



UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES

March 2026

The [Conserving the Diablotin: Black-capped Petrel Conservation Update and Action Plan](#) calls for nine strategies to enable conservation and address threats. Analysis suggests that no single strategy can result in a population increase but, by pursuing multiple strategies in synergy, we can achieve a positive population trajectory into the future. Our 10- to 20-year conservation goal is ensuring the long-term survival of a stable population of Black-capped Petrel whose conservation status has improved from Endangered to Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List.

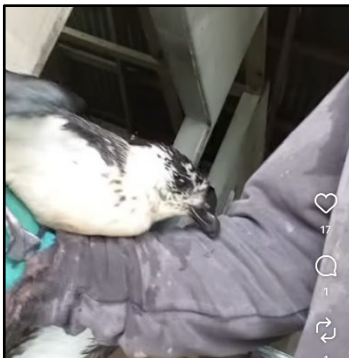
Newsletter Contents

STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: Build local capacity	2
Strategy 2: Locate and characterize nest sites	3
Strategy 3: Explore restoration methods.....	4
Strategy 4: Reduce predator pressure.....	5
Strategy 5: Reduce collisions and groundings	6
Strategy 6: Support community development in Boukan Chat, Haiti	6
Strategy 7: Undertake study of socio-economic drivers of threats at La Visite, Haiti	7
Strategy 8: Engage Dominican government to plan and strengthen oversight of parks.....	7
Strategy 9: Address threats at sea through advocacy	8

MONITORING, RESEARCH, AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

Monitoring	9
Research Publications and Links	9
Communications.....	10
Working Group Tools.....	10



Breaking news: Two grounded birds have been recovered and released in Dominica in the last year (May 2025, February 2026). See page 3 for a description of the find in May and its implications for conservation. Both birds were found by the same individual at the construction site for the top station of the Dominica Cable Car project, near Boiling Lake.

Credit D. Carbon

STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: Build local capacity

Activities to build local capacity might include outreach to in-country partners, international grant support, training and relationship-building. Highlights from the previous year include:

The Grupo Jaragua core field team currently consists of Geny Marcelo (Chachi) Feliz, Juan Pérez Vidal and Juan Pablo Montero (left to right in image below). The petrel-related work of these young men is supervised by Ernst Rupp and supported by other members of the Grupo Jaragua staff.



The “Diablotineros.” Credit: J.Wheeler

Yvan trained Juan Pablo Montero in the collection of samples (filters) to be sent off for analysis of eDNA. Credit: J. Wheeler

In September 2025, the team hosted Yvan Satgé from Clemson University and Jennifer Wheeler from BirdsCaribbean in Valle Nuevo. With a grant from The Seabird Group in the UK, Yvan was examining if genetic material shed by petrels into the environment (“environmental DNA”, or “eDNA”) could be found in a stream below the petrel colony. If DNA from feces, feathers or other biological material shed from a known colony could be detected in a nearby watercourse, then perhaps water samples could be used to determine petrel presence in suspected areas of nesting.



Juan Pablo also received training from Yvan in attaching satellite transmitters in March 2024. He successfully put his training to work by fitting satellite transmitters onto two additional petrels found grounded but uninjured at Loma del Toro (early 2024 and early 2025)

Public education and outreach are other forms of capacity-building. When in the DR, Yvan presented on the current knowledge of petrels in the National Park to the members of the Valle Nuevo National Park Co-management Council. This entity serves as the mechanism to bring together multiple parties to plan, manage and monitor the protected area. The presentation brought members of the Council up to speed on the petrel work in the park and the challenges there.

The Black-capped Petrel is also included in the curriculum of Grupo Jaragua’s annual summer nature camp for children in Oviedo, at which children learn about the birds of the transboundary Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo Biosphere Reserve. In 2025, 87 children participated and 20 local young adults were trained as facilitators.

In Haiti, sociopolitical and economic challenges, as well as reduction in funding, prevented Anderson Jean with Action pour la Sauvegarde de l’Écologie en Haiti (ACSEH) from being able to travel to Morne Vincent during the 2024-2025 season. Ernst Rupp of Grupo Jaragua assisted with provisioning of individuals conducting the

nest monitoring and community work in that location, as was done in the early years of the petrel program (2011 to 2019). ACSEH continued to oversee work in La Visite.

Local partners continue to do the best they can with the diminishing funding available through U.S. and other international sources.

