



The Caribbean Seabird Initiative: Invasives

April 2012

CSI: Invasives is a project that seeks to increase regional capacity, support, and funding for invasive species work to benefit seabirds in the Caribbean region.

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The mangrove islets of Bancho Chinchorro in the Mexican Caribbean are one of the locations undergoing rodent eradication in Spring 2012.

Recent Eradication Events

Eradications are taking place at a number of Caribbean locations this spring. Of course, an eradication event (e.g., trapping and baiting) is only one action within a multi-year process of planning, preparation, monitoring, mitigation, evaluation, and biosecurity. Real success must be measured over years. But it's undeniable that the actual eradications are exciting and pivotal events!

Banco Chinchorro, Mexico

Located in the Mexican Caribbean, in front of the south-eastern tip of the State of Quintana Roo in the Yucatan Peninsula, the Banco Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve encompasses over 144,866 hectares of open water, sea grass beds, mangroves, sand beaches and coral reefs and is considered one of the most outstanding marine sites in the region. It is the biggest platform type reef complex system in Mexico and because of its isolated position, it represents well-preserved natural ecosystems. In collaboration with Mexico's protected areas agency (CONANP) and with the support of the Mexican Navy (SEMAR) and Amigos de Sian Kaan, Conservación de Islas has begun to systematically remove rats from the mangrove islets of the reserve. Two islands have been recently cleared and planning is underway for a third, larger island. Contact Marlenne A. Rodríguez, Conservación de Islas, marlenne.rodriguez@islas.org.mx.

Conservación de Islas is also conducting post-eradication monitoring on Arrecife Alacranes in the Gulf of Mexico, a seabird site of international importance and where successful rodent eradications took place at the end of 2011.

Cayo Ratones, Cayo Cardona, and Cayo Berbería, Puerto Rico

A rat eradication program was started in early 2011 on these relatively small mangrove islets off the south-southeast coast of Puerto Rico. A February 2012 visit to Cardona and Ratones cays indicated no rats remained or were introduced since the 2011 eradications and new vegetation growth was observed in previously unvegetated parts of the island. At Cayo Berbería, eradication is underway with bait stations
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Recent Eradications, cont.

being placed in March and April. Even after successful eradication, however, stewards must remain vigilant because of the closeness of these islands to the mainland. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program funded Effective Environmental Restoration (EER) to undertake this project, with the cooperation and consultation of the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources. Contact Jorge E. Saliva, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jorge_Saliva@fws.gov.

Dog Island, Anguilla

This is one of the Caribbean's most important seabird islands, with nine breeding species including globally and regionally significant populations of Sooty Terns, Brown Boobies, Laughing Gulls, Magnificent Frigatebirds, Brown Noddies, Masked Boobies, and Red-billed Tropicbirds. It is also used by migratory waders, nesting sea turtles, as well as four terrestrial reptiles endemic to Anguilla. Decades of occupation by rats have badly degraded Dog Island's ecosystem, suppressed the regeneration of native flora, and resulted in predation on eggs, chicks, and other small animals. Fortunately, the Anguilla National Trust, partnering with Fauna and Flora International, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Anguilla Government's Department of Environment, and Dog Island's owner, is working to change this. It appears that the eradication activities in March were successful, with over two weeks of immediate follow-up monitoring finding no sign of rat activity. Permanent monitoring stations have now been installed to confirm eradication and prevent reintroduction. Contact Anguilla National Trust, axanat@anguillanet.com.



Sooty Terns on Dog Island, Anguilla - now hopefully rat-free.

Desecheo, Puerto Rico

This 358-acre island 13 miles off the west coast of Puerto Rico is managed as a National Wildlife Refuge. Historically known as an important center of biodiversity and species abundance in the Caribbean, the island was also a major seabird rookery and formerly home to one of the largest Brown Booby breeding populations in the world. The extirpation of nesting seabirds, as well as the decimation of endemic reptile and cactus species, has been linked to the presence of invasive mammals including goats, macaques, and rats. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Island Conservation are working together to remove these exotic vertebrates, with the project now focused on the rat eradication. The two bait applications in March appear successful according to the post-application monitoring team still on the island. Contact Gisella Burgos, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Gisella_Burgos@fws.gov or Amy Carter, Island Conservation, Amy.Carter@Islandconservation.org.

