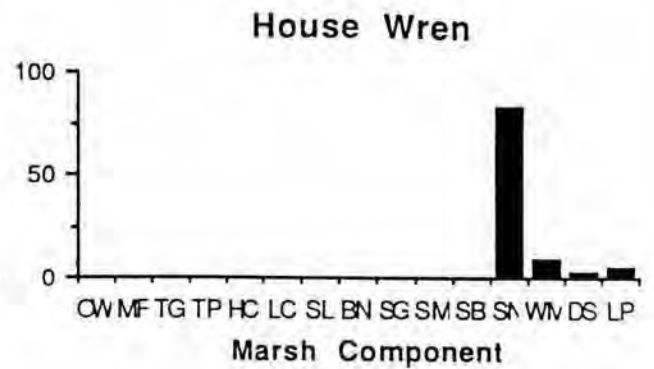
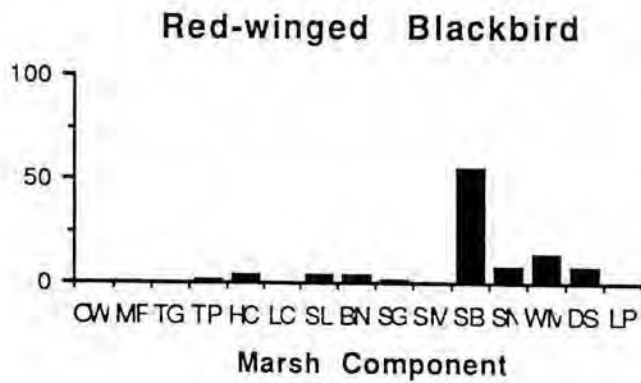
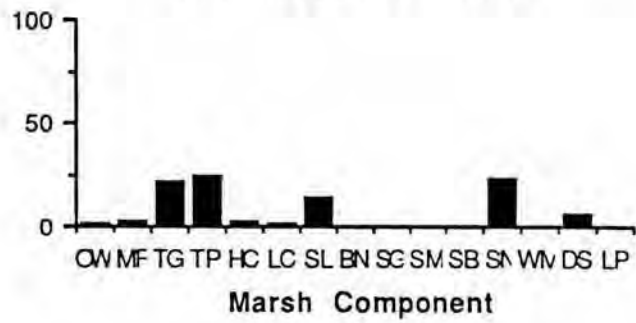
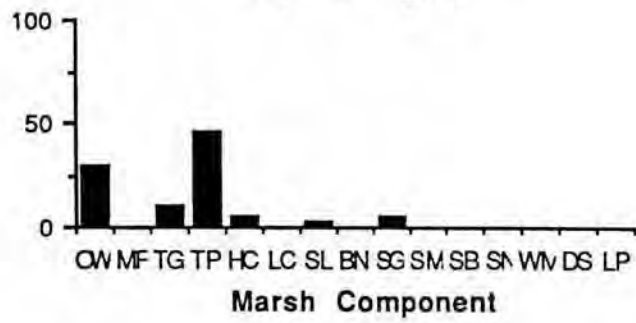


