

# Neotropical News



## GENERAL

### New Internet alliance for bird conservation in Latin America

American Bird Conservancy has launched a new Internet resource dedicated to bird conservation in Latin America and the Caribbean. The website, called 'Alianza por las Aves' ([www.alianzaves.net](http://www.alianzaves.net)), has country pages, with links to conservation projects, organisations, lists of endemic birds, birding sites and travel details. The site also includes a message board and information on 23 important bird conservation projects. ABC hopes the resource will help develop interest in bird conservation across the continent.

- NEO-ORN, 26 September 2000

### Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act clears US Congress

On 26 June, the USA House of Representatives passed the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act by a vote of 384 : 22. The act authorises (but does not appropriate) funding, by matching finances for projects to promote the conservation of Neotropical migratory birds in Latin America and the Caribbean. The programme will be managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which will be required to develop guidelines for the proposals. The House has permitted US\$5 million to be made available annually and requires that 75% of the money be spent outside the US.

- NEO-ORN, 27 June 2000

## CARIBBEAN

### Montserrat Orioles caught for captive breeding

In July 1999, the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust captured eight wild Montserrat Orioles *Icterus oberi* on the island of the same name. These will be used to

develop a captive-breeding programme. The species' population is thought to have declined considerably following a volcanic eruption in the mid-1990s (see *Cotinga* 9: 8–9).

- Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust press release, 21 July 1999.

### Puerto Rican Amazons reintroduced, but others stolen

In May 2001, 16 captive-reared Puerto Rican Amazons *Amazona vittata* were released into the Caribbean National Forest, joining the remaining 40 individuals in the wild. Ten had earlier been released in June 2000, with a 50% survival rate (five were taken by a Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*). The releases were major achievements of the 32-year cooperation between several local and US organisations. However, further reintroduction efforts were jeopardised following a burglary at a US Fish and Wildlife Service aviary in the Caribbean National Forest, on 22 April 2001. An undisclosed number of birds was stolen. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has offered a US\$2,500 reward for information relating to the theft.

- *Endangered Species Bulletin* 25 (4): 27; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service news releases, 30 April 2001 and 18 May 2001

### Latest news on Montserrat Oriole

In December 1999 a team from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (the UK partner of BirdLife International) worked with the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade & Environment on Montserrat to repeat a December 1997 census of Montserrat Oriole *Icterus oberi*. The earlier census was conducted during the peak of volcanic activity, and produced a surprisingly high estimate of c.4,000 orioles. The 1999 survey

produced results that were disappointing in the light of reduced volcanic activity during the intervening two years. The number of orioles located was very substantially lower, as was the number of sites where the species was present. Quarterly monitoring of a sub-sample of plots during 1998 and 1999 also supports the idea of a continued decline. The species' status is now of considerable concern. By contrast the globally threatened Forest Thrush *Cichlherminia lherminieri* appears to be thriving on Montserrat, with numbers increasing steadily in the hill forests since 1997. Given this species' apparent scarcity in its other three range-states—Guadeloupe, St Lucia and Dominica—Montserrat may harbour the most important sub-population.

- Geoff Hilton, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, *in litt.* March 2000

### Wintering American Redstarts in Jamaica

Studies of American Redstarts *Setophaga ruticilla* wintering in Jamaica have revealed that the quality of a migratory bird's tropical wintering grounds can affect its survival and breeding success. Those wintering in high-quality wet forests reach their breeding grounds earlier, and in better condition, than birds wintering in scrub. These findings have implications for focusing conservation action for migrants on tropical forests.

- *Winging It*, April 1999

### Bermuda's Cahows in 1999

Continued conservation efforts are paying dividends for the recovery of the Cahow *Pterodroma cahow* population. The species was rediscovered in 1951 after 350 years. The programme has resulted in a slow but accelerating

increase in the Cahow population, from 18 pairs in 1961 to an all-time high of 56 pairs in 1999 (one more than the previous year). Twenty-nine chicks hatched and 27 fledged. New-pair formation increased; from four pairs in 1998 to seven pairs in 1999. This compares to a mean one new colonising pair per year until the 1980s.

