



Waterbird Conservation for the Americas

Outcomes of the 20 January 2009 Workshop

A Caribbean Seabird Initiative Addressing Invasive Species [CSI: Invasives]

The small group of conservationists that gathered in Anguilla on 20 January 2009¹ believes that excellent opportunities now exist to advance seabird conservation in the Caribbean by pursuing a combination of outreach activities and on-the-ground projects to promote and demonstrate the beneficial results of invasive species management.

Recognizing that approximately two-thirds of the world's species extinctions have occurred on islands, and that the majority of those extinctions were caused by invasive species, there was consensus that management of invasive species is a critical action that must be undertaken to secure the breeding populations of 23 species of seabird in the Caribbean, despite a lack of specific information on the nature and extent of invasive species impacts on these populations.

Several recent developments relating to the synthesis of information on the status of seabird colonies, the creation of Caribbean regional partnerships and projects on invasive species, and advances in invasive species management in other regions of the world, provide an excellent foundation for a new initiative focused on Caribbean seabirds. Further, the organization and promotion of such an initiative will in turn strengthen these other approaches.

As defined at the workshop, this initiative seeks to increase regional capacity, support, and funding for invasive species work to benefit seabirds in the Caribbean region. The group believes that a strong foundation for these goals can be laid in five years time through the following activities:

Strategic Outreach

- Continue the development of an inclusive and comprehensive framework for the initiative. At the workshop, participants expanded on the elements which were felt to be necessary parts of the initiative: Coordination, Demonstration Projects, Training, Information Sharing and Research. This input will be captured and used to revise a framework that can serve as the organizational reference and communications tool for activities related to this initiative.
- Undertake outreach to the many stakeholders and potential partners inside and outside the Caribbean region. There are a number of other initiatives, institutions, and programs related to invasive species in place or in development to which this initiative could connect. Additionally, coordination with organizations concerned with taxa co-located with seabirds (iguanas, endemic mammals, sea turtles) and other interests (human health, socioeconomic status) could result in more efficient use of resources and expertise.

¹ Participants included Stas Burgiel, The Nature Conservancy; Rhon Connor, Anguilla Department of the Environment; Burr Heneman, Commonwealth Ocean Policy Program; Brad Keitt, Island Conservation; Dan Petit, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; Will Mackin and Ann Sutton, Seabird Working Group of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds; Sarah Sanders, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; Alan Saunders, Landcare Research; David Wege, Birdlife International; Jennifer Wheeler, Coordinator - Waterbird Conservation for the Americas with facilitation by Paul Kluckner, Chair of the Waterbird Conservation Council.

New Project Proposals

- Participants agreed that actual projects (with new funding) would be vital to the initiative. Eradication projects were felt to be the most marketable because of the visible effects, but the other elements of the initiative must also receive funding support. There were several opportunities for project funding discussed and some to be pursued in the near-term.
- With the emphasis on demonstration projects, the participants considered at length criteria for identifying and prioritizing demonstration projects. Demonstration projects should not only accomplish a biological goal but also train local people, build capacity and interest in governments, and demonstrate that eradication of invasive species is a credible and cost-effective way of protecting seabirds.

Continued Initiative Coordination and Support

- Participants recognized that because of the complex nature of this initiative, and the host of stakeholders and potential partners, it was important to pursue the creation of a position dedicated to its coordination. In fact, without a dedicated position, the initiative is at risk. Not only would a coordinator provide cohesion and a nexus of information, this individual could undertake the organizational and administrative tasks necessary to underpin the development of any major proposals.
- Participants brought extensive field and organizational experience from around the world (New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, the west coast of North America, the South Atlantic, and the Caribbean itself) to the table. Participants agreed to continue on as a steering committee for this initiative.

For More Information

Please contact any of the participants at the workshop.