Figure 12

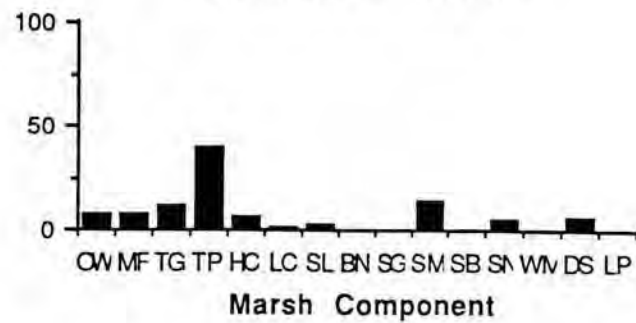
Green-backed Heron



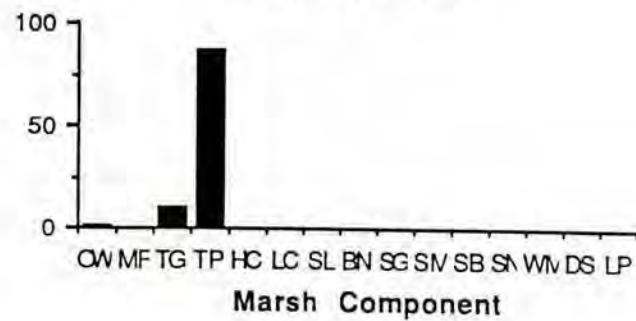
Great Egret



Great-blue Heron



Snowy Egret



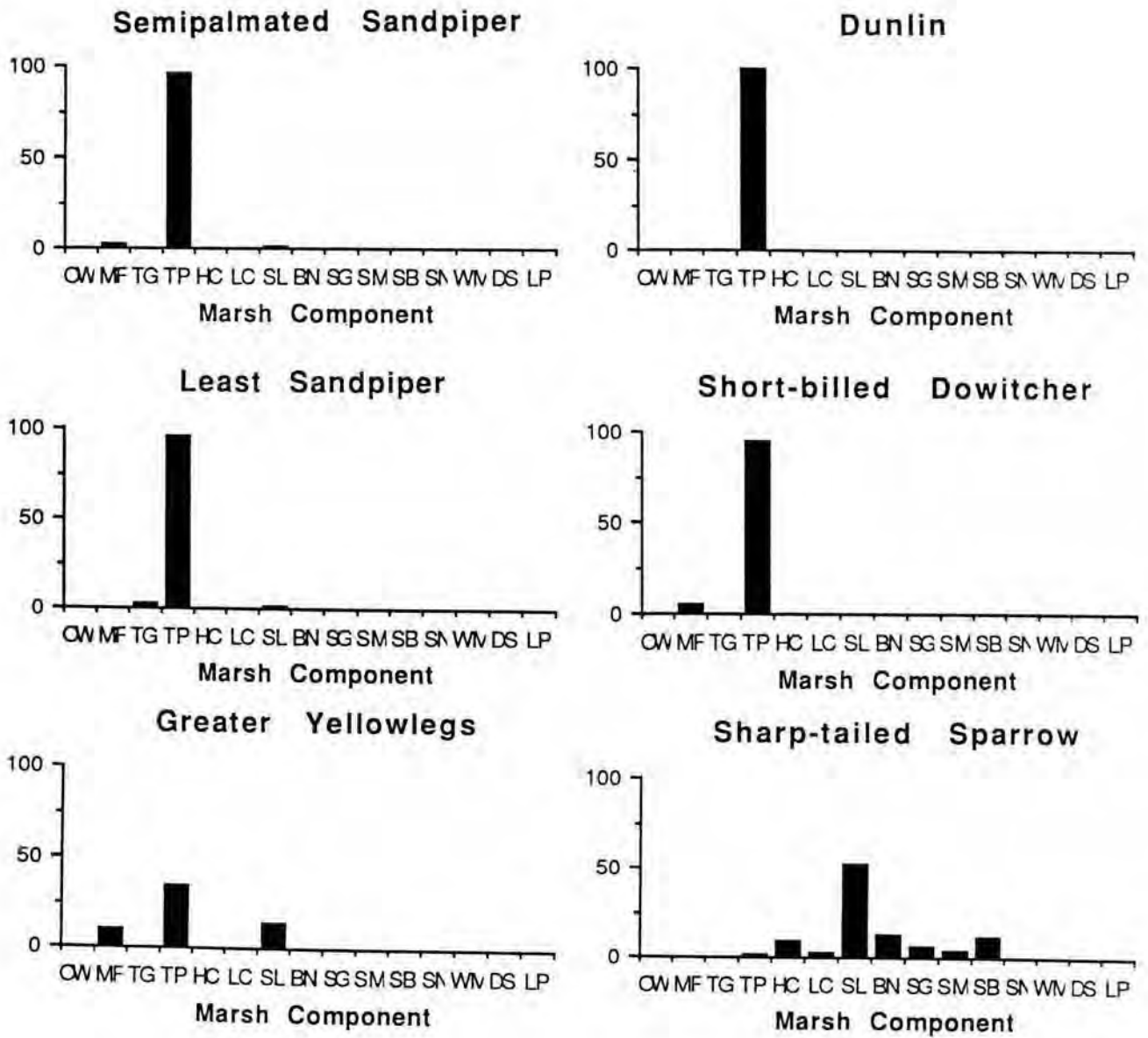


Figure 14

Boat-tailed Grackle, Willet). For some wide-ranging species, dissimilar components were used for different activities. Willets, for example, typically foraged in tidepools or wet slews and roosted in dead snags. In addition, all 12 Willet nests found were located in tufts of saltmeadow hay. It is important to note that because observations were made during the day, patterns of marsh use may be biased for species with nocturnal activity periods. Marsh use by Clapper Rails was highly skewed to black needlerush and tall cordgrass because these dense plants provide nesting substrate and cover during the day. However, high marsh areas in most of the larger sites were strewn with thousands of fiddler (Uca spp.) crab claws (fiddlers are the primary summer prey of Clappers). These observations serve as evidence that Clappers use high marsh areas heavily for foraging at night.

The heron and egret species that represent the resident user group were generally concentrated within the water and low marsh zones for feeding. All observations of these species within the high marsh and transition zones were of roosting individuals. Green-backed herons typically roost in dead snags and Great Blue Herons roost frequently in saltmeadow hay and dead snags. The Snowy Egret appears to be the most specialized species of this group foraging primarily in small tidepools.

Like the Snowy Egret, all of the shorebird species foraged almost exclusively in tidepools with only a few individuals using wet slews during low tide. All of these species preferred feeding in shallow water with sparse vegetation along the edge of tidepools. During migration, Sharp-tailed Sparrows were most often flushed from the ground while foraging in wet slews. Individuals preferred slews surrounded by black needlerush, tall cordgrass or saltbush where they retreat when disturbed.

Patterns in Marsh Size and Composition

In order to better interpret the significance and implications of the marsh-use patterns observed, data on the size distribution and vegetational composition of local marshes were examined. Data on nearly 1,300 tidal marshes located within the reach of the study area were included in the analysis.

