

Newsletter

on Alcyon programme activities



Second half of 2017

A new boost for seabird and marine resource conservation in West Africa

BirdLife International marine programme - BIMP- has recently significantly expanded its conservation actions in West Africa, building on the success of the Alcyon Project, thanks to new MAVA grants. This strengthening of BIMP's activities in West Africa has gained momentum from the second half of 2017. We have decided to keep the name Alcyon, which evokes a history and purpose linked to the existence of the programme. We will therefore refer to the 'Alcyon programme'.

Many of you are wondering what has been going on since our last issue, when we announced the launch of the Alcyon programme. What is certain is that, many activities have taken place injecting a new dynamism into the programme.

This newsletter is dedicated to the presentation of the different projects already started under the Alcyon programme; these include the seabird conservation project in Cabo Verde, the coastal seabird project on Mauritania, Senegal and Guinea Bissau, and the project of minimizing bycatch of seabirds and sea turtles in industrial fisheries. Undoubtedly,

BirdLife has demonstrated elsewhere its ability to work to reduce bycatch of seabirds in specific fisheries and we look forward to seeing our sub-region follow up on this model.

In autumn 2017, we organized inception workshops of our two seabird conservation projects and our highly motivated partners have already started field activities with great enthusiasm, mainly in Cape Verde. For instance, Bulwer's petrels, these small seabirds in the family Procellariidae, which in the past have been under threat from human activity and are still heavily preyed on by gulls, cats and rats, were tracked for the first time using GPS devices, in an effort to unveil their mysterious offshore feeding grounds in capeverdean waters. The first results of this study, as well as others will be revealed to you.

For the time being, we invite you to discover the challenges for these projects, and the joint efforts of BirdLife and its partners in the conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity in the West Africa.

Justine Dossa
Alcyon Programme Manager
BirdLife International Marine Programme
BirdLife International Africa Partnership Secretariat



The Alcyon programme, mainly funded by the MAVA Foundation, aims to contribute to the conservation of seabirds and marine and coastal biodiversity in West Africa

Biosfera officers releasing a Cape Verde shearwater (© Biosfera)



Promoting the conservation of Cabo Verde seabirds

This 2,5 years project, funded by MAVA Foundation, is in partnership with the Nacional Directorate for the Environment of Cabo Verde (DNA), Biosfera I, Projecto Vitó, Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves - SPEA (BirdLife partner in Portugal) and the University of Barcelona. A number of other local organisations including Amigos do Calhau, Associação Projeto Biodiversidade, BIOS CV, Fundação Maio Biodiversidade, Instituto Nacional de Investigação e Desenvolvimento Agrário, Lantuna, the University of Cabo Verde and the University of Coimbra (Portugal) also play a key role in the project. Building on recent initiatives of external researchers and the Alcyon project, this project will determine the status of Cabo Verde's seabirds, especially their distribution and threats both at their breeding sites and at sea, thence work together to mitigate key threats and build a wide interest and pride in seabirds. Throughout, building capacity will be a key theme of the project, with local PhD and MSc students supported as well as field assistants, protected areas staff and tour guides. These steps and close involvement with the main government partner will help build seabird conservation into national structures and plans.

During the breeding season of 2017 Bulwer's petrels were tracked for the first time in capeverdeian waters in an effort to unveil their mysterious feeding grounds. These stunning birds seem to tend to forage in the waters south of Cabo Verde doing amazing flights to feed their chicks as revealed by preliminary tracking data. At the same time their nests were monitored to assess for breeding success and threats. But this is not just about Bulwer's petrels. As part of this project, all the other breeding seabird species found in Cabo Verde are being studied, monitored and protected in a number of colonies by dedicated teams of local, national and international organisations.