- *Bermuda Audubon Society Newsletter* 10 (2): 4–5, 1999

### New national park for Imperial Amazon

In January 2000, the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation helped the island government of Dominica to create the Morne Diablotin National Park. The new park will protect nearly 5% of the country's land area and help conserve Dominica's national bird, the Imperial Amazon (or Sisserou) *Amazona imperialis*. But its creation has nearly bankrupted the Foundation. They are trying to recoup a US\$300,000 debt (including director Paul Reillo's life savings), having spent US\$750,000 to buy a crucial 650 ha of forest. Reillo asserted that there was no choice: 'We are a tiny scientific organisation that is not prone to land deals, but the Sisserou is a flagship species representing one of the last great island ecosystems in the Caribbean, and this parcel was the last stumbling block to overcome. We had to go beyond science and education and actually do something permanent.' In return, the Government dedicated an additional 3,500 ha to the park.

- Rare Species Conservatory Foundation website <http://www.rarespecies.org>, 4 January 2000

### Cuba joins Ramsar convention

On 12 April 2001, Cuba acceded to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention). Cuba's first Wetland of International Importance is the 452,000 ha Ciénaga de Zapata in Matanzas province, encompassing the Bay of Pigs and the inland and coastal regions on either side. The site is

already a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (January 2000) and includes a National Park and five other protected areas. The largest and best-preserved wetland in the Caribbean, the site is outstanding for birds including migrants and several threatened endemics. Cuba's accession brings the status of the Convention to 124 Contracting Parties, with 1,061 Wetlands of International Importance covering more than 81 million ha.

- Ramsar Convention news release, 6 May 2001

### New coastal management education programme

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is to fund a coastal management education programme. The five-year initiative will help Cuba address environmental problems related to rapid development activities along the coast.

- *The Gallon Environment Letter* 4: 33, 2000

## CENTRAL AMERICA

### MEXICO

#### EcologyFund.com to save Mexican forest

Pronatura, Mexico's largest conservation organisation has announced a partnership with EcologyFund.com ([www.EcologyFund.com](http://www.EcologyFund.com)) and the US-based The Wildlands Project to conserve Mexican forest. The consortium has established a 'click-to-donate' website, whereby site visitors pay nothing but contribute to the purchase of forest. From February to July 2000, over 700 ha was bought. The conservation partners aim to work with EcologyFund.com to conserve 3,000 ha of Sierra Madre forest, at Cebadillas de Yaguirachic, and 8,000 ha in the Cuatro Ciénegas valley, in northern Mexico. Conservation work at the former site aims to help the threatened Thick-billed Parrot *Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*.

- Press release, 19 July 2000

### Hope for protection of Thick-billed Parrot

In January 2000, two years of delicate negotiations paid dividends when an agreement was signed to protect an important breeding area for the endangered Thick-billed Parrot *Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*. Recent field work by organisations such as the Wildlife Preservation Trust International and Monterrey Tech revealed that the Bisaloachic (Cebadillas) area held perhaps 100 nesting pairs, 10% of the world population. The area comprises 2,000 ha of relatively undisturbed forest that had been under a logging concession, held by the Elido Tutuaca, a rural forest co-operative. The agreement calls for a 15-year moratorium on any cutting of timber in the area. In return, several organisations—notably The Wildlands Project, Pronatura (Noreste) and Naturalia—will offset community income losses. Incentives include a 'rent payment' eventually totalling 50% of the net value of timber that will not now be harvested. This will be complemented by a movement towards sustainable forest management and development of ecotourism possibilities.

- Ernesto C. Enkerlin-Hoeflich, Wildlife Preservation Trust, *in litt.* 2000

### New protection for and potential new threat to Monarch butterflies

In November 2000, Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo decreed a new Monarch *Danaus plexippus* butterfly Biosphere reserve in Michoacan state, 70 km west of the capital. The move was in response to a study demonstrating that farming and illegal logging have destroyed 44% of the original forest since 1971. The widely acclaimed decree was to implement a system through which local people will be financially compensated for losing logging rights. Yet in early March 2001 local environmentalists claimed that loggers, hoping to reclaim the forest, had deliberately sprayed pesticides on the

same forest in an attempt to eradicate the 22 million butterflies that winter there.