Marsh size within the study area varied from 0.1 ha to nearly 1500 ha (It should be noted that the lower limit to marsh size was constrained by the conventions of the marsh inventory. Marshes less than 0.1 ha were not included). However, marsh size was highly skewed to small marshes. Over 62% of marshes within the study area were less than 1 ha, and just over 85% of marshes were less than 5 ha. By contrast just over 8.0% of marshes were larger than 10 ha and only 1.0% of all marshes were larger than 65 ha (minimum size of control marshes). The low frequency of larger marshes in the study area has direct implications for the distribution and availability of foraging and nesting habitat for those species with apparent area requirements.

On average, marshes of the study area were dominated by saltmarsh cordgrass. Average coverage of the 5 target plant groups was: cordgrass - 52%, black needlerush - 17%, saltbush - 10%, saltgrass - 0.8%, and saltmeadow hay - 0.7%. All of these plant groups exhibited a significant, positive relationship with marsh area (F -value > 4.5 , and $P < 0.05$ for all vegetation types). However, none of these relationships appear to be biologically meaningful (adjusted R -squared values range from .022 to .003). Marsh area explained so little of the overall variation in coverage by these plant species that it is not a useful

indicator. A similar pattern was found for dominance. The overall regression for the area/dominance relationship was significant (F -value = 24.3, $P < 0.001$) but not predictive (adjusted R -squared = .24).

Local Species of Special Concern

Some of the observations made over the course of this study have independent significance because they deal with species for which we have very little distribution information or know little about their local breeding ecology. Below, is a summary of observations for three species of special interest.

Sharp-tailed Sparrow

Nearly all of the Sharp-tailed Sparrows observed within the study system were considered to be transients. This species has a migration period that extends relatively late into the summer. Sharp-tails were present in study marshes and in many neighboring marshes until the third week of June. The species then disappeared from marshes nearly overnight. Only one pair of birds was detected in any of the study marshes (or other local marshes) visited after the third round of surveys. This pair bred in saltmeadow hay along the edge of a tidepool in one of the control marshes. The marsh (Four Points Marsh, located at the end of Robbins Neck) is an extensive short grass marsh with numerous tidepools. This marsh contained the most extensive habitat for the species and was the location of the single highest count for the species (33 birds detected along survey route on 11 May) during this study.

The occurrence of this species in individual marshes during migration was influenced by marsh size. Sharp-tails were never detected in marshes smaller than 5.0 ha. The majority of individuals were detected feeding in wet slow areas either around shallow tidepools or around the terminus of narrow tideguts. Because of their secretive nature Sharp-tails during migration should be surveyed using line transect techniques.

Sedge Wren

The majority of Sedge Wrens detected over the study period were believed to be transients. It appeared that most transient birds moved through the marshes by late May. A high count of 22 birds was made on 20 May in the large control marsh near Poquoson (Messick Marsh adjacent to Plumtree Island). These birds were detected over an area of several hectares. Several pairs later bred in this same location. One individual was detected during a survey of Four Points Marsh on 17 May. No pairs were believed to have bred at this location. Individuals were also located in the large control marsh at New Point just outside of Bavon in Mathews County. At least 1 pair bred in this marsh.

All Sedge Wrens detected were in control marshes (3 of 4 replicate control marshes). This species appears to prefer expansive stands of saltmeadow hay with scattered shrubs (which may explain its requirement for large marshes). In two of the marshes, wrens were detected in the high marsh singing from scattered saltbush shrubs embedded in extensive areas of saltmeadow hay. In Messick Marsh where the majority of individuals were detected Sedge Wrens were located in the high marsh in scattered wax myrtle clumps interspersed with large patches of saltmeadow hay. Extensive areas with this vegetational configuration

are rare within the coastal plain of Virginia (pers. obs.). Wax myrtle plants were distinctly spaced at intervals within an expansive saltmeadow.

This species may be severely impacted by marsh burning. Winter burning of high marsh areas kills scattered shrubs such as saltbush and wax myrtle. In Messick Marsh, the habitat type supporting the wrens was clearly twice as large in the recent past. A fire set in the marsh two years before the study had completely killed a large section of shrub vegetation. Marsh burning remains a common practice in some areas. Because shrub vegetation of this type takes several years to recover, burning on a short rotation may completely eliminate breeding areas.

Northern Harrier

The Harriers detected during this study were resident pairs. Of the 20 study marshes, Harriers were only detected in 2 marshes (both controls). These control marshes included the Messick Marsh and another control marsh located on Langley Air Force Base. In addition to the two pairs observed within focal marshes, 5 other breeding pairs were detected within the general study area. This includes one pair on the landward side of Plumtree Island and 4 pairs in the Guinea Marshes. Although no nest monitoring was attempted, 5 of the pairs were observed nest building and 4 pairs were observed feeding young. One female in the Guinea Marshes built three separate nests and laid three clutches before being successful (3 young hatched). The first two clutches were lost to Fish Crows.

Harriers in both marshes utilized extensive stands of black needlerush for foraging and nesting. The large area for foraging needed by this species likely explains their

dependence on large marshes. All nests found in the guinea marshes were in nearly identical areas. Nests were placed in small, mounded clumps of short, black needlerush. These clumps were interspersed with open saltflats. Saltflats were either bare or covered with glasswort (Salicornia sp.). All areas were expansive with hundreds of regularly spaced needlerush mounds. This vegetational configuration is relatively rare on the western shore of the Bay. One nest found in Messick Marsh was in an area of mounded needlerush interspersed with saltmeadow hay.

