



Indian Ocean Seabird Group

IOSG NEWSLETTER

Coordinators / Editors

Western Indian Ocean – Matthieu Le Corre – lecorre@univ-reunion.fr

Eastern Indian Ocean – Nic Dunlop – tern@git.com.au

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Making the Connections

At the end of October Chris Feare visited Western Australia to share his intimate knowledge of Starlings with the State's Department of Agriculture. Introduced Starlings are starting to invade the southern coast of Western Australia from across the Nullabour Plain.

Some of the seabird botherers in these parts managed to steal him away from his frenetic official itinerary and take him to a couple of handy islands. We got to talking about improving communications with the fraternity in the Western Indian Ocean and the need for an Indian Ocean Seabird Group. Well, of course, there already was one! So courtesy of Chris, Matthieu meets Nic through the wonders of telecommunication and the rest, as they say, is history.



Inaugural IOSG Conference

The Indian Ocean Seabird Group was formed in November 2004 but as yet hasn't got together for a congress. So we are planning for an inaugural conference on Christmas Island, Indian Ocean in late April 2008. Put that in your diaries now!

Having a conference on Christmas Island presents some challenges with travel arrangements but once there we will be able to combine erudite presentations with plenty of hands on contact with endemic and threatened seabird species guided by on-island researchers.

Responses to our preliminary round of 'Expressions of Interest' were very encouraging so we are pressing on into the unknown. For those who missed the first signals and are interested in attending please eMail Matthieu or moi (been brushing up on my dodgy French).

An indicative idea of costs for the conference will be available in February so stay tuned. We are seeking some sponsored places for young

scientists / resource managers from developing countries.

Nic Dunlop



What Frigatebird is that?

Conservation Alert!

A moratorium on primary rainforest clearing was imposed on Christmas Island in 1988 to protect the Island's unique ecosystem and seabirds. It has remained in place since. About 70% of the Island's forest is intact. With increasing threats from long term fragmentation effects, introduced weeds and Yellow Crazy Ants it is vital that all the remaining forest is retained.

The small mining company on the Island, Phosphate Resources Limited, now wants access to 9 new areas of forest, including areas with nesting Abbott's Booby and a buffer zone protecting the only Christmas Island Frigatebird colony on the planet.

The Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, Senator Ian Campbell, will make a decision on these proposals in February. It would help enormously if members of IOSG eMailed the Minister to voice their objections
Malcolm.Turnbull.MP@aph.gov.au

Nic Dunlop

Call for contributions: This is the first Newsletter of the Group. We plan to prepare the second issue for February or March. So do not hesitate and send your contributions to one of the editors (see above) now!

Feral cats and Sooty tern predation at Juan de Nova Island, Mozambique Channel

We have recently completed a 6 week trip to Juan de Nova Island to document the impact of cats on sooty terns, and to start the eradication process. As we all know, cats can be a major problem to breeding seabirds, and this was clearly the case at Juan de Nova where a large proportion of dead sooty terns were discovered each day, many of which were killed without being consumed! But at the end of the day, as you can see, at least one sooty tern came out 'on top'!

We will complete eradication in February 2007 and will monitor the ecosystem thereafter to gauge how the ecosystem recovers after the removal of this most efficient predator.

Darren Peck & Patrick Pinet (ECOMAR, University de la Reunion)



Workshop on "Seabirds as bioindicators of the tropical western Indian Ocean", Victoria, Seychelles, December 2007.

As part of a research program funded by the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), the NGO Nature Seychelles and the Marine Ecology Lab of the University of Réunion are organizing a workshop on "Seabirds as bioindicators of marine ecosystems of the tropical western Indian Ocean". The workshop will last 3 days and will be held at Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles, in December 2007.

The goal of this workshop is to present what has been achieved so far in the Seychelles and in the Mozambique Channel from 2002 to 2007 and to discuss (during a round table meeting) with fishery managers, stakeholders, local NGOs, ... on the implementation of a long term program to use seabirds as bioindicators of the marine environment.

Invited speakers with considerable experience in the relevant topics will present their own findings and long term work conducted at various parts of the world. They will also participate to the round table discussion mentioned above as their valuable expertise and experience will be of considerable interest.



A part of the workshop will be also devoted to studies that have been conducted elsewhere in the tropics. People willing to present a communication should contact M. Le Corre for details (lecorre@univ-reunion.fr).

Barau's Petrels endangered by cats

Barau's petrels are endemic seabirds that breed only on the top of the ancient volcano of Réunion Island, between 2300 and 2800 masl. Although their breeding colonies are very remote and difficult to reach, they are invaded by feral cats. We have shown in a recent study that these introduced predators kill hundreds of adults and chicks every year, even in the more remote colonies. Although cat eradication is impossible for an island as big as Réunion, conservation actions are planned to at least reduce cat density before each breeding season.

Matthieu Le Corre, Lucie Faulquier, & Rémi Fontaine (ECOMAR, Université de La Réunion).

