Grupo internacional para la conservación del Diablotín

Comité international pour la conservation du Pétrel diablotin

International Black-capped Petrel Conservation Group

UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES
May 2025

The Conserving the Diablotin: Black-capped Petrel Conservation Update and Action Plan calls for nine strategies to enable conservation and address threats. Analysis suggests that no single strategy can result in a population increase but, by pursuing multiple strategies in synergy, we can achieve a positive population trajectory into the future. Our 10- to 20-year conservation goal is ensuring the long-term survival of a stable population of Black-capped Petrel whose conservation status has improved from Endangered to Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List.

Newsletter Contents

A pair of petrels caught on camera outside their burrow in the Valle Nuevo colony, Dominican Republic, January 2024.
Credit: Grupo Jaragua

STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: Build local capacity

Activities to build local capacity might include outreach to in-country partners, international grant support, training and relationship-building. Highlights from the previous year include:

Field Team Recognition

At the BirdsCaribbean Conference in Santo Domingo in July 2024, we proudly honored the dedicated Dominican and Haitian field teams for their relentless efforts in studying the elusive Black-capped Petrel. These seabirds nest in remote, rugged highlands, making their discovery and monitoring exceptionally challenging. Team members face difficult terrain, complex logistics, and harsh weather conditions. Yet, thanks to these committed teams, our understanding of the species has significantly advanced. During the ceremony, each team member's name was announced, and the awards – Certificates of Achievement and branded rain jackets to aid in future expeditions – displayed. With deep respect and admiration, we celebrate their invaluable contributions to the scientific study and conservation of the Black-capped Petrel.

Honored Field Team Members:

- Haitian (ACSEH) Team: Anderson Jean, René Jeune, Samuel Nossirel, Tinio Louis, Renozier Victome, Maxon Fildor, Jephtanie François, Lionel Raymond, Brazil Jonel, Julcene Raymond, Wilson Aubourg.
- Dominican Republic (Grupo Jaragua) Team: Ernst Rupp, Gerson Feliz, Geny Marcelo Feliz, Juan Pérez Vidal, Juan Pablo Montero, Jairo Issa Matos, Jose Luis Castillo, Esteban Garrido.

Team members are honored at the 2024 BirdsCaribbean International Conference and model their new field jackets. *Credit: BirdsCaribbean*

We take pride in seeing members of the local Diablotin teams selected for other conservation projects. Haitian field expert René Jeune has served as the local technical consultant for the 2022-2024 Ansapit project, funded by the Caribaea Initiative in collaboration with FOKAL Foundation. This initiative, based in Anse-à-Pitres near the Dominican border, focuses on biodiversity assessments, reforestation (including cactus planting), and community awareness programs. Visit https://www.caribaea.org/en/our-projects/research-and-education-programs/ansapit/

Local Challenges

The organization, Action pour la Sauvegarde de l'Écologie en Haiti (ACSEH), continues to manage petrel work in Haiti despite challenges due to scarcity of essential equipment and supplies, and uncertain shipping options due to airport closures. The work-around method of shipping via the Dominican Republic has been hindered with the border now closed and government guards stationed at the crossing point between Morne Vincent and Loma del Toro colonies. While small items like trail cameras can still be transferred, larger equipment (e.g., wooden nest boxes, traps) and personnel cannot. Within Haiti, fuel shortages and rising costs complicate in-country travel, restricting the ability of project leads to supervise field teams in-person. Slow and limited internet connectivity creates difficulties in transferring large quantities of data, such as camera trap imagery.

Funding & Policy Challenges

Funding in the past year has been sustained by:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Migratory Bird Program, a long-time supporter of international petrel conservation, who, thanks to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act had some discretionary funds to award.
- Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC), which remains a key financial and logistical supporter of ACSEH.
- BirdsCaribbean, which awarded two small grants to support community education and outreach in communities near the Morne Vincent and La Visite colonies.