DISCUSSION

Area Effects

Within the confines of the 20-marsh system, marsh area was a very good indicator of overall species richness. This finding is consistent with bird communities studied in prairie marshes (Brown and Dinsmore 1986) and various upland habitats (e.g. Forman et al. 1976, Lynch and Whigham 1984). The individual slopes of the species/area relationships derived here are all similar to others reported from area-specific studies (see Connor and McCoy 1979). Species richness for those species in direct contact with the marsh showed the most rapid declines with decreasing marsh area (Table 4). In general, the marsh-bird community observed in large marshes appears to collapse as marsh size is reduced from 5.0 to 1.0 ha. Only a small fraction of the total species observed were detected in marshes smaller than 1.0 ha and none of these species were obligate marsh breeders.

Previous studies relating patch size and bird species richness have dealt primarily with breeding bird communities. This study is unique in illustrating that non-breeding species may also show area sensitivity in marsh use or association. Marsh area was a very good predictor (though somewhat less than for direct users as a whole) of species richness for transient species, resident users, and so called associated species. These species groups clearly have less ties to the marsh proper but nonetheless exhibited patterns of area sensitivity.

The observed decline in species richness with marsh area was not due to random or sampling effects. Inspection of species loss patterns reveal that species were systematically lost with reductions in marsh size. This pattern was observed for associated species as well as all user groups. Bird assemblages within small marshes were completely nested subsets of those found within larger marshes.

Several viable explanations exist for the observed species/area relationships and, in fact, it is highly unlikely that a single factor could explain the loss patterns observed. The most obvious and straight forward explanation is that smaller marshes do not meet area requirements needed for breeding territories. For example, because of their hunting techniques, Northern Harriers require large open areas for foraging. Breeding ranges for this species have been reported to vary between just under 100 to well above 300 ha (Craighead and Craighead 1956). This large area requirement likely explains their restriction to control marshes. However, Sedge Wren territories have been reported to be less than 0.2 ha (Bent 1948) but were also restricted to control marshes. It is clear that for the majority of species, average territory sizes would permit use of even some of the smallest marshes

surveyed. However, for individual species that require specific plant groups, total marsh area may not be the best estimate of habitat availability. Because marshes were chosen to contain all 5 target plant groups, small marshes contained very small patches of each vegetation type. A species that requires 1.0 ha of black needlerush may occur in a one hectare marsh dominated by needlerush but would require a 5.0 ha marsh of the types used in this study. This artifact could possibly explain the loss of some species between the very smallest marsh categories.

Another likely explanation for species losses is that larger marshes contain a greater diversity of habitats. Although vegetational composition was controlled for in the marshes selected, vegetation is not the only important marsh component. For example, tidepools were used by the most individual birds and by the second highest number of species. In general, tidepools do not occur in smaller marshes. None of the study marshes smaller than 5.0 ha contained significant tidepools. This single component likely influences patterns of marsh use for many species. Snowy Egrets are tidepool specialists when foraging and were not detected in smaller study marshes. The same pattern was observed for all of the transient shorebird species.

In addition to individual marsh components that vary with marsh size, larger marshes tend to contain more component combinations. Although vegetational composition was controlled for, how these vegetation types are associated with one another seems to be important for some species. For example, Eastern Meadowlarks were confined to the high marsh zone and prefer to sing from clumps of saltbush (70% of those observed were in salt bush). However, because they nest on the ground in saltmeadow hay they only use saltbush

when it occurs in saltmeadow. Similarly, Meadowlarks typically do not occur in expansive areas of saltmeadow hay that do not contain salt bush for singing perches. Sedge Wrens appear to require a similar combination of vegetative components. In general, it appears that larger marshes tend to contain more component combinations and so have a greater diversity of habitats.

Associated species did not as a rule use the marsh surface but showed similar patterns of area sensitivity. It is possible that these species were indirectly influenced by marsh size. Nearly all of the associated species feed on aquatic prey or carrion in the shallow waters surrounding the marsh and so are likely influenced by prey populations that depend on various marsh characteristics.

Whatever the mechanisms responsible for the patterns of area sensitivity, they have implications for the distribution and management of some marsh birds. The patterns suggest that marsh size is a good indicator of marsh value for some species and species groups. The frequency distribution of marsh size categories within the study area suggest that a fraction of the total marshes support the bulk of the individuals of certain species. Larger marshes are relatively rare. The vast majority of marshes are of the size classes supporting the fewest species. The occurrence of larger marshes both on a local and regional scale should be taken into account when making decisions pertaining to proposals for wetland use and modification.

Marsh Components

The core species groups were different in their use of the four marsh zones. Core breeding species utilized the entire marsh but the high marsh supported the most species.

However, virtually none of the species breeding in the high marsh were obligate marsh breeders (species specific to tidal marshes). These species including Song Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Prairie Warbler, Red-winged Blackbird, etc also breed in other shrubby habitats of the coastal plain and elsewhere. Of the 7 obligate marsh breeding species (including: Seaside Sparrow, Marsh Wren, Willet, Boat-tail Grackle, Clapper Rail, Virginia Rail, and Black Duck) all but the Boat-tailed Grackle primarily used the low marsh or water components. The heron species primarily used the marsh for foraging and were concentrated in the water zone. Over 95% of the transient shorebirds detected were observed foraging in tidepools.

