

REPORT OF THE SYMPOSIUM AND ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION  
“TRAINING NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT”

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THIS SYMPOSIUM took place in direct response to a mandate given at the 2005 SCSCB meeting held in Guadeloupe. At that time, the issues and problems which need to be addressed in order to effectively manage protected areas to conserve birds were identified (Nathai-Gyan *et al.* 2005). The purpose of this follow-up session was to devise a means to enhance capacities of the Caribbean professionals involved in protected areas management to face these challenges through the development of a suitable training programme(s).

The approach taken was an attempt at fast-tracking the process, through the tailoring of the RESERVA course, which has been training protected areas managers in Latin America for decades. To do so, a 50-min presentation on the course was given in the plenary session, followed by 3 successful case studies/models from the Caribbean, each of 15 min duration that addressed different aspects of protected areas management. Two focus groups, formed on the basis of language (English and Spanish), were then requested to engage in discussions to identify how best to adapt the RESERVA course for the Caribbean.

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATIONS

The first presentation was on the RESERVA course, coordinated by David Alonzo Para and presented on behalf of Eduardo Carrera, Director Nacional, Ducks Unlimited de Mexico, who assisted in the preparatory work leading up to the symposium. This course is designed for persons directly involved in management of protected areas and natural resources, and serves as the conduit for transfer of highly technical information from its academic staff and scientists. It is a mix of classroom and field work, delivered through modules supported by handbooks, catering for a small group of 16 persons during a period of 62 days (540 hours). The course outline includes the following topics: GIS applied to management of natural resources; conservation biol-

ogy; tools for the conservation of flowers and vegetation; monitoring of vertebrates; biodiversity: valuation and application; conservation and management of wildlife; veterinary medicine; environmental development in Association of National Parks in Latin America; public use of national parks; social investigation and work in local communities; environmental education; environmental impact; forestry practices; ecological bases for the management of coastal wetlands; definition of territory and environmental planning; seminar: conflict management; seminar: economics, natural resources, and the environment; seminar: climate change; and environmental development.

The second presentation was on “Strengthening Protection of the Avifauna of the Sierra de Bahoruco National Park, Dominican Republic,” by Paul Salaman of the American Bird Conservancy. Located on the Haitian border, the importance of this site as habitat for 15 of the 19 threatened birds of Hispaniola was mentioned as well as its provision of critical sites for Neotropical migrants. Despite this, habitat loss and population declines are occurring from slash-and-burn agriculture, illegal squatters, wildfires, hunting, and capture of nestling birds for the pet trade. Guided by the 18-page park management plan, Grupo Jaragua and American Bird Conservancy are involved in the protection of the park’s biological resources. Pressing issues were identified as guard training (for better enforcement), extending the park boundary, environmental education (towards attitudinal changes), and community involvement (as guides), all geared towards strengthening the park protection efforts. Important points to consider are that “big bucks” are not needed to make a difference, work should be concentrated at the grassroots level—the frontline in conservation—and that more synergy is needed between the government and the non-governmental organizations.

The third presentation was on “Local Forest Man-

agement Committees (LFMCs) in Jamaica: A Case Study of Cockpit Country,” by Susan Koenig of the Windsor Research Centre. The LFMCs programme established by the Forest Department of Jamaica enables participation of communities in the management of forested habitats for conservation and sustainable use. Information-sharing is a cornerstone of the LFMC fora, both for imparting scientific information to communities and for formalizing and archiving traditional knowledge. In 2007, three LFMCs were established for the Cockpit Country Conservation Area, which encompasses three important bird areas. These LFMCs have united their voices with international and national non-government organizations and individuals to tackle the bauxite mining issue in the Cockpit Country, calling on the government to legally declare the area “closed” to mining. Prompted by the coordinated public outcry, one prospecting license has been suspended and a second has been surrendered back to the government. Important lessons learnt are that a strong community-based component is needed in management of protected areas, co-management is a mechanism to unify forces, and conservation is needed at many levels—site-based, national, and international—and this mechanism provides a pool of experts with credible facts.