- NEO-ORN, 13 November 2000, 9 March 2001

## BELIZE

### Scarlet Macaws at risk

The Chalillo Dam is set to flood some of the richest remaining rainforest in Belize, which harbours the country's last 250 Scarlet Macaws *Ara macao*. The dam will cover c.760 ha of forest close to the Guatemalan border. It threatens to destroy two valuable river ecosystems, both important areas for biodiversity conservation. The dam aims to store water for a downstream hydroelectric power station. The Belize Audubon Society believes that the Belize government has not reviewed alternative options for electricity generation, such as obtaining electricity from options such as wind power, solar energy, and as a by-product from citrus fruit cultivation, sugar and sawmill industries. There are also significant environmental concerns. The region is prone to flash floods; construction of a dam would affect the natural flooding regime of the area, with unknown consequences on wildlife. Furthermore, Chalillo is fringed by limestone; the likelihood of cave systems would have significant implications for dam construction.

- *World Birdwatch* 21 (4): 5, 1999

## SOUTH AMERICA

## ECUADOR

### Galápagos battle to remove alien species almost over

Alien species, considered to be the gravest threat to Galápagos native wildlife, have almost been removed from the archipelago. A 25-year programme to stop thousands of wild pigs destroying the largest island, Santiago, is nearly complete. Pigs are the most destructive of the islands' 800 alien species, being thought to have driven land iguanas *Conolophus* sp. to extinction on Santiago. The pigs were released by 19th century sailors who

wanted a ready supply of pork. Tourist donations have funded half the cost of the eradication programme.

- *BBC Wildlife*, September 2000

### Oil pipeline could decimate the Neotropics' first Important Bird Area

The Critical Black-breasted Puffleg *Eriocnemis nigrivestis*, a hummingbird on the brink of extinction has been found on the proposed route of the new oil pipeline in Ecuador. On 12 January 2000, Rob Williams and Tatiana Santander of CECIA were undertaking surveys to locate remaining breeding areas for the species, which now occurs only on the north slope of Volcán Pichincha west of Quito. The survey team was checking all previously known localities for the puffleg, most of which have now been deforested for cattle grazing and charcoal production. They found Black-breasted Puffleg on the route of the proposed OCP (Oleoducto de Crudos Pesados) oil pipeline at an altitude of 3,240 m, on a ridge called Cruz Loma. The proposed pipeline and accompanying road would destroy much of the remaining vegetation along the ridge and would probably lead to the extinction of the species at the site. Black-breasted Puffleg is very local and rare, and apparently relies on stunted ridge-top vegetation; very little habitat remains within its range. Surveys in recent months have found the species at only one other location, where a single male and female have been seen and forest clearance for cattle threatens the remaining habitat. Given current knowledge, the forest on Cruz Loma is probably an important area for the long-term survival of the species. It is hoped that the petrol companies will ensure that intensive studies of the species are undertaken to fully assess the status of the species in the area and ensure that construction of the pipeline does not prove to be the end of the Black-breasted Puffleg.

- Rob Williams *in litt.* January 2001

### Major forest corridor purchased

The Ecuadorian organisation, NYTUA, Rainforest Concern and Fauna & Flora International have purchased 5,260 ha of pristine forest linking the Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve and the Awa Ethnic Reserve in north-west Ecuador. The area had been threatened by oil-palm development. In 1999, the demand for oil palms caused the destruction of 10,000 ha of Ecuadorian forest.

- *Oryx* 35 (1): 12, 2001

## PERU

### Tambopata given national reserve status

On 5 September 2000, the Peruvian government created the Tambopata National Reserve and doubled the size of the Bahuaja Sonene National Park. This followed the final withdrawal of Mobil, the international oil company, from the Candamo basin in late August. The national park now encompasses 1.1 million ha, including the Candamo basin. An area of 262,000 ha has been identified as a buffer zone.

- NEO-ORN, 23 September 2000

## BOLIVIA

### Oil spill on altiplano

On 30 January 2000, an oil pipeline traversing the altiplano, from La Paz, Bolivia, to Arica, Chile, burst, spilling crude oil into the rio Desaguadero. The accident happened when the level of the river rose rapidly during a storm. Initial reports claim that oil gushed from the pipeline for 18 hours, releasing perhaps 5,000 barrels. The oil spread over 95 miles into lakes Uru Uru and Poopo, which are important sites for three species of flamingo: James' *Phoenicopterus jamesi*, Andean *P. andinus* and Chilean *P. chilensis*. The pipeline is owned by Transredes, a consortium of Shell and Enron companies. The Wildlife Conservation Society has been working with San Andres University, La Paz, to conduct an environmental impact assessment of the spill.

