

# BiRDs

Celebrating the bounty of beautiful birds across the Caribbean



**LEFT:**  
Radar was used to track the Diablotin in Dominica's valleys

## Black-cap comeback

The mysterious 'little devil' returns to Dominica

The mountains of Dominica are lush, almost impossibly rugged and among the last truly wild spaces in the Caribbean. For over 150 years, they have also been hiding a secret.

Black-capped Petrels are one of the region's rarest, most enigmatic seabirds. They spend most of their life at sea, returning to land only to nest. During nesting season, they spend their days foraging on water and return to their nests under cover of darkness. Locals call them the *Diablotin* (little devil), after their haunting calls.

The past few centuries have been tough for seabirds in the Caribbean. Most nest on the

ground, so when rats and other predators were brought from Europe, and when coastal areas became more developed, the lives of seabirds changed. Many sought out remote, uninhabited islands to breed. Black-capped Petrels retreated inland instead.

As these birds disappeared from human-inhabited areas, they disappeared from scientific records too. It was thought they were extinct, until an expedition to Haiti in the 1960s rediscovered them. Until 2015, they were only known to nest in the peaks of Hispaniola. The last confirmed nesting on Dominica was in 1862.

In 2012 a group of scientists from Grupo Jaragua, Société Audubon Haiti and Environmental Protection in the Caribbean used the latest technology to track petrels on Hispaniola. Using night-vision goggles and radar, they followed the birds to their nests. It had never been done before.

In 2015, a team set out to find proof of the Diablotin on Dominica. Again using radar, the team detected nearly 1,000 petrels. This leaves little doubt they are breeding on Dominica.

This discovery has redrawn the map for the Black-capped Petrel, and gives new hope. It also opens the door for further discovery: surviving unseen for 150 years on Dominica, could other islands have hidden colonies in their mountains?



WATCH THIS...

## DEVIL ON FILM

New movie reveals more about the plight of this rare bird

The Black-capped Petrel is the subject of a new documentary film, *Save the Devil*. The film tells the story of two families: one is a family of Haitian farmers struggling to feed their children; one is a family of birds on the brink of extinction, in one of the last places they can hide.

Seen through the eyes of biologist Adam Brown, the film showcases both groundbreaking research on one of the world's most fascinating birds and the desperation that drives Haitian farmers to work up the highest peaks, clearing the last forests to farm the land. In telling both stories, the film explores the connection between humanitarian crisis and environmental devastation, and how the two problems must be solved together.

\* [WWW.SAVETHEDEVIL.NET](http://WWW.SAVETHEDEVIL.NET)



\* FOR MORE ON THE DIABLOTIN, VISIT [WWW.BIRDSCARIBBEAN.ORG](http://WWW.BIRDSCARIBBEAN.ORG) AND SEARCH FOR 'BLACK-CAPPED PETREL'. BIRDSCARIBBEAN IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION COMMITTED TO CONSERVING CARIBBEAN BIRDS AND HABITATS. FOLLOW ON FACEBOOK (SEARCH 'CARIBBEAN BIRDS'), TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM (@BIRDSCARIBBEAN)

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