Strategy 2: Locate and characterize nest sites

A goal of the action plan is that, by 2025, all known, probable and suspected sites on Hispaniola have received comprehensive search and at least one other probable or suspected island has been explored more thoroughly.

Due to lack of funding for field stays, rain, and vehicle issues, there was only very limited nest searching at known sites in Hispaniola during the 2024-2025 season. Two new nests were discovered in Valle Nuevo near known burrows. This site seems to hold much promising habitat, that to date, the team has not been able to search. Vocalizations heard in the night provide clues as to where petrels might be headed, but many areas are very difficult to access. In Sierra de Bahoruco, the known breeding site of Loma Quemada seems to have lower human or predation pressures, and it is desirable to understand more about the size of the population there, but the logistics of searching there are also very difficult. No additional on-the-ground searching was possible at known sites in Haiti or at probable or suspected sites in either DR or Haiti.

Nest searching is laborious and time-consuming and involves technicians moving through difficult terrain seeking out guano, feathers, odors and promising holes. Other methods are employed when feasible. As noted under Strategy 1, researcher Yvan Satgé undertook a visit to Valle Nuevo in September 2025 to collect water samples for eDNA. If genetic material from petrels is detected, then the method might be of use in other locations. On that visit, thermal binoculars were also used to try and ascertain the movements of petrels into forested slopes. Flying petrels were detected, but the equipment was not powerful enough to pinpoint where petrels might be landing.

Elsewhere, in 2024-2025, there were two autonomous recording units (ARUs, specifically SM4s) placed in a possible nesting area at Las Abejas canyon (Cañada Cruce Abejas), 6.5 km west of Loma Quemada. This data has yet to be analyzed.



Clips from a video taken of petrels over the Valle Nuevo nesting area at night. Credit: Grupo Jaragua

No formal searches were undertaken on other probable or suspected islands (Dominica, Guadeloupe, Cuba, Jamaica), but on Dominica, more evidence of breeding was found! An [news article](#) by Arlington James, retired **Forest Officer** from the **Forestry, Wildlife & Parks Division** in Dominica provides these details and images:

“[T]he most recent find was made on the morning of Monday, May 19, 2025, this one in the Morne Trois Pitons National Park World Heritage Site. This ... bird was collected on the ground by Darnell Carbon of Morne Prosper in the general vicinity of the Top Station of the Cable Car Dominica Project currently under construction; Darnell is an employee of the company. This third ‘Dyabloten find’ turned out to be a juvenile/fledgling, meaning that it was a young bird that had recently left its nest cavity for the first time.”

Darnell kept the bird safe, taking it outside, and on the morning of May 20, it flew off.



Given that the bird was a fledgling (as shown by the down feathers on the petrel’s legs), it is almost certain it originated from a nest in the mountains of Dominica. Conservationists are concerned that the lights associated with the Cable Car construction caused the fledgling to be grounded and that lights and structures associated with the completed project will pose threats of groundings and collisions to other petrels in the future. On the other hand, cooperation with the cable car project managers might provide an opportunity for nest searching on Dominica. Local partners in Dominica, including Division of Forestry, are being engaged to pursue these possibilities.

Strategy 3: Explore restoration methods

The Black-capped Petrel action plan calls for a full feasibility study of restoration methods to be completed by 2025, with recommendations for pilot projects; and by 2030, any necessary restoration projects have started.

A full feasibility study on restoration has yet to be completed.

Nest boxes continue to be tested at Loma del Toro colony. That colony hosts six wooden boxes placed into existing cavities and 20 placed in novel locations. All of the replacement burrows seem to have attracted interested breeding petrels over time. In the 2024-2025 season, four were active and two fledged chicks.

In the 2024-2025 season, six of the 20 artificial burrows showed adult activity, although no presence of any chick could be verified. The activity of adults in six artificial burrows is a significant increase from the 2023-24 season, where only one nest was active. See the previous [International Black-capped Petrel Group annual updates](#) for details on nest box installation.

There are no reports of Black-capped Petrel activity on Desecheo Island, where vocalizations are being broadcast.

Strategy 4: Reduce predator pressure

Controlling predators will allow reproductive output and adult survival to increase. Eradication is impossible at known breeding sites on the Hispaniola mainland. Control methods that vary among locations and with predator-type are used to reduce depredation. These include trapping, burrow enhancements, and most recently, remote surveillance.