- *Wildlife Conservation* 103 (3): 21, 2000

**Seismic testing threat to Amboró**

In March 2001, Argentine oil company Andina S.A. announced its intention to proceed with 105 km of seismic test lines in Bolivia's Amboró National Park. One 55 km test line falls entirely within Amboró's strict scientific reserve and would damage critical life zones at 800–1,500 m. Andina has not been deterred by vigorous local protests. Amboró holds important populations of several threatened birds.

- NEO-ORN, 9 March 2001

**BRAZIL**

**Public pressures force Brazil to shelve deforestation legislation**

On 17 May 2000, Brazil's Congress shelved proposed legislation to increase the rate and area of Amazon forest destruction.

Ranchers and large landowners had attempted to push a draft law through a joint House/Senate committee that would have relaxed restrictions on deforestation, a law considered likely to result in a 25% annual increase in clearing and burning. Massive e-mail and fax protests to Congress and the President, and broad international and national media coverage, orchestrated by Brazilian environmental groups, killed the measure before it reached the House floor. The defeat is a milestone for Brazilian NGOs.

- Environmental Defense press release, 18 May 2000

**New threat to Amazon**

A new plan by the Brazilian government to develop the Amazon by improving infrastructure is feared to cause environmental devastation that far outweighs the perceived economic advantage. The plan, *Avança Brasil (Forward Brazil)*, will see US\$40 million spent over seven years on roads, hydroelectric dams, railways and waterways, but could leave only 5% of Amazonian forest intact by 2020. The government argues that the improvements are needed to cater to the development needs of the region's 12 million inhabitants.

- *The Guardian*, 20 January 2001

**Oilrig sinking threatens Spectacled Petrel**

The sinking in March 2001 of the world's largest oilrig—P-36 off the coast of Rio de Janeiro—has raised fears that scarce seabirds may be at risk from any oil spill that results. BirdLife International is deeply concerned at the potential plight of the globally endangered Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata* and near-threatened Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche chlororhynchos*, which winter in the area. The 40-storey oilrig has 9,500 barrels (1.5 million litres) of crude oil onboard and sank 120 km north-east of Rio de Janeiro.

- BirdLife International News Briefing, 20 March 2001, reported on NEO-ORN

**Penguins receive a warm welcome in Rio**

Increasing numbers of Magellanic Penguins *Spheniscus magellanicus* are making their way from the Valdez peninsula in Patagonia to the Rio de Janeiro coast—much to the bewilderment of locals. In a typical year, 40 or so individuals make the 3,200 km swim north, but numbers rose in 1999 and reached 300 in 2000. "This is totally atypical" said Valdir Ramos, principal mammalogist at the Rio de Janeiro zoo. "We can't talk about a 'penguin season' any more. It doesn't exist—they just keep coming." It is thought that the influx relates to unusually strong cold ocean currents bringing prey (anchovies)—further north. Although most of the penguins are taken to Rio's zoo to recover, some are reputedly kept as pets by fishermen who feed them sardines and even walk them on leashes. "You wouldn't believe how many people put these penguins in freezers when they rescue them," said Ramos. "Of course, they mostly die."

- *The Guardian Weekly*, 1 February 2001

**Hope for Pantanal**

In December 2000, the Inter-American Development Bank

approved a US\$82.5 million loan backing the long-term protection of the Pantanal. The initiative will increase the protected watershed area from 0.5 million ha to 2 million ha. An eight-year programme will clean the increasingly polluted and over-fished waterways.

- Reuters, 8 December 2000

**Brazilian Merganser international recovery team established**

In September 2000, the Brazilian government hosted a workshop at Serra da Canastra National Park to devise an action plan to save the globally endangered Brazilian Merganser *Mergus octosetaceus*. The workshop assembled experts from the species' three range states (Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay), the US and Europe. Participants drew up recommendations for a conservation action plan, including the formation of an international recovery team to prioritise conservation needs and to raise funds for project implementation. The action plan should be ready in April 2001 and the team will meet again in August 2001.

