

More petrels discovered in Haiti

Title

The nocturnal calls of Black-capped Petrels *Pterodroma hasitata* have guided Haitian researchers to discover more nesting locations for this Endangered seabird. During November and December 2011, researchers from the Société Audubon Haïti (SAH) carried out field expeditions as part of their ongoing efforts to better understand and conserve Haiti's unique biodiversity. Expeditions are being carried to potential remnant forest patches identified by remote sensing. Once on-site, the researchers assess the areas for the presence of threatened and endemic birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and plants. This time, the expedition took SAH's team ? Anderson Jean, Joel Timyan and Enold Louis Jean? to the Key Biodiversity Area of Massif de la Selle in south-easternmost Haiti.

The first area visited is known as Morne Mare Rouge, a site that had never previously been explored for Black-capped Petrels, 24 km south-east of the nearest known nesting petrel colony at Tête Opaque on the northern escarpment in La Visite National Park. During the evening of 20 November, the SAH field team approached a dense forest patch on steep limestone cliffs, and to their surprise, around 24 petrels were discovered calling near the locality of Bois Dimé.

The discovery of any Black-capped Petrel colony is exciting enough, but on the next day the team travelled by helicopter to Morne d'Enfer, c.35 km due west along the Massif de la Selle ridge. Once there they detected another group of petrels vocalizing ? this time between 10 and 15 individuals close to the escarpment of Bois l'Etat. The team strongly believes that these birds represent another nesting colony which would be the westernmost site in the Massif de la Selle reported for Black-capped Petrels.

In December, the team heard 3-5 petrels passing overhead on two evenings at sites within the La Visite National Park, close to the well documented breeding colony on Morne La Visite.

These expeditions are generating essential baseline data to support the protection of Haiti's forest remnants that harbor so many unique species. The forest in the Massif de la Selle is being severely impacted by unsustainable land-use practices including cutting trees for timber, charcoal production and agricultural gardens. What is not yet clear is the impact that this forest destruction and degradation is having on the nesting colonies of Black-capped Petrel. This requires more research, but in the meantime, alternative livelihoods are being explored and it is clear that the long-term survival of these petrel colonies will require the full support of the local communities living around them.

If you would like to help the petrel, you can support the conservation efforts of the [International Black-capped Petrel Conservation Group](#).

Biodiversity conservation efforts by the Société Audubon Haïti are carried out in partnership with BirdLife International through funding from U.S. Forest Service, Darwin Initiative and MacArthur Foundation, and Pennsylvania State University through funding from the National Science Foundation.

The full report can be downloaded [here](#).

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