No Net Loss for Migratory Birds

Sanderlings along the Ghana Coast

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Background

- Amansuri Wetland IBA is recognised for large concentrations of Sanderlings and Royal Terns that overwinter on the beaches.
- These birds triggered Critical Habitat.
  - Greater than 1% of bioregional population triggers Critical Habitat criterion (iii) of the IFC Performance Standard 6.

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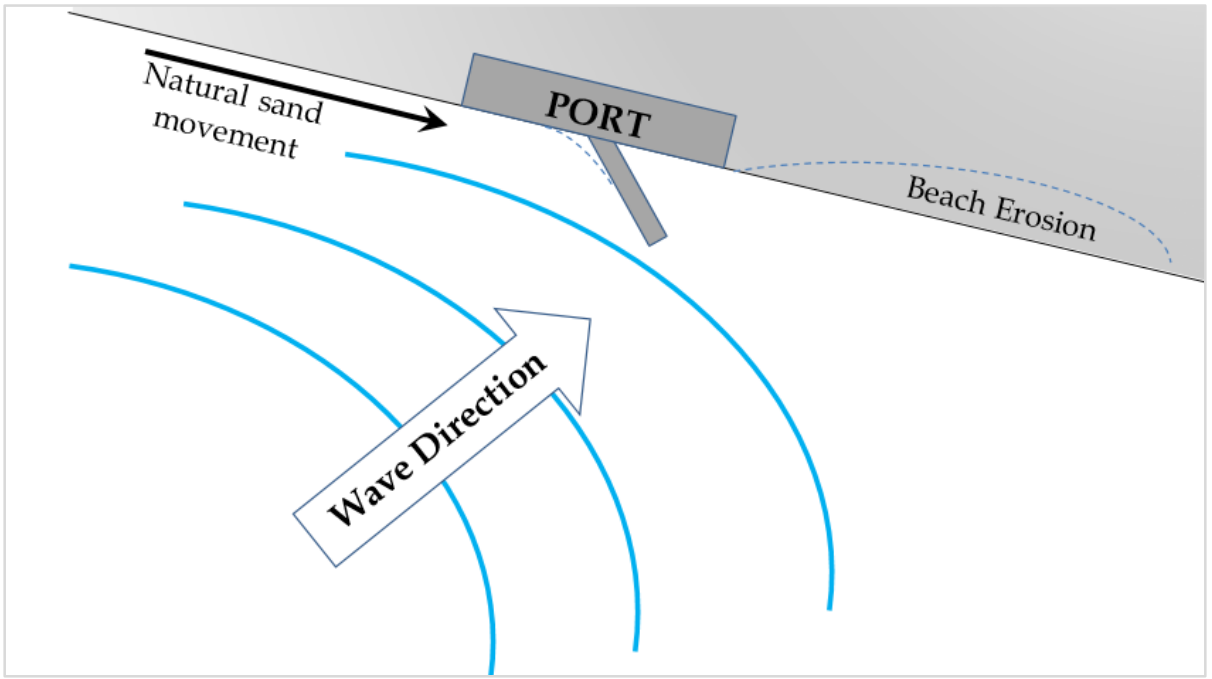
Background

- Sanderlings are a long-distance migratory bird species that breeds in the high Arctic and migrates southwards to avoid the Arctic winter.
- Winter diet: Feeds primarily on small invertebrates in the surf zone.

Brief Description of the Project Impact

- Worked on a project for a proposed port, which would result in a direct loss of 3km of beach habitat.
- Port would also interrupt Coastal Processes causing further loss of beach on the 'downstream' side.
- The extent of the interrupted coastal process was uncertain.



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Some of the Challenges

- IFC wanted an accounting of losses versus gains to demonstrate NNL, but very difficult to quantify because:
  - Migratory behaviour results in large variations in numbers of Sanderlings arriving along the coast.
  - Migratory birds are exposed to threats far beyond the control of the project.

- Typical offset development was not possible because the beach is common property, everybody has access, and there is no ownership.
- Offsets with defined boundaries are not feasible for a highly mobile bird species.
- There was a lack of examples to follow that demonstrate NNL for migratory birds.

Analysis of the Situation

- Primary attraction to shorebirds in the area was safe roosting at the nearby Esiama Estuary.
- Shorebirds are threatened by fishing activity on the beach, plastic pollution, local persecution and adjacent human disturbance.
- Ghana Wildlife Conservation Society had previously implemented a Save our Seabirds programme further up the coast that showed benefits of the birds to fishermen, and had yielded quantifiable benefits to diversity of shorebird numbers.

Approach Adopted

- Improved the protection of roost area at the nearby Esiama Estuary.
- Categorised the habitat into Low, Medium and High value.
- Used the habitat categorisation to focus community conservation programmes.
- Developed a balance between level of effort and geographical extent, which provided flexibility for implementation, based on monitoring.

Key Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Key Challenges

- Mitigation required an indirect approach without guarantee of success.
- Lack of documented case studies to give confidence on offsetting mobile fauna.
- Challenge of limiting unpredictability and a high risk of failure.

Key Success factors

- Building on existing initiatives and involving local role players to address local threats.
- A multidisciplinary approach was provided.
- Incorporating flexibility into the design to accommodate some of the uncertainty.

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