# 2024-2025 Black-Capped Petrel Conservation and Monitoring

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**Date of Report: Revised February 5, 2026**

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A mating pair in a burrow in Valle Nuevo

## Summary

The 2024-2025 monitoring season in the Dominican Republic brought similar results as the 2023-2024 one. Despite intensive efforts of trapping using AT220s to reduce mongoose presence at Valle Nuevo, not a single mongoose was caught, and fledging success remained extremely low (only two successful nests were verified). At Loma del Toro, 8 nests with fledging chicks were registered, two of them in nest boxes installed to replace damaged burrows. Twenty artificial burrows (wooden boxes placed in novel locations) were monitored at this site. Six of them showed activity of adult birds, but no eggs or chicks were observed. At Loma Quemada only one nest was successful. Two new nests were found in Valle Nuevo. Although not funded by this grant, Grupo Jaragua also assisted with monitoring at Morne Vincent.

## Project Activities Under Grant #21107J

### *Nest Monitoring Activities in Agreement*

*1.a. At Valle Nuevo*

*a.i. Monitor nesting birds following established protocols*

*a.ii. Place 30 cameras on nests at Valle Nuevo*

*1.b. At Loma del Toro*

*b.i. Monitor nesting birds following established protocols*

*b.ii. Place cameras at 40 nests at Loma del Toro (which includes 17 at artificial nest boxes and the rest at nests),*

*b.iii. Maintain nests dog-proof by securing entrances and burrows*

*1.c. Place 6 cameras at Loma Quemada and 15 at Morne Vincent (Haiti).*

Monitoring trips were made by the Grupo Jaragua team to three locations (day.month.year). Each location was visited prior to petrel arrival to determine status of burrows and set mongoose traps and cameras, then visited monthly (Valle Nuevo) or every other month (Loma del Toro and Loma Quemada), weather permitting.

Valle Nuevo (6 visits, 4 to 7 days in duration each, total of 36 days):

13.9.24 to 19.9.24
15.1.25 to 21.1.25
24.2.25 to 2.3.25
20.3.25 to 27.3.25
10.5.25 to 16.5.24
4.7.25 to 8.7.25

At Valle Nuevo, there were 25 cameras placed on nests and seven on AT220 traps (this includes 2 cameras with instant transfer of photos to e-mail, though there were issues of low signal strength.)

Loma del Toro (5 visits, 4 to 7 days in duration each, total of 26 days):

21.10.24 to 27.10.24
2.2.25 to 9.2.25
26.4.25 to 30.4.25
8.6.25 to 13.6.25
13.8.25 to 17.8.25

At Loma del Toro, there were 22 cameras placed on nests and 20 on artificial nest boxes.

Loma Quemada (4 visits, 1 to 4 days in duration each, total of 12 days):

31.10.24 to 2.11.24
15.2.25 to 19.2.25
13.4.25 to 17.4.25
25.7.25 to 26.7.25

At Loma Quemada, there were 7 cameras placed on nests.

Twelve cameras were delivered to the border for use placement in Morne Vincent colony by the Haitian team.

The number of cameras in use varied somewhat from the agreement, adjusted due to camera availability. Camera failures were frequent at all sites regardless of quality or price of camera, due to high humidity. For example, of the 12 delivered to Haiti, only 9 were still functioning by the end of the season.

Camera data were used to determine the use and fate of nests, including evidence of predation or disturbance. Camera data also provides insights on behavior. In previous seasons, Yvan Satgé conducted a comprehensive review of camera data, providing details on effort, petrel and predator activity, including interesting behaviors and co-occurring wildlife. Additional funds would be needed to

repeat that analysis with 2024-2025 data.

Results of Predator Control in Valle Nuevo:

To address mongoose predation in Valle Nuevo, Grupo Jaragua received five AT220 self-resetting traps from American Bird Conservancy in November 2023. Experts in New Zealand and Hawaii were consulted on their use, including recommendations for timers, placement, security, human safety, and bait.

