

REPORT OF THE BLACK-CAPPED PETREL WORKING GROUP MEETING

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INTRODUCTION

There has been much interest and work conducted on the Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata*; BCPE) for many years. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) now has some funds to dedicate to a particular species. This provides an opportunity to have Elena Babij as a lead facilitator for the working group. This will involve collecting information and ensuring it is available to everyone, facilitate work being conducted in various focus teams and ensuring networking, and developing a strategy on the BCPE from information provided by the working group.

The only proven breeding sites are Haiti and Dominican Republic. Other potential and/or historic sites include Cuba, Dominica, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, St. Croix, and Crooked Island (Bahamas).

CAPE HATTERAS MEETING SYNOPSIS

A brief synopsis was provided to the group of an at-sea meeting held at Cape Hatteras during 16–18 June 2009. Full meeting notes are available on the BCPE Website. Certain action items were identified during this section of the meeting:

1. Atlantic Seabird Project: Share information about the Atlantic Seabirds (O'Connell) project with group by posting it on the BCPE working group website;
2. Climate change: There is a need to collaborate with European organizations; and
3. Wind: When addressing wind farm issues in Caribbean, include RSPB/Wind Farm individuals, Mike Dolton (Audubon–Western Hemisphere wind issues), and Genevieve Thompson (Audubon, Chair of Federal Advisory Committee Act). The working group needs to examine data from the Danish Ornithological Society. Information regarding the sea distribution of the BCPE is lacking and should be obtained (data on the Cahow influenced wind farm planning in Bermuda).

BRIEF PRESENTATIONS

JEREMY MADEIROS

There have been 50 years of work on the

“Cahow” (Bermuda Petrel [*Pterodroma cahow*]) starting with work by David Wingate. The Cahow is definitely affected by invasive species such as rats which are combated by a grid pattern of rat bait boxes on all breeding islands. The issue of habitat loss was solved by using artificial burrows. Petrels from around the world are drawn to artificial burrow complexes. Global warming resulted in seven instances of overwash and loss of nesting islands, including the largest population. Luring and relocation actions are ongoing.

Political recognition and buy-in was hugely important. This was done by making the Cahow the National Bird. Outreach was a priority and three Government Ministers visited Somers, the “poster chick.” There are good relations with newspaper staff.

Tagging has applicability to foraging mysteries. Geolocator tags gives location and water temperature and are cheaper than satellite tags but must be retrieved. This works on the small Cahow and has not been shown to have any effect on behavior; the tags are placed on the Cahow's leg and do not seem to get in the way. There have been some amazing results with the use of these tags on the Cahow. Some birds went north of Bermuda with some as far as the edge of the ice pack near the St. Lawrence! Four thousand miles was the longest distance recorded. The BCPE and the Cahow forage in the same area off the coast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and these findings may be clues to where else the BCPE goes.

International recognition includes a military base agreement, but there has not been much international engagement. Birdlife provides venues for sharing and getting the science out. Australia/New South Wales Parks and Wildlife is the closest thing to a partner. They provided a place for Jeremy to train. Victor Carlisle has come and helped.

JIM GOETZ

Jim's recent work involves looking at goals (basic research and conservation hurdles) and methods (logistics, night-time listening, mist-netting, and nest searching).

In Loma del Toro, Jim heard a couple of BCPE each night, (possibly six individuals). It is very difficult to determine how many petrels are calling. Radar and imaging are two possible techniques for determining the number of petrels. The National Park is fairly well protected and one could possibly try artificial nests in this area. Ted Simons found a nest, maybe a male waiting for his mate. A camera and automatic recording device were deployed.

The Macaya site is very remote. In 2005, Jim was there with Chris Rimmer and John Gerwin but it was not really a legitimate survey although one bird was heard. They have not returned to this site, which was inaccessible in 2008 and 2009.