Ironically, the 2024 listing of the Black-capped Petrel under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA) – although a highly significant designation for the species – has not immediately improved funding prospects. The USFWS grant funds set aside for ESA-species recovery are currently restricted to use within the U.S. and its territories. Other agencies (e.g., NOAA Fisheries, FEMA) have similar restrictions. The funding cuts and personnel downsizing stemming from international aid freezes and reductions in force announced under the Trump Administration add further uncertainty and concerns regarding long-term financial stability of the project.

Strategy 2: Locate and characterize nest sites

A goal of the action plan is that, by 2025, all known, probably and suspected sites on Hispaniola have received comprehensive search and at least one probable or suspected island has been explored more thoroughly.

Funding shortfalls limit the ability to spend time seeking nests in probable or suspected nest sites on Hispaniola or any other island.

The team in La Visite, Haiti was able to spend one day per month at probable nest areas along the La Visite Escarpment but found no new nest cavities in 2024.

Nest searches conducted in and around known breeding sites in the Dominican Republic were successful in 2024. A total of 11 new nests were found, eight at Valle Nuevo, one at Loma del Toro and two at Loma Quemada. All new nests were monitored in-person and where it was possible, a camera was installed. At Valle Nuevo, the very steep terrain prevented camera placement at all but two new nests. As always, the team sought evidence of odor, feathers and feces to find nests, and will continue to do so in these known breeding sites.

Without additional funds, it is unlikely that the goal of fully exploring probable and suspected breeding sites in Hispaniola will be met in 2025.

Strategy 3: Explore restoration methods

The Black-capped Petrel action plan calls for a full feasibility study of restoration methods to be completed by 2025, with recommendations for pilot projects; and by 2030, any necessary restoration projects have started.

Nest Boxes

The installation of wooden nest boxes continues in the Dominican Republic. These boxes, equipped with tunnels, offer additional protection for eggs and chicks, mitigating risks from predators and unstable burrows. They also allow researchers to assess whether petrels will adopt artificial nest cavities in new locations.

Following the 2020-2021 dog depredations at Loma del Toro, six nest boxes were placed where natural burrows had been damaged or destroyed. Encouragingly, five of the six were visited or used by petrels over three subsequent seasons. Over the two most recent seasons, four chicks successfully fledged from two boxes.

In the past three seasons, an additional 22 nest boxes have been installed in proximity to known burrows at Loma del Toro to create artificial nesting burrows. While one box has been occupied and another briefly explored by an adult petrel, further monitoring is needed to assess their long-term attractiveness to petrels.

Due to the ongoing border closure between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, no additional nest boxes could be transferred to Morne Vincent for the 2023-2024 or 2024-2025 seasons.

All nest boxes are monitored via camera traps. The study on petrel attraction and acceptance of artificial burrows was funded by a USGS-USFWS Quick Response Program grant. Findings are included in Grupo Jaragua's field reports on the working group website.

Twenty-two wooden nest boxes and tunnels have been installed in novel locations within and near the Loma del Toro colony. Once installed, they were carefully camouflaged. *Credit: Grupo Jaragua*

Social Attraction Through Sound Broadcast

In January 2024, a sound broadcast system was carried to Loma del Toro to attract petrels, but heavy rain delayed setup. Deployment is now on hold due to time and cost constraints for installation, and because of the desire to collect more appropriate vocalizations for playback, which currently only include in-flight calls. To address this second challenge, six automatic recording units (ARUs) were installed—four at Loma del Toro and two at Valle Nuevo: thanks to this effort, nest-site vocalizations were recorded at Loma del Toro and Valle Nuevo. These nest-based vocalizations will be a valuable addition to our understanding of petrel social interactions and more likely to attract birds to the ground.

In January 2024, two ARUs were placed in a small canyon in eastern Sierra de Bahoruco to investigate potential nesting activity there.

Planning for invasive mammal eradication on Alto Velo Island, south of Hispaniola, continues. During a site visit in March 2025, Brad Keitt observed several Black-capped Petrels foraging at sea near the island. These observations bode well for future use of sound broadcast to attract seabirds seeking breeding sites. Establishing a Black-capped Petrel colony on a predator-free island would be a major conservation achievement. Petrel vocalizations are currently being broadcast on Desecheo Island, Puerto Rico, which was declared free of introduced invasive predators in 2017, yet there have been no reports of petrel activity there.

