

# WSU Annual Report-2012

Report from the World Seabird Union

# WSU Annual Report 2012

January 2013

## Table of Contents

1. Background .....	3
2. Establishment of the World Seabird Union (WSU).....	3
3. Procedures .....	3
4. Progress with initiatives.....	3
4.1 World Seabird Conference.....	3
4.2 Communications and seabirds.net .....	3
4.3 Global seabird colony register.....	5
4.4 Population and productivity indices.....	6
4.5 Seabird monitoring database.....	6
4.6 Seabird at sea database.....	8
4.7 Seabird tracking data .....	8
4.8 Mortality events.....	8
Annex 1 -Charter for the World Seabird Union (WSU).....	9
Annex 2 - List of organizations and representatives to the WSU .....	10
Annex 3 -World Seabird Union Board of Directors.....	11
Annex 4 -World Seabird Monitoring Database Regional Coordinating Committee .....	12
Annex 5 -Seabirds.net work plan .....	13

# World Seabird Union

## Report from the WSU for 2012

### 1. Background

At the inaugural World Seabird Conference (WSC) in Canada in September 2010, representatives of all the seabird groups and organizations present there agreed in principle to try to establish a global seabird body, in order to:

1. Help hold another WSC, if desired.
2. Improve communication: a) between seabird researchers worldwide, especially students and younger scientists; and b) between the various regional seabird groups.
3. Develop global seabird database networks, as scoped in the series of “Legacy Workshops” at WSC.

### 2. Establishment of the World Seabird Union (WSU)

To take these initiatives forward, the representatives agreed at WSC to establish a “Transition Team (TT)”. This body agreed that the global organization should be called the World Seabird Union; it developed the terms of reference above into a draft Charter/Constitution (Annex 1). This has been approved and the World Seabird Union (WSU) was formally incorporated as legal nonprofit organization on 18 January 2012.

### 3. Procedures

The WSU has met by conference call quarterly (January, April, July, October); the agenda for these meetings and the minutes recording outcomes have been posted on seabirds.net, together with copies of any documents under discussion.

All WSU decisions to date have been made by consensus, though provision has been made for voting procedures as necessary. Membership of the WSU will be free to suitably qualified organizations. (List of member groups, Annex 2)

Now that the WSU is a formal organization we have held our first election of the Board of Directors. The aim was to have a board that represents the global perspective of the WSU and we have board members representing: Europe, Africa/Indian Ocean, North America, South America, Asia, and Australasia. The list of board members is in Annex 3.

### 4. Progress with initiatives

#### 4.1 World Seabird Conference

We plan to hold the second World Seabird Conference (WSC2) in 2015. The WSU established a small committee (Chair Pat Jodice) to provide liaison and advice to prospective applicants to host WSC2. The plan is that interested organizations would express interest in principle by 31 January 2014, and would then consult with the WSU Board to develop a more detailed proposal for review by the WSU.

#### 4.2 Communications and seabirds.net

The Seabirds.net organizational committee has been working in the last year to improve and develop the current website. Since WSC1, the Seabirds.net committee has put together a work plan which outlines the overarching plans for the website, and an approximate time-table (Annex 3). The team has made good progress with the items as outlined.

In January of 2012, Grant Humphries contacted Dragonfly Ltd., a company based in Wellington, New Zealand, to help in the construction of the website. It was planned to have Dragonfly Ltd. construct the framework of the website with regards to integrating the personnel database into the design. Several tasks were set forth in the contract including:

- With input from the Committee, create the design for the webpage, inclusive of colour schemes and layout
- Creation of an administrative section for the Committee to update static content of the website
- Creation and design of PETREL (the personnel database)
- Creation of a Discussion forum, WSU News board, Job and Opportunities section, and Staff Only discussion.
- Integration of many of these features with social media outlets (Twitter, and Facebook currently).

In order to fulfill the contract, payment of \$10,000 USD was to be made to Dragonfly from funds that remained from the World Seabird Conference. This was voted on at the 39<sup>th</sup> annual Pacific Seabird Group (PSG) annual meeting held in Turtle Bay Hawaii. This vote was passed unanimously by the PSG Executive Council. By this time a temporary version of PETREL was set up to encourage members of PSG to sign up. A table was set aside for the Committee, and over 80 people signed up for PETREL at this conference.

A contract with Dragonfly Ltd., under the supervision of Edward Abraham, was signed in March, 2012, and work began on the design and implementation.

Payment to Dragonfly Ltd. for half of their work was made in May, 2012 (5000.00 USD).

By August, 2012, prior to the International Albatross and Petrel Conference (IAPC) held in Wellington, New Zealand, the layout and design of the website were set up, and PETREL was officially launched on August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012 with full functionality. A table was set up at IAPC for people to sign up to PETREL, and approximately 70 people signed up at the conference. By December 2012, approximately 500 people were members of PETREL.

The final stage of Seabirds.Net for Dragonfly to complete their contractual obligations was to create a discussion forum, news board, jobs and opportunities section, and staff only discussion board. This work was still underway by December 2012, and is expected to be fully completed by January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013, with a final payment of 5000.00 USD to be made to Dragonfly Ltd. in February 2013.

As of January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, there were 556 members of PETREL. Seabirds.net has received over 2,000 unique visitors since September, 2012, with over 14,522 page views. The activity on this site is continually growing.

Other features of the website which have been completed include: 1) A section dedicated to the World Seabird Union (description of the organization, documents pertinent to the WSU, the board members, and a list of member organizations including individual web space for each organization if they ask for it). 2) A resources section which lists a series of important seabird related links, links to a series of publications, and the Seabird Information Network, which points users to all of the important seabird related databases which current exist.

