

# SHARP Vegetation Protocol for Avian Point-Count Circles

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Saltmarsh Integrity Project

## SOP 1: Vegetation Monitoring in Salt Marshes Using Rapid Assessment Method

The percent cover of plant communities and habitats within the point-count circles will be described. The vegetation survey should be performed June 1<sup>st</sup> or later.

### Methods:

1. Survey the entire 100-m diameter circle from the center survey point by using your binoculars to scan 360-degrees (i.e. the full point-count circle). Walk within the circle plot as needed to view the plant communities while minimizing disturbance to the vegetation. Look for the following plant communities and open water features:

- Low Marsh
- High Marsh
- Salt Marsh Terrestrial Border
- Brackish Terrestrial Border
- Invasives
- Pannes, Pools and Creeks
- Open Water
- Upland
- Wrack

2. Using the table below, estimate the cover for each of the above communities. Fill in the cover class on the Avian Point-Count Circle - Plant Communities and Habitats data sheet. Record the most dominant species and what % of the 100-m diameter circle the species cover(s) (e.g. *S. alt* tall 50%, *S. patens* 25%). The dominants do not have to add up to 100% and you do not need to record a dominant species for each plant community or habitat type. Please be sure to discriminate between *Spartina alterniflora* – short form (1 – 35 cm) and tall form (50+ cm) on the data sheet (e.g. *S. alt* tall and *S. alt* short); use your best judgment for plants 35 – 50 cm tall.

### Cover classes

0: 0% cover

0.5: Absent or Less than 1% cover

1: 1% to 5% cover

2: 6% to 10% cover

3: 11% to 25% cover

5: 51% to 75% cover

6: 76% to 100% cover

3. Count the number of dead snags within the 100-m diameter circle and record the number in the last row on the data sheet.