Strategy 4: Reduce predator pressure

Controlling predators will allow reproductive output and adult survival to increase. Eradication is impossible at the known breeding sites on the Hispaniola mainland. Control methods that vary among locations and with predator-type are used to reduce depredation. These include trapping, burrow enhancements, and most recently, remote surveillance.

Predator Control in Dominican Republic

Mongooses remain the most significant threat in the Valle Nuevo colony, so trapping efforts were intensified during the 2023-2024 season. In September 2023, 11 Tomahawk traps were installed at Valle Nuevo, baited with smoked herring, and monitored via camera traps. Traps were checked periodically from November 2023 to April 2024, with bait replaced and closed traps reopened. A continuous field team presence in March and April aimed for checks every three days, but heavy rainfall severely limited access. Trapping was discontinued in May 2024.

Three mongooses were trapped (one in January, two in March), compared to ten trapped in the previous season. The reduced capture rate suggests prior trapping efforts lowered the local mongoose population. However, frequent rain in March and April prevented regular trap visits, limiting trapping effectiveness. Camera footage showed mongooses repeatedly attempting to access bait in closed traps. Ultimately, five dead petrels were found in and around nests last season, likely due to mongoose predation, though no direct attacks were captured on camera.

For the 2024-2025 season, five AT220 self-resetting traps, provided by the American Bird Conservancy, have been deployed. These traps require no manual resetting, reducing labor and increasing effectiveness (no lost opportunities from closed traps). The traps are being rigorously tested during the 2024-2025 breeding season before live deployments during next season.

In Loma del Toro, dogs remained the primary predator concern. Field teams visited nests every two months throughout the 2023-2024 nesting season, reinforcing burrow entrances with rocks or wood where needed to prevent excavation. Most nests were monitored with camera traps, with three cameras transmitting images to

cell phones (two functioned successfully all season). Camera trap analysis appended to the field report documented dog visits to several nests but found no evidence of direct attacks or damage. Cats were occasionally present but did not appear to investigate nests, while rats were detected frequently but caused no apparent harm. However, one chick carcass was found just outside a nest entrance, likely predated, but the responsible predator remains unknown due to a camera malfunction.

The Loma Quemada site has not faced major predator threats, though wild pigs, cats, and rats were recorded passing through. Two dead chicks were found inside nests—one intact, the other likely predated.

Predator Control in Haiti

Trapping in both the La Visite and Morne Vincent colonies were hindered by a lack of supplies, with no commercial traps available for use. The La Visite team attempted to improvise, construction and deploying bucket traps daily from January to August across the three known breeding areas at Tet Opak. Each day, the traps were checked and relocated in an effort to control the rat population. However, despite continuous deployment from January to July 2024, no rats were captured.

The LaVisite team members construct a bucket trap in an attempt to catch rats. Unfortunately, these traps were not effective.
Credit: ACSEH

Strategy 5: Reduce collisions and groundings

The action plan recommends several actions to combat losses due to collisions and groundings. These include advocacy to regulators of infrastructure; providing tower owners with recommendations and tools to minimize collisions; and outreach to communities with high levels of light pollution.

Collisions and groundings may be an increasing problem in Loma del Toro. Despite efforts to educate tower owners about the collision risk, the tower that collapsed in 2022 has been replaced by a taller array with more guy lines, possibly increasing risks of collisions. During the 2023-2024 season, six grounded petrels were recorded. Five were found around the tower array on Loma del Toro, a sixth was found in Vengan-a-Ver, northeast of the Sierra de Bahoruco National Park. Most of the birds appeared to be adults although one found in July appeared to be a fledgling. Birds or remains were typically found after nights with fog and high winds. Three of the grounded birds were released; one of these was fitted with a satellite transmitter. Already in the 2024-2025 season, several grounded birds have been reported, one of which was also fitted with a satellite transmitter. Reducing these collisions is a priority for the conservation team.