In general, the lower, regularly inundated areas of the marsh appear to have somewhat more value when compared to the drier marsh components. These low lying areas serve as stopover habitat for migrating shorebirds, foraging habitat for all of the resident breeding herons, and support nearly all of the marsh-endemic breeders.

SUMMARY

1. Marsh area is a good indicator of bird species richness for salt marshes of the lower Chesapeake Bay. Species groups that breed in the marsh proper, forage in the marsh (either during migration or during the breeding season), or were merely associated with the marsh, all exhibited a positive response to marsh area.

2. Species losses in smaller marshes were not due simply to random effects. Bird communities documented in smaller marshes were completely nested subsets of those found

in larger marshes. In addition, the occurrence of individual species was more predictable in larger marshes.

3. Slopes of species-area relationships were relatively high but comparable to similar studies conducted in other habitats. Species groups that used the marsh directly for foraging or breeding showed the highest species loss rates.

4. The lower, regularly inundated portions of the marsh appear to have the most value for 1) species that breed exclusively in salt marshes, 2) transient shorebirds, and 3) locally resident birds that use marshes as foraging areas.

5. Small tidepools supported nearly one third of all birds observed and contained nearly 40% of the species detected. The presence or absence of tidepools may have a significant influence on species richness particularly for smaller marshes.

6. Marsh area is not a good indicator of marsh composition (with respect to the 5 target plant groups) or marsh dominance.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Marsh area should be considered when making decisions concerning proposals for marsh alteration. Many of the species observed did not occur in small marshes. Because of this, a single large marsh has more wildlife value than many small marshes even though combined they may contain more total area. In addition, it appears that larger marshes are relatively rare so that a few marshes may support most of the individuals of certain species. The availability of larger marshes, not just total marsh acreage, should be considered on a local and regional scale before considering activities proposed within large marshes.

The slopes of species-area relationships suggest that fragmentation of large marshes may result in a substantial reduction in species richness. Fragmentation of marshes within particular size categories may result in a near faunal collapse. These factors should be considered when making wetland management decisions. Creating small replacement marshes as mitigation for fragmenting mid-sized marshes may not replace lost wildlife values.

Creating productive tidepools and low-lying areas within marshes may increase species richness and enhance overall marsh value. Marsh enhancement projects may be particularly effective within small marshes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. This study examined species-area relationships for a fairly restricted set of marsh conditions. How well these results apply to other marsh types is unclear. Work is needed to clarify non-game wildlife values for other common marsh types in the region.
2. Marshes included in this study spanned a wide range of sizes. It appears that many of the obligate marsh users are lost as marsh area is reduced from 5.0 to 1.0 ha. However, the information gap between these two size categories is functionally very large. Further work needs to focus on this information gap to titrate where species losses are most pronounced.
3. Patterns in marsh use suggest that some marsh components contribute a great deal to overall bird abundance and diversity. The direct links between these components and the marsh-bird community should be studied in detail. An understanding

of the function provided by these components could provide insights into how best to enhance or create valuable wetlands.

4. Previous wetland-use guidelines have suggested that marshes dominated by black needlerush have relatively low wildlife value when compared to other marsh types. Results from this study suggest that this plant type supports very few species. However, those species supported tend to be marsh obligates. In addition, some of these species reach their highest densities within this habitat. Further work is needed to clarify the wildlife value of needlerush marshes.

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Appendix I: List of scientific names for species detected.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Common Loon	<u>Gavia immer</u>
Brown Pelican	<u>Pelecanus occidentalis</u>
Double-crested Cormorant	<u>Phalacrocorax auritus</u>
Least Bittern	<u>Ixobrychus exilis</u>
Yellow-crowned Night-heron	<u>Nyctanassa violacea</u>
Green-backed Heron	<u>Butorides striatus</u>
Tri-colored Heron	<u>Hydranassa tricolor</u>
Little-blue Heron	<u>Florida caerulea</u>
Snowy Egret	<u>Egretta thula</u>
Great Egret	<u>Casmerodius albus</u>
Great Blue Heron	<u>Ardea herodias</u>
Glossy Ibis	<u>Plegadis falcinellus</u>
Mute Swan	<u>Cygnus olor</u>
Canada Goose	<u>Branta canadensis</u>
Mallard	<u>Anas platyrhynchos</u>
Black Duck	<u>Anas rubripes</u>
Blue-winged Teal	<u>Anas discors</u>
Red-breasted Merganser	<u>Mergus serrator</u>
Clapper Rail	<u>Rallus longirostris</u>
Virginia Rail	<u>Rallus limicola</u>
Sora	<u>Porzana carolina</u>
American Oystercatcher	<u>Haematopus palliatus</u>
Killdeer	<u>Charadrius vociferus</u>
Semipalmated Plover	<u>Charadrius semipalmatus</u>
Willet	<u>Catoptrophorus semipalmatus</u>
Greater Yellowlegs	<u>Tringa melanoleuca</u>
Lesser Yellowlegs	<u>Tringa flavipes</u>
Spotted Sandpiper	<u>Actitis macularia</u>
Short-billed Dowitcher	<u>Limnodromus griseus</u>
Red Knot	<u>Calidris canutus</u>
Dunlin	<u>Calidris alpina</u>
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<u>Calidris pusilla</u>
Least Sandpiper	<u>Calidris minutilla</u>
Black-necked Stilt	<u>Himantopus mexicanus</u>
Laughing Gull	<u>Larus atricilla</u>
Ring-billed Gull	<u>Larus delawarensis</u>
Herring Gull	<u>Larus argentatus</u>
Great Black-backed Gull	<u>Larus marinus</u>
Common Tern	<u>Sterna hirundo</u>
Forster's Tern	<u>Sterna forsteri</u>
Gull-billed Tern	<u>Gelochelidon nilotica</u>
Little Tern	<u>Sterna albifrons</u>
Royal Tern	<u>Sterna Maxima</u>
Black Skimmer	<u>Rynchops niger</u>
Bald Eagle	<u>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</u>
Northern Harrier	<u>Circus cyaneus</u>
Red-tailed Hawk	<u>Buteo jamaicensis</u>

