



SCIENCE AND CONSERVATION FOR SEABIRDS AROUND THE WORLD

Seabirds: A Global Resource

Seabirds rely on both marine and terrestrial habitats, and encounter an array of threats in both systems, resulting in population declines for many species. For this reason, they are currently the most threatened of all avian taxa. Seabirds are excellent indicators of the health of marine systems and are particularly sensitive to fisheries, climate change, and pollution in the ocean such as oil and plastics.

The World Seabird Union

The World Seabird Union (WSU) is a scientific organization founded in 2010 focused on seabird science and conservation. Our mission is to place seabird research, management, and conservation into a worldwide perspective. We do this by creating global partnerships that reach out to developing nations to facilitate research, transfer knowledge, and support conservation.

The World Seabird Union is a meta-society comprised of 20 professional seabird organizations around the world. Our members are not required to pay

dues as we prefer they support regional and local science and conservation efforts. Therefore, we rely on fundraising to support many of our long-term actions and goals. The WSU has participants from developing nations that benefit greatly from networking around the globe.

The WSU is governed by an elected Board of Directors and incorporated as a nonprofit in the United States. The Board is comprised of five elected officers and six elected Regional Representatives (Africa, Asia, Australia-New Zealand, Europe, North America, South America). Each member society has an appointed representative to the WSU. The WSU has standing committees (Conservation, Financial Affairs, Communications, Early Career Scientists) that contribute to the activities of the Union.

The World Seabird Conference

The WSU hosts a World Seabird Conference (WSC) every five years in coordination with a local host. The WSC facilitates communications and cooperative conservation efforts among scientists, especially in regions where expertise or information may be lacking.

WSC1 was held in 2010 in Victoria, Canada, in association with the Pacific Seabird Group. WSC2 was held in 2015 in Cape Town, South Africa, in association with the South African Seabird group. Each WSC attracted 600 - 800 attendees from approximately 50 countries with over 400 presentations and posters. Students comprised 25 - 35% of the attendees at each conference.

WSC3 is being planned for 2020 in Hobart, Australia, in conjunction with the Australasian Seabird Group.

The World Seabird Twitter Conference

The WSU supports an annual World Seabird Twitter Conference (WSTC) allowing timely communication of research results among scientists worldwide and real-time discussions between presenters and the Twitter audience. The WSTC typically hosts about 100 presentations from 20 - 25 countries, with presentations in 3 languages. In 2018 during the 4th WSTC, 1.2 million Twitter users saw tweets from the conference. During the 3-day conference our WSTC4 hashtag was tweeted 2,600 times by 600 contributors. The WSTC was featured in *Science* as an example of a cost-effective, low-carbon complement to traditional conferences (DOI: 10.1126/science.352.6292.1404-b). April 2019 marked the 5th WSTC.



Global Web Forum

WSU provides a free, global forum for seabird scientists and conservationists to interact through our web page at www.seabirds.net. Research blogs and discussion forums provide opportunities for scientists from across the globe to network and share ideas. Job postings and member lists keep the WSU growing and our constituents engaged.

Seabird Information Network

WSU promotes several databases of global significance as part of the Seabird Information Network. One such data base supported directly by the WSU is the Global Seabird Colony Register, an interactive map that provides data storage, data sharing, and visualization of colony data. Using open-source database management to collate and serve seabird data, this is a valuable resource for seabird conservation initiatives aimed at assessing vulnerabilities of breeding sites to threats such as coastal development, energy generation, mineral extraction, oil pollution, invasive species, and climate change. This register provides a valuable resource for developing and transitional countries with limited resources for marine conservation.

<http://www.seabirds.net/seabirdinfonet.html>



Published Symposia

Symposia presented at the first two World Seabird Conferences have been published in the peer-reviewed literature and are available to all for consultation and reference. These papers help scientists in many countries make informed decisions about seabird conservation issues thus expanding the reach of the science presented at our conferences.

Examples include special themes in Marine Ecology Progress Series on Seabirds and Climate Change (2012) and on Individual Variability in Foraging and Migration (2017). The journal Biological Conservation also published a suite of papers from WSC1 on The Role of Seabirds in Identifying Marine Protected Areas (2012).

<https://www.int-res.com/abstracts/meps/v454/>

https://www.int-res.com/abstracts/meps/v578

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/biological-conservation/vol/156/suppl/C>

Marine Plastics Working Group

<http://seabirds.net/SCSPP.html>

WSU supports a Specialist Committee on Seabirds and Plastic Pollution through which international seabird researchers can collaborate on issues, scientific papers and products relating to plastic ingestion by seabirds. The working group represents experts on the issue from every corner of the globe. Two of their recent products are available online through the National Center for Biotechnology Information (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>), under the titles:

- [Linking plastic ingestion research with marine wildlife conservation](#)
- [Quantifying ingested debris in marine megafauna: a review and recommendations for standardization](#)

Early Career Scientists

One of the very active committees within the WSU is the Early Career Scientists Committee (ECSC). The ECSC supports a variety of efforts that are designed to provide opportunities for younger scientists for professional development and growth. Among other activities, the ECSC sponsors 'Meet the Masters' which provides opportunities for younger scientists to meet with seasoned professionals via the web to discuss career strategies, research opportunities, and current issues in our field.

OFFICERS & CONTACTS

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Phillip Island Nature Parks, Little Penguins