



The Caribbean Seabird Initiative: Invasives

March 2010

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.

A Collective Effort

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Early in 2009, a group of partners concerned with Caribbean seabird conservation met in association with the Waterbird Conservation Council to advance the practice of invasive species management to benefit seabirds in the region. Lack of specific information on the nature and extent of invasive species impacts on these populations is a challenge, but due to new information on the status of seabird colonies, the immersion of a variety of Caribbean regional partnerships and projects focused on invasive species, and advances in invasive species management in other regions of the world, an initiative is timely. The group concluded that significant progress should be possible in five years time through outreach, new project proposals, and continued initiative planning and coordination. This newsletter reports on relevant developments in the past year. To learn more about the initiative and contribute stories related to Caribbean seabirds and invasive species management, contact Jennifer Wheeler, Coordinator, Waterbird Conservation for the Americas, Jennifer_A_Wheeler@fws.gov, 1-703-358-1931.

"I am enormously excited to see growing interest in alien invasive species control among other groups and countries. We know this approach works and can significantly benefit multiple native species, it doesn't have to be prohibitively expensive and the long term control work can be sustained by local groups."

— Jenny Daltry

Invasive Species Threat to Biodiversity

Arguably the biggest threat to biodiversity in the Caribbean is invasive species. Today more than 25 percent of the Caribbean's endemic species are either threatened or have already become extinct. The Insular Caribbean's 58 endemic mammals are particularly hard hit; 62 percent of the known species have gone extinct since 1600 and 100 percent of those remaining are threatened with extinction. Management of invasive species is also a critical action that must be undertaken to secure the breeding populations of 23 species of seabird in the Caribbean. Although land conversion and overexploitation have contributed to the Insular Caribbean's extinctions, invasive mammals have played a disproportionate role. The impacts of invasive species are most acute in the Caribbean's many protected areas, where other anthropogenic threats can be minimized, but invasive mammals continue to cause tremendous damage.

Emerging Funding Opportunities

NFWF Board Commits To Support

In November 2009, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) approved a business plan that recommends initiating invasive species-focused and other conservation efforts within the Caribbean Basin. The underlying goal of the plan is to benefit imperiled Caribbean seabirds such as Black-capped Petrel, Audubon's Shearwater, White-tailed Tropicbird, Red-billed Tropicbird, Bridled Tern, and other imperiled species and includes initial emphasis on four islands: Navassa (USA), Conception Island (Bahamas), Dog Island (Anguilla), and Petite Terres (Guadeloupe). Enhancing the human capacity to address seabird conservation issues was identified as a critical, long-term need necessary for maximizing the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of seabird conservation in the region. The plan recommends a total investment of nearly US\$4M over the next 5 to 10 years, of which NFWF costs are estimated to be approximately US\$1.5M. The business plan is a dynamic document, meant to evolve with increased knowledge of species and identification of new opportunities for seabird conservation. Growing the available funding for Caribbean seabirds and identifying new ways of effectively collaborating within and amongst nations need to be aggressively pursued in unison by the partners. Contact Daniel Petit, Director, Bird Conservation, NFWF, daniel.petit@nfwf.org, 1-330-666-4010.

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--Daniel Petit



Seabird populations are just one element of entire island ecosystems that benefit when alien invasive species are removed.

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund Targets the Caribbean

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) now includes the Caribbean Islands in its portfolio of focal biodiversity hotspots - Earth's most biologically rich and threatened areas - and is in the process of identifying an organization to serve as its regional implementation body. The CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank. Already working in 30+ hotspots around the world, CEPF has committed to spending an anticipated US\$6.5M over five years in the Caribbean. The focus will be on 45 key biodiversity areas and six biodiversity conservation corridors in countries eligible as both signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity and World Bank client countries, or eligibility to receive GEF funds specifically. Improving management of invasive species is a priority in many of these key areas, and some host significant seabird resources. The key biodiversity areas and the strategic directions for the new funds are outlined in the Caribbean Hotspot ecosystem profile, authored by

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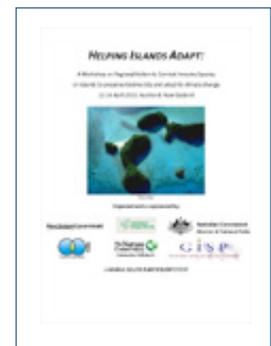
Birdlife International. It is online at http://www.cepf.net/Documents/Finaldraft_Caribbean_EP.pdf. Contact Michele Zador, Grant Director, CEPF/CI, m.zador@conservation.org, 1-703-341-2635.

