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Black-capped Petrel Conservation

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Conduct nest monitoring and protection of the Black-capped Petrels at known nesting sites in 2018 breeding season.

A total of 50 nests were monitored during the 2017/18 breeding season at four different sites.

Table 1: Results of nest monitoring during 2017/18 BCPE breeding season.

Result 2018	Morne Vicent, Haiti	Loma del Toro, Dominican Rep.	Loma Quemada, Dominican Rep.	Valle Nuevo, Dominican Rep.	Total
birds successfully left nest	12	14	2	-	28
adults brooding, no chick ever seen	1	5	2	-	8
eggs found unhatched	-	5	1	-	6
eggshells found, no chick	1	4	-	-	5
chick dead	-	1	-	-	1
chick disappeared	-	1	-	-	1
animal predation	-	-	-	1	1
Total	14	30	5	1	50

Monitoring indicates the successful fledging of 28 chicks: 12 at Morne Vincent, 14 at Loma del Toro, two at Loma Quemada and none in Valle Nuevo. These numbers are maximum estimates, since it is rare that the actual departure of chicks is documented (though camera trap images of the event do exist) but are based on signs and marks which indicate a successful departure. These include observations of chicks in an advanced state of feather growth and/or detection of down feathers inside and surrounding the nest, which are shed by the chicks as they grow flight feathers.

Eight nests had brooding adults, but no eggs or chicks were found in these nests as the season progressed. At the last visit, unhatched eggs were found in six nests and five nests had only egg shells. One dead chick was found outside of its nest, while in another nest a detected chick later disappeared for unknown reasons.

Especially negative results were produced at one of the Loma del Toro sites (TTRO), which during former years always had a very high fledging rate. Of the nine nests monitored at TTRO, none had a fledging chick at the end. At the beginning of the season the nine nests had been active, but only one chick was ever seen, which later disappeared. Three nests had egg shells but no chick. A complete egg was found in another nest. The remaining four nests had brooding adults, but no additional sign of eggs or chicks later in the season. We attribute this negative outcome to the presence of a cat, which was registered on camera traps throughout the breeding season, although it was not possible to document a direct attack on an adult or chick.

In the case of the one Valle Nuevo nest, a mongoose was identified by camera trap entering the burrow March 19th in the morning and staying inside for more than three hours. It visited again the following days. Prior to detection of the mongoose, the camera recorded adults entering and leaving the nest on several occasions. After the mongoose visits, the activity of adults ceased. There is no information on what the mongoose encountered in the burrow (adult, egg, or chick) because the burrow was too deep to use an endoscope and no images of the mongoose with prey were captured on the camera trap outside the nest. Oddly, some feathers from a dead bird were found in front of the nest a few days after the visit of the mongoose.

The overall nesting success for 2018 is only 56%, much lower than the previous six years (see Table 2). In 2015 and 2016, a smaller subset of nests were monitored, but in all 2012-2017, success was greater than 70%.

Another unusual finding this season was that during the last nest check (end of August 2018), one fledgling was still found in its nest at Morne Vincent. Although the chick had a very healthy appearance and was ready for take off, the late date of encounter is surprising. During all the previous years successful fledglings had left the nest the latest at the end of July.

Finally, somewhat astonishing is also the high number of abandoned eggs as well as nests without egg or chick. We do not dare to interpret this phenomenon as the possibility of reduced food availability, but if other observations (at sea) suggest decreases in available prey, it may be worthwhile looking deeper into this hypothesis.

Table 2: Monitored nesting results since 2011

year	Active nests monitored	Successful nests	Nest failure	Percentage of success
2011	3	1	2	33,33
2012	30	23	7	76,67
2013	43	30	13	69,77
2014	47	34	13	72,3
2015	34	27	7	79,41
2016	25	21	4	84
2017	42	34	8	80,95
2018	50	28	21	56

Participate in BCPE Conservation Plan updates and meetings with key stakeholders. Provide current data and results to inform the actions.

Data and results were provided.

Continue study to determine impact of predators at BCPE nesting sites with trail cameras.

Camera trap installed at nests of Loma del Toro, Loma Quemada and Valle Nuevo were used to document predator presence and their impact during the 2018 breeding season.