- *Wildfowl and Wetlands* February 2001: 7

**Coffee to help Atlantic Forest?**

Coffee growing is spreading into the Atlantic Forest of Bahia state, to alternate outcry and acclaim. Some environmentalists fear that the new plantations will further reduce the dwindling Atlantic Forest, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and one of Conservation International's 25 most threatened ecosystems on Earth. But some local farmers claim that shade-grown organic coffee can provide an economic incentive to retain forest rather than clear-felling it. Coffee is rapidly replacing cocoa as the principal crop in the region, bringing in US\$1,800 per ha compared to US\$340 for cocoa. Ruy Rocha, who heads the Brazilian Institute for social-environmental studies argues that farmers should be encouraged to plant the kind of shade-grown

organic coffee popular in foreign markets, to help keep the forest intact. Wanderlino Medeiros Bastos, a local coffee farmer, agrees with this fundamental premise: 'As long as there are poor people, if there's a tree somewhere that will fetch them 2,000 reales, do you really think it's going to stay there?'

- CNN website, 8 September 2000

#### **Alagoas reserve threatened**

Murici reserve in Alagoas, one of the most important protected areas for bird conservation in South America, is under considerable threat. This site is critical for the conservation of several endangered Atlantic Forest endemics. Alagoas Foliage-gleaner *Philydor novaesi* and Alagoas Antwren *Myrmotherula snowi* are currently known only from this site. The dozen or so other threatened species known from Murici include other Alagoas endemics such as Alagoas Tyrannulet *Phylloscartes ceciliae* and Orange-bellied Antwren *Terenura sicki*. During a visit in February 2000, Andrew Whittaker learnt of a number of very worrying activities. The reserve has apparently been reduced to 2,000 ha in area. Illegal loggers have used tractors and bulldozers to create roads into the heart of the reserve, and have extracted large trees over a period of three months. Illicit clear felling continues on the reserve borders, including removal of the secondary growth that served as the reserve buffer zone. An 'anti-logging gate' has been destroyed. Burning pasture on adjacent lands has caused forest fires. One IBAMA guard had reportedly not been paid for several months, and had been forced to resort to slash-and-burn cultivation to feed his family. Trapping of birds, including the threatened Yellow-faced Siskin *Carduelis yarrelli*, is rife. Unless action is taken urgently, this veritable 'park in peril' is doomed to extirpation, taking its endemic birds along with it.

- Andrew Whittaker *in litt.* to NEO-ORN, March 2000

#### **Implications of forest loss and fragmentation for wildlife conservation**

American and Brazilian biologists have assessed the implication of forest loss and fragmentation in the Amazon for wildlife conservation. William Laurence, Heraldo Vasconcelos and Thomas Lovejoy consider that Amazonian forests are experiencing rapid, unprecedented changes that are having major impacts on wildlife, regional hydrology and the global climate. Rates of deforestation and logging have accelerated recently, and patterns of forest loss are changing, with new highways providing conduits for settlers and loggers in the heart of Amazonia. Logging operations are becoming increasingly international. In 1996 alone, Asian companies invested over \$US500 million in the Brazilian timber industry and now own, or control, over 12 million ha of Amazonian forest. In addition, there are nearly 400 Brazilian timber companies, most with poor environmental records. The Brazilian government estimates that 80% of Amazon timber is harvested illegally, irrespective of environmental controls.

Such changes are causing widespread forest fragmentation. The total area now affected by fragmentation, clearing and edge effects could comprise as much as one third of the Brazilian Amazon. These fragmented landscapes experience diverse changes in forest dynamics, structure, composition and microclimate, and are highly vulnerable to droughts and fires. Such alterations negatively affect a broad range of animal species. Many faunal groups, including understory insectivorous birds, decline or disappear in fragmented forests. Many such species are also unwilling to cross even the small forest clearings that result from fragmentation.

The authors are sceptical about the Amazon's future. The several international and domestic programmes that exist face daunting challenges. The most likely 'saviour' is the Pilot

Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rainforest. Administered by the World Bank, the Program is attempting to channel US\$350 million from G7 governments into Amazonian conservation programmes. The best grounds for optimism may be the growing local support for conservation. There are now around 350 indigenous and environmental groups in Brazil. But, the authors conclude, they have a tough battle ahead.