Future planned phases of Seabirds.net include: 1) Internationalization of the webpage: translations to potentially up to 10 different languages. 2) Creation of a photo gallery for users to upload their favourite photos of seabirds. 3) A bibliography of seabird papers which can be easily accessed and maintained by users. A work plan is to be submitted for consideration of funding for these phases to the Board of the WSU.

In September 2012, The Committee also launched the World Seabird Union facebook page ([www.facebook.com/World.Seabird.Union](http://www.facebook.com/World.Seabird.Union)) and WSU Twitter account (@Seabirders). These are currently maintained by Grant Humphries, Sjurour Hammer and Moritz Schmid. Currently there are 210 people following the World Seabird Union on twitter, and 316 followers of the WSU facebook page. These numbers are increasing by approximately 1 – 2 people/followers every day, and it is planned to aim for 1000 followers by the end of 2013.

The Seabirds.net organizational committee has been working in the last year to improve and develop the current website. Since WSC1, the Seabirds.net committee has put together a work plan which outlines the overarching plans for the website, and an approximate time-table (Annex 3). The team has been progressing with the items as outlined. Since the creation of the work plan, the team has been discussing plans for a new design for the webpage which would be more representative of the final product. The webpage, [seabirds.net/wsu](http://seabirds.net/wsu) was created, which houses documentation for the WSU business. The creation of the personnel database is also been of high priority and is progressing. The team is working on contracting Dragonfly Ltd. in New Zealand to get the personnel database and website to a level where users

can begin updating and making changes to personal profiles. This directory will eventually be linked to a number of the databases that will be accessed through seabirds.net. The committee plans to have a functioning website using the new layout before the Pacific Seabird Group meeting in February, 2012.

### 4.3 Global seabird colony register

The WSU agreed that it was appropriate to move forward with this, initially using the data entry fields, provisions and rules of access and use as recently implemented for the Circumpolar Seabird Colony Register, developed by the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) on behalf of the Arctic Council. It was agreed to proceed by entering and soliciting data for areas complementary to those covered by CAFF (and by other existing major regional seabird colony databases). A compilation of appropriate source data has been prepared. In addition, agreement in principle has been reached with BirdLife International that seabird data for sites (some 3000 worldwide) qualifying as Important Bird Areas would be available for and/or linked to the WSU database after BirdLife launches its global marine IBA inventory.

#### Status of Global Seabird Colony Register current work.

A majority of the current work is being supported by a grant from the Pacific Seabird Group, using funds raised for the World Seabird Conference in 2010. In many cases matching funds and/or *pro bono* work is being contributed by the collaborating organizations and individuals listed below.

#### 1. Linking existing databases

##### 1.1 BirdLife Marine IBA database - ONGOING

Linkage to this database (comprising some 3,000 sites worldwide), following its launch at the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2012, has been agreed in principle but appreciable work will be needed to ensure ready access from (and appropriate compatibility with) the World Seabird Union's Global Colony Register. Through similar arrangements it is also intended to provide access to data on all seabird breeding sites which were reviewed but which did not qualify as IBAs; these data (some 1,500 sites) are currently within the BirdLife World Bird Database (but not publicly available).

Collaborators: Mr. Ben Lascelles (Marine IBA Programme Officer), Mr. Phil Taylor (Marine IBA data analyst), Dr. Ian May (Head of Information Technology)

##### 1.2 Caribbean, Bermuda and West Indies - ONGOING

The existing inventory, compiled under the auspices of the Seabird Working Group of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) underpinned the publication of Schreiber and Lee (2000) and Bradley and Norton (2009) and includes detailed data for the vast majority of seabird breeding sites (over 700 in total) for all 25 nations in the region under consideration. Providing new linkages enhancing access to and use of this inventory would be very timely.

Collaborator: Dr. Will Mackin (on behalf of SCSCB)

##### 1.3 Southern Africa - ONGOING

The South African Ministry of the Environment, maintains a database relating to seabird colonies in South Africa and Namibia. The African Seabird Group, will work the Ministry of Environment to facilitate this work. Access to appropriate parts of these data has been agreed in principle but appreciable checking and reformatting will be needed.

Collaborators: Dr. Ross Wanless (African Seabird Group), Dr Rob Crawford (Ministry of Environment)

Funds will be used to support technical staff to prepare databases to be become interoperable and for the actual process of linking the databases.

## **2. Remote data entry by seabird organisations (or holders of seabird site data), who may also simultaneously be compiling national/regional databases**

- 2.1 Australia, starting with Victoria, via Australasian Seabird Group (Dr. Peter Dann) – CONTACTED
- 2.2 Western Indian Ocean, via Indian Ocean Seabird Group (Prof. Matthieu Le Corre) – ONGOING
- 2.3 New Zealand, via NZ Forest & Bird (Dr. Chris Gaskin) – CONTACTED
- 2.4 South Pacific, via BirdLife Pacific regional team (Mr. Jez Bird, Mr. Steve Cranwell) – ONGOING

We are aware that this includes no South American data. However data entry on behalf of the Argentine Seabird Group (via Dr. Pablo Yorio) has already been funded independently and incorporation of the BirdLife IBA and non-IBA data will encompass most other countries in the region, for which the only other WSU member organisations are in Peru.

## **3) Remote data entry from published literature for countries/areas lacking any seabird organisation**

The sources for these data are principally Croxall et al. (1984) and Croxall (1991) supplemented by any more recent published data.

