

## REPORT OF THE CARIBBEAN ENDEMIC BIRD FESTIVAL COORDINATORS' MEETING

SHEYLDA N. DÍAZ-MÉNDEZ

HC-04 Box 9084, Utuado, PR 00641; email: [otoarina77@yahoo.com](mailto:otoarina77@yahoo.com)

THE SOCIETY for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) celebrates the Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival (CEBF) from 22 April to 22 May every year. Countries from all over the region have joined in this celebration helping to make it a success. Our purpose is to increase public awareness of the region's high endemism and rich bird life through many activities.

For the first time in 2007, we adopted a conservation theme: Climate Change. The theme proved to be the perfect opportunity to raise awareness about this critical issue—how it will likely affect our region's birds and habitats, and the actions we can all take to help stop it. There were multiple showings of Al Gore's movie "An Inconvenient Truth" which we distributed to all coordinators. Coordinators distributed and displayed the Global Warming and the Caribbean Fact Sheet and the poster designed exclusively for the CEBF, as well as excellent materials from International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) that included a climate change education booklet, posters, stickers, and even bird tattoos.

At our coordinators meeting, we discussed aspects of the last two festivals. The agenda included a presentation of results from the 2006 and 2007 festivals, including participation, grants awarded, media, CEBF materials, shipping of materials, payment of shipping, new themes, and theme T-shirts. In 2006 the participation was very impressive: 20,322 persons participated in 260 activities in 11 countries. Eight small grants for festival activities were awarded to the following organizations: Bahamas National Trust (\$300), Universidad de la Habana, Cuba (\$500), Dominica Forestry Department (\$500), Sociedad Ornitológica Hispaniola in Dominican Republic (\$400), Jamaica Environmental Trust (\$400), Sociedad Ornitológica Puertorriqueña (SOPI) (\$150), Casa Pueblo in Puerto Rico (\$350), and University of the Virgin Islands (\$350) for a total of \$3,000. Thanks to BirdLife International UNEP-GEF grant for these funds.

The results of the 2007 CEBF overcame our expectations when reports added up to over 35,000 participants (and still counting) celebrating with 380

activities in 15 countries! New countries or islands participating this year included San Andres, Martinique, Tobago, St. Maarten, and Bonaire. Seven small grants were awarded to the following organizations: The Bahamas National Trust (\$300), Universidad de la Habana (\$500), Grupo Jaragua in the Dominican Republic (\$500), Jamaica Environmental Trust (\$500), Sociedad Ornitológica Hispaniola in the Dominican Republic (\$400), Amazona in Guadeloupe (\$300), and Sociedad Ornitológica Puertorriqueña (\$400) for a total of \$2,900. Thanks to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Fund for providing these funds. Each country turned in a report of how they used their funds in various activities, such as preparation of posters, brochures, and a coloring book.

In 2006 and 2007, local coordinators used the media release prepared by Leo Douglas. In 2007, most coordinators used the Global Warming Fact Sheet prepared by Lisa Sorenson during activities and distributed it to schools, government and non-government agencies, and the media. The 2007 CEBF poster (artwork by Rolando Ata) showing vulnerable habitats and birds and potential impacts (increased storms, droughts, and flooding) conveyed the global warming theme very effectively. We also used the excellent materials donated by IMBD, especially posters, stickers, magazines, and tattoos with our shared theme on climate change.

The top recommendation for the CEBF is aiming activities for children as well as adults. It was agreed that sharing the theme of IMBD each year, as long as the theme was relevant to the Caribbean, was a very good idea. This would allow us to share educational materials and not duplicate efforts. Many of us commented that we would like to see more Caribbean species in the IMBD materials we use. Consequently, the group brainstormed a list of Caribbean species that IMBD can use for the production of educational materials. The list included Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*), Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), hummingbirds (Trochilidae), todies (*Todus* spp.), and cuckoos (Cuculidae). Sue Bon-

field, IMBD coordinator, will do her best to include at least a couple of Caribbean species in IMBD materials each year.

The shipping of materials to each coordinator is covered by the SCSCB with each group repaying the cost of shipping. In the future we will consider encouraging organizations to print some CEBF materials (e.g., posters) locally (SCSCB providing files) in order to minimize shipping costs if printing in smaller quantities can be done economically.

For our 2008 CEBF, we decided to share the IMBD theme “Tundra to Tropics: Connecting Birds, Habitats, and People.” We agreed to use IMBD materials in our upcoming CEBF and adapt them if necessary. We will also be encouraging more celebrations of IMBD throughout the region in the fall; we decided on the second Saturday in October as

the “official” day to celebrate IMBD in the Caribbean since this is when bird migrations peak in many countries. (IMBD is celebrated the second Saturday in May in North America). We stress, however, that countries are free to celebrate IMBD (and CEBF) whenever it best suits their schedule.

Finally, in the future we will try to produce an official “CEBF T-shirt” each year to enhance our celebrations. The T-shirts can be given away as prizes in CEBF activities or sold by organizations as a means of helping to economically sustain our festivals. In this matter, every country has agreed to keep exploring funding possibilities and sponsorships for the festival in their countries and to continue celebrating birds and their habitats in the Caribbean for years to come!