La Visite is a forested area that is extensively used by many people. Wood is used to make plaster for construction. There is a steep escarpment along the top of the cliff where listening surveys have been conducted.

Birds may aggregate and call away from nest site. Jeremy found that single Cahows never call. Cahows only call in the air. Those monitoring the BCPE should consider using other techniques, such as recordings. It has not been heard in other locations although there are rumors from Dominica.

People everywhere still eat the BCPE, although fewer people are eating the bird now (probably because it takes a lot of work to get to them). Techniques used to capture the bird include the use of fire and poking burrows.

Much has been learned about petrels, habitat, and about people (e.g. Jim Goetz's paper posted on website). Solutions: there must be ecosystem services or some benefit to the people. Don't make poor people pay.

JEAN VILMONDE'S IDEAS

Both Macaya and LaVisite are in Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA). The forest and its perimeter are degraded and completely surrounded by the community. Steepness does not protect the bird. There is a need to intervene to reforest and recover the area. Reforestation would probably help reduce invasive species. Because logistics are difficult, it is better to have a regional program that would take data over an extended period of time. There is a need to combine research and restoration.

Local projects help to improve the income of people by substituting crops (like onions) and hiring them for restoration using endemic plant species (vs. agroforestry). Restoration can also benefit other species. There is forestry in the lowland areas too. There are a number of different interests/projects at

various elevations. Again, avoid the term agroforestry (commercial and exotics).

In any species-specific conservation plan it needs to be clearly stated that habitat restoration and management are needed to help the BCPE.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

A number of actions were proposed as a result of the presentations. Several suggestions and propositions resulted from Jeremy Madeiros's presentation: (1) David and Catherine Lowrie are willing to add new techniques to their cruises; (2) connect with Frank Zino and the international *Pterodroma* research community; (3) reach out to Australia/New South Wales Parks and Wildlife regarding artificial burrows; and (4) obtain information about Cahow vocalization patterns.

Additional ideas from Jim Goetz's presentation and Jean Vilmonde's suggestions include: (1) study at an additional location (Haut Borgne in north Haiti 19°48'N, 72°31'W); (2) visibility: consider BCPE for the flagship species for LaVisite or as the emblem for the Caribbean Biological Corridor; (3) make sure any research ties into public education; (4) develop long-term strategy of bird tourism with the BCPE as an attraction; and (5) analyze Haleakala data on the Hawaiian Petrel (*Pterodroma sandwichensis*).

There were several other topics of particular interest:

1. Education: There is a need to continue with youth/capacity building programs (particularly two interns from Haiti) and to pursue a regional conservation program for youth. The best training for students is by working with partners, therefore we should bring qualified individuals to build programs and mentor students, and develop training agreements with different universities. In Macaya, work must include the schools, locals, and Audubon Haiti.

2. Cooperation: The need to work with other petrel biologists and the importance of contacting them was reiterated. ACAP policy needs to be reviewed and conservation should piggyback on other At Sea programs.

3. Invasives: Eradicate invasive species from small islands to create restored breeding sites. Consider possibility of supporting IC's plans for invasive species removal by asking (1) if we agree with these habitats and (2) if we would support social attraction and burrows following eradication.

4. Strategy for surveys of possible breeding sites: Matthew LeCoure is dealing with similar issues in

the French Antilles (very inaccessible terrain) by using techniques with recorders.

5. Strategies to support Haiti: For the two existing programs in LaVisite analyze and determine if these can be expanded or supported for BCPE needs. The BCPE working group needs to know what is going on with habitat conservation in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. There is a recent feasibility study for LaVisite working with Seguin and funded by Birdlife.

6. Strategies to support the Dominican Republic: Lomo del Toro National Park—Grupo Jaragua is managing KBAs in this area and there are numerous organizations willing to work on this. Currently, rat studies are underway and they are finding them in the pines where the BCPEs are. There could be some eradication around the pines. It may be good to try out artificial burrows somewhere else like Alto Vuelo or Beata Island.