



Increasing Capacity for Caribbean Wetlands Conservation: A Training Workshop for Monitoring, Education and Conservation

CARIBBEAN WATERBIRD CENSUS (CWC) TRAINING WORKSHOP

22 - 25 February 2010 – Summary Report

SCSCB is working towards establishing the **Caribbean Waterbird Census (CWC)**¹, a region-wide waterbird and wetland monitoring program². The overall **goal of the program** is to increase support for waterbird and wetland conservation in the insular Caribbean by promoting monitoring as a means to improve science-based conservation planning and adaptive management of birds.

The **objectives of the CWC** are to:

- Promote inventories, surveys and censuses of waterbirds and their habitats in all Caribbean countries
- Encourage broad-based participation in waterbird counts including NGOs, governmental agencies, institutions, communities and volunteers
- Ensure that as many internationally and nationally important wetland sites as possible are conserved and monitored
- Increase awareness of conservation issues related to wetlands and waterbirds and what can be done to address these issues.

Twenty-two participants from 16 Caribbean islands took part in the SCSCB's four-day CWC Training Workshop in Negril, Jamaica 22 -25 February. The purpose of the workshop was to provide persons from across the Caribbean with equipment, materials, training and skills in waterbird and wetland monitoring protocols so that they can design and implement their own monitoring program (or improve/expand programs that are in place), participate in CWC annual counts, train and mentor others, and form the basis of a regional waterbird monitoring network. Participants were prospective national and site coordinators for the CWC. They included executive directors of NGOs in charge of protected areas, ornithologists, and conservation biologists employed to governments and NGOs, protected area managers and volunteers, all of whom share a common interest in learning monitoring methodologies to more effectively conserve and manage migrant and resident waterbirds and their habitats.

The six facilitators and presenters included Richard Huber (Organization of American States), Jeff Gerbracht (Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, New York), Ken Kriese (US Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC), Ainsley Henry (National Environment and Planning Agency, Jamaica and Ramsar), Ann Haynes-Sutton (Monitoring Coordinator, SCSCB, Jamaica) and Lisa Sorenson (President, SCSCB, Boston).

The workshop provided training in implementing the CWC, including how to design and implement surveys,

¹ The CWC arose from discussions at the SCSCB's previous monitoring training workshop "**Long-term Bird Monitoring in the Caribbean – Why, What, Where and How?**" which took place in Nassau, Bahamas in February 2009. It is a part of a regional bird monitoring program called *Caribbean Birdwatch*. For more information: <http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/caribbeanbirdwatch>

² The Caribbean region will join Wetland International's global program of wetland bird monitoring, with data from the Caribbean filling a major gap in the coverage of the International/Neotropical Waterbird Census. It can be used to promote site conservation, assess impacts of climate change and other threats, and design programs to protect, manage and restore wetlands.

levels of monitoring and CWC protocols³, waterbird identification, count training tools and habitat monitoring, field sessions to practice survey methods, data entry and analysis, and presenting results to decision-makers. Participants were also guided in the development of projects and preparation of proposals to implement monitoring on their islands. SCSCB has applied for funding for a small-grant program to support these applications and if it is successful will be able to distribute funds for up to ten projects.

The participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with the workshop and committed to share their experiences, train others in their islands, and participate in the CWC. To facilitate this process all the materials from the workshop (including presentations and a CWC Trainers Manual) will be placed on a ConserveOnline website where they will be available for download. SCSCB hopes to offer additional training workshops and welcomes participation by all countries in the CWC.

The workshop was the main output of a project called *“Increasing Capacity For Caribbean Wetlands Conservation: A Training Workshop For Monitoring, Education And Conservation”* which is being funded by the Organization of American States through the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI). Additional funding and support were provided by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, US Forest Service, Optics for the Tropics, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Negril Area Environmental Protection Trust, and others. An additional output from the project is a regional capacity building strategy for implementation of the CWC, that includes plans for long-term sustainability such as encouraging agencies to institutionalize monitoring, providing continued skills-building training and support for our partners, setting up a regional data repository, assisting with procuring appropriate equipment and funding, and application of the program to other regions. SCSCB is working with our monitoring coalition, established to support the previous workshop in Nassau, Bahamas in February 2009, to implement the strategy.



Participants at the SCSCB CWC Monitoring Training Workshop, February 22 - 25, 2010, Negril, Jamaica

³ The CWC offers a hierarchical and flexible approach to monitoring (employing levels of monitoring) that enables the user to choose the protocol and extent of participation in the program that is best suited to their objectives, available resources and capacity. The basic CWC protocols (Level 2 – area search and point count) include measures of detection probability, which are essential for accounting for bias in monitoring.



Participants listen attentively to the morning's training presentations about monitoring.



First day's field trip to the Negril Royal Palm Reserve: Jonathan Sayao (Turks and Caicos), Predensa Moore (Bahamas) and Rhodriquez Ewing (Turks and Caicos) practice the area search count method.



Ann Sutton leads a discussion with participants about how to count the birds at Big Bridge ponds.



Practice point count at Spring Pond – freshwater wetland loaded with Common Moorhens, also American Coots, Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Grebes, Pied-billed Grebes, Masked Ducks (!), and more.



Great Pedro Pond: winter home to 762 Blue-winged Teal and many other waterbirds. Angela Ramsey (Tobago) & Anthony Levesque (Guadeloupe) count them all.



Farewell Dinner at Catcha' Falling Star: Workshop trivia quiz, awards and presentation of certificates to all participants. Maxine Hamilton (Jamaica) and Lisa Sorenson (Boston).