Seabird Training Workshop Will Include Session on Invasives

The Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds, as part of a multi-faceted project "Building International Capacity for Seabird Conservation," is hosting a workshop in San Salvador, Bahamas in early June. Applicants for the workshop are now being selected. Recognizing the threat that invasive species pose to seabird populations, one of the sessions in the workshop will address this topic, in specific the need for outreach and communication. The objectives are to equip participants with messages about the threats of invasive species and the benefits of addressing them, along with the messages about the importance of seabird conservation in general. The destruction or removal of some organisms as a means of island restoration is a conservation concept that politicians and the public need to understand and support for this practice to successfully move forward in the region. Contact Ann Sutton or Will Mackin, SCSCB, asutton@cwjamaica.com or willmackin@gmail.com.

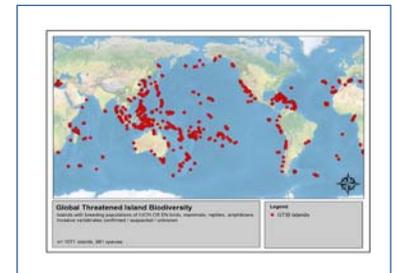
Caribbean Included in Global Dataset

Experts are asked to help review the global IUCN Red List Threatened Species and Invasive Alien Vertebrates on Islands dataset. A spreadsheet is located at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/carib_ias_threat/attachments/folder/723954050/item/750014349/view with detailed instructions on a) how to undertake this review, b) metadata information describing the parameters used, and c) a list of all reviewers contacted. This database of threatened island biodiversity and invasive vertebrate distribution will be a world first and will serve as a tool for informing where invasive vertebrates can be removed to protect the world's most endangered insular species from extinction.

The database team (Nick Holmes, Island Conservation; Bernie Tershy, Don Croll, Dena Spatz, Coastal and Conservation Action Laboratory, University of California at Santa Cruz; Stuart Butchart, BirdLife International; and Shyama Pagad, IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group) has requested reviews by **April 15, 2012**. Contact islands.db@ucsc.edu or (1) 831 459 4581 (US).

IC Regional Director's Activities

A year into his position, Island Conservation (IC)'s Caribbean Regional Director, Boris Fabres, is focused on strategic planning for his organization in the region as well as project and program development via outreach to governments, regional government organizations and NGOs. He is also working with the international Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) towards the development of a Caribbean ISSG node. Boris is still located in Trinidad; but will be re-locating the IC regional office to the Bahamas. Contact Boris Fabres, Island Conservation, boris.fabres@islandconservation.org.



Map produced from the developing global dataset of islands with IUCN Red List Species and Invasive Alien Vertebrates. To date, the project has identified 1305 islands with breeding populations of 1080 IUCN Critically Endangered and Endangered species, of which 1071 islands appear to have known damaging invasive vertebrates.

Dutch Caribbean Report Highlights Invasive Threats to Seabirds

Exotic and invasive terrestrial and freshwater animal species in the Dutch Caribbean, a report conducted by Imares (Institute for Marine Resources & Ecosystem Studies) for the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, the Netherlands highlights the threat of invasive vertebrates to seabirds.

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From our overview we conclude that the key priorities for successful action against aggressive exotic animals are:

- *control of goats;*
- *control of introduced predators (rats and cats) near seabird breeding colonies;*
- *eradication of several small populations of exotic mammal predators and reptiles as long as this is possible before they get a strong foothold and spread;*
- *eradication of introduced species from small offshore islands which serve (or served) as seabird breeding habitat.*

In addition to such on-island action against species already present, it is critical to prevent further introductions. Two key action points are urgently needed: a) develop the existing legislation and b) establish biosecurity units empowered for action.

The report is found at <http://edepot.wur.nl/192697>.



Control of introduced predators would help the Red-billed Tropicbird, of which the Saba population represents the largest breeding population in the Caribbean.

Find this newsletter posted at <http://wicbirds.net> and <http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/caribbeanseabirds>



CSI: Invasives is an initiative of Waterbird Conservation for the Americas, a partnership with the vision that the distribution, diversity and abundance of populations and habitats of breeding, migratory and non-breeding waterbirds are sustained or restored throughout the lands and waters of the Americas.
www.waterbirdconservation.org