The fourth presentation was the “National Workshop on Waterbird Ecology—An Opportunity for Capacity Building and a Tool for Conservation of Protected Areas for Birds,” by Lourdes Mugica, Martin Acosta, Antonio Rodriguez, and Alieny Gonzalez of the Facultad de Biología, Universidad de la Habana, Cuba. Because these authors were unable to attend, the presentation was delivered on their behalf by Lisa Sorenson, co-facilitator of the symposium. It provided a description of a 1-week capacity building workshop organized at a national level, focused on raising the level of knowledge in people working in protected areas with wetlands included. This was undertaken to address the gaps in knowledge of local people, usually technicians, some with high school level or a bachelor’s education in different topics, not always related to biology. In this way, the cadre of people working in Cuba’s national system of protected areas can effectively participate in biodiversity management and monitoring. Twenty-two people from nine provinces attended. The Bird Ecology Group at the University of Havana delivered topics related to aquatic birds and their work in protected areas including systematics of aquatic birds, general ornithology, ecological field methods, data analysis, project

planning, environmental education, and management using different modes, including lectures, a field trip, and seminars. Finally, the basis for a network was created for continued national communication. Important points to consider are that capacity building is crucial to guarantee conservation in the long term and networking is a necessity for continuity.

#### REPORT OF FOCUS GROUPS

The two focus groups under the facilitation of Doug Ryan (Spanish-speaking) and Susan Koenig and Bonnie Rusk (English-speaking) were requested to consider the following questions in their deliberations of how to adapt the RESERVA course for the Caribbean:

1. Who should comprise the target audience in the first instance?
2. Which are the topics from the RESERVA course that should be given intensive focus and are there any others which should be included?
3. Which topics are the highest priority for training?

#### SPANISH-SPEAKING FOCUS GROUP

Target countries comprise Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela to be held as a separate course in the Dominican Republic, but such a training course for this group should be second in priority as these countries can likely access the RESERVA course. Duration should be 2 weeks and target professionals within the concept of “training the trainers.” The priorities were identified as follows:

1. Definition of territory and environmental planning (land-use planning).
2. Biodiversity monitoring.
3. Engaging communities—conflict management and social investigation in local communities.

#### ENGLISH-SPEAKING FOCUS GROUP

This group did not consider whether a separate course should be designed for the Spanish-speaking countries but agreed that the target audience should comprise the professionals involved in protected areas management. A 2-week course was seen as suitable and the priorities were identified as follows:

1. Biodiversity: valuation and monitoring.
2. Social investigation and work in local communities.
3. Conservation and management of wildlife.
4. Project management and communications (new topic).

CONCLUSION AND FOLLOW-UP

A number of other topics were identified as important for the Caribbean (conservation biology, environmental education, environmental impact, and coastal wetlands management) and it was suggested that programmes may already exist where these are offered. It was therefore recommended that a calendar of training opportunities should be compiled by the SCSCB.

On charting the way forward for the elaboration of the specific areas to be covered under the general heading (course outline and content), manner of delivery, and subsequent implementation of the training course(s) in 2008, it will be necessary to prepare a proposal for grant funding. Two potential sources were identified: the US Fish and Wildlife

Service Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Fund and the US Fish and Wildlife Service–Wildlife Without Borders programme, recognizing that this is by no means an exhaustive list. In the final analysis, the critical factor in the success of this SCSCB initiative is the coming forward of volunteers to assist in the preparation of a proposal to take advantage of early windows of opportunities.

LITERATURE CITED

- NATHAI-GYAN, N., E. CAREY, AND H. RAFFAELE.  
2005. Protected areas management: moving from paper parks to effective management, are protected areas really conserving birds? *Journal of Caribbean Ornithology* 18:97-99.