Appendix I: -----continued-----

Osprey	<u>Pandion haliaetus</u> American
Kestrel	<u>Falco sparverius</u>
Merlin	<u>Falco columbarius</u>
Peregrine Falcon	<u>Falco peregrinus</u>
Mourning Dove	<u>Zenaida macroura</u>
Great-horned Owl	<u>Bubo virginianus</u>
Chimney Swift	<u>Chaetura pelagica</u>
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	<u>Archilochus colubris</u>
Belted Kingfisher	<u>Megaceryle alcyon</u>
Red-headed Woodpecker	<u>Melanerpes Erythrocephalus</u>
Red-bellied Woodpecker	<u>Melanerpes carolinus</u>
Common Flicker	<u>Colaptes auratus</u>
Downy Woodpecker	<u>Picoides pubescens</u>
Eastern Kingbird	<u>Tyrannus tyrannus</u>
Great-crested Flycatcher	<u>Myiarchus crinitus</u>
Eastern Pewee	<u>Contopus virens</u>
Eastern Phoebe	<u>Sayornis phoebe</u>
Tree Swallow	<u>Iridoprocne bicolor</u>
Purple Martin	<u>Progne subis</u>
Bank Swallow	<u>Riparia riparia</u>
Rough-winged Swallow	<u>Stelgidopteryx ruficollis</u>
Barn Swallow	<u>Hirundo rustica</u>
American Crow	<u>Corvus brachyrhynchos</u>
Fish Crow	<u>Corvus ossifragus</u>
Tufted Titmouse	<u>Parus bicolor</u>
Carolina Chickadee	<u>Parus carolinensis</u>
Brown-headed Nuthatch	<u>Sitta pusilla</u>
House Wren	<u>Troglodytes aedon</u>
Carolina Wren	<u>Thryothorus ludovicianus</u>
Marsh Wren	<u>Cistothorus palustris</u>
Sedge Wren	<u>Cistothorus platensis</u>
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	<u>Polioptila caerulea</u>
Eastern Bluebird	<u>Sialia sialis</u>
Gray Catbird	<u>Dumetella carolinensis</u>
Mockingbird	<u>Mimus polyglottos</u>
Brown Thrasher	<u>Toxostoma rufum</u>
European Starling	<u>Sturnus vulgaris</u>
White-eyed Vireo	<u>Vireo griseus</u>
Prairie Warbler	<u>Dendroica discolor</u>
Pine Warbler	<u>Dendroica pinus</u>
Yellow Warbler	<u>Dendroica petechia</u>
Common Yellowthroat	<u>Geothlypis trichas</u>
Yellow-breasted Chat	<u>Icteria virens</u>
Northern Cardinal	<u>Cardinalis cardinalis</u>
Indigo Bunting	<u>Passerina cyanea</u>
Rufous-sided Towhee	<u>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</u>
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	<u>Ammodramus caudacuta</u>
Seaside Sparrow	<u>Ammodramus maritima</u>
Song Sparrow	<u>Melospiza melodia</u>

Appendix I: -----continued-----

Field Sparrow	<u>Spizella pusilla</u>
Swamp Sparrow	<u>Melospiza georgiana</u>
Eastern Meadowlark	<u>Sturnella magna</u>
Red-winged Blackbird	<u>Agelaius phoenicius</u>
Brown-headed Cowbird	<u>Molothrus ater</u>
Common Grackle	<u>Quiscalus quiscula</u>
Boat-tailed Grackle	<u>Quiscalus major</u>
Orchard Oriole	<u>Icterus spurius</u>
American Goldfinch	<u>Carduelis tristis</u>

Appendix II: Breakdown of marsh use categories by species. Categories include: one - bird in direct contact with marsh, two - bird not in direct contact with marsh but foraging on prey just over or on marsh surface, three - bird flying over marsh but under 50 m in altitude and or associated with water within 50 m of shoreline.