No other groundings were reported in Haiti or on any other island in 2023-2024. Conservationists are keeping an eye on projects in Dominica which may present a collision hazard to petrels (and other birds). These include an aerial tram [described in a Facebook post by the Dominica Ministry of Tourism] and transmission lines which will run from a new geothermal plant [described in a Facebook post by Prime Minister of Dominica].

A petrel grounded at the telecommunications facility near the colony of Loma del Toro, in the DR is photographed before release. *Credit: Grupo Jaragua*

Strategy 6: Support community development in Boukan Chat, Haiti

The town of Boukan Chat lies to the north of the Morne Vincent nesting site and expanding agriculture is an imminent threat to the colony. The strategies in place to slow or stop expansion into forests involve agroecological programs to improve existing farm yields and foster tree crops, as well as community outreach and education.

The local Haitian team maintained a presence in Boukan Chat, interacting with the community during monthly visits to the nearby petrel colony, January through July 2024. EPIC describes the scope of activity in an article: https://epicislands.org/community-engagement-leads-to-long-term-conservation-gains-in-haiti/. Specifically, the team continued its outreach to two schools, reaching a total of about 240 students. Modest financial support was raised to support the local nursery program and youth group.

In July 2024, we were saddened to learn of the sudden passing of the village soccer club organizer, Jonatas, who was only in his early thirties. Jonatas did not work directly with Black-capped Petrels but more broadly to motivate and engage young people living near the colony in constructive activities. His loss leaves a void in local leadership.

Strategy 7: Undertake study of socio-economic drivers of threats at La Visite, Haiti

La Visite ridge hosts the greatest density of petrels, but the socio-economic and political situation encourages the unsustainable use of natural resources by local communities. A scoping study would help understand the specificities of this area and better inform socioeconomic and environmental interventions needed to reduce the impacts of poverty and preserve natural resources.

The ACSEH team, with support from EPIC, continues to monitor human activity on the La Visite Escarpment. While a formal scoping study has yet to be conducted, the team has been able to reach relevant audiences for outreach and education to promote bird and land conservation.

Sustainable Agriculture and Soil Conservation

ACSEH has built a working relationship with a local farmers cooperative operating near the La Visite colony, continuing its sustainable agriculture program. From February to August 2024, monthly meetings were held with 40 farmers—up from 25 the previous year—covering soil and water conservation and forest-farm interactions.

This program culminated in a project to extend the rock wall built to prevent erosion and landslides above BCPE Nest Colony One in Tet Opak. An additional 12 meters were added to the rock wall constructed the previous year.

Environmental Education

From February to August, ACSEH conducted monthly visits to Ecole Nationale de Macary and Notre Dame D'Algrace de Seguin, educating students on BCPE conservation, bird migration, soil conservation, the water cycle, and recycling.

A highlight in 2024 was a celebration of the United Nations World Environment Day (June 5). ACSEH organized presentations addressing human threats to the BCPE and other endemic birds, followed by a tree planting initiative to encourage eco-friendly practices. To facilitate the event, ACSEH collaborated with the Seguin community school principal and engaged local landowners with family ties to a degraded forest area. Negotiations led to an agreement to use the land for reforestation and protect it from grazing.

A total of 186 students participated, attending two presentations on BCPE conservation and endemic bird threats before planting 600 pine seedlings across 1,350 square meters. These efforts mark an important step toward fostering eco-consciousness in La Visite, empowering the next generation to protect Haiti's environment.

Rain did not dampen enthusiasm during a celebration of **World Environment Day,** which included school presentations, a tree planting event, and consultations with local landowners.
Credit: ACSEH

Strategy 8: Engage Dominican government to plan and strengthen oversight of parks

All confirmed and suspected nesting sites in the Dominican Republic fall within national parks. Local partners will foster collaboration with park administrators for expertise on petrels and petrel habitat; seek public engagement to gain public backing; and showcase habitat restoration projects to park administrators.

Grupo Jaragua has an ongoing engagement with the Ministry of Environment. It seeks participation of Ministry staff in proactive conservation and raises issues of conservation concern to authorities. Advocacy for habitat conservation, community outreach, and strengthening legal protections for these critical areas provides a necessary foundation and backdrop for specific species conservation work, such as for Diablotin.

