

## ICBP/SSC SEABIRD SPECIALIST GROUP REPORT ON ACTIVITIES, 1992

The Seabird Specialist Group of the International Council for Bird Preservation and the World Conservation Union's Species Survival Commission has responsibility for approximately 288 species of seabirds that cover the world's oceans from the tropics to the polar ice packs. The problems of seabirds are diverse and vary between regions and species, ranging from pollution and habitat destruction to human predation and competition for fishery resources.

With the publication of two ICBP technical volumes on the status of the world's seabirds (Croxall *et al.* 1984, Croxall 1991) and the scheduled 1993 publication of a third volume on the management of the seabird islands (Nettleship *et al.* 1993), the group has documented the major problems presently confronting seabirds and the actions needed to ameliorate such problems.

The past year has been one of transition and planning toward two goals: implementing programmes to address seabird problems and developing a means to identify and deal with future problems as they arise. It is not yet clear how the group will achieve these two goals.

Implementing programmes will require staff and financial resources, either raised by the specialist group itself, by ICBP and SSC, or by outside parties such as UNEP and the EEC, by other conservation organizations, or by individual nations. ICBP, in the process of changing its overall structure, has focused most of its attention toward its new national affiliates, placing less emphasis on its network of specialist groups. A December meeting with specialist groups dealt frankly with the need for further support for the groups, but ICBP policies toward specialist groups remain in transition.

To identify future problems and vulnerable species, two opposing scenarios exist. In the first, the

Seabird Specialist Group would continue to be a loose-knit committee of correspondence that would meet perhaps once a decade to update the existing volumes on seabird status and would conduct occasional letter-writing campaigns concerning threats to seabirds. In the second, different committees within the group might seek continuously to identify new threats and problems, serve as a source of technical expertise on solutions, and implement programmes in areas such as education, eradication of feral pests, or development of international law concerning seabirds.

In 1993, the Seabird Specialist Group is essentially at a transition point where it can grow, divest some of its programme responsibilities to other institutions, or remain primarily as an information-gathering body with no institutional capabilities. Whatever its eventual fate, there is a need for an international group to monitor seabirds and their problems and to ensure that necessary conservation actions are carried out.

## REFERENCES

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*David Cameron Duffy, Box 1095, Shelter Island Heights, New York 19965, USA. Received 8 February 1993.*