

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION SEABIRD SPECIALIST GROUP

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

The ICBP/IUCN Seabird Specialist Group has now produced two ICBP technical volumes on the status and conservation of the world's seabirds and another volume on the management of seabird islands is in press. Essentially we now have the data to produce an action plan for the seabirds of the world. This plan would specify which species, colonies, islands, or marine areas most need international conservation assistance, what sorts of data should be collected to monitor future problems, and what international programmes, treaties or laws are needed to protect seabirds. The plan would also be used by ICBP to raise the necessary funds for seabird conservation programmes and to encourage decision-makers to include seabirds in their considerations.

Seabirds occupy a wide range of latitudes and marine environments that differ greatly in their local conservation problems, so writing the plan will require contributions from scientists and conservationists of many nations. This is an invitation to participate in this process.

You can help in several different ways: first would be to answer the questions listed below; second would be to volunteer to serve on committees that would write and review drafts of different chapters; and third would be to make the investment of time, energy or resources to help implement the plan.

The questions we need help with now are:

1. What areas of seabird conservation should an international action plan address?
2. Should we attempt a species approach, a site approach, or a theme approach (egging, seabird/fisheries conflict, oil)?
3. What sorts of information do we need to collect to assess or monitor threats? How should this information be stored and made available?
4. How can we ensure that the action plan is carried out?
5. How do we assess the plan's effectiveness and how do we update it?
6. How much of this should or could be done by an international specialist group and how much by local or regional seabird groups?
7. What forms of support are there for seabird conservation research and management and what additional forms of support could be developed?
8. Are there institutions that would be willing to commit themselves to managing databases, research programmes, or management operations developed in this plan?
9. What structure of specialist group would best achieve these ends?

Please feel free to respond to some or all of these, or to ask and answer your own, additional questions.

I believe that we are at a juncture where we can either continue to work in small groups on local issues, or we can organize, reach a consensus on our goals, and together raise the resources to undertake global programmes. The action plan is an opportunity to achieve such a consensus.

I would appreciate a response as soon as possible. Thanking you in advance,

David Cameron Duffy, Chairperson, ICBP Seabird Specialist Group, Box 1095, Shelter Island Heights, New York 11965, U.S.A.