The Sierra de Bahoruco National Park, one of the Dominican Republic's most ecologically valuable protected areas, became once again the center of public and legal attention in the last year. Grupo Jaragua and other members of the Coalition for the Defense of Protected Areas denounced multiple lawsuits against the Ministry of Environment that claimed renumeration for supposed expropriations in the Park. Private parties were fraudulently seeking compensation of many millions of pesos from the State. The Coalition for the Defense of Protected Areas appealed to a third party to engage, ensuring thorough investigation. In a significant legal development, on December 17, 2024, the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) annulled a previous ruling that had ordered the Dominican State to pay compensation. This decision strengthens efforts to have other fraudulent land claims annulled or rejected, in order to protect the Sierra de Bahoruco and the public interest.

The Coalition for the Defense of Protected Areas now has a new threat to address: the interest in rare earth metals in Sierra de Bahoruco. In a recent visit, the U.S. Secretary of State broached this topic.

Strategy 9: Address threats at sea through advocacy

Given the scope of marine threats (reduced prey availability, plastics and other pollutants, oil spills), the most effective and feasible interventions will be to advocate for the species' interest in the realm of marine policies, by highlighting the Black-capped Petrel in science/policy forums and contributing data to regulatory agencies.

Technical Assistance

Members of the International Black-capped Petrel Conservation Group continue to provide technical assistance to the USFWS as it advances the drafting of a Recovery Plan required by the 2024 listing on the Endangered Species Act. Additionally, it is also engaging with biologists and coordinators in the USFWS's Southeast Region as they assess potential effects of offshore energy projects.

Petrel Tracking Study

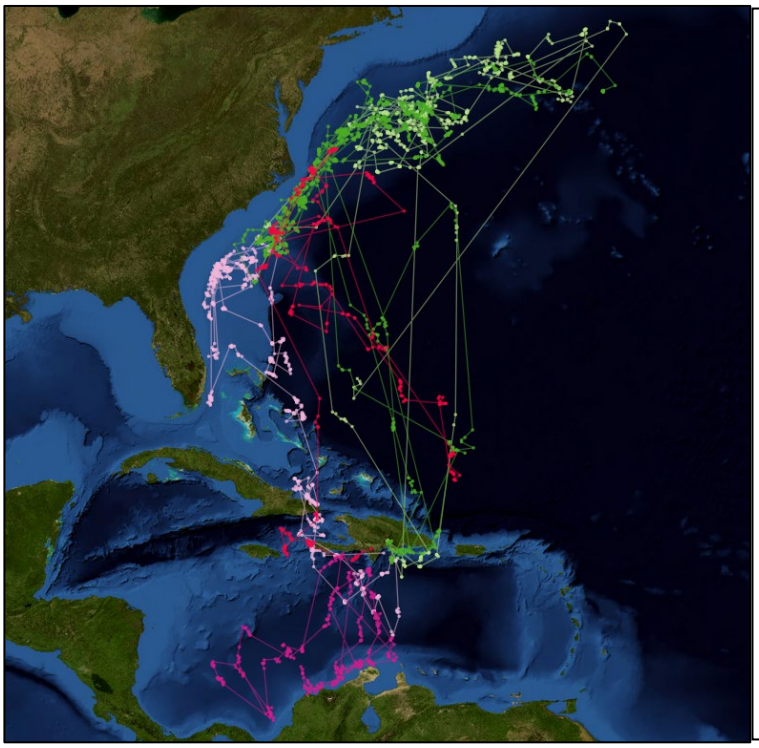
In March 2024, Ernst Rupp and Grupo Jaragua hosted Yvan Satgé (Clemson University) during a visit to the Dominican Republic. The team deployed lightweight, solar-powered satellite transmitters on three petrels breeding in Valle Nuevo, and on one petrel in Loma del Toro. This latter petrel was rescued uninjured after hitting metal cables used to secure telecommunication antennas near its breeding site. The petrels were tracked for 182 days in average (range: 54 – 281 days) and provided a total of ~2,700 locations. The petrels' travels ranged from the Darien Gulf in the southern Caribbean Sea to the North Atlantic. In February 2025, another petrel found uninjured after hitting cables at Loma del Toro was rescued by Grupo Jaragua and also equipped with a lightweight satellite transmitter. The data are joining a (slowly by surely) growing dataset of Black-capped Petrel tracking data, helping understand the connections between breeding areas on land and

