

Building capacity to save Haiti's biodiversity

Over the last 12 months, BirdLife has been stepping up its efforts to build the capacity of Société Audubon Haiti (SAH) through both institutional strengthening and staff training. The latest chapter in raising the skills-base of SAH's field biologists has seen Enold Louis-Jean travelling to Jersey (British Channel Islands) to participate in [Durrell's Endangered Species Management Graduate Certificate \(DESMAN\)](#) – a 12-week course (accredited by the University of Kent) designed to equip conservationists with the skills needed to manage species recovery. BirdLife is supporting SAH through an institutional strengthening grant from the MacArthur Foundation which is providing the means to hire staff (including an Executive Director and field staff), develop an institutional strategic plan and establish an office. This process has been helped by support from the US Forest Service International Program (who are helping to finance SAH's field biologists), but it is BirdLife's Darwin Initiative project – *Building a future for Haiti's unique vertebrates* – that is proving invaluable in terms of technical training opportunities. The Darwin project is being led by BirdLife in collaboration with Zoological Society London (ZSL), Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (Durrell) and SAH. Two key objectives of the project are to *strengthen SAH's capacity for conserving and monitoring globally threatened vertebrates and their habitats*, and to *strengthen the skills-base in conservation biology, planning, advocacy and management*. With these objectives in mind, two SAH field staff (Enold Louis-Jean and Anderson Jean) have been trained in various techniques and protocols (for bats, terrestrial mammals, herps and birds) during a BirdLife/ZSL/Durrell project field visit in May 2011; during an intensive one-week training course focusing on Hispaniolan hutia and Hispaniolan solenodon with Durrell's field team in the Dominican Republic (who are working under a separate Darwin Initiative grant); and during a week-long *Island Species-Led Action* (ISLA) training course in September 2011 (also run by Durrell in association with their Darwin project in the Dominican Republic).

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<http://www.birdlife.org/community/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/DESMAN-participants-300x200.jpg>



Participants on the 2012 DESMAN training course in Jersey (Durrell)

The Jersey-based DESMAN course that Enold is attending builds on his previous training through two six-week modules: (1) Application of conservation biology theory; and (2) Transferable skills for conservation managers. The first module consists of a four week lecture and seminar series and a two week block working in the animal and veterinary departments in Durrell's Wildlife Park. This is followed by practical workshops on topics such as Geographic Information Systems, statistics, data analysis and population monitoring techniques. Enold, along with the other DESMAN participants will also attend courses on Facilitation Skills for Conservation Managers, and Leadership and Communication Skills. Enold will be returning to Haiti at the end of April, ready to put his newly-learnt skills into practice within some of the world's highest priority areas for biodiversity conservation.