From January 2024 through the end of breeding season, the five traps were set up in test locations (>100 m from petrel nests) with the kill mechanism blocked. Each AT220 was monitored by camera. During this test period, no mongoose activity at the AT220s was detected. Several rats were attracted and seen on camera inspecting the traps, though it appeared the rat visits decreased over time. The bait used during this time was a paste of grounded smoked herring and vegetable oil.

During the test period there was no indication that the AT220s presented a risk to petrels or native wildlife. Thus, they were moved to locations closer to clusters of petrel burrows, activated and monitored by camera. The same bait was used. From September 2024 to present, no mongoose activity was detected at the AT220s. The traps were very successful in dispatching rats (dozens).

The AT220s will be deployed in the same locations in 2025-2026. Although no mongoose have been caught to date, the team has gained good experience in setting up the traps. We will look into different bait formulations. We request additional batteries for the AT220s because of the difficulty of recharging in the field (the ranger station at Valle Nuevo has only intermittent power).

Results of Predator Control in Other Locations:

Very little predator presence was noted in Loma del Toro, Loma Quemada and Morne Vincent, on cameras or through evidence at nests. No trapping was conducted in the DR colonies.
However, reproductive success was low in these locations (see below).

In Loma del Toro, the nest boxes continue to hold up well. One tunnel required replacement. No natural burrows suffered any damage.

Success of Monitored Nests:

Table 1 shows the fate of monitored nests at Valle Nuevo, Loma del Toro and Loma Quemada during the 2024-2025 season. The total of nests monitored was 33 in Valle Nuevo 29 at Loma del Toro, and nine at Loma Quemada. Twenty-five nests were active (showing presence of petrels during the season) at Valle Nuevo, 20 at Loma del Toro and seven at Loma Quemada. Successful fledging was documented for two nests at Valle Nuevo, eight at Loma del Toro, and one at Loma Quemada, which brings fledging success to 8%, 40%, and 14% respective to the mentioned sites.

Table 1: Results of Monitoring at Valle Nuevo, Loma del Toro y Loma Quemada

| **Results of nests monitored in 25** | **Valle Nuevo** | **Loma del Toro** | **Loma Quemada** |
|---|---|---|---|
| not active from start | 8 | 9 | 2 |
| Presence of adults but no chicks | 18 | 12 | 5 |
| predator impact | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| fledged | 2 | 8 | 1 |
| dead unharmed chick | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| infertile egg or abandoned egg | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **Total nests monitored** | **33** | **29** | **9** |
| active | 25 | 20 | 7 |
| % fledging to active nests | **8.00** | **40.00** | **14.29** |

Fledging success has been very low in Valle Nuevo over the years, presumably due to high predation by mongoose. This holds also true for the 2024-2025 season (see Table 1 and 2). Eighteen nests were occupied by adults and failed to produce a fledgling. Five nests show evidence of predation.
A high level of abandonment occurred at the Loma del Toro colony after the 2020-2021 season, which was marked by a significant depredation event by dogs. During the 2023-2024 season, the Loma del Toro site finally showed a notable increase in successful fledging. In 2024-2025, a similar result with eight successful nests was achieved.

Numbers of fledging chicks and corresponding percentages of fledging success have been mixed at the Loma Quemada colony since the start of monitoring at this site (Table 2). The 2023-2024 season as well as the 2024-2025 season both show extremely low fledging success, for reasons unknown.

Table 2: Annual nesting success at the three colonies in the Dominican Republic

| season | Valle Nuevo | | | Loma del Toro | | | Loma Quemada | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | active nests monitored | successful nests | percentage of success (%) | active nests monitored | successful nests | percentage of success (%) | active nests monitored | successful nests | percentage of success (%) |
| 20/21 | 5 | 2 | 40 | 29 | 2 | 6.90 | 6 | 4 | 66.67 |
| 21/22 | 18 | 2 | 11.11 | 24 | 4 | 16.67 | 6 | 1 | 16,67 |
| 22/23 | 23 | 3 | 13.04 | 21 | 3 | 14,29 | 6 | 5 | 83,33 |
| 23/24 | 25 | 2 | 8 | 20 | 9 | 45,00 | 8 | 2 | 25.00 |
| 24/25 | 25 | 2 | 8 | 20 | 8 | 40,00 | 7 | 1 | 14,29 |

Use of Nestboxes at Loma del Toro:

Of the 29 nests monitored in Loma del Toro, six contained wooden boxes placed into existing cavities after the dog attack of the 2020-2021 season. Table 3 shows the use of these replacement burrows by petrels over time. In the 2024-2025 season, two had fledged chicks.