Results of Predator Control in Valle Nuevo:

To address mongoose predation in Valle Nuevo, Grupo Jaragua received five AT220 self-resetting traps from American Bird Conservancy in November 2023. Experts in New Zealand and Hawaii were consulted on their use, including recommendations for timers, placement, security, human safety, and bait.

From January 2024 through the end of breeding season, the five traps were set up in test locations (>100 m from petrel nests) with the kill mechanism blocked. Each AT220 was monitored by camera. During this test period, no mongoose activity at the AT220s was detected. Several rats were attracted and seen on camera inspecting the traps, though it appeared the rat visits decreased over time. The bait used during this time was a paste of grounded smoked herring and vegetable oil.

During the test period there was no indication that the AT220s presented a risk to petrels or native wildlife. Thus, they were moved to locations closer to clusters of petrel burrows, activated and monitored by camera. The same bait was used. From September 2024 to present, no mongoose activity was detected at the AT220s. The traps were very successful in dispatching rats (dozens).

Controlling mongoose is a very high priority for Valle Nuevo due to reproductive failure. In 2024-2025, five nests showed evidence of predation; a total of 18 nests were occupied by adults and failed to produce a fledgling.

The AT220s will be deployed in the same locations in 2025-2026. Although no mongoose were caught during the 2024-2025 season, the team gained good experience in setting up the traps.



An AT220 trap in Valle Nuevo. A board ramp aids mongoose access; signs are placed to prevent human disturbance. Credit: J. Wheeler

Results of Predator Control in Other Locations:

Very little predator presence was noted in Loma del Toro, Loma Quemada and Morne Vincent, on cameras or through evidence at nests, so no predator control was conducted in any of these locations in 2024-2025. In La Visite, during all visits to the colony, the team observed cat and rat feces within the colony but did not observe evidence of other predator species. The team observed a dead adult Black-capped Petrel within the LaVisite colony that had evidence of predation by a mammal. Lack of traps precluded any predator control at LaVisite.

Strategy 5: Reduce collisions and groundings

The action plan recommends several actions to combat losses due to collisions and groundings. These include advocacy to regulators of infrastructure; providing tower owners with recommendations and tools to minimize collisions; and outreach to communities with high levels of light pollution.

Collisions and groundings at the antenna area near the Loma del Toro colony remain a problem. During the 2024-2025 season, six downed birds were recorded there. One bird had a broken wing. Only feathers and bones remained of another. Four birds were found seemingly unharmed and released successfully. The Grupo Jaragua team provides training and small awards to the antenna guards for reports and releases of petrels.

It would appear that the threat is increasing as another large tower is going up on Loma del Toro. The International Black-capped Petrel Conservation Group has recommended placement of diverters on tower cables, which should help reduce collisions. However, establishing direct engagement with the government agencies responsible for the construction and operation of the towers has proven challenging.

No groundings were reported in Haiti.

As noted under Strategy 2, a fledgling petrel was found grounded in May 2025 at the construction site for the Dominica Cable Car Project, an aerial tram being built for ecotourism. An adult petrel was found grounded in February 2026. The government of Dominica has been contacted to explore ways to follow-up on the finding, and to address concerns about future groundings or collisions caused by lights, towers and cables.

Strategy 6: Support community development in Boukan Chat, Haiti

The town of Boukan Chat lies to the north of the Morne Vincent nesting site and expanding agriculture is an imminent threat to the colony. The strategies in place to slow or stop expansion into forests involve agroecological programs to improve existing farm yields and foster tree crops, as well as community outreach and education.

As stated previously, in 2024-2025, ACSEH and Grupo Jaragua supported coordination and funding of individuals working locally in Boukan Chat and Morne Vincent. The local team includes Haitians René Jeune, Samuel Nossirel, Tinio Louis, Pierre Richard Sanon, and Victor Renozier “Ti Tet”, who live in Haiti or are able to cross over the border at Perdenales/Anse-en-Pitre down near the coast. Those crossing the border are able to carry small equipment (e.g, cameras) and small amounts of funds to support the monitoring in the Morne Vincent colony and some relevant community projects (e.g., the nursery, youth/soccer group).