foraging and wintering areas at sea. At this link, you can see an animation of the early travels of the petrel tagged in Loma del Toro in 2024 https://www.instagram.com/reel/DBjbUNUPyeg/

This work was described in the Dominican newspaper Diario Libre: **https://www.diariolibre.com/planeta/medioambiente/2024/11/06/el-ultimo-refugio-del-diablotin/2899949**

The 2024 tracking team: (from left to right) Juan Pablo Montero, Yvan Satgé, Ernst Rupp, Chachi Feliz, Pirrin Matos

Credit: Grupo Jaragua



Map of five Black-capped Petrels tracked from Valle Nuevo and Loma del Toro, Dominican Republic between March 2004 and March 2025. Shades of pink represent dark morphs, and shade of green represent the pale morphs.

Credit: Clemson University

Diablotin sightings strengthen DR marine protection efforts

An international scientific expedition over the Beata Ridge, an underwater mountain range between the Dominican Republic and Colombia, documented over 80 sightings of the Black-capped Petrel, confirming the area's importance as a key transit zone for the species. The 20-day expedition covered 2,740 kilometers with researchers from 10 countries, identifying diverse marine life, including endangered sharks, cetaceans, and over 300 bird species. The data, collected by the Caribbean Cetacean Society, helped justify the designation of the Cordillera Beata as an oceanic protected area, now named the Orlando Jorge Mera Marine Sanctuary,

encompassing Beata Island (27 km²) and officially established by presidential decree in April 2024. Previously, only the southern portion of the mountain range was protected in Colombian waters. The protections all stem from a Joint Declaration signed by the presidents of Colombia and the Dominican Republic on July 26, 2022, reaffirming their commitment to preserving the Seamounts of the Cordillera Beata ecozone in the Caribbean Sea.

The official scientific report on the research expedition is available online.

MONITORING, RESEARCH, AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

Monitoring

The 2021 Conserving the Diablotin: Black-capped Petrel Conservation Update and Action Plan relies on Key Ecological Attributes (KEAs) to comprise the basic elements of a monitoring plan for the species. KEAs are aspects of the species biology or ecology that define the health of the species.

The seven KEAs are:

- Flyway Population Index
- Breeding Vocal Activity
- Colony Occupancy
- Reproductive Success
- Breeder Return Rate
- Habitat Intactness
- Breeding Distribution

Our current capacity has allowed us to collect data to assess colony occupancy and reproductive success fairly well, and habitat intactness to some degree, as described below.

Dominican Republic

The total of nests monitored (with camera and/or visually) was 30 at Valle Nuevo, 26 at Loma del Toro, and nine at Loma Quemada. The number of active nests (showing presence of petrels during the season) was 25 at Valle Nuevo, 20 at Loma del Toro and eight at Loma Quemada. Initial estimates of occupancy are 83%, 77%, and 89% respectively, which is categorized as Very Good in the Conservation Plan.

Successful fledging was documented at two nests at Valle Nuevo, nine at Loma del Toro, and two at Loma Quemada. This equates to fledging successes of 8% (Poor, as categorized in the Conservation Plan), 45% (Fair), and 25% (Poor), respectively.

Reproductive success in Valle Nuevo has been consistently very low over the years, including the 2023-2024 season. Mongoose predation is a recognized threat, but it is also notable that 18 nests were occupied by adults and failed to produce a fledgling, without any evidence of predation or disturbance.