- 3.1 Iran/Arabia (over 100 sites and 2000 species/site entries) - ONGOING
- 3.2 Indonesia (about 50 sites and 500 species/site entries) - ONGOING
- 3.3 China (about 50 sites and 600 species/site entries) - ONGOING
- 3.4 Malaysia (about 30 sites and 500 species/site entries) - ONGOING

Input of these data is being organised and co-ordinated by the marine Important Bird Areas team at the BirdLife International Secretariat, under the direction of Mr Ben Lascelles.

## **References**

- Bradley, P.E. & Norton, R.L. (eds). 2009. *An inventory of breeding seabirds of the Caribbean*. Univ. Florida Press, Gainesville.
- Croxall, J.P. (ed.). 1991. *Seabird status and conservation: a supplement*. ICBP, Cambridge, 308 pp.
- Croxall, J.P., Evans, P.G.H. & Schreiber, R.W. (eds). 1984. *Status and conservation of the world's seabirds*. ICBP, Cambridge, 778 pp.
- Schreiber, B.A. & Lee, D.S. (eds). 2000. *Status and conservation of West Indian seabirds*. Society of Caribbean Ornithology, Ruston, La.

## **4.4 Population and productivity indices**

Like with the colony register, the WSU agreed that it was appropriate to move forward with this, initially using the data entry fields, provisions and rules of access and use as recently implemented for the Circumpolar Seabird Colony Register, developed by the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) on behalf of the Arctic Council. It was agreed to proceed by entering and soliciting data for areas complementary to those covered by CAFF. A work group is working on an inventory of people or organizations with data who will be contacted.

## **4.5 Seabird monitoring database**

The WSU-TT is sponsoring the work of a 17-member Regional Coordinating Committee (Annex 4) tasked with development and implementation of a World Seabird Monitoring Database (WSMD), modeled initially on the data entry fields, provisions and rules of access and use implemented in the Pacific Seabird Monitoring Database (Pacific Seabird Group). During 2012, the committee chair (S. Hatch) devoted approximately one month to making code revisions in the

PSMD web application to make it serve as a pilot version of the WSMD. These changes will accommodate the enlarged geographic and taxonomic scopes required of a world database, implement greater flexibility in managing data ownership and user permissions, and support a larger choice of internet browsers (PSMD being currently limited to Internet Explorer). Code changes are extensive and are not expected to be completed until sometime in 2013 or 2014. At that time a new application will be launched at Seabirds.net, followed by efforts by committee members to solicit data entry on a regional basis. In parallel with its initiative for a world database of seabird monitoring results, the Regional Coordinating Committee is building a database of seabird monitoring effort, past and present, irrespective of whether or when the resulting data are committed to the WSMD. It is anticipated that a change of web hosting service for the PSMD (and its WSMD successor) will occur in early 2013, moving from a USGS administered server (<http://seabirds.usgs.gov>) to a commercial web hosting service provider.

#### 4.6 Seabird at sea database

Advice on the desired next steps to enhanced links between existing databases of seabird records at sea is still awaited from the working group established at WSC.

#### 4.7 Seabird tracking data

##### Seabird tracking

During 2012 the BirdLife International Global Procellariiform Tracking Database increased its holdings by 995 new tracks, involving 23 seabird species, of which seven were new to the database (Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii*, Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma barau*, Trindade Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*, Parkinson's Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*, Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*, Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* and Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*). As well as enhancing species coverage, these have also helped improve understanding of seabird distributions in tropical waters, a region with previously poor representation. For each of these new species year-round tracking, providing information about breeding and non-breeding distributions, is available.

This year also saw the conclusion of a major programme of work by BirdLife, funded by Lenfest, directed at identifying priority at-sea areas for seabirds for contributing to the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) identification of Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) in the marine environment as candidates for special protection and management. Since the start of the project, 2072 new tracks have been added to the tracking database from 70 individual datasets. These data cover 28 species provided by 29 dataowners (plus many other co-owners), 21 of whom were not involved with the database before this project. For procellariiform species there is now good coverage for many ocean regions. Multiple species and many years of data in regions such as the South Atlantic, North Pacific and Tasman Sea have significantly improved the ability to identify a credible representative network of sites for these areas. The success of the Lenfest project in encouraging participation in the tracking database promises to leave a lasting legacy, as there are good prospects of acquiring data for several new *Pterodroma* species and receiving a multi-species tracking dataset for the southern Indian Ocean region.

The seabird tracking data provided a critical input to the three CBD regional expert workshops held in 2012: for the Wider Caribbean and Central Atlantic (Brazil, Jan 2012), the Southern Indian Ocean (Mauritius, Aug 2012) and the Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific (Galapagos, Oct 2012). At each workshop, seabird data were recognised as the most consistent and comparable data input to the process, which resulted in a large number (>200) of marine Important Bird Areas being recognised as EBSAs, either in their own right or as part of wider site descriptions involving other marine taxa. At the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the CBD (India, Oct 2012) many countries recognised the important process underway to describe EBSAs. The sites described at the workshop in Brazil were formally approved as well those from an earlier workshop for the South Pacific (Fiji, Nov 2011). This now means the CBD has fulfilled its scientific remit to describe sites in these regions, and that the onus now passes to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to decide how sites should be managed, particularly on the High Seas.

These successes for seabirds would not have been possible without the generous contribution of data by a wide range of researchers and their recognition that the EBSA process offers potential for improved marine site protection and management for seabirds. With more EBSA regional workshops scheduled in 2013 and 2014 there will be further opportunity to input relevant data. Sites described by all workshops will be discussed and approved at subsequent CBD COPs; approved sites will be forwarded for consideration by UNGA.

