

Neotropical News



CARRIBEAN

WEST INDIES

West Indian seabirds in serious decline

A new publication by the Society of Caribbean Ornithology (SCO), entitled *Status and conservation of West Indian seabirds* states that almost all of the region's seabirds are in serious decline. This publication directly results from concerns expressed at a 1997 International Seabird Workshop, held at the SCO annual conference in Aruba. Of a total of 21 seabird species that nest in the West Indies, six are Critically Endangered, three Endangered, four Vulnerable and two Near Threatened, i.e. more than half are of current conservation concern, including all six of the region's endemic seabirds: Black-capped *Pterodroma hasitata* and Jamaican Petrels *P. caribbaea*, Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*, White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*, Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* and Cayenne Tern *Sterna sandvicensis eurygnatha*. Major reasons for declines are habitat destruction and disturbance, human predation of eggs and adults, introduction of mammals, and chemical and solid waste/pollution. Additionally, the most recent reason for seabird declines is the region's growing tourist industry. Development of coastal habitats is increasing and isolated small islands, rocks and cays that were formerly safe nesting sites are now increasingly being developed as attractions and/or are visited by tourists seeking remote island experiences. The book notes that it is ironic that while West Indian seabird colonies have become attractions for the ecotourism industry, this is contributing to their rapid demise. Participants of the 1997 Aruba meeting agreed

that conservationists had largely ignored the plight of seabirds in the region and that research and standardised monitoring had been neglected. The new publication is the most up-to-date account of the distribution and status of West Indian seabirds, highlighting conservation issues and discussing the steps vital to the long-term survival of this rapidly disappearing heritage and resource.

- BirdLife Jamaica press release, July 2000

CENTRAL AMERICA

GUATEMALA

Significant Resplendent Quetzal *Pharomachrus mocinno* population found in an unprotected forest in Guatemala

The national bird of Guatemala, the Resplendent Quetzal *Pharomachrus mocinno*, is considered one of the most spectacular birds in the New World. It is restricted to Central American cloud forests that are declining rapidly, in Guatemala and elsewhere, due to shifting cultivation by indigenous Maya people. Surveys, in 1998 and 2000, discovered a population of approximately 500 quetzals in a cloud forest fragment of c.1,700 ha, located on the ridges of Sierra Caquiepec (Alta Verapaz). The area is not protected, but in partnership with the Maya people a local NGO is initiating a conservation programme.

- U. Schulz & K. Eisermann *in litt.* August 2000

SOUTH AMERICA

BOLIVIA

Bolivian forest saved?

A total of 55,000 ha of Andean forest adjacent to the 290,000 ha Madidi National Park has been saved from a logging concession, and will be protected. Conserva-

tion International negotiated the deal with a private logging company and also persuaded the Bolivian government to permanently protect Madidi National Park.

- *Plant Life* 20: 13, 2000

BRAZIL

NGO alliance to save Atlantic forest?

In July 1999, Brazil's largest environmental NGO, Fundação SOS Mata Atlântica, formed an alliance with Conservation International to try to save the Brazilian Atlantic forest. Less than 7% of this highly fragmented habitat remains. The aims of the 'Joint Initiative for the Atlantic forest' are 'Zero Deforestation' and 'Zero Species Lost'.

- *Neotropical Primates* 7 (3): 96, 1999

PERU

New protected area

More than 6 million ha are to be added to Peru's protected areas system. The Peruvian government, the World Bank (through a grant from the Global Environment Facility) and WWF-Peru have drawn up a scheme whereby local indigenous communities co-manage lands for biodiversity conservation. The government has complemented this with a commitment to establish an ecologically representative protected areas system in the country.

- *IUCN Arbovitae* 12: 10, 1999