Due to lack of capacity and resources, we have no reports on school visits, farmer trainings, or community festivals. The good news is that agriculture does not seem to be expanding into petrel habitat, the fire risk seems low as forest litter has burned down, and the community maintains its positive view of the petrel. We are hopeful that future years will allow a return to increased community development activity.

Strategy 7: Undertake study of socio-economic drivers of threats at La Visite, Haiti

La Visite ridge hosts the greatest density of petrels, but the socio-economic and political situation encourages the unsustainable use of natural resources by local communities. A scoping study would help understand the specificities of this area and better inform socioeconomic and environmental interventions needed to reduce the impacts of poverty and preserve natural resources.

While a formal scoping study has yet to be conducted, the team continues to reach out to relevant audiences for outreach and education to promote bird and land conservation.

Regarding environmental education in this area, the team regularly visited one school (*Ecole Presbyteral Notre Dame Altagrace de Seguin*) in Seguin and taught 115 pupils the conservation need of Black-capped Petrel and how they could contribute to preservation of the species.

The team also continued to work with the farmers in the area to improve sustainable farming practices, specifically around erosion control as well as providing buffer areas around the nest colonies. They met with 40 farmers from two community associations in Seguin.

Unfortunately, agricultural encroachment and forest clearing were notable at the Tet Opak area of LaVisite, despite efforts to discourage residents from removing vegetation in petrel habitat. In subarea 1, there were grazing cattle in the upper part of the colony, there was evidence of burning and vegetation clearing, and there were observations of small farm plots on the edges of the upper colony. In subarea 2, there were multiple new trails leading to area where trees had been cut and removed. Further, following a number of rainstorms, it was noted that numerous nest entrances were blocked with soil washed down the slope.

Environmental education on the Black-capped Petrel at a primary school near La Visite National Park, Haiti.

Credit: ACSEH



Strategy 8: Engage Dominican government to plan and strengthen oversight of parks

All confirmed and suspected nesting sites in the Dominican Republic fall within national parks. Local partners will foster collaboration with park administrators for expertise on petrels and petrel habitat; seek public engagement to gain public backing; and showcase habitat restoration projects to park administrators.

As always, the local partner Grupo Jaragua seeks to have ongoing engagement with the Ministry of Environment. It seeks participation of Ministry staff in proactive conservation and raises issues of conservation concern to authorities.

In August 2025, [the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the Jaragua Group signed an inter-institutional co-management agreement](#) for the administration of the Sierra de Bahoruco and Jaragua National Parks, with the goal of strengthening the conservation of these protected areas. Working with the relevant divisions of government and civic institutions, Grupo Jaragua Group will focus on the regional development of these protected areas, through community participation processes.

Initial work under the co-management agreement involved the renovation of five protection and surveillance centers in the Sierra de Bahoruco National Park, associated with a goal of 50% improved infrastructure. One of these is used by the petrel team during monitoring visits to Loma Quemada. However, infrastructure improvement has yet to come to the Loma del Tora area. In fact, work at the Loma del Toro colony has been complicated by increased presence of military and antenna construction activities, such as more scrutiny of team actions, less accommodations space, and demands on the food supply.

Strategy 9: Address threats at sea through advocacy

Given the scope of marine threats (reduced prey availability, plastics and other pollutants, oil spills), the most effective and feasible interventions will be to advocate for the species' interest in the realm of marine policies, by highlighting the Black-capped Petrel in science/policy forums and contributing data to regulatory agencies.

Partners continue to highlight the petrel in forums related to marine policy. However, due to changes in U.S. government policy and personnel, several activities relevant to the petrel are on hold.

The 2023 listing of the Black-capped Petrel under the Endangered Species Act required that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designate critical habitat in territorial waters. Although in October 2025, the Center for Biological Diversity sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for failing to meet this requirement <https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/lawsuit-challenges-failure-to-protect-habitat-for-endangered-black-capped-petrels-2025-10-07/>, it appears there are few staff to work on this task. Development of a Recovery Plan, also required by the ESA listing, is also paused due to personnel shortage. Tom White, the wildlife biologist who oversaw the Species Status Assessment accompanying the ESA Listing Decision, is retiring in March 2026.

USFWS's plans to conduct a Resource Equivalency Analysis for Black-capped Petrels affected by wind development has been suspended due to significant funding and staff cuts, and the suspension of offshore wind power projects in the U.S.