In relation to the potential for expanding the coverage of the BirdLife tracking database to seabirds other than procellariiforms, considerable dialogue was held with relevant dataholders and an investigation of some sources of potential support is planned for 2013. In addition, starting in April 2013, BirdLife is collaborating on projects involving penguin tracking data with scientists from France and the UK, which may provide valuable experience in linking and harmonising such data with those from flying seabirds.

## 4.8 Mortality events

Julia Parrish will publish a paper on the interpretation of seabird wrecks that should provide guidance as we proceed. Metadata on where and when data are being regularly collected will be assembled. A schema, i.e., database structure, for the mortality index will be produced. A list of major seabird wrecks that have been written about in the scientific literature or in the news media will be constructed as background information.

## **Annex 1 -DRAFT Charter for the World Seabird Union (WSU)**

### **Mission Statement**

Serve as a global network of seabird organizations to enhance seabird conservation and research.

### **Objectives**

- Ensure mechanisms are in place to hold World Seabird Conferences at appropriate intervals.
- Establish and develop effective communications between existing seabird organizations and researchers.
- As feasible, establish a global initiative to develop a system of seabird status and trends indices.
- As feasible, establish mechanisms to facilitate develop and manage global seabird database networks.
- Facilitate the development of seabird initiatives benefitting from global and/or regional coordination/interaction.

### **Membership**

- Open to regional, national and international organizations with an interest in seabird research and conservation. Subject to approval by a majority of existing member organizations
- Each organization shall nominate one of their members (and one alternate, if desired) to serve as a representative of their organization on the WSU Council. An individual may not serve as a voting representative of more than one organization.

### **Governance**

- The Council of the WSU shall comprise representatives of all member organizations. Each organization shall be entitled to one vote.
- Decisions by the WSU council shall be taken by simple majority of those representatives voting; changes to the charter shall require a 2/3 majority.
- The Council shall elect an Executive Committee to be responsible to Council for executing the business of the WSU.

### **Meetings**

- Council shall meet at least annually, including by conference call.
- The Executive Committee and Subcommittees shall meet at least quarterly and report to council twice a year.

### **Expenses**

- Unless there is prior agreement, participants in WSU meetings are responsible for their travel and per diem expenses.

## Annex 2 -List of Organizations and representatives to the WORLD Seabird Union

<u>World Seabird Union Member Organizations and Their Representatives</u>			
Organization	Location (Country or Region)	Representative to WSU	Alternate Representative to WSU
African Seabird Group	South Africa	Ross Wanless	None at present
American Bird Conservancy, Seabird Program	USA	George Wallace	None at present
Argentine Seabird Group	Argentina	Pablo Yorio	Esteban Frere
Australasian Seabird Group	Australia	Peter Dann	Nicholas Carlile
BirdLife International, Global Seabird Programme	UK	Ben Sullivan	John Croxall
Circumpolar Seabird Group (CBird)	Arctic Region	David Irons	None at present
Dutch Seabird Group	Netherlands	Kees Camphuysen	JA (Jan) van Franeker
European Seabirds at Sea Group	Europe	Stefan Garthe	None at present
Indian Ocean Seabird Group	Reunion Island	Matthieu Le Corre	Nick Dunlop
Japan Seabird Group	Japan	Yutaka Watanuki	None at present
Medmaravis	Mediterranean Sea	Carles Carboneras	None at present
Northwest Atlantic Marine Bird Cooperative	USA	Melanie Steinkamp	None at present
Ornithological Society of New Zealand	New Zealand	Graeme Taylor	None at present
Pacific Seabird Group (PSG)	USA	Pat Jodice	Michelle Kappes
Peruvian Assn for the Conservation of Nature	Peru	Liliana Ayala	Raul Sanchez-Scaglioni
Royal Naval Birdwatching Society	Europe	Steve Copsey	Mark Cutts
Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB)	Caribbean	Will Mackin	None at present
The Seabird Group	UK	Russell Wynn	Ellie Owen
The Waterbird Society (TWS)	USA	Betty Anne Schreiber	None at present
Waterbird Conservation for the Americas	USA	Jennifer Wheeler	None at present

<b><u>Associate Members (non-voting)</u></b>			
<b>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)</b>	<b>Global</b>	<b>Mark Tasker</b>	<b>Marco Favero</b>
<b>Associacao de Pesquisa e Preservacao de Ecossistemas Aquaticos (AQUASIS)</b>	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Caio Carlos</b>	<b>None at present</b>
<b>Global Penguin Society</b>	<b>Southern Hemisphere</b>	<b>Pablo Garcia Borboroglu</b>	<b>Dee Boersma</b>
<b>Prodelphinus Peru</b>	<b>Peru</b>	<b>Jeffery Mangel</b>	<b>None at present</b>
<b>Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR)</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>Mark Hindell</b>	<b>Yan Ropert-Coudert</b>
<b><u>WSU Support Team</u></b>			
<b>Global Seabird Colony Register - Manager</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>Robb Kaler</b>	
<b>Seabirds.net</b>	<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>Grant Humphries</b>	
<b>Secretariat</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>Marischal DeArmond</b>	