EC Solicits Invasive Species Management Projects

The European Union could prove a source for funding as they have identified support for field pilot activities and models to limit the spread and reduce the impact of invasive species as one of the priorities under its Thematic Programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources Including Energy (ENRTP). The stated goal is to improve information and understanding of the dynamics of invasive species; development of replicable models to limit their spread and social, environmental and economic impact. Eligible Small Island Development States (SIDS) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT's) are a particular focus for these priority areas. Partners active in invasive species control to benefit biodiversity (Flora and Fauna International, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) will be applying for these funds to advance work in Antigua, Anguilla and St. Lucia. The Commission approved the initial concept submitted by this group in October; hopefully the full proposal will be approved and funded. Contact Jenny Daltry, Senior Conservation Biologist, Fauna & Flora International, jenny.daltry@gmail.com, +33 5 63 24 27 68.

Caribbean Region Selected as Focal Area for International Workshop

The New Zealand Government, the Australian Government, the Nature Conservancy, the Pacific Invasives Initiative, the Secretariat for the Convention of Biological Diversity, the Global Island Partnership, and the Global Invasive Species Program are hosting an international workshop on regional actions to combat invasive species on islands. The Caribbean is one of five regions targeted for this workshop. The workshop will take place in Auckland, New Zealand from 12-16 April, 2010, with the purpose of identifying and strengthening mechanisms that enable effective and sustainable invasive species management for islands, with management including prevention and incursion response. The steering committee for the workshop has invited representation from several programs and partnerships operating in the region, including Caribbean Seabird Initiative: Invasives. Contact Stas Burgiel, Policy Director, Global Invasive Species Programme, s.burgiel@gisp.org, 1-202-288-2360.



Helping Islands Adapt Workshop taking place in Auckland, New Zealand in April will target five regions, including the Caribbean.

Island Prioritization Effort Launched

The Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) regional meeting served as a venue for a workshop to “Prioritize, Plan and Secure Funding for Removing Damaging Non-Native Vertebrates from Islands.” This workshop was planned and facilitated by staff from Island Conservation and the SCSCB Seabird Working Group Chairs. A series of presentations provided participants with an understanding of the context and potential for conservation through eradications, the state of knowledge about Caribbean seabird colonies and co-located invasive species, and the social and political readiness criteria necessary to successful eradication projects. Participants were updated the West Indian Breeding Seabird Atlas (see wicbirds.net) and provided additional information relevant to invasive species eradication. Finally, the workshop continued to build relationships to undertake an overarching regional strategy of information-gathering, strategic-planning, capacity-building and successful eradications.

Progress after the workshop continues. The collection of information to inform eradication needs and feasibility continues online at www.islandconservation.org (click on Caribbean regional development). Island Conservation has since been successful in obtaining some funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to continue to assess opportunities for island restoration work and is seeking full funding from this source to complete the regional assessment through investment in a staffed position. This assessment will also include recommendations on how to develop a collaborative regional approach to identifying, funding and implementing island restoration projects in the Caribbean. Contact Brad Keitt, Director of Conservation, Island Conservation, brad.keitt@islandconservation.org, 1-831-359-4787 x107.

RSPB Now Well Positioned to Support CSI: Invasives

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is now preparing its five-year strategy for engagement in the UK Overseas Territories and seabird conservation will receive significant emphasis in an approach that is expected to include support for partners on the ground in parallel with advocacy for better resourcing and policies. Additionally, its new Country Programme Officer for the UKOTs in the Caribbean, James Millett, has significant experience with seabird conservation and island restoration. Millett previously worked for BirdLife International in the Pacific and the RSPB in the Indian Ocean islands, initiating in 2005 a seabird conservation program for the Pacific Birdlife Partnership with the restoration of Vatuira Island (Fiji) and subsequent projects. Contact James Millett, James.Millett@rspb.org.uk, 01767-639242 x2612.



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