



## Notes

### International Black-capped Petrel Conservation Group Meeting, June 30, 2022

### BirdsCaribbean – American Ornithological (BC-AOS) 2022 Joint Conference San Juan, Puerto Rico

#### Introduction

17 individuals participated in the afternoon discussion (see list below). Due to visa issues and conference expense, representation from the petrel's terrestrial range states (countries where the species is confirmed, probable or suspected to breed) was low. Maxon Feldor and Jim Goetz could speak directly about conditions in Haiti, but no in-country partners from Dominican Republic, Dominica, Guadeloupe or Cuba could attend. The participants did represent several different organizations (focused on Puerto Rico or Chile, or with international scope) that collectively brought together extensive experience in seabird species conservation research, planning, and actions, including restoration.



#### Attendees

Chris Rimmer, VCE, [crimmer@vtcostudies.org](mailto:crimmer@vtcostudies.org)

Jim Goetz, VCE/Cornell, [james.e.goetz@gmail.com](mailto:james.e.goetz@gmail.com)

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Dan Lebbin, ABC, [dlebbin@abcbirds.org](mailto:dlebbin@abcbirds.org)

Tom White, USFWS, [thomas\\_white@fws.gov](mailto:thomas_white@fws.gov), writing species assessment for Petrel

Todd Hass, Univ. of Washington, [thass@uw.edu](mailto:thass@uw.edu) – PhD on Petrel in NC

Eric Vanderwerf, Pacific Rim Conservation, [eric@pacificrimconservation.org](mailto:eric@pacificrimconservation.org)

Charles “Robby” Kohley, Pacific Rim Conservation, [robby@pacificrimconservation.org](mailto:robby@pacificrimconservation.org)

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Jennifer Wheeler [Jennifer.Wheeler@birdscaribbean.org](mailto:Jennifer.Wheeler@birdscaribbean.org) Chair of Working Group

## Discussion Notes

After introductions, Jennifer Wheeler announced the availability of the 2021 Black-capped Petrel Conservation Update and Action Plan. 4-page Executive Summaries were distributed. Participants were asked to review the 9 strategies presented in the plan/summary and indicate which ones they most wanted to discuss at this particular gathering. Of the 9 strategies in the plan, the group voted highest to discuss **Build Local Capacity, Explore Restoration Methods** and **Reduce Predator Pressure**.

### **Build Local Capacity**

This was the strategy of greatest interest, but without local representation, challenging to discuss. Maxon Feldor spoke a lot of his experiences in Haiti. Tom White highlighted two points he heard from Maxon: (1) hard to change behavior of adults, so reaching community through children and having them influence their parents is powerful; (2) environmental education needs to include big picture for entire ecosystem and importance to them, not stopping at a single animal like the petrel. The current work in Boukan Chat, Haiti (a community adjacent to a confirmed petrel breeding area) was noted as exemplifying these points.

### **Explore Restoration Methods**

Representatives of Pacific Rim Conservation (Eric Vanderwerf and Robby Kohley) were able to share a number of insights and considerations relating to seabird restoration methods. The main points from the discussion pertained to:

Translocation – Obviously need both a source of chicks and a safe place to put them. Creating safe places with fences is expensive. However, without a fence, any actions to make a place safe (e.g., predator trapping) would need to continue in perpetuity, potentially requiring more expense.

Translocation methods are well-developed. Robby has taken birds from nests as a few days old, and actually prefers younger chicks to keep them very healthy before they need to fledge. Grupo Jaragua has camera trap data that can help predict timing for Black-capped Petrels. Imprinting occurs when chicks emerge from burrows and see the night-time sky (plus smell), so translocation must be done prior to emergence date, erring on the cautious side. Encouraging adults to double-clutch is not an issue; to our knowledge, Procellariids don't re-lay if eggs/chicks lost.

Safety is relative and must be assessed carefully. The translocation site must be demonstrably safer to be effective in improving a population. Presumably, petrels persist in the safest places to date. Are petrels safe in La Visite (given the steep cliffs)? Maxon felt no: farmers now active in site to harvest tree ferns (as orchid perches), where they were not before.

The question was asked: how far could one take a chick to a safe place (e.g., such as to Puerto Rico from Haiti)? Eric felt it could be as far as needed, even >1,000 km has been achieved with other species.

Social Attraction – Translocation always accompanied by social attraction, but social attraction can occur without translocation. Social attraction is a less expensive approach (10% cost of translocation). Requires a sound system at least which should run autonomously; decoys have been used for some species. Concerns include theft (safe place to leave equipment). Social attraction usually gets young birds that are just starting to breed. Prospecting birds need to pass close by; in New Zealand, a reasonable distance from nearby colony was <25 km.

The best social attraction is chicks on ground...translocated individuals attract others. Seabirds are also attracted to the presence of other species (e.g., as seen at Nihoku in Hawaii).

A proposed activity would be to add Black-capped Petrel calls to preexisting systems with other calls; a natural starting point would be a predator-free island in Puerto Rico; Desecheo is on deep-water passage travel route. Sea McKeon noted that is a list of predator-free islands (e.g. Redondo, Monito) that could be suitable and meet criteria if we can afford broad use of sound systems. Sea wondered about the Bahamas as restoration site for both Black-capped Petrel and Cahow.