Species	N	User Category		
		one	Two	Three
Common Loon	13	-----	-----	100.0
Brown Pelican	7	-----	-----	100.0
Double-crested Cormorant	76	7.9	-----	92.1
Least Bittern	2	100.0	-----	-----
Yellow-crowned Night-heron	10	100.0	-----	-----
Green Heron	71	85.9	-----	14.1
Tri-colored Heron	8	75.0	-----	25.0
Little-blue Heron	1	-----	-----	100.0
Snowy Egret	98	56.1	-----	43.9
Great Egret	67	55.2	-----	44.8
Great Blue Heron	102	98.0	-----	2.0
Glossy Ibis	3	100.0	-----	-----
Mute Swan	2	100.0	-----	-----
Canada Goose	21	52.4	-----	47.6
Mallard	69	89.9	-----	10.1
Black Duck	102	79.4	-----	20.6
Blue-winged Teal	7	71.4	-----	28.6
Red-breasted Merganser	1	100.0	-----	-----
Clapper Rail	249	100.0	-----	-----
Virginia Rail	75	100.0	-----	-----
Sora	3	100.0	-----	-----
American Oystercatcher	17	88.7	-----	11.3
Killdeer	6	83.3	-----	16.7
Semipalmated Plover	9	77.8	-----	22.2
Willet	415	88.7	-----	11.3
Greater Yellowlegs	37	81.1	-----	18.9
Lesser Yellowlegs	5	100.0	-----	-----
Spotted Sandpiper	2	100.0	-----	-----
Short-billed Dowitcher	128	96.9	-----	3.1
Red Knot	3	100.0	-----	-----
Dunlin	51	100.0	-----	-----
Semipalmated Sandpiper	993	98.3	-----	1.7
Least Sandpiper	138	100.0	-----	-----
Black-necked Stilt	2	100.0	-----	-----
Laughing Gull	368	15.5	-----	84.5
Ring-billed Gull	1	-----	-----	84.5
Herring Gull	77	10.4	-----	89.6
Great Black-backed Gull	2	-----	-----	100.0
Common Tern	18	5.6	-----	94.4
Forster's Tern	84	31.0	10.7	58.3
Gull-billed Tern	1	-----	-----	100.0

Appendix II: -----continued-----

Least Tern	51	17.6	58.8	23.6
Royal Tern	37	-----	5.1	94.4
Black Skimmer	24	-----	75.0	25.0
Bald Eagle	3	-----	-----	100.0
Northern Harrier	17	35.3	64.7	-----
Red-tailed Hawk	10	20.0	-----	80.0
Osprey	78	29.5	1.1	79.4
American Kestrel	2	-----	100.0	-----
Merlin	1	-----	100.0	-----
Peregrine Falcon	1	-----	100.0	-----
Mourning Dove	3	-----	-----	100.0
Great-horned Owl	1	100.0	-----	-----
Chimney Swift	21	-----	100.0	-----
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	6	100.0	-----	-----
Belted Kingfisher	1	-----	-----	100.0
Red-headed Woodpecker	1	-----	-----	100.0
Red-bellied Woodpecker	2	100.0	-----	-----
Common Flicker	18	88.9	-----	11.1
Downy Woodpecker	2	50.0	-----	50.0
Eastern Kingbird	44	100.0	-----	-----
Great-crested Flycatcher	1	100.0	-----	-----
Eastern Pewee	3	100.0	-----	-----
Eastern Phoebe	1	100.0	-----	-----
Tree Swallow	14	-----	100.0	-----
Purple Martin	36	2.8	97.2	-----
Bank Swallow	9	-----	100.0	-----
Rough-winged Swallow	20	-----	100.0	-----
Barn Swallow	226	-----	100.0	-----
American Crow	7	57.1	-----	42.9
Fish Crow	97	21.6	-----	78.4
Tufted Titmouse	1	100.0	-----	-----
Carolina Chickadee	16	100.0	-----	-----
Brown-headed Nuthatch	7	100.0	-----	-----
House Wren	43	100.0	-----	-----
Carolina Wren	5	100.0	-----	-----
Marsh Wren	136	100.0	-----	-----
Sedge Wren	29	100.0	-----	-----
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	7	100.0	-----	-----
Eastern Bluebird	2	100.0	-----	-----
Gray Catbird	27	100.0	-----	-----
Mockingbird	10	100.0	-----	-----
Brown Thrasher	1	100.0	-----	-----
European Starling	101	60.4	-----	39.6
White-eyed Vireo	6	100.0	-----	-----
Prairie Warbler	46	100.0	-----	-----
Pine Warbler	10	100.0	-----	-----
Yellow Warbler	28	100.0	-----	-----
Common Yellowthroat	130	100.0	-----	-----
Yellow-breasted Chat	24	100.0	-----	-----

Appendix II: -----continued-----

Northern Cardinal	16	100.0	-----	-----
Indigo Bunting	13	100.0	-----	-----
Rufous-sided Towhee	2	100.0	-----	-----
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	107	100.0	-----	-----
Seaside Sparrow	1094	100.0	-----	-----
Song Sparrow	210	100.0	-----	-----
Field Sparrow	5	100.0	-----	-----
Swamp Sparrow	2	100.0	-----	-----
Eastern Meadowlark	73	100.0	-----	-----
Red-winged Blackbird	232	100.0	-----	-----
Brown-headed Cowbird	71	71.8	-----	28.2
Common Grackle	27	37.0	-----	63.0
Boat-tailed Grackle	198	89.9	-----	10.1
Orchard Oriole	4	100.0	-----	-----
American goldfinch	34	85.3	-----	14.7

Appendix III : Total frequency of birds observed during each survey period for all marshes combined (list of scientific names given in appendix I).

