

**PTERODROMA HASITATA / BLACK-CAPPED PETREL WORKING GROUP**  
**NOTES FROM THE SOCIETY FOR THE CONSERVATION AND STUDY OF CARIBBEAN BIRDS**  
**REGIONAL MEETING, 25 JULY, 2011; FREEPORT, GRAND BAHAMA**

*Notes reflect discussions but are also supplemented by details compiled shortly after the workshop.*

**PARTICIPANTS**

Verónica Anadón, Yvonne Arias, Marlon Beale, Jorge Brocca, Natalia Collier, Boris Fabres, Esteban Garrido, Eduardo Iñigo-Elias, Matt Jeffrey, Brad Keitt, Adam Kent, Sara Lara, Mildred Méndez, Ricardo Miller, Nat Miller, Andrew Rothman, Bonnie Rusk, Ann Sutton, Kirsty Swinnerton, David Wege and Jennifer Wheeler. See SCSCB meeting directory for contact information.

Apologies for absence especially noted from Jim Goetz, Jessica Hardesty, Chris Rimmer, Ernesto Rupp, Anderson Jean and Enold Louis Jean.

**CONSERVATION UPDATES (IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, SINCE THE 2009 SCSCB MEETING)**

Action Planning

**Santo Domingo, November 2010 Working Group Meeting.** A partners meeting was held in the Dominican Republic jointly with Bicknell's Thrush Working Group, to advance Hispaniola Montane Forest conservation. The outputs of the meeting allowed for completion of final draft of conservation plan.

**Final review draft of the species Conservation Action Plan in circulation.** The document was sent via e-mail on July 24 to all members of Black-capped Petrel Working Group.

Increasing Conservation Knowledge

**Discovery of a new nest site in Haiti.** At the SCSCB Freeport meeting, Esteban Garrido presented the recent discovery of a new nesting location for the species:

DISCOVERY OF A NEW NESTING LOCATION FOR BLACK-CAPPED PETREL (PTERODROMA HASITATA) IN HAITI. Ernst Rupp\*, Esteban Garrido Gomez, Jairo Isa Matos, Gerson Féliz, José Luis Castillo\*, Jim Goetz\*\*, John Gerwin† \*Grupo Jaragua Inc., Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, \*\*Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA, †North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, Raleigh, NC, USA. E-mail: jeg43@cornell.edu

Nesting populations of Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata*) have been confirmed at only three locations, all on Hispaniola, so documenting additional sites is urgent for conservation of this endangered bird. We report a new nesting location, and the first instance of monitoring of active nests of the species. On 13 March 2011 we found two adults on active nests on Morne Vincent, Massif de la Selle, Haiti. One nest was in small cave, while the other was in a ravine. Two weeks later we found a nestling in the cave nest, but the ravine nest failed, likely due to heavy rain. This

nesting location appears to be highly threatened by agricultural expansion, invasive mammals and direct harvest by local residents. Our future work will continue nest monitoring, assess threats to nest success, and, most importantly, focus on collaborating with the local community to conserve and enhance the nesting site.

As the time of the presentation, the chick in the small cave appeared near to fledging.

**Sightings from EPIC Seabird Breeding Atlas of the Lesser Antilles work.** During their surveys of Dominica in February 2010, the Lowrie's hosted David Wingate on their sailing boat and together searched for Black-capped Petrel as well as other breeding seabirds on the island. There were just a few probable sightings at sea. The Lowrie's also assisted Wingate in preserving the specimen (a breeding female) found in Dominica in 2007.

**Sightings off Jamaica.** In November of 2009, a pelagic expedition aimed primarily at searching for the Jamaican Petrel was conducted as part of a larger work on genetics, geographic variation, and conservation of Caribbean petrels (Shirihai et al. 2010). "A total of forty-six Black-capped Petrels were observed coming towards the island at during late afternoon and early evening. Some lingered at sea below the mountains as if waiting for darkness before flying inland, a behavior that suggests that they may be Jamaican breeders."

**Genetic research.** Marcel van Tuinen sent this email to the Black-capped Petrel Working Group on 2/15/2011: "With help from Dave Lee and Brian Patteson, our lab has managed to extract and amplify DNA from 20+ black capped petrels caught off the coast of the outer banks in the 1980's. Amazingly, we are continuing to find fixed genetic differences between dark and light morphs in terms of the size of the black cap, with intermediate morphs mostly falling with the light morphs. This genetic evidence points out the clear possibility of two distinct breeding populations of black-capped petrel. Although different, I do not think the genetic differentiation is large enough to consider these different species, but populations for sure and maybe subspecies. Considering how little we know of population structure in this species, this is an exciting find!" Marcel has submitted a manuscript on this study to the Auk.