### **Annex 3 World Seabird Union Board of Directors**

**Terms began January 1, 2013**

Kees Camphuysen, Europe

Nicholas Carlile, Secretary, Austral-Asia

Patrick Jodice, North America

David Irons, Chair

Matthieu Le Corre, Africa/ Indian Ocean

Betty Anne Schreiber, Treasurer

Yutaka Watanuki, Asia

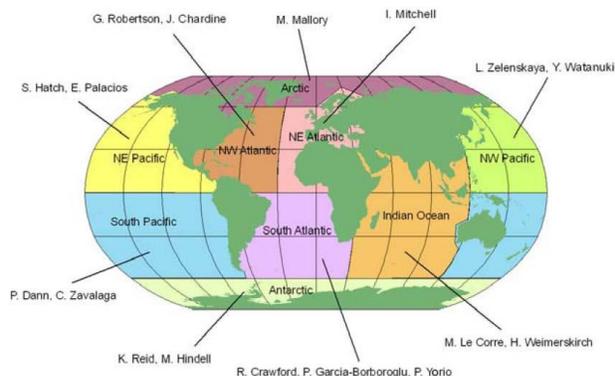
Pablo Yorio, South America

## Annex 4 -World Seabird Monitoring Database Regional Coordinating Committee

Coordinator	Region	Affiliation	Email
Mark Mallory	Arctic	Canadian Wildlife Service, Nunavut	<a href="mailto:Mark.Mallory@ec.gc.ca">Mark.Mallory@ec.gc.ca</a>
Ian Mitchell	NE Atlantic	JNCC, UK	<a href="mailto:Ian.Mitchell@jncc.gov.uk">Ian.Mitchell@jncc.gov.uk</a>
Larisa Zelenskaya	NW Pacific	IBPN, Magadan, Russia	<a href="mailto:lzelenskaya@mail.ru">lzelenskaya@mail.ru</a>
Yutaka Watanuki	NW Pacific	Hokkaido University, Japan	<a href="mailto:ywata@fish.hokudai.ac.jp">ywata@fish.hokudai.ac.jp</a>
Matthieu Le Corre	Indian Ocean	University Reunion, Reunion Island	<a href="mailto:mathieu.lecorre@univ-reunion.fr">mathieu.lecorre@univ-reunion.fr</a>
Henri Weimerskirch	Indian Ocean	CNRS, France	<a href="mailto:henriw@cebc.cnrs.fr">henriw@cebc.cnrs.fr</a>
Rob Crawford	South Atlantic	University of Capetown, So. Africa	<a href="mailto:crawford@deat.gov.za">crawford@deat.gov.za</a>
Pablo Garcia-Borboroglu	South Atlantic	Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, Argentina	<a href="mailto:pgborbor@cenpat.edu.ar">pgborbor@cenpat.edu.ar</a>
Pablo Yorio	South Atlantic	Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, Argentina	<a href="mailto:yorio@cenpat.edu.ar">yorio@cenpat.edu.ar</a>
Mark Hindell	Antarctic	University of Tasmania	<a href="mailto:Mark.Hindell@utas.edu.au">Mark.Hindell@utas.edu.au</a>
Keith Reid	Antarctic	CCAMLR	<a href="mailto:Keith@ccamlr.org">Keith@ccamlr.org</a>
Peter Dann	South Pacific	Phillip Island Nature Park, Australia	<a href="mailto:pdann@penguins.org.au">pdann@penguins.org.au</a>
Carlos Zavalaga	South Pacific	University of North Carolina, Wilmington, NC	<a href="mailto:cbz3724@uncwil.edu">cbz3724@uncwil.edu</a>
Scott Hatch	NE Pacific	USGS, Alaska	<a href="mailto:shatch@usgs.gov">shatch@usgs.gov</a>
Eduardo Palacios	NE Pacific	CICESE, Ensenada, BC, Mexico	<a href="mailto:epalacio@cicese.mx">epalacio@cicese.mx</a>

World Seabird Monitoring Database

Regional Coordinating Committee



## Annex 5-Seabirds.net Work plan



# Seabirds.net

Work plan

Grant Humphries

Centre for the Study of Agriculture, Food and Environment

University of Otago, Dunedin, NZ



This document is a detailed work plan for the development of seabirds.net, a website that will be managed by the World Seabird Union for the global seabird community. The importance of such a website is clear in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where telecommunications and internet are the primary form of interaction and data transfer. This website will encourage global collaborations between seabird researchers, which are particularly important considering the distribution of most seabirds includes multiple countries. We list nine objectives that we plan to accomplish in the next nine months, and include available resources, and strategies to obtain these goals. Also included are a current organizational staff list for seabirds.net, a budget, and work schedule. By following these guidelines, the seabirds.net organizational team will be able to create an active website that will act as an important communication tool for the entire seabird community.

Table of Contents

- 1. Background ..... 1
- 2. Objectives ..... 3
  - 2.1 Template creation and approval ..... 3
  - 2.2 Seabirds.net discussion forum ..... 3
  - 2.3 World Seabird Personnel Directory ..... 3
  - 2.4 Database linkages ..... 3
  - 2.5 Content model revision and implementation ..... 3
  - 2.6 News feeds and updates ..... 4
  - 2.7 Seabirds.net/WSU ..... 4
  - 2.8 Update procedure and approval process ..... 4
  - 2.9 Website coordinator position ..... 4
- 3. Resources ..... 5
  - 3.1 Financial ..... 5
  - 3.2 Personnel ..... 5
  - 3.3 Computational ..... 5
  - 3.4 Organizational ..... 5
- 4. Strategy ..... 6
  - 4.1 Template creation and approval ..... 6
  - 4.2 Seabirds.net discussion forum ..... 6
  - 4.3 World Seabird personnel directory ..... 6
  - 4.4 Database linkages ..... 7
  - 4.5 Content model revision and implementation ..... 7
  - 4.6 News feeds and updates ..... 7
  - 4.7 Seabirds.net/WSU ..... 7
  - 4.8 Update procedure and approval process ..... 8
  - 4.9 Website coordinator position ..... 8
- 5. Concluding remarks ..... 8
- Appendix A ..... 9
- Appendix B ..... 10
- Appendix C ..... 11



