

## THE FUTURE OF THE SOCIETY OF CARIBBEAN ORNITHOLOGY (SCO): THE RESULTS OF A ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION, SOME IDEAS, AND A QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE MEMBERSHIP

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During the 1995 Annual Meeting held in Trinidad we had a round-table discussion about the future of the SCO. The discussion, in part, provided a follow-up to a paper published in *El Pitirre* (Vol. 8, No. 1, Pp. 8-10). Here we present a synopsis of the results of the round-table discussion, provide some additional ideas, and solicit, through a questionnaire, further input from the SCO membership. This questionnaire will help us in contacting a large number of members (hopefully the whole membership!), and will serve as a tool to prioritize future actions according to what we wish to accomplish as an organization primarily concerned with the conservation of birds and their habitats in the Caribbean region.

During the round-table discussion the following points were mentioned by one or more members:

(1) The need to increase the participation of local people in the annual meetings, not just amateur and professional ornithologists, but other persons representing other disciplines (e.g., environmental sciences, education, resource managers) and socioeconomic interests (e.g., ecotourism, developers, politicians) to make our meetings more relevant to the conservation of birds and their habitats in particular, and to the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources in general.

The Local Committee should become more involved in the coordination of the annual meeting. For example, the Local Committee should advertise the meeting and secure the participation of key persons from government and non-governmental organizations involved in important conservation issues (e.g., unregulated hunting, urban development, resource planning, nature reserves management).

(2) The development of policy statements to clarify our position regarding important conservation issues (e.g., the benefits and costs of ecotourism, bird trade, the establishment and management of natural reserves and buffer zones). The development of policy statements should involve the Executive Board in direct consultation with the Island Representatives and the active membership of the Society.

(3) The need of reaching a wide audience at national and regional levels with our conservation message. Why is the conservation of birds so important? What do we gain by spending our limited resources in bird conservation projects? How can the public help in conserving birds and their

habitats? What is our position regarding ecotourism projects and, for example, the constructions of access roads and trails inside and outside natural reserves? Can we help in providing feasible alternatives to development projects?

It was agreed that *El Pitirre* should be our main channel of communication. However, we should also contact other newsletters and actively involve other local and regional organizations in our conservation efforts (e.g., CCA, CANARI, UNICA, NAAEE; see H. A. Raffaele. 1995. Building partnerships: ideas for expanded Society collaboration. *El Pitirre* 8(3):7). For example, the Local Committee may contact public or private TV and radio stations or may publish articles in magazines and newspapers to reach the public in general.

Moreover, each year, the SCO may give an award to a prominent person (say, the Minister of the Environment of the island in turn or the leader of an important NGO) for his or her contribution to the conservation of birds and their habitats. Needless to say, the local press should be formally invited to the ceremony, which might take place on a specific day dedicated to the discussion of local conservation issues with decision makers representing public and private organizations dealing with the environment.

As part of SCO public outreach efforts, it was suggested that a brochure be prepared with a simple mission statement, a directory of expertise, a document about the conservation and management of endangered and threatened bird species ("flagships") and their habitats. Also suggested was a 10-year anniversary document summarizing the achievements of the Society.

(4) The need of conducting fund raising activities to make the SCO more self-sustainable was also discussed, as was the idea of selling at the meeting T-shirts with our logo, bird stamps, drawings, posters, photos, books, field guides, and so forth.

In our opinion, the 1995 meeting at Trinidad was an excellent first step in becoming more interactive as members of a Society promoting the conservation of birds and their habitats in the region. We now need to sustain that momentum in preparation for taking a second step in the Bahamas. You can help by filling out and returning the attached questionnaire.

## SCO QUESTIONNAIRE (1996)

**INSTRUCTIONS.**—Except when indicated, answer all the questions by selecting only one alternative per question. At the end of the questionnaire, please write your name, addresses, telephone, fax, and e-mail in the space provided. (The results of the questionnaire will be statistically analyzed and discussed in our next meeting in the Bahamas; the identity of the

surveyed members will be kept confidential and will be used only for statistical purposes). *Return the questionnaire as soon as possible to:* Frank F. Rivera-Milán, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of International Affairs, 4401 N. Fairfax Dr., Suite 860-ARLSQ, Arlington, VA 22203, U.S.A.