### Capacity and Habitat Conservation News

**Environmental conservation capacity in Haiti.** The January 2010 earthquake had major environmental consequences. Refugees from Port-au-Prince temporarily increased the pressures on the remaining forests and the staff and operations of Haitian environmental organizations, including Société Audubon Haïti, were harmed. Fortunately, a number of funding streams are now in place to assist these organizations, which collaborate as a network known as the Rézo-Ekolo. BirdLife facilitated acquisition of funding to this network from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), building on investment already made for SAH capacity building with MacArthur Foundation funds. Funds through BirdLife from the UK government's Darwin Initiative are focusing SAH field research efforts (on threatened vertebrates) in the Massif de la Hotte. Strategic conservation interventions in the Massif de la Hotte (complementing existing activities with SAH around Macaya National Park) and the Massif de la Selle – both known to host Black-capped

Petrels – are planned. Thanks in part to funding by U.S. Forest Service, BirdLife has also arranged salaries for two biologists to work with Société Audubon Haïti (Anderson Jean and Enold Louis Jean).

**Declaración de Santo Domingo: Corredor Biológico del Caribe.** In July 2010, the ministers of environment in Haiti, Cuba and Dominican Republic signed a Plan of Action for the Caribbean Biological Corridor, initiating a commitment to conserving biodiversity through environmental, social, economic and cultural projects. This corridor includes the known breeding sites of the Black-capped Petrel.

**Grupo Jaragua plans for work in Sierra de Bahoruco.** This mountain range forms one of three core zones in the UNESCO Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo Biosphere Reserve which supports populations of over 50 globally threatened species, including the Black-capped Petrel. With CEPF funds, Grupo Jaragua aims to develop a land fund with which to purchase strategically sited plots of land for conservation purposes. This is deemed to be the most effective approach to forest conservation for this region. Additionally, the organization is overseeing a process to develop a strategy to implement monitoring of these threatened species and to influence their threats, included consultation of literature, key informants and intensive field work.

**National Audubon Society Seabird Internships.** With MacArthur funding facilitated by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Steve Kress has offered seabird conservation internships – a 10 week training at Maine field stations in seabird census, banding, foraging, telemetry, habitat restoration and public education – to interns from Black-capped Petrel range countries (e.g., Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba).

**Jim Goetz's Field Work.** Jim has expanded his research interests from species ecology to include human dimensions, so to address the root causes of endangerment via human behavior (e.g., deforestation for charcoal extraction). He is currently in Haiti conducting research in Haitian communities.

## **UPCOMING AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

Ernst Rupp, Esteban Garrido and others with Grupo Jaragua intend to continue to spearhead investigations of Black-capped Petrel on Hispaniola, as well as address immediate threats such as agriculture and fire.

Yvonne Arias also noted that Grupo Jaragua is on the Caribbean Committee for IUCN Species Survival Groups and can serve as an advocate for the species with IUCN.

BirdLife will continue their support of the habitat and species conservation strategies.

Cornell has funding from the MacArthur Foundation and is interested in supporting field investigations in Cuba. Partners are applying for permits to visit Pico Turquino in Cuba where BCPE were observed foraging, calling, and going into the mountains in February 2004.

Eduardo Iñigo and Natalia Collier (married to Adam Brown) also noted the interest in using cutting-edge technologies to help in field investigations of Black-capped Petrels, e.g. acoustic monitors and radar ornithology. Adam Brown, on behalf of EPIC, is seeking funds to use radar to search for petrels as part of a larger project which includes outreach and partnerships with Grupo Jaragua, American Bird Conservancy, and Jim Goetz.

## **WORKING GROUP ADMINISTRATION**

### Chairmanship

The Working Group should establish new leadership, since Elena Babij has stepped down as Chair as she has a new position in USFWS. USFWS is committed to involvement (Black-capped Petrel is an agency focal species), but leadership of the Working Group should involve all range states.

### Plan Completion and Use

The nearly complete Black-capped Petrel Conservation Action Plan can serve many uses for the Working Group – as a guide, a promotion tool, a scorecard. The group needs to think about strategically pursuing these many uses. Moreover, the plan is intended to be general and support a broad partnership, so individual partners need to continue to collaborate on specific projects.

### Ongoing Communications

The Working Group currently consists of about ~100 persons, connected by e-mail. The working group may consider transitioning to a more interactive framework such as a Ning site (in use by the Gadfly Petrel Working Group) or Conserve Online (several in use by SCSCB).

### Name and Logo

The working group might strengthen its identity through a formal logo and name. Jennifer showed some draft logos to the group (a bird over water), but several people mentioned the need to represent montane habitat. The group should also discuss what language to use for group name (suggestions include Grupo Diablotín, or some combination of Creole, French, Spanish, and English!)