The seabirds.net initiative was originally proposed to seabird researchers in March 2008 by Scott Hatch (US Geological Survey) at the Pacific Seabird Group meeting in Blaine, Washington. Hatch outlined the formation of this website, which could act as a 'one-stop shop' for all things seabird related. Seabird information and data are currently spread amongst various sources found on the World Wide Web (herein referred to as "the web"), potentially slowing the transfer of information due to search time. Seabirds.net could therefore simplify the transfer of information, as well as act as a host for open access databases with interfaces designed for use by the general seabird community. The current generation of emerging scientists has developed in a world that is dominated by the internet and telecommunications. These tools have become commonplace, but have yet to be applied sufficiently, actively, and widely in the seabird research community. With the formation of the World Seabird Union, this is particularly important as the success of such an organization will rely on fast, easy information transfer and communication that is available through the web (see [joomla.wildlife.org](http://joomla.wildlife.org), [www.conbio.org](http://www.conbio.org), [www.aou.org](http://www.aou.org) for examples of successful web tools).

The seabirds.net domain name ([www.seabirds.net](http://www.seabirds.net)) was purchased in 2007 by the Pacific Seabird Group, and since the 1st World Seabird Conference has been conveyed to the World Seabird Union. The static content of seabirds.net was housed in Anchorage, Alaska at Axiom Consulting & Design, where work is currently being undertaken to construct various seabird databases that will be accessible through seabirds.net. These applications can be viewed at [axiom.seabirds.net](http://axiom.seabirds.net). The static content was moved from Axiom to a new host ([www.bluehost.com](http://www.bluehost.com)) as of 1 March 2011. Currently seabirds.net has a template website that hosts the seabird metadata survey portal, a template portal for the North Pacific Seabird Data Portal<sup>1</sup>, the Circumpolar Seabird Data Portal<sup>2</sup> and links to Google forum discussions around the creation of the databases and the content/layout of seabirds.net.

At the 1<sup>st</sup> World Seabird Conference (Victoria, British Columbia, September 2010) the seabirds.net initiative was revisited with increased enthusiasm from the general seabird community. Hatch coordinated a workshop on seabirds.net, in addition, many other database-related workshops were held (see [www.seabirds.net/seabird\\_conference\\_abstracts.php](http://www.seabirds.net/seabird_conference_abstracts.php) for workshop materials) During the course of the conference, Hatch was approached by a small group who expressed interest in coordinating efforts to continue the work on seabirds.net to make it a useful global tool to enhance communication among people involved in the conservation, management and research of seabirds. (See Appendix A for Seabirds.net Committee current membership).

Since WSC, the Seabirds.net Committee (hereafter the Committee) has made several steps to advance seabirds.net:

- 1) Google discussion forums were created to facilitate communication between people interested in contributing to the content and layout, and the databases.
- 2) A template "World Seabird Personnel Directory" (WOSPED) was created through Google Sites.

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<sup>1</sup> Compiled by US Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Seabird Group, US Geological Survey, North Pacific Research Board and Axiom Consulting, Anchorage, Alaska

<sup>2</sup> Compiled by US Fish and Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, Circumpolar Seabird Group, Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, United Nations Environmental Program-World Conservation Monitoring Centre and Axiom Consulting



## Seabirds.net

- 3) The World Seabird Union Transition Team (WSUTT) was petitioned and agreed to support the Committee.
- 4) Lisa Ballance (employed by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA) agreed to allow Annette Henry (also with NOAA) to be the webmaster of seabirds.net so that it is now part of her official duties.
- 5) Permission to use the World Seabird Conference logo was granted as a placeholder for the World Seabird Union logo until one is determined.
- 6) Seabirds.net was moved from the Axiom servers to BlueHost ([www.bluehost.com](http://www.bluehost.com)) and is being paid for by funds from the WSU
- 7) Templates for the website are under construction by Henry

This document outlines the objectives for seabirds.net for the next nine months, resources that are currently available for the construction of the website, and a strategy for implementing the resources to complete these objectives (actions to complete these objectives are underlined in section 4). Appendices include a staff list, budget and schedule that will guide the Committee.

## 2. Objectives

### 2.1 Template creation and approval

Henry is currently in the process of creating template designs for review by those interested and involved with the content discussions. A decision on which of the templates to use must be made either via vote or popular demand, and modifications to the chosen template must be made based on input from the community.

### 2.2 Seabirds.net discussion forum

Discussions are being held through Google Groups, but due to the nature of certain restrictions in some countries, this may not be adequate for the end goal of a “Global” discussion about the website content. In order to alleviate this, a forum must be set up under seabirds.net as a subdirectory which will give all countries access to the discussions.

### 2.3 World Seabird Personnel Directory

As part of an initiative to increase global communication between seabird researchers, WOSPED is under development and is housed (for the time being) on a Google site: (<https://sites.google.com/a/alaska.edu/seabirds-net-directory/>). As of March 1 2011, WOSPED has 368 members from ~ 280 unique institutions around the world, and is quickly developing into a truly global directory. In order to further this initiative, WOSPED must be integrated into seabirds.net with a defined structure that will allow users to update their profiles and add extra information as they require it. The level of detail of WOSPED must also be determined, as well as a system that determines who can create a profile in WOSPED. A discussion of a suitable name for the database (in order to attract users) must also be held.