Species	Census Number				Total
	one	two	three	four	
Common Loon	12	1	0	0	13
Brown Pelican	7	0	0	0	7
Double-crested Cormorant	50	14	3	9	76
Least Bittern	1	1	0	0	2
Yellow-crowned Night-heron	1	4	3	2	10
Green Heron	17	12	17	25	71
Tri-colored Heron	4	3	1	0	8
Little-blue Heron	1	0	0	0	1
Snowy Egret	34	19	32	13	98
Great Egret	24	16	14	13	67
Great Blue Heron	25	22	17	38	102
Glossy Ibis	3	0	0	0	3
Mute Swan	0	2	0	0	2
Canada Goose	13	2	3	3	21
Mallard	25	22	17	5	69
Black Duck	25	22	26	29	102
Blue-winged Teal	5	2	0	0	7
Red-breasted Merganser	0	1	0	0	1
Clapper Rail	116	59	47	27	249
Virginia Rail	32	24	11	8	75
Sora	3	0	0	0	3
American Oystercatcher	3	6	5	3	17
Killdeer	1	1	4	0	6
Semi-palmated Plover	5	4	0	0	9
Willet	116	88	147	64	415
Greater Yellowlegs	31	6	0	0	37
Lesser Yellowlegs	3	2	0	0	5
Spotted Sandpiper	1	0	1	0	2
Short-billed Dowitcher	128	0	0	0	128
Red Knot	1	2	0	0	3
Dunlin	51	0	0	0	51
Semi-palmated Sandpiper	893	100	0	0	993
Least Sandpiper	131	7	0	0	138
Black-necked Stilt	2	0	0	0	2
Laughing Gull	144	67	79	78	368
Ring-billed Gull	0	1	0	0	1
Herring Gull	40	18	10	9	77
Great Black-backed Gull	1	0	0	1	2
Common Tern	0	0	5	13	18
Forster's Tern	38	12	19	15	84
Gull-billed Tern	1	0	0	0	1
Least Tern	25	13	8	5	51
Royal Tern	3	19	8	7	37
Black Skimmer	5	3	11	5	24

Appendix III : -Continued-

Bald Eagle	1	0	0	2	3
Northern Harrier	4	4	4	5	17
Red-tailed Hawk	4	3	2	1	10
Osprey	20	20	22	16	78
American Kestrel	1	0	1	0	2
Merlin	1	0	0	0	1
Peregrine Falcon	1	0	0	0	1
Mourning Dove	1	1	1	0	3
Great-horned Owl	0	0	1	0	1
Chimney Swift	1	2	6	12	21
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	2	0	2	2	6
Belted Kingfisher	0	0	0	1	1
Red-headed Woodpecker	0	0	0	1	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1	0	0	1	2
Northern Flicker	5	8	3	2	18
Downy Woodpecker	1	1	0	0	2
Eastern Kingbird	8	13	13	10	44
Great-crested Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	1
Eastern Wood Pewee	2	0	1	0	3
Phoebe	1	0	0	0	1
Tree Swallow	11	3	0	0	14
Purple Martin	8	13	8	7	36
Bank Swallow	4	3	0	2	9
Rough-winged Swallow	7	9	1	3	20
Barn Swallow	61	52	64	49	226
American Crow	4	3	0	0	7
Fish Crow	25	27	20	25	97
Tufted Titmouse	0	0	1	0	1
Carolina Chickadee	5	4	5	2	16
Brown-headed Nuthatch	5	1	1	0	7
House Wren	7	12	12	12	43
Carolina Wren	0	0	4	1	5
Marsh Wren	34	32	38	32	136
Sedge Wren	10	7	5	7	29
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	4	0	2	1	7
Eastern Bluebird	1	0	1	0	2
Gray Catbird	2	10	9	6	27
Mockingbird	3	2	4	1	10
Brown Thrasher	1	0	0	0	1
European Starling	18	24	45	14	101
White-eyed Vireo	5	0	1	0	6
Prairie Warbler	23	11	8	4	46
Pine Warbler	1	8	0	1	10
Yellow Warbler	11	6	6	5	28
Common Yellowthroat	27	37	34	32	130
Yellow-breasted Chat	7	6	7	4	24
Northern Cardinal	4	6	1	5	16
Indigo Bunting	4	2	3	4	13
Rufous-sided Towhee	1	1	0	0	2

Appendix III : -Continued-

Sharp-tailed Sparrow	62	31	12	2	107
Seaside Sparrow	339	252	282	221	1094
Song Sparrow	70	52	42	46	210
Field Sparrow	4	1	0	0	6
Swamp Sparrow	1	1	0	0	2
Eastern Meadowlark	31	12	15	15	73
Red-winged Blackbird	70	64	45	53	232
Brown-headed Cowbird	32	17	4	18	71
Common Grackle	9	3	10	5	27
Boat-tailed Grackle	55	59	46	38	198
Orchard Oriole	2	1	0	1	4
American Goldfinch	7	10	8	9	34

APPENDIX IV: Working bibliography of selected marsh-bird species.

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