- *Oryx* 34: 39–45, 1999

#### **Obituary: Spix's Macaw extinct in the wild**

It appears certain that Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii* is now extinct in the wild. *Folha de São Paulo*, a major Brazilian newspaper, broke the news to the world on 29 November 2000, reporting that the famous last surviving male had not been seen for 55 days. Searches until mid-February 2001 subsequently failed to locate it. Another species lost; another tragedy for global biodiversity. The Club's condolences go, in particular, to all those who have strived to bring this avian figurehead back from the brink.

- *World Birdwatch* 23: 9–11, 2001

#### **Oil pollutes Rio bay**

In January 2000, an oil slick spanning nearly 30 km<sup>2</sup> of the Rio de Janeiro coastline began to wash up on Copacabana and Ipanema beaches. This was the worst environmental disaster to affect the city in 25 years. Authorities blamed Petrobras, the state oil company, for the spill, which was caused when 500 tonnes of crude oil leaked from pipes at a refinery in Guanabara Bay. The impact on the coast's shorebirds and seabirds is uncertain.

- *The Times*, 22 January 2000

#### **PARAGUAY**

##### **Mbaracayú declared a Biosphere reserve**

In November 2000, the Mbaracayú Forest Nature Reserve was officially declared a Biosphere reserve. The 64,000 ha private

reserve, managed by Fundación Moisés Bertoni, is the country's most important site for bird conservation. It holds populations of threatened cerrado species such as Rufous-faced Crake *Laterallus xenopterus* and White-winged Nightjar *Caprimulgus candicans*, as well as Atlantic Forest endemics such as Black-fronted Piping-guan *Pipile jacutinga*.

- *World Birdwatch* 23: 3, 2001

## ARGENTINA

### Wetland reserve threatened by petroleum exploration

A Ramsar-listed wetland, Llancañelo in Mendoza province, is threatened by petroleum exploration. YPF-Repsol, an international oil company, is interested in exploiting oil reserves within the 42,000 ha Laguna Llancañelo provincial faunal reserve, which supports up to 150,000 waterbirds during the summer. Twenty-four species breed, including 10,000 pairs of Chilean Flamingo *Phoenicopterus chilensis* and 1,500 pairs of Black-necked Swan *Cygnus melanocoryphus*. Up to 24,000 Black-necked Swan and 8,000 Coscoroba Swan *Coscoroba coscoroba* use the wetland as a post-breeding moult refuge.

- NEO-ORN, 23 September 2000

### Military blunder sets Falklands on fire

In January 2001, at the height of the seabird breeding season, a fire started accidentally by British troops trying to remove ordnance burned 40% of South Jason Island in the Falklands. The fire destroyed 90% of the tussock grass forming the nesting grounds of 1,750 pairs of the near-threatened Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophrys* and 900 pairs of the Vulnerable Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome*. Recent surveys by Falklands Conservation had earlier revealed that the total Falklands population of Black-browed Albatross had declined from 458,000 in 1995 to 382,000 in November 2000. Fortunately, however, the main colony was only burned around the edges, and the birds escaped death. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife UK Partner), which is involved in seabird censuses on the islands, has requested the UK government mount an enquiry.

- *World Birdwatch* 23: 4, 2001
- *Falklands Conserv. Newsletter* 2: 1, 2001

### Update on Cobb's Wren

Cobb's Wren *Troglodytes cobbi* is globally threatened and endemic

to the Falkland Islands. Following a 10-year survey, in 1983–1993, just 2,000 pairs were thought to remain, all on 12 offshore islands c.40 km distant from each other. During 1997/8, further surveys revealed that the population was higher than previously considered, c.6,000 pairs on 29 islands. Cobb's Wren did not occur on any of the 23 islands where there was evidence of introduced rats. Interestingly, Grass Wren *Cistothorus platensis* was found to occur on 21 of these 23 islands. Populations of Cobb's Wren remain isolated; it is feared that the species will be threatened should rats colonise any new islands. Funding is now being sought to eradicate the rats.

- *The Warrack* 17: 11 (2000)