The dog disaster in the Loma del Toro colony in the 2020-2021 season resulted in very poor reproductive success and a high level of abandonment. It seems to be recovering. From three successful nests in 2022-2023, the number jumped up to nine fledglings in 2023-2024 season. The calculated fledging success of 45% is lower than the rates documented before the dog disaster (~80%), but it is hoped that the protective measures against dogs at Loma del Toro will continue to bring the fledging rate up.

The Loma Quemada colony experiences fluctuating levels of occupancy and reproductive success. It appears that seasons of high fledging percentage are followed by seasons of lower percentages. There has been little

evidence of predation in the Loma Quemada colony, although wild pigs, cats and high numbers of rats have been documented.

Based on field observations, habitat intactness – based on percent of suitable breeding habitat that has been cleared within colonies – has remained constant in the colony areas of the Dominican Republic.

Haiti

The monitoring program in Morne Vincent is challenged by data quality issues, mostly due to the inability of the project leader to travel to the border, so results are not reported here.

In La Visite, 55 nests at the Tet Opak colony were followed in the 2023-2024 breeding season. Of the 55 nests, 45 nests contained evidence of petrel activity (adult, chick, egg, feathers, feces, or smell of petrel). Of the 55 nests, 23 nests contained evidence of active nesting (adult, chick, or egg). Of the 23 active nests, 16 nests successfully fledged a chick while seven nests failed prior to fledging. All seven nests failed during the chick rearing phase. Of the seven failed nesting efforts, four failed due to an apparent carnivore depredating the chicks and three failed for unknown reasons, as the chicks were found dead in the nest cavities without evidence of cause of death.

Unfortunately, clearing of vegetative cover near and within the Tet Opak petrel colony continues. Of the total 55 nests monitored monthly, four nest cavities were altered due to agricultural encroachment. However, while two cavities had no evidence of nesting attempt, another two of those nests still successfully fledged chicks.

Research Publications and Links

Suggested links between the diet of the Diablotin and the levels of mercury measured in feathers

Satgé, Y.G., Janssen, S.E., Clucas, G., Rupp, E., Patteson, J.B. & Jodice, P.G.R. 2024. Mesopelagic diet as pathway of high mercury levels in body feathers of the endangered Black-capped Petrel (Diablotin) *Pterodroma hasitata*. *Marine Ornithology* 52: 261 - 274 http://doi.org/10.5038/2074-1235.52.2.1591 or http://www.marineornithology.org/article?rn=1591

Overview of work on another gadfly petrel, the Cape Verde Petrel

Jacob González-Solís, Joan Lluís Riera, Herculano Andrade Dinis, Admilton de Pina, Teresa Militão. 2024. Life history, population dynamics and impacts of cat predation on an endemic gadfly petrel in Cabo Verde. Vol. 55: 187–203, November 2024. **https://doi.org/10.3354/esr01369**

A small museum's find appears to expand the known vagrant range of the Black-capped Petrel

Oliver W. Patrick, Max Chalfin-Jacobs, Arthur Lyu, Jody Smith, Ellery Foutch, Alexis M. Mychajliw. 2025. A 19th Century Stormwrecked Black-Capped Petrel From Vermont Offers Insight Into Historical Vagrancy Processes. NATURE NOTES, Open Access. First published: 05 February 2025 https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.70846 or https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ece3.70846

As stated in the article, "This research likewise highlights the critical role of small museum collections play in piecing together historical datasets and informing modern conservation, emphasizing the importance of their preservation and digitization."

The Taxonomic split of Jamaican Petrel and Black-capped Petrel

In the Sixty-fifth Supplement to the American Ornithological Society's Check-list of North American Birds, the Jamaican Petrel *Pterodroma caribbaea* was added to the check-list, because it was split from the Black-capped Petrel; that is, the two are considered distinct species. In recent decades, there has been confusion and disagreement on considering *caribbaea* to be a color morph of *hasitata,* a subspecies of *hasitata*, or a distinct species. The split is based on plumage differences between specimens of *hasitata* and *caribbaea*, as well morphometrics and feather lice evidence. The two *hasitata* color morphs on Hispaniola are referenced for comparison, but no recommendation made about their taxonomic treatment. See https://academic.oup.com/auk/advance-article/doi/10.1093/ornithology/ukae019/7716004; and the actual proposal https://americanornithology.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-A.pdf (pp 51-54)