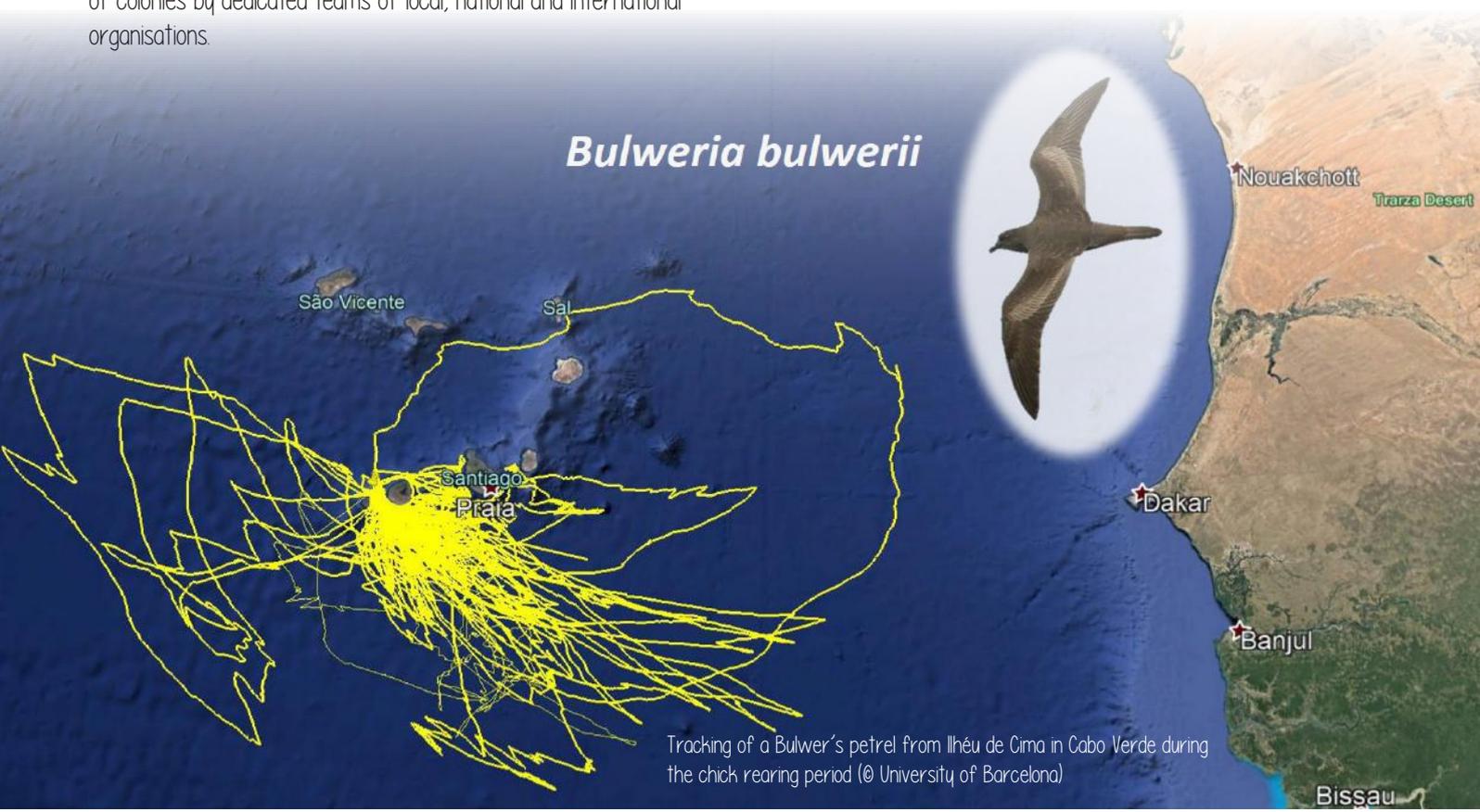


Deployment of a GPS logger in a Bulwer's petrel (© Biosfera)



New boat of Biosfera to support conservation actions (© Biosfera)

For the first time a nationwide project coordinated by BirdLife International in close relation with DNA, aims at changing the fate of the internationally important seabird populations that inhabit the islands of the Cabo Verde archipelago.



Tracking of a Bulwer's petrel from Ilhéu de Cima in Cabo Verde during the chick rearing period (© University of Barcelona)

Conservation of coastal seabirds along the West African coast

This project aiming at conserve West Africa's impressive colonies of terns and gulls, will build on results of the previous Alcyon project and is coordinated by BirdLife International in partnership with a number of national NGOs and Governmental institutes (Nature Mauritanie and PNBA in Mauritania; NCD, Nébédag and DPN in Senegal; ODZH and IBAP in Guinea-Bissau), including the PRCM and national and international universities and research institutes. Over 2.5 years, MAVA Foundation funds the project activities in an effort to improve management of coastal Marine Protected Areas and other priority sites, especially to guide the wise and long-term management of breeding colonies. This will include stepping up surveillance and build awareness about the values of gulls and terns, whilst also investing in ecotourism initiatives through a regional strategy and site-based interventions targeting local communities.