At all sites rats were present. Up to date we have not been able to confirm any direct negative impact of rats on nesting activity

Predation by a mongoose terminated petrel reproduction at the only known nest in Valle Nuevo (Cordillera Central) (see photo 5). The presence of a feral cat would seem responsible for terminating nine active nests at one of the nesting locations at Loma del Toro, Sierra de Bahoruco. The site Loma Quemada shows continued intensive presence of feral pigs and reproduction seems to be limited to only a few nests which, due to their structure of entrance and deepness of crevice, impedes pigs from predated these nests.

Based on the documented negative predator activities we propose their control for Loma del Toro (site TTRO), Loma Quemada and Valle Nuevo during the next breeding season. Grupo Jaragua has been implementing a successful predator control program for Ricord's iguanas eliminating feral dogs, cats and mongooses during vital periods of the nesting season of this critically endangered species for several years now. We could set up a similar program for BCPE. Costs for the program working with live traps would be basically manpower installing and monitoring the traps. Grupo Jaragua already has sufficient Tomahawk live traps with the size for cats and mongooses, which can be used immediately. No extra buying and shipping will be needed.

Conduct outreach with key communities in Dominican Republic and Haiti regarding conservation issues affecting Black-capped Petrels.

We have continued supporting the work of the nursery in Boukan Chat, where saplings are being produced for agroforestry systems. Tinio Louis has been in charge of the technical assistance while Marie Chantal has been the person organizing work and maintaining the nursery.

1200 saplings of Avocado were distributed in the community. A first evaluation in August shows an establishment of over 50% of the saplings (see photo 1). Presently Tinio is doing a more detailed inventory to document the more exact

fate of the planted material. 3000 coffee saplings are ready for distribution and planting (see photo 3)

The nursery has also been supplying saplings to the projects of Plant for Purpose. It has served the German GIZ for the production and distribution of 3000 saplings of different species including Prunes, Grapefruit, Oranges and Peaches.

In addition the nursery has served for educational purposes and has been a place for interchange of ideas and experience. In March a group of students and professors from the agricultural department of university, where Tinio is studying (Université Saint Francois d'Assise d'Haiti), made a field trip to Boukan Chat. During the trip, the group was informed on BCPE investigation and conservation (see photo 2). The focus of the visit, of course, was the work of the nursery and the agroforestry activities which are being developed. The group returned in April for several days to participate in reforestation.

In April the Diablotín Team of Grupo Jaragua also participated in the Diablotin Festival organized by EPIC (see photo 3).

Presently educational activities for two schools in Boukan Chat are being prepared by Chantal. They will take place in October with logistical and technical support of Grupo Jaragua. Environmental issues like the function of



soil and soil erosion will be addressed as well as the conservation of the petrel.

Photo 1: planted avocado tree



Photo 2: Group of teachers and students from the Saint Francois d'Assise d'Haiti in Boukan Chat



Photo 3: Coffee saplings ready to go



Photo 4: BCPE festival in Boukan Chat with Tinio wearing the diabolon costume leading the parade



Photo 5: Mongoose at nest in Valle Nuevo

Continue to work with Bahoruco and Valle Nuevo park administration and park guards on reducing petrel strikes at communication towers and on the adequate handling and release of downed birds.

The diabolon team is continuing to work towards reducing petrel strikes. We have instructed the park administrations in both Sierra de Bahoruco and Valle Nuevo of the importance of finding and saving downed birds. Special attention has been given to the park guards at Loma del Toro where communication towers have negative effects on flying petrels.

Flyers with release protocols Spanish have been distributed to all park guard stations in the Sierra de Bahoruco National Park and Valle Nuevo National Park, as well as in different institutions in Pedernales, Puerto Escondido and Duvergé. Fliers in Kreyol have been distributed in Anse-a-Pitres and Marigot as well as Seguin. Thiotte and Port-au-Prince.

Albeit of the intensive promotion of our interest to document the fate of downed birds, this season we only had one case reported. The bird was found on the ground at Loma del Toro in December by one of the guards. It seemed unharmed and was released successfully from one of the communication towers.