1. How often should we hold meetings?
  - A. Every year
  - B. Every two years
  - C. Every three years or more
  
2. When should we hold meetings?
  - A. June
  - B. July
  - C. August
  - D. September
  - E. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. For how long should we hold meetings?  
(*Note: excluding arrival and departure days, but including field trips*).
  - A. Three days
  - B. Four days
  - C. Five days
  - D. Six days
  - E. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Should we hold meetings jointly with other conservation organizations?
  - A. Yes
  - B. No
  - C. Don't care
  
5. If you chose (A), indicate with how many and what size of organizations?
  - A. One small organization (less than 150 participants)
  - B. Two small organizations (less than 300 participants)
  - C. One large organization (more than 500 participants)
  - D. One small and one large organization (500-1000 participants)
  
6. How many SCO meetings have you attended since 1988?
  - A. None
  - B. One
  - C. Two
  - D. Three
  - E. Four or more
  
7. Besides the SCO meeting, approximately how many meetings do you attend per year?
  - A. None
  - B. One
  - C. Two
  - D. Three
  - E. Four or more
  
8. Besides your SCO membership, how many memberships do you hold in conservation organizations?
  - A. None
  - B. One
  - C. Two
  - D. Three
  - E. Four or more
  
9. List one or two examples of other organizations that you are member of:
 

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10. How much time should we dedicate to round-table discussions of local issues incorporating the participation of local decision makers?
  - A. None
  - B. Less than one day
  - C. One day
  - D. Two days
  - E. More than two days
  
11. How much time should we dedicate to workshops and round-table discussions of regional issues?
  - A. None
  - B. One day
  - C. Two days
  - D. Three days
  - E. Four days or more
  
12. How much time should we spend presenting papers?
  - A. None
  - B. One day
  - C. Two days
  - D. Three days
  - E. Four days or more

SCO Questionnaire (Continued)

13. Do you think we need concurrent sessions to reduce the time spent presenting papers?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't care

14. How many field trips would you like to attend per meeting?

- A. None
- B. One
- C. Two
- D. Three
- E. Four or more

15. Should the SCO conduct fund raising activities during the meeting?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't care

If yes, provide suggestions:

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16. Besides the money for registration and membership fees, how much money (US\$) can you spend buying fund raising products (posters, T-shirts, field guides, stamps, etc.)?

- A. \$5.00-\$10.00
- B. \$10.00-\$20.00
- C. \$20.00-\$50.00
- D. More than \$50.00
- E. I can't afford it.

17. Have you received support from the SCO to participate in meetings?

- A. Yes
- B. No

18. If you chose (A), indicate how many times have you received support from the SCO?

- A. One
- B. Two
- C. Three
- D. Four or more

19. Do you think you can raise matching travel funds to attend meetings?

- A. Yes
- B. No

20. If you chose (A), indicate approximately the level of matching?

- A. 10% (\$50 of \$500)
- B. 25% (\$125 of \$500)
- C. 50% (\$250 of \$500)
- D. I can cover my travel expenses
- E. I can't cover my travel expenses

21. Do you see the SCO mainly as a scientific organization?

- A. Yes
- B. No

22. Rank the level of success of the SCO in promoting the conservation of birds and their habitats in the Caribbean?

- A. High
- B. Moderate
- C. Poor
- D. Unsuccessful

23. Do you think the Columbidae and Psittacidae Working Groups serve a function in meeting SCO goals?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't care

24. Do you think SCO should form a Migratory Bird Working Group?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't care

25. Rank the following themes for workshops by the level of importance as: 0 = not important, 1 = low, 2 = moderate, 3 = high.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Conservation Education
- \_\_\_\_\_ Monitoring and Management Techniques
- \_\_\_\_\_ Landscape Ecology, Resource Planning, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Basic Statistics and Elementary Survey Sampling Designs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ecotourism, Public Outreach and Fund Raising Strategies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Environmental Impact Assessment and Decision Making Processes

SCO Questionnaire (Continued)

If needed, rank and provide additional themes for workshops:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

26. Should the SCO have a Resolution Committee?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't care

27. Should the SCO support specific projects that can serve as models for promoting the conservation of birds and their habitats?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't care

28. If you chose (A), what kind of projects should be a priority for the SCO?

(Note: select one alternative only).

- A. Research
- B. Inventories, Surveys, Monitoring
- C. Management
- D. Education
- E. Ecotourism
- F. Interdisciplinary (team work)

29. What do you think of the following policy for members requesting SCO support?

(I) Applicants must work with other interested individuals/groups on their island/country to develop mutual interest and partnerships with the Society to achieve conservation goals and objectives. (II) Priority should be given to applicants who can raise matching travel funds or raise in-kind contributions on their island/country. (III) Applicants must provide a one-page statement on how their participation in the meeting will contribute to their professional development and to

conservation programs they represent. (IV) Repetitive financing of the same individuals, despite meeting the mentioned requirements, will be discouraged through a gradual decline in the level of assistance.

- A. Agree
- B. Disagree
- C. Don't care

30. If you chose (B), with what of the above criteria do you disagree?

(Note: select more than one, if needed).

- A. I
- B. II
- C. III
- D. IV
- E. All of them

Please provide the following information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel.: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_