### 2.4 Database linkages

Open access databases are becoming more widespread in the scientific community, and have been vital in many important analyses (see NOAA’s World Ocean Atlas, and various NASA Satellite derived datasets). For the seabird community to remain up-to-date scientifically, and for the transparency of the scientific method, databases must be easy to use and accessible through a single hub (e.g. seabirds.net). Axiom Consulting & Design is currently working on various database applications, and eventually these applications must be linked through seabirds.net.



### 2.5 Content model revision and implementation

Seabirds.net currently contains a content model as proposed by Hatch during the initial construction of the website. This can be visited at <http://www.seabirds.net/content-model.php>. This model must be revisited by the organizational committee to determine any changes to be made, and to decide on a final website structure.

### 2.6 News feed and updates

When seabirds.net is up and running, it will be important to have a way of keeping up to date with the latest seabird news. A section for this and methods for viewing this news must be developed.

### 2.7 seabirds.net/WSU

In order to avoid the creation of competitive websites, the WSU webpage for communications about the business of WSU should exist as a subdirectory of seabirds.net.

### 2.8 Update procedure and approval process

As updates and changes are made to seabirds.net by Henry, a general approval process must be created which eventually goes through the WSUTT (and future WSU).

### 2.9 Website Coordinator position

Henry is currently acting as “website coordinator” for the technical aspects of seabirds.net, but it is recommended that she be officially recognized by the WSUTT/WSU as the Webpage Coordinator, and that this position be created permanently in the WSU.

## 3. *Resources*

### 3.1 Financial

For the upkeep and development of seabirds.net, most work will be done “pro-bono” by the organizational committee. Work being performed by Henry is being funded by NOAA and supported by Lisa Ballance. Other financial support is available through funds remaining from the World Seabird Conference, which can be accessed by approval from the WSUTT. Finances from the WSC are currently being cared for by Ron Levalley (RL; Treasurer, Pacific Seabird Group). A budget for operating costs of seabirds.net is provided in Appendix B. The proposed budget requires approval from the WSUTT.

### 3.2 Personnel

For a list of personnel (staff) who are actively involved in seabirds.net, see Appendix A. Other personnel from the global community are encouraged to join in discussions, and communications will be via email and the Google forum (until the seabirds.net forum is developed)

### 3.3 Computational

Bluehost has an unlimited storage capacity, and therefore we are not constrained by this. Website updates can be performed from any computer, by anyone with an internet access and appropriate login.

### 3.4 Organizational



The process of creating seabirds.net will be overseen by the Committee, comprised currently of the individuals in Appendix A. The Committee will include as many people as possible via the forum to gain insight on content/layout, but will report directly to the WSUTT.

#### 4. Strategy

##### 4.1 Template creation and approval

Template designs are under construction by Henry. When templates are created, they will be posted to the seabirds.net discussion forum where peers will be able to review the content, and discuss changes or choose a template which they feel will work best. Once a template is chosen, Henry will work on incorporating the changes/recommendations from the broader community, and then will be forwarded to the WSUTT to examine and approve.

##### 4.2 Seabirds.net discussion forum

Upon the 'activation' of seabirds.net, a forum will enable people from the entire global seabird community to voice their opinion on the content of seabirds.net. This forum will be available for all those who have created a username and password for access to seabirds.net. To implement the forum, a username and password style structure for "members" must be established which will be done by A) giving a username and temporary password to people who have already submitted to WOSPED, and B) Inviting the global seabird community via email and word of mouth to create a profile, giving them access to the forum. These steps are linked to strategy 4.4. Once a username and password profile is set up, the forum will act as a way for people to communicate quickly about issues pertaining to the website (initially), and will then begin to act as a tool for discussions on field methods, data collection, and other seabird-related issues. This will be implemented by Henry and Schmid.

##### 4.3 World Seabird Personnel Directory

As stated in strategy 4.2, a username and password profile will be given to all those who have submitted their information to WOSPED via the Google Site. All profiles that have been given so far will be manually input into the website by Henry & Moritz Schmid. Because WSU will be acting under a free membership scheme initially, there is currently no way of determining criteria for those people who should be permitted to have profiles on seabirds.net (i.e. any member of the general public could create a profile). Two options are available here: A) Open access profile creation, where anyone can create a profile and keep it active (seabird professionals or seabird enthusiasts). B) A 'referencing' system where the user gives a list of 1 – 2 seabird professionals that they are affiliated with or have worked with to determine their identity. Option A is easier to implement and is more representative of the open access nature of the seabird data and information we wish to distribute. Option B is harder to implement, but reflects a system where only professionals have profiles (thus a more 'official' setup). At the upcoming WSUTT conference call, this motion will be put forth to a vote to determine which option is preferred.

The level of detail that will be incorporated into WOSPED is also to be discussed through the forum. It will be decided how much detail is required for a user profile, whether the option of uploading a picture should be available, and if the user can select a box that subscribes (or un-subscribes) them to receiving updates about WSU and its activities. The end result should be a database of seabird professionals / personnel that can be queried. This query would allow students to search for potential supervisors based on their research interests, or to encourage important global collaborations between researchers and managers.



In order to aid in the successful use of the directory, a name which is easy to remember and use should be delineated. It is recommended that the directory be named “*Petrel*” to attract users (i.e. the *Petrel* directory/database). At the upcoming WSUTT conference call, this name will be recommended and put to a vote.

