



Black-capped Petrel (Diablotin) Working Group meeting
BirdsCaribbean International Meeting, Kingston
27 July, 2015, 7:30 pm

Facilitator/Note taker:

Jennifer Wheeler

Attending:

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Jennifer Wheeler, BirdsCaribbean, USA jennifer.wheeler@birdscaribbean.org

Agenda:

- Introductions and sharing of interest in Diablotin
- Review of current work / sharing by relevant participants

Introductions and Interest

Jennifer explained that anyone who is interested in the Diablotin (local name for the Black-capped Petrel) is welcome to consider themselves part of the International Black-capped Petrel Conservation Group. All are welcome to subscribe to the Diablotin email group:

Send email to diablotin-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or
Visit <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Diablotin/info>

Participants were asked to introduce themselves and share their particular interest in the petrel.

Of particular note (to Jennifer, at least):

Freddy Rodriguez stated that the Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC) convention secretariat is working on their 2016-2020 plan, and want to increase the focus on flagship species.

Antoine Chabrolle has been involved in the sea watch surveys off Guadeloupe. He would be interested in mounting a terrestrial expedition in Guadeloupe.

Jim Goetz's project with GIZ in Haiti is wrapping up and he is leaving Haiti soon, to return to the US.

Chris Rimmer noted that Juan Carlos Sanchez (with VCE) is leaving his base in Port-au-Prince. He will know be half time in the DR (Santo Domingo) and half-time in Washington, D.C.

Review of Current Work and Discussions (Drawn from Wheeler Presentation to be given in the Seabird Session, July 28, 2015)

Quick review of research/conservation up to 2013

- Re-discovered in Hispaniola in 1963
- At sea concentrations in 1970s and 1980s
- Multiple expeditions in the Caribbean in recent decades
- Active petrel nest discovered March 2011
- Hispaniola field research and conservation activities
- Conservation Action Plan 2012
- Radar work in Hispaniola 2013 to present (Led by EPIC, with local partners)
 - Haiti
 - Massif de La Selle – 3,097 targets
 - Massif de La Hotte – 75 targets
 - Dominican Republic
 - Sierra de Bahoruco – 1,098 targets
 - Cordillera Central – 84 targets
 - Sierra de Neiba – 15 targets
 - Total
 - Petrel-like Targets: 4,550
 - 21 petrel flyways
 - 11 likely nesting areas
 - Future Plans: The radar unit used in Hispaniola broke and was taken to the US for repairs. It was subsequently used on Dominica and now resides in the EPIC office in St. Maarten.
- Key Hispaniola Locations
 - Massif de la Selle (Parc National La Visite) *The Hot Spot*.
 - Sierra de Bahoruco on border (Loma del Toro, Parque Nacional Sierra de Bahoruco; Boukan Chat, Haiti)
 - Cordillera Central (Parque Nacional Valle Nuevo)
 - Sierra de Neiba

- Sierra de Bahoruco East (Loma Quemada, Parque Nacional Sierra de Bahoruco)
- Massif de la Hotte (Macaya)

- Hispaniola monitoring and new nest searching 2013 to present

Participants interested in expeditions want to see the reports to understand activity patterns, season, time weather.

- 2013/2014 Field Season

- Massif de la Selle focus with intensive nest searches were conducted in the northern escarpments of Massif de la Selle, including the La Visite ridge and a new “high” density area discovered at the exploratory site along the cliffs of Seguin, Haiti. 36 nests now known in the area, 18 visited in 2014; 11 with live chicks.
- Border Areas received the most monitoring as more accessible. In 2013/2014, 47 active nests were monitored by hand or camera, with fledging success measured at 74%.

- 2014/2015 Field Season

- Focused on determining the extent of breeding on Hispaniola following up on radar findings from the previous year and deploying and downloading acoustical data from song meters.
- Valle Nuevo in the Cordillera Central has approximately 100 km² of promising habitat so like finding a needle in a haystack, not to mention the difficulty of access to this remote area. Deployed song meters in the area to hopefully narrow down the search.

Note: Eladio quite interested in this area. He knows the Park Director and believes that the park would be very supportive in work to find and protect birds. Would help with logistics, volunteers, maybe funding.

- Loma Quemada, in Sierra de Bahoruco identified as an area of interest when nest searching radiating from the known area of Loma del Toro resulted in the discovery of two active nests in a broadleaf forest area near Hoyo de Pelempito. Threats to the area from humans and introduced animals (e.g., pigs) there have yet to be determined.

- Vocalization data from Hispaniola.

- Jennifer briefly noted that Matthew McKown has a lot of promising data to analyze. Goal in 2014/2015 was to get a complete profile of vocal behavior from the beginning of the nesting season. In 2013/2014, only have late season data. Song meters deployed in some exploratory sites – places where radar evidence suggests birds might be present.
- Participants very interested in vocalizations. Wondered if playback used to capture individuals? Jim and Jennifer explained, no, not so much. Rather vocalization are used to find nests, estimate activity levels. Playing vocalizations could be a way to attract prospecting birds.

- Tracking Diablotin at sea

- Information from Pat Jodice. Starting caveat: Tracking data from 3 birds is not a lot, so let’s not go crazy with what we see! We have no data during incubation or early chick-rearing for example. Tracking data suggest frequent use of the Caribbean Sea during the chick-rearing stage. 2 of the birds made regular trips. Tracking data confirm use of shelf waters off NC and SC, but also show use of waters off the eastern edge of the GS. Most of our data from that region occurred during nonbreeding. There is a lot of overlap in location data of BCPE in the

Atlantic Seabird Compendium and in the tracking data, but tracking data also show more use of eastern Gulf waters and Caribbean waters.

- Conservation Status, Threats
 - Main threats listed as habitat destruction/encroachment, especially in La Visite/Massif de la Selle; fire, light, not so much predation by animals or people.
- Conservation Steps
 - Planning Group working to update the Conservation Plan. Used Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation. Have conceptual models to lay out the targets, the threats, the factors, ultimately the strategies. Strategies to make results chains.... In process!
 - Addressing threats of human encroachment on Hispaniola is quite daunting given the social and economic stresses.
 - Some first steps towards addressing encroachment involve awareness and building relationships. 2012: EPIC led diabolito-themed summer camps in the Sierra de Bahoruco. 2013: EPIC's creation and distribution of Diabolito-themed activity book "Who is the Diabolito Bird?" throughout Hispaniola. 2014: More activity books distributed in Hispaniola and filming for Diabolito documentary "Save the Devil" in Haiti, a film that focuses on the struggles by petrels and by the community of Boukan Chat.
 - Participants had a lot of interest in addressing the threat of downed juvenile birds (light attraction to cities). Suggest that there be a protocol for re-release. Lessons from Hawaiian Shearwaters? Also, concerns raised about the wildlife trade. Was there some evidence of downed birds being bought and sold.
- Findings from Dominica.
 - Conservation Strategy of seeking new opportunities (other islands with petrels)
 - Gave the floor to Machel Sulton and Elroy Ricardo Dominique from Dominica.
 - Referred to Sulton Presentation to be given in the Seabird Session, July 28, 2015
 - Referred to Press Release