The Black-capped Petrel used as a study subject for Remote Sensing and Machine Learning

The USFWS, USGS, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and several academic partners have been collaborating to integrate remote sensing technologies and machine learning methods for marine wildlife monitoring. With the goal is moving away from traditional low-level aircraft surveys with human observers, the program has modified aircraft to host remote sensing platforms, acquired sophisticated multi-sensor arrays, and made substantial progress for managing huge datasets and processing via machine learning. The program has focused on the marine environment to date. In September 2023, a major acquisition of data was conducted over the shelf break off North Carolina, targeting Black-capped Petrels. Analysis is focusing on development of generalized machine learning models to detect and classify marine wildlife from aerial imagery and the data acquisition off North Carolina expanded the representation of species like Black-capped petrels in the image set used for model training and validation. The study is continuing with an aim of deploying arrays in the Atlantic, the Gulf and U.S. waters in the Caribbean. Interested parties may contact Mark Koneff (mark_koneff@fws.gov) or Brad Pickens (bradley_pickens@fws.gov) for more information on the project.

Communications

BirdsCaribbean International Conference

The Black-capped Petrel, or Diablotin, was given a high level of visibility at the BirdsCaribbean International Conference in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. This was fitting as the petrel's only confirmed breeding location is Hispaniola, and the local host of the conference, Grupo Jaragua, is the lead Dominican organization for petrel monitoring and conservation. The IBPCG's objectives for the conference were to bring individuals interested in the conservation of the Black-capped Petrel together, to share updates, exchange ideas and celebrate accomplishments. A summary of the petrel-related events at the conference is posted to the working group website.

Road to Recovery Webinar: From Lost to Listed
– Conservation Milestones for the Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata*)

Yvan Satgé and Jennifer Wheeler were invited to present a webinar on conservation milestones for the Black-capped Petrel by coordinators of the Road to Recovery. Road to Recovery is an initiative focused on recovering the most rapidly declining birds in the U.S. and Canada by supporting species-focused teams. The webinar can be viewed by visiting: https://r2rbirds.org/resources/workshop-engagement-resources/species-working-group-webinars/

Call to Action Webinar series: Conservation Action Planning for The Black Capped Petrel
Jim Goetz was invited to present on the petrel (along with Isabel Vique-Bosquet on the Saint Lucia Fer-de-lance) by coordinators of the Call to Action webinar series. The series was commenced by Re:wild and Flora & Fauna as part of the Conservation Action Plans for Endangered Caribbean species project. A copy of the webinar is available on request from J Goetz james.e.goetz@gmail.com or Jennifer Wheeler Jennifer.wheeler@birdscaribbean.org.

Working Group Tools

Listserv: Visit BirdsCaribbean.groups.io/g/Diablotin to subscribe to our discussion group for the people interested in *Pterodroma hasitata* conservation. We use the Groups.IO platform provided by BirdsCaribbean to take advantage of the regional organization's reach, influence and administrative support.

Websites: The website for the working group is hosted by BirdsCaribbean and includes a library of unpublished documents related to the Black-capped Petrel project. The website library includes the new conservation action plan, the unpublished reports noted in this newsletter, links to open access educational materials, and copies of presentations (slides, posters) to communicate to the conservation community.

Please visit www.BirdsCaribbean.org, and search under "Petrel" or go directly to https://www.birdscaribbean.org/our-work/black-capped-petrel-working-group/

Another website, Diablotin.org, offers additional, timely information on Black-capped Petrel activities.

This newsletter was prepared by Jennifer Wheeler (Jennifer.Wheeler@BirdsCaribbean.org), with contributions from many others.

Fun stuff: See humans imitating the Diablotin and other Hispaniolan birds at the BirdsCaribbean conference on Grupo Jaragua's Instagram page.

Link: *https://www.instagram.com/reel/C-Frov2uJOR/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=28aa2815-52fc-4aa4-ada2-bc16883940d2*