#### 4.4 Database linkages

Following the Legacy workshops at WSC, many databases have begun to form which will be linked into seabirds.net as applications that are being developed by Axiom Consulting. These applications are currently housed at axiom.seabirds.net, and are still under construction. As these databases are formed and applications created, Henry will create web links that will guide users to axiom.seabirds.net for data access. The nature of the databases will be discussed in forums outside of the content/layout discussions.

#### 4.5 Content model revision and implementation

The current content model as proposed by Hatch will be reviewed by members of the organizational committee to determine if this is suitable for seabirds.net, or if changes and additions are warranted. For instance, the current model has a “careers” section, which could be helpful for students, but it is not a clear-cut “students” section for emerging scientists. Once reviewed, the new content model will be posted on the forum for revision by the public for a short period of time (~ 1 – 2 weeks), and then implemented by Henry.

#### 4.6 News feed and updates

A news section will be added to seabirds.net which will be updated by the website coordinator (Henry), or other delegated people with access to the website. News items will be submitted to an email address by the general public, which will be reviewed by the website coordinator or others, and then posted to the news feed. News will be updated once every week.

#### 4.7 seabirds.net/WSU

Seabirds.net is a web portal that acts not only as a data access system, but as a way of informing people of the business of the WSU. Instead of creating a competing website (e.g. worldseabirdunion.org), the main webpage for WSU will be seabirds.net/WSU. This website will be maintained by the Website coordinator and will report on all business by the WSU. Though seabirds.net/WSU will contain business of WSU, the WSU logo and affiliation will be prominently displayed on all subpages of seabirds.net as seabirds.net is a product of and maintained by WSU. Seabirds.net is therefore the main site for WSU, but business and information about WSU will be under seabirds.net/WSU.

#### 4.8 Update procedure and approval process

A procedure to make updates to seabirds.net must be created in order to apply any major changes to the website once it is complete. A general outline for such a procedure would be a proposal by one (or many) members of WSU, which is then submitted to the WSU and approved (or overturned). A formal procedure should be discussed when the WSU is formally convened.

#### 4.9 Website Coordinator position

In lieu of the formation of the WSU, it is highly recommended that a website coordinator position be officially recognized and formed as a member of the executive council. The website coordinator would play an integral role in communications for WSU as delivered over the internet. Duties of the website coordinator would include: 1) Maintaining and updating seabirds.net. 2) Updating the news section of seabirds.net. 3) Reporting to WSU any pertinent information about seabirds.net. 4) Dealing with user issues in case of website crashes or errors.



## Seabirds.net

5) Playing an active role in the proposal and approval process for changes to seabirds.net. 6) Actively discusses business with WSU during meetings and conference calls to ensure seabirds.net is up to date with WSU business. Assets for such a position would be: 1) Knowledge of PHP web programming. 2) Active in the seabird community. 3) Easily accessible via email or other communications. During the upcoming WSUTT conference call, Humphries will recommend this action.

### 5. Concluding remarks

This document outlined the general work plan for seabirds.net for the upcoming nine months, wherein the expected outcome is a fully operational website by the end of this time. Many of the initial constraints to developing seabirds.net (i.e. ownership, physical location, accessibility) have been overcome, and initial construction has begun. Appendices A through C show a staff list, budget and work schedule for seabirds.net. Through this work plan we aim to create a successful webpage that will accurately represent the goals and requirements of the entire seabird community.

### Appendices

#### *Appendix A. Seabirds.net Committee*

Name	Institution, Country	Committee position	Position description
Scott Hatch	US Geological Survey, US	Seabirds.net initiator	Initiator of seabirds.net concept
Grant Humphries	University of Otago, NZ	Coordinator	Coordinating content and layout discussions, reporting to WSUTT
Michelle Kappes	US	Member	Aiding with design and content discussions and other duties where required
Peter Kappes	Oregon State University, US	Member	Aiding with design and content discussions and other duties where required
Sjúróur Hammer	Natural History Museum of Denmark, DK	Member	Aiding with design and content discussions and other duties where required
Annette Henry	NOAA, US	Website coordinator	Primary technician for seabirds.net
Moritz Schmid	Lincoln University, NZ	Assistant to Website coordinator	Aiding Henry with technical aspects of seabirds.net

#### *Appendix B. Budget*

Activity	Per month cost (USD)	Total per annum (USD)
Domain name ownership	\$20.00	\$240.00
Hosting	\$6.95	\$83.40
Total operating fees:	\$323.40 USD per annum	



Funding for Henry comes from her position at NOAA and should be recognized as well.

All others are donating their time as necessary.

*Appendix C. Work schedule*

Objective	Time frame	Personnel
2.1 Template creation and approval	End of March for templates, decision by mid April	Creation by Henry, approval by committee and public
2.2 Seabirds.net discussion forum	To be implemented by end of April	Henry / Schmid
2.3 World Seabird Personnel Directory	April – August and ongoing	Creation by Henry/Schmid
2.4 Database linkages	Work to begin in May/June, but will be ongoing	Axiom Consulting / Hatch
2.5 Content model revision and implementation	Mid April	Revision by Committee, implementation by Henry/Schmid
2.6 News feed and updates	July and onwards	Henry and future webpage coordinators for WSU
2.7 seabirds.net/WSU	July through December for major design, onwards for minor changes	Henry/Schmid; via requirement of WSU
2.8 Update procedure and approval process	Procedure determined by October for implementation	Humphries & Committee; to be approved by WSU
2.9 Website coordinator position	To be determined by WSUTT/WSU	Recommended by Humphries; to be approved by WSU