Table 3. Use of replacement burrows at Loma del Toro

| **nest** | **Results 24/25** | Results 23/24 | Results 22/23 | Results 21/22 | Results 20/21 | Results 19/20 | Results 18/19 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| JGP02 | **abandoned from start of season** | abandoned from start of season | abandoned from start of season | last photo adult 31.10.21 | destroyed by dog | fledged | fledged |
| TRO02 | **abandoned from start of season** | abandoned from start of season | last photo adult 18.11.22 | last photo adult 14.12.21 | destroyed by dog | fledged | fledged |
| TRO08 | **chick fledged 12.7.25** | chick leaving nest 27.7 (7:53) dropping dead | Chick fledged 7.7.23 | last photo adult 21.4.22 | destroyed by dog | abandonend during season | fledged |
| TRO09 | **last photo of adult 27.3.25** | chick fledged | last photo adult 18.4.23 | last photo adult 24.3.22 | destroyed by dog | abandonend during season | fledged |
| TRO15 | **last photo of adult 16.4.25** | last photo adult 11.4 | Last photo adult 21.3.23 | last photo adult 2.4.22 | destroyed by dog | fledged | fledged |
| TRO17 | **chick fledged** | chick fledged | Chick fledged 6.7.23 | last photo adult 14.3.22 | destroyed by dog | abandonend during season | egg outside nest |

A total of 20 artificial burrows (nest boxes with or without tunnels in novel locations) were monitored at Loma del Toro during the 2024-2025 season (See Table 4). See the December 2023 and May 2025 International Black-capped Petrel Group Update on Activities for details on their installation.
Note: The May 2025 updated reported 22 were in place, but the two planned for December 2024 were not actually installed).

In the 2024-2025 season, six of the 20 artificial burrows showed adult activity, although no presence of any chick could be verified. The activity of adults in six artificial burrows is a significant increase from the 2023-24 season, where only one nest was active.

Table 4: Artificial burrows installed at Loma del Toro

| box | coordenates | | site and comments | date of installation | type of box | Results 24/25 | Results 23/24 | Results 22/23 | Results 21/22 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | E NAD27 | N NAD27 | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 213347 | 2024083 | trail to nest tro11 | 16/03/22 | without tunnel | **Active, last photo adult 28.2** | | | |
| 2 | 213346 | 2024083 | trail to nest tro11 | 16/03/22 | without tunnel | **Active, last photo adult 22.4** | passage bird | | |
| 3 | 213323 | 2024094 | close to nest tro12 | 12/05/22 | Old wooden tunnel broken, replaced | **Active, last photo adult 7.3** | active, last photo adult 17.3.24 | Active nest, adult bird present until March/April | |
| 4 | 213315 | 2024100 | left side of nest tro12 | 12/05/22 | with tunnel | **Passage bird in November** | passage bird | | |
| 5 | 213323 | 2024123 | below tro17 | 16/03/22 | with tunnel | **Active, last photo adult 4.4, pair present** | passage bird | passage bird | |
| 6 | 213379 | 2024160 | beside tro18 | 17/03/22 | with tunnel | | | passage bird | |
| 7 | 213373 | 2024160 | above tro18 | 17/03/22 | with tunnel | **passage bird in January** | | passage bird | |
| 8 | 213017 | 2024283 | right side of nest nv1 | 02/02/22 | with tunnel | | | | |
| 9 | 212984 | 2024295 | below nest nv1 | 02/02/22 | with tunnel | | | | |
| 10 | 212993 | 2024264 | part above nv1 | 02/02/22 | with tunnel | | | | |
| 11 | 213018 | 2024248 | above nest nv1 | 03/02/22 | with tunnel | | | | |
| boca1 | 213014 | 2024374 | below nv1 | 03/02/22 | only tunnel | | | | |
| 12 | 213360 | 2024089 | 30 m above nest tro6 | 18/10/23 | with tunnel | **Active, last photo adult 12.12.24** | adult bird inspecting box 12.2 for about 20 minutes | | |
| 13 | 213350 | 2024108 | 15 m below nest tro19 | 18/10/23 | with tunnel | **Passage bird in November** | passage bird | | |
| 14 | 213317 | 2024107 | between tro17 and tro5 | 18/10/23 | with tunnel | **Active, last photo adult 16.11** | passage bird | | |
| 15 | 213363 | 2024162 | below nest 8 | 19/10/23 | with tunnel | **Bird inspectioning entrance of box in November, birds pasing nest possibly to get to nest 8** | passage bird | | |
| 16 | 213362 | 2024167 | below nest 8 | 19/10/23 | with tunnel | **Passage bird in November** | | | |
| 17 | 213361 | 2024173 | below nest 8 | 19/10/23 | with tunnel | | | | |
| 18 | 213367 | 2024089 | above box 12 | 23/10/24 | with tunnel | **Bird walking around box in November** | | | |
| 19 | 213367 | 2024092 | above box 12 | 23/10/24 | with tunnel | **Bird in front of box in November and February** | | | |
| 20 | 213365 | 2024094 | above box 12 | 23/10/24 | with tunnel | **Bird in front of box in November and February** | | | |