MONITORING, RESEARCH, AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

Monitoring

The 2021 [Conserving the Diablotin: Black-capped Petrel Conservation Update and Action Plan](#) relies on Key Ecological Attributes (KEAs) to comprise the basic elements of a monitoring plan for the species. KEAs are aspects of the species biology or ecology that define the health of the species.

The seven KEAs are:

- Flyway Population Index
- Breeding Vocal Activity
- Colony Occupancy
- Reproductive Success
- Breeder Return Rate
- Habitat Intactness
- Breeding Distribution

At present, resources are sufficient only to assess KEAs of colony occupancy and reproductive success through nest monitoring. To aid in this assessment, a single, comprehensive Database of Nest Monitoring Data for the Black-capped Petrel was created in 2025. For the first time it will allow standardized comparisons between nests, nesting areas, and across some of the 13 years (and counting) of available nest monitoring data. Yvan Satgé describes the work in his report, [Creation of a Database of Nest Monitoring Data for the Black-capped Petrel](#), online on the [working group website](#):

The Database of Nest Monitoring Data for Black-capped Petrel coalesces all nest monitoring data collected annually from the 2011-2012 to the 2023-2024 breeding seasons by Grupo Jaragua, Environmental Protection in the Caribbean, and Action pour la Sauvegarde de l'Écologie en Haïti (ACSEH). These organizations retain the ownership of all the data entered in the database through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by members of the International Black-capped Petrel Conservation Group in 2020. Between 2011 and 2024, more than 181 Black-capped Petrel nests were located in Hispaniola. Data from 13 seasons have been collected. Twenty-five nests had more than 10 years of monitoring data, and nine nests had more than 10 years of consecutive monitoring data. The creation of this comprehensive Database of Nest Monitoring Data for the Black-capped Petrel is intended to allow for standardized comparisons between nests, nesting areas, and across years and for future nest monitoring data to be entered as it is collected.

Yvan proposes the use of confidence levels (i.e. low, medium, high, confirmed) based on the strength of the data recorded in the field, to describe the quality of the biological metrics stored in the database. The confidence levels can be used to weigh data used in calculations, thus providing more reliable KEAs. Once the data owners and working group agree on the confidence levels and weights, we will report on colony occupancy and reproductive success.

Research Publications and Links

Satgé, Y.G., J.B. Patteson, B.S. Keitt, C.P. Gaskin, and P.G.R. Jodice. 2025. **Satellite tracking supports hypotheses of breeding allochrony and allopatry in the Endangered *Pterodroma hasitata* (Black-capped Petrel, Diablotin).** *Journal of Caribbean Ornithology* 38:59–66.
<https://doi.org/10.55431/jco.2025.38.59-66>

General Outreach



Jim Goetz highlighted the Black-capped Petrel planning process in an Open Standards workshop held in the Dominican Republic, in January 2026.

Working Group News

EPIC co-founder and Board Member Adam Brown is stepping away from day-to-day project management and seabird research to pursue a new career in counseling. His impact on the study and conservation of the Black-capped Petrel has been extraordinary—from leading radar studies across multiple islands to strengthening and expanding conservation programs in Haiti. We are deeply grateful for his dedication and wish him every success in this next chapter. Leadership of EPIC’s Haiti projects will now transition to Dr. Simone Lewis, the [organization’s new Program Director](#). Simone brings 15 years of experience in natural resource management, climate resilience, and sustainable development across the Caribbean. We are pleased to welcome Simone to the team.

Listserv: Visit BirdsCaribbean.groups.io/g/Diablotin to subscribe to our discussion group for the people interested in *Pterodroma hasitata* conservation. We use the Groups.IO platform provided by BirdsCaribbean to take advantage of the regional organization’s reach, influence and administrative support.

Websites: The [website for the working group](#) is hosted by BirdsCaribbean and includes a library of unpublished documents related to the Black-capped Petrel project. The website library includes the new conservation action plan, the unpublished reports noted in this newsletter, links to open access educational materials, and copies of presentations (slides, posters) to communicate to the conservation community.

Please visit www.BirdsCaribbean.org, and search under “Petrel” or go directly to <https://www.birdscaribbean.org/our-work/black-capped-petrel-working-group/>

Another website, Diablotin.org, offers additional, timely information on Black-capped Petrel activities.

This newsletter was prepared by Jennifer Wheeler (Jennifer.Wheeler@BirdsCaribbean.org), with contributions from many others.