

REPORT OF THE “THREATENED BIRDS OF THE CARIBBEAN” WORKSHOP

DAVID C. WEGE

BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK; e-mail: david.wege@birdlife.org

OVER 10% OF THE CARIBBEAN’S avifauna (57 of 560+ species) is considered globally threatened (categorised as Critical, Endangered, or Vulnerable) following the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List criteria. These birds will be the next to go extinct (due to a number of different threat factors), and thus it is our collective responsibility to focus on their conservation. Many of these globally threatened birds are best conserved by protecting the sites (Important Bird Areas) in which they occur. Others require species-specific actions to stop their decline towards extinction. Conservation efforts, whether focused on particular sites or species, are best achieved locally through community-based groups (e.g., site support groups) or dynamic “Species Champions” supported nationally by non-government organizations (NGOs) and academic or government institutions. Such efforts represent discrete individual projects, each requiring planning, funding and implementation. However, there is generally little awareness or understanding of the region’s threatened birds, and this can inhibit our conservation efforts at any stage of project implementation.

The Threatened Birds of the Caribbean Workshop was attended by 25-30 participants. There was an introductory presentation outlining the IUCN Red List process, availability of information about threatened birds in the Caribbean, and opportunities for people to have an input in the 2008 Red List evaluation. The workshop then focused on a review of action points identified during the 2005 SCSCB meeting in Guadeloupe (and whether or not they had been achieved), and then a brainstorm for ideas as to how a Threatened Birds Working Group could best help achieve the objectives of the SCSCB.

REVIEW OF 2005 THREATENED BIRDS ACTION POINTS

Five main action points were documented as an output of the 2005 Threatened Bird Workshop in Guadeloupe. Progress was scored using a scale of J-K-L. The action points were:

1. Act on recommendations for changes in species threat status, additions to the threatened species list,

and changes to the listed conservation actions. J (Outputs from the 2005 Guadeloupe meeting have informed a new discussion topic in the Globally Threatened Bird discussion forums.)

2. Work in close collaboration with the IUCN Red List process (coordinated by BirdLife International). J (As the IUCN Red Listing authority for birds, BirdLife works as an integral part of the IUCN Red List process.)

3. Follow up the concept of Species Guardians and whether this could form a network that engages members of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) and could help monitor the status of threatened species. K (The concept of Species Guardians has been drafted as a global program within the BirdLife Partnership, but has not yet been reviewed by SCSCB.)

4. Build on the dynamism generated to develop an SCSCB Threatened Bird Conservation Program. L (A formal programme has not been established.)

5. Liaise closely with the Monitoring Working Group (and others) to develop joint initiatives. L (With no program, little has been done to link to the activities of other SCSCB Working Groups.)

THREATENED BIRDS BRAINSTORM

The brainstorm focused on what the Threatened Birds Working Group, as a regional network of individuals and institutions, could most realistically achieve to help the SCSCB meet its strategic objective to “improve the conservation status of threatened and endemic Caribbean birds.”

The main action points identified during the brainstorm were:

1. Focus on contributing to the Globally Threatened Bird discussion forum to update, comment on and correct the Caribbean threatened species profiles (especially for the 2008 IUCN Red List assessment). The species profiles can be found on SCSCB’s TBWG webpage. The discussion forums can be found at: www.birdlifeforums.org.

2. Make an explicit link with the SCSCB website’s “Bird of the Month”—using it as an exercise to update our existing information on a globally threatened bird and also to publicize threatened birds (and

the specific species) regionally and nationally.

3. Make an explicit link between the Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival (CEBF) and the globally threatened status of many of our endemics while also pushing for the implementation of the CEBF in new countries—targeting first those countries which have Critically Endangered birds.

4. Promote the plight of globally threatened birds (generically or specifically) wherever possible through the Media Working Group.

5. Continue to exert international pressure (through letters of intervention, web stories, etc.) in reaction to specific threats to critical sites and species (e.g., the Mount Hartman development and the Grenada Dove [*Leptotila wellsi*] or Wind Mar and the Puerto Rican Nightjar [*Caprimulgus noctitherus*]).

6. Share “lessons learnt” regarding threatened species conservation efforts, and new information from research through *Birds Caribbean* newsletter, *Journal of Caribbean Ornithology*, or the SCSCB listserve/website.

7. Identify sympathetic politicians (and famous people) who could push a Globally Threatened

Birds agenda nationally.

8. Provide summary documents, nationally and regionally, to key individuals, about the Globally Threatened Birds, the threats they face and what needs to be done to save them.

9. Work to promote the concept of Species Champions (individuals or NGOs) and assist their efforts (international pressure, media, etc.) to conserve Globally Threatened Birds.

THREATENED BIRDS WORKING GROUP

It was agreed that an SCSCB Threatened Birds Working Group was needed, but that its focus overlaps with many (if not all) other SCSCB working groups, and thus there would need to be a close dialogue with all other working group chairs. The Threatened Birds Working Group chair is, for the moment, David Wege (david.wege@birdlife.org), assisted by co-chair Adam Kent (adam2kent@yahoo.com). Communication, due to the cross-cutting nature of the subject area, will be through the SCSCB listserve, although this will be reviewed constantly.