On mid-December 2017 about 40 experts from 13 organisations met close to Dakar to attend the kick-off workshop of this new challenging project. This event was an occasion to meet all partners and to discuss about project activities and best approach. During the workshop partners had the opportunity to better understand their role in the project and to discuss the best means to work together towards the implementation of the activities. A number of PhD and Master students, field assistants, protected areas staff and tour guides will be involved and trained throughout the project along with Civil Society Organisations.



Participants attending the project inception workshop (@MLecoq)



Colony of royal tern on 'Ile aux Oiseaux' in National Park of Saloum Delta (@ J. Dossa)

Minimising bycatch of seabirds and turtles in industrial fisheries

In November 2017, MAVA approved the seabirds and sea turtles bycatch project, which pleased many in the ranks of BirdLife's West African and external partners who pledged to fight for the cause. This 2.2-year project coordinated by BirdLife in seven countries of West Africa from Mauritania to Sierra Leone including Cabo Verde.

Thus, together with the PRCM, the GSRP, stakeholders from the fisheries departments of the 7 countries (DPM, DPSP - Sénégal; DGERH, DARE - Mauritanie; DPA, DGRM - Cap Vert; DGPI - Guinea Bissau, Fisheries Departments - Gambie & Sierra Leone); oceanographic research institutes and local universities; associations of ship-owners and fisheries Industries; with the collaboration of international universities and external partners such as NOAA, UNEP-CMS and IIRD to name just a few, BirdLife will try to shed light on the nature and extent of bycatch risks for seabirds and sea turtles in West Africa.



Flock of seabird following a fishing vessel off the coast of Senegal (@ B. Van Gernerden)

As such, the project will ensure that knowledge is collectively generated and shared with key stakeholders, which will allow for risk analysis, bycatch baseline data and status assessment, an important step in identifying mitigation measures. Emphasis will be placed on the collection of data at sea by trained observers who will be trained in the project. Capacity building remains a key component of this project as it is in all other projects: local universities will participate in research and integrate the ecosystem approach to fishing into curricula. Several Master and PhD students will be trained as part of this project. At the same time, a review of the legislation will allow the project to improve and validate recommendations to minimize bycatch. For this reason, the project will initiate mechanisms to ensure that best practices are mandatory in national regulations through national, regional and international legal frameworks and the development of new legislation.



Shearwaters feeding at sea off the coast of Senegal (© MLecoq)

For the first time in our sub-region, quantified information (by fleet, type of fishing gear and area) will be available on the bycatch rates of these two species in industrial fisheries with a view to motivating coordinated efforts to address this issue in our sub-region.

Certainly, influencing international and regional conservation policies is vital, and BirdLife works with regional fisheries management organizations around the world to reduce bycatch in fisheries. BirdLife also works with fishermen and other stakeholders to find and implement appropriate measures to prevent unnecessary mortalities of seabirds in fisheries. Unquestionably, the bycatch project is a unique point of entry for long-term integration of seabirds and ecosystem-based fisheries management, which, if implemented properly and sustainably, will have significant benefits for the West-African populations, their economies and the environment in general.

Improving knowledge for better management of offshore oil and gas activities in West Africa

Significant new oil and gas reserves are being discovered in our sub-region, with relatively low environmental capacity to monitor and control standards, legal compliance and pollution risks.

BirdLife is involved in the implementation of the research and monitoring strategy of the MAVA-funded Oil and Gas project coordinated by IDDRI. BirdLife, in close collaboration with local research institutes in the sub-region, Fauna and Flora International (FFI), the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), the Abidjan Convention and other agencies with a proven track record, will provide all necessary data and tools to better understand and manage the risks associated with the oil and gas industry in order to avoid sensitive areas, and to better plan and carry out pollution risk monitoring.

Upcoming events

- ➔ 21st February 2018, Dakar, Senegal: Inception workshop of the Oil and Gas Project
- ➔ BirdLife will soon be recruiting technical assistants for its various Alcyon projects and the Bycatch project team. Vacancy announcements will soon be posted on the BirdLife website

For more information :

Justine Dossa
Alcyon Programme Coordinator
justine.dossa@birdlife.org

Miguel Lecoq
Seabird Projects Manager
miguellecoq@birdlife.org

www.birdlife.org