REPORT OF THE ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION "BUILDING A LOCAL BIRD SPECIMEN COLLECTION"

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Bird specimen collections have many uses, such as voucher specimens, teaching aids, identification reference, artistic reference, taxonomic study, and providing genetic material for a range of research topics. Normally, these collections are housed in far-off universities or museums where access is impractical if not impossible. Building a local specimen collection is a very useful alternative to flying to Washington, DC, so a student can study a series of Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*) specimens in the Smithsonian. The Bahamas National Trust (BNT) has begun a very successful local specimen collection in collaboration with an American institution. Specimens resulting from this collaboration have been put to use in public awareness and conservation campaigns, as well as providing scientists and artists with locally relevant reference material. The Museum of Vertebrates at Cornell University is interested in partnering and collaborating with organizations throughout the Caribbean following the successful model that the BNT has implemented.

This session covered how the BNT has used the collection in furthering its work in the Bahamas, how the existing collaboration is set up, and any changes that BNT would like to see with the process. Since the BNT does not have the personnel to prepare specimens, they send frozen birds to a university in the United States that prepares them, keeps some specimens for its own collection, and returns the remainder to the BNT. The resulting specimens are kept in a "specimen" case in the BNT's main office. Jeff gave his thoughts on how the collaboration would work with Cornell and briefly covered topics such as specimen cases, import / export permits, labeling specimens, and transportation of the specimens. The goals of the discussion were to determine what is needed to make the collaboration work within different countries and organizations, and to take the first steps in setting up some specific partnerships

The first focus of the discussions centered on the fact that there are very few individuals with the training to locally prepare specimens. Several countries already have existing specimen collections and the infrastructure to house the collection but they do not have the personnel with the skills to prepare new specimens for the collection. There was strong interest in having a "Specimen Preparation Workshop" held in the Caribbean that would cover all aspects of the specimen preparation process. Ideally, this would be located in a country and facility with existing specimen cases and a series of specimens in the freezer. The workshop would be a hands-on preparation workshop and participants would prepare specimens using a variety of techniques. The recommendation is that Cornell and the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds work together to secure funding and conduct a Specimen Preparation Workshop in the Caribbean.

The second focus of the discussion was on building a local specimen collection where none currently exists. Challenges include acquiring import / export permits, transportation of specimens, and acquiring and housing specimen cases. To set up a local collection, organizations would need to acquire a specimen case and have space to store the case, ideally in a climate-controlled environment. If the organization does not have the local skills to prepare specimens, the Cornell Museum of Vertebrates would provide specimen preparation services. This would require the local organization to get the necessary import / export permits and work with Cornell in transporting the specimens back and forth. Please contact Jeff Gerbracht for more information or for assistance in beginning a local collection.