***Nest Searching Activity in Agreement***

2. *Find new nests at suspected sites on Hispaniola.*
   *2.a. Searches will be conducted at Valle Nuevo, Loma del Toro, Zapoten and Loma Quemada as part of the predator control and monitoring trips.*
   *2.b. Report on nest search effort by reporting date, effort, GPS locations and observations.*

Unfortunately, due to rain and other difficulties (e.g., vehicle issues), there was only very limited nest searching during the 2024-2025 season.

Two new nests were located in Valle Nuevo. This site seems to hold much promising habitat, that to date, the team has not been able to search. Vocalizations heard in the night provide clues as to where petrels might be headed, but many areas are very difficult to access.

Loma Quemada seems to have lower human or predation pressures, and it is desirable to understand more about the size of the population there, but the logistics of searching there are very difficult.

***Nest Database Development Activity in Agreement***

3. *Establish a comprehensive database of nesting data to reduce uncertainty around life history factors and enhance conservation efforts.*

This task was completed by Yvan Satgé and documented in a separate report.

## Additional Activities Outside Grant #21107J

Morne Vincent Nest Monitoring:

Because of the sociopolitical and economic challenges in Haiti, Anderson Jean of ACSEH was unable to travel to Morne Vincent during the 2024-2025 season. Grupo Jaragua worked with the local Haitians to conduct the nest monitoring and community work in Morne Vincent, as it had done in the early years of the petrel program (2011 to 2019). Specifically, Grupo Jaragua provided the funding to cover stipends and travel costs for field techs and community liaisons (René Jeune, Samuel Nossirel, Tinio Louis, Pierre Richard Sanon, Renozier “Ti Tet” Victome,). Additionally, Grupo Jaragua provided small awards to leaders of community projects (local nursery, youth group). However, the summary of nest monitoring data and its submission to the nest monitoring database remained the responsibility of ACSEH/EPIC.

Recording of calls of BCPE at nests with ARUs:

Automatic recording units (ARUs, specifically SM4s) were deployed inside known nesting areas in Valle Nuevo (n = 2 SM4 within 5-10 m of known nests; 2023-2024), Loma del Toro (n = 5 SM4 within 10 m of known nests; 2023-2024 and 2024-2025), and Loma Quemada (n = 1 SM4 within 10 m of known nests; 2024-2025). A summary of ARU activities and data (totaling 3 terabytes) has been assembled for submission to Conservation Metrics (although funding for analysis has not been secured).

Collisions Assessment:

During the 2024-2025 season, six downed birds were recorded around the antenna area at Loma del Toro. One bird had a broken wing. Remains of feathers and bones of another one were found. Four birds were found seemingly unharmed and released successfully.

No other downed birds were reported in other locations.