Location Considerations for both Translocation and Social Attraction – Eric noted that predator-free island is much more preferable and lower risk than a predator-proof fence on a large island. Eric also noted the downside of attracting birds to disparate sites. The appropriateness of using social attraction to restore populations to the Atlantic region, even if island nesting site might be or not be historical was discussed. This is more like a regional rewilding conservation perspective rather than more restrictive traditional restoration perspective to bring back what was exactly where it was. With climate change, we may not have nearly the same options as the world will be very different.

The importance of nesting micro-climate was queried. Eric believes petrels are likely nest site limited; capable of nesting in a variety of sites compared to what we see today. It was noted that in the case of the Hawaiian Petrel, they now nest only in high elevations without predators, but historically nested down to sea level. Sea-fossil evidence of Black-capped Petrel also shows nesting at low elevations on Hispaniola as well on other Caribbean islands. Pacific Rim uses artificial nest burrows (and monitors nest burrow temperature at all times to avoid over-heating).

Cooperation on Restoration – If and when decision to pursue restoration is made, Pacific Rim is willing to help for Black-capped Petrel or other species. Advising group in Jamaica to protect a bat cave and they are using locally sourced materials which helps to drive down costs.

### **Reduce Predator Pressure**

Predators of the Black-capped Petrel include cat (1 documented instance), mostly dogs (adults and fledglings) & mongoose (fledglings), rats present but no evidence yet of predation. Predator control has increased in recent years; ongoing monitoring at restored burrows (Grupo Jaragua) against dogs; Grupo Jaragua monitoring traps but it has not been possible to control mongoose. Predators are wiping out entire seasons at multiple nesting sites. So far, using A24s against mongoose (as well as live-trap tomahawks); the new model A12 might be a better size for mongoose. The concern for kill traps to by-catch of non-target endemic mammals. Live trapping challenging in that sites are remote without permanent paid staff, so teams go up for only a couple days/month to maintain effort.

Sea wondered about “simpler” fencing options – something dog-proof but not rat-proof. Eric thought about half cost is labor, so cost savings overall may be 10-20% overall. Eric noted that mongoose are easier to exclude than rats as they don’t climb as well, and easier to trap than cats.

### **Monitoring/Petrel Numbers:**

Yvan – stated that the world population is thought to be around 5,000. This is also suggestive of many birds nesting elsewhere (Cuba, Dominica).

Todd Hass noted numbers at sea seemed stable over 90s, still relative stability; declines more due to different data methods.

## Working Group Information

Compilers of notes: Dan Lebbin, Jennifer Wheeler

The International Black-capped Petrel Conservation Group consists of any individual or group working to understand and conserve this species.

These notes will be posted at: <https://www.birdscaribbean.org/our-work/black-capped-petrel-working-group/> ) along with other unpublished reports, notes and presentations relating to the petrel.

Core working group has list-serve and monthly meetings, all are welcome to join.

## Talks Presented at 2022 BC-AOS BirdsCaribbean Meeting on or relating to conservation of Black-capped Petrel

See <https://meeting.americanornithology.org/program/scientific-program-abstracts/>)

(Revised at conference) **Patterns in the relative abundance of endangered Black-capped Petrels as revealed by at-sea surveys off Cape Hatteras since the 1990s, and considerations for drawing longer term comparisons and inferences**

**Todd S. Hass, Kate Sutherland, and Brian Patteson**

*Presenting author / Autor presentador:* **Todd S. Hass**, University of Washington, [thass@uw.edu](mailto:thass@uw.edu)

**A tale of two petrels: Temporal and spatial segregations between phenotypes in the endangered Diablotin Black-capped Petrel**

**Yvan Satgé, Patrick G. R. Jodice, Brad Keitt, Chris Gaskin, Gemma Clucas, and Sara E. Janssen**

*Presenting author / Autor presentador:* **Yvan Satgé**, South Carolina Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, [ysatge@g.clemson.edu](mailto:ysatge@g.clemson.edu)

**Managing light pollution impacts on seabirds in Chile**

**Rodrigo Silva and Ivo Tejada**

*Presenting author / Autor presentador:* **Rodrigo Silva Caballero**, Red de Observadores de Aves de Chile (ROC), [rodrigosilva@redobservadores.cl](mailto:rodrigosilva@redobservadores.cl)

Until a few years ago, the evidence of impacts

**Stewardship and conservation of the Black-capped Petrel in Haiti**

**Anderson Jean, Maxon Fildor, Rene Jeune, Tinio Louis, Lionel Raymond, Jonel Bazile, and Adam C. Brown**

*Presenting author / Autor presentador:* **Anderson Jean**, JACSEH, [andersonjeanht@gmail.com](mailto:andersonjeanht@gmail.com) (Substituted by **Maxon Fildor**)

**Ten years of research, monitoring and protecting the Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata*) in Hispaniola**

**Ernst Rupp, Andrea Thomen, Hector Andújar, Jairo Matos, Gerson Feliz, Esteban Garrido, and Geny Feliz**

*Presenting author / Autor presentador:* **Hector J. Andujar**, Grupo Jaragua,  
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**Exploring the reasons why conservation education and science communication are failing to promote behavior change**

*Symposia presentation abstracts / Resúmenes de presentaciones de simposios*

**Tabitha Whalen Stadler**

*Presenting author / Autor presentador:* **Tabitha Whalen Stadler**, Environmental Protection in the Caribbean,  
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**Endemic bird conservation goals on Hispaniola—cause for optimism, or a reality check?**

**Christopher C. Rimmer, Andrea Thomen, Steven C. Latta, Yolanda Leon, and Ryan R. Rebozo**

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