



# **CIRCUMPOLAR SEABIRD GROUP**

## **CBIRD Status Report**

### **CAFF Board Meeting, Helsinki**

**February 3, 2006**



## *I. Executive Summary*

The concept of a Circumpolar Seabird Group (CBird) was approved by CAFF in 1993 in recognition that Arctic countries have many seabird species in common and often share the same populations and conservation issues, and therefore share a joint and equal responsibility for their conservation. This was CBird's 11<sup>th</sup> meeting and in the past 11 years CBird has been instrumental in addressing and raising the visibility of priority circumpolar Arctic seabird conservation issues. It has published two Conservation Action Plans (Murres and Eiders), six CAFF Technical Reports, two editions of the Circumpolar Seabird Bulletin, two posters, ten Progress Reports, and participated in numerous meetings and workshops. CBird has been successful in meeting its objectives because the members are united and focused on their desire to conserve Arctic seabirds. CBird meets once a year to ensure progress is made on their action items and projects.

CBird conducted its 11th meeting in Aberdeen, Scotland 2 – 5 March 2005. The meeting was attended by about 25 seabird specialists and managers representing the nine Arctic countries including the Faroe Islands, and an official observer from Great Britain along with several interested local attendees. The CAFF Chair also attended. CBird primarily focused its attention on the following issues: Circumpolar Murre and Eider Conservation Strategies, Birds of Arctic Conservation Concern, Harvest of Seabirds in the Arctic, Circumpolar Seabird Monitoring Network, and the Arctic Seabird Status and Trends Report, a Circumpolar Black-legged Kittiwake Status and Trends Report, an International Ivory Gull Conservation Strategy. The Nordic countries have recently completed a database of seabird colonies, there is also an existing North Pacific Seabird Colony Database, the existence of these two major databases prompted the group to begin discussion on the idea of creating a Circumpolar Seabird Colony Database, which would be web-based and make data readily available to all users. The next year promises to be very busy, CBird has 12 products that are due by the CAFF meeting in June 2006. These include: (1) complete a CAFF Technical Report summarizing the results of each country's Birds of Arctic Conservation Concern status report and prioritized recommendations, (2) update the Technical Report on seabird harvest in 2006, (3) produce a CAFF Technical Report on the status and progress of the Eider Conservation Strategy, (4) publish a report on the Thick-billed Murre Population Model for the Atlantic Region, (5) complete a peer-reviewed publication "Seabird and Climate Change: a Circumpolar Seesaw", (6) complete a Circumpolar Seabird Monitoring Framework and (7) a Circumpolar Murre Monitoring Plan, (8) complete a murre poster for the Atlantic region, (9) publish the third Circumpolar Seabird Bulletin, (10) write an Arctic Seabird Status and Trends Report, (11) complete a draft International Ivory Gull Conservation Strategy, and (12) complete a CAFF Technical Report on Seabird Gillnet Bycatch. Work is progressing nicely on most of these, although, a few have fallen behind and hope to catch up. For more details please see the Meeting Report that follows and the CAFF website [www.caff.is/](http://www.caff.is/) for the complete CBird XI Meeting Report with all appendices attached.

***I. CAFF/Circumpolar Seabird Group Work Plan, 2004-2006,  
Status Report***

Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna  
Work Plan 2004 - 2006

**Conserving Arctic Species**

**FAUNA**

- 1.1 Complete a review on “Birds of Arctic Conservation Concern” in 2005.  
*Lead: US and Wetlands International*

**A presentation was made at CBird XI in March 2005. The design of several summary tables were reviewed and revised. The drafting of the country reports is progressing and will be completed in 2006.**

- 1.2 Complete a review of impacts of bycatch and harvests on seabirds by 2006.  
*Lead: Greenland and US*

**Each country reported on seabird gillnet bycatch issues at CBird XI. We discussed gillnet bycatch issues and will write a CAFF Technical Report on the status of gillnet bycatch that will be finished by CBird XII.**

**Harvest issues for each country were discussed and the format for the technical report was decided upon. A general timeline for completing a CAFF Technical Report by CBird XII was completed.**

- 1.3 Complete a review of progress on the CAFF Circumpolar Eider Conservation Strategy by 2006. *Lead: Canada*

**Countries continued to implement the “Circumpolar Eider Conservation Strategy and Action Plan”. We completed a draft “Common Eider Colony Poster” of the circumpolar region for all four eider species. We also reviewed the status and progress of the Eider Conservation Strategy and will produce a Technical Report on the status and progress of the Eider Conservation Strategy by 2006.**

- 1.4 Complete a Circumpolar Ivory Gull Conservation Strategy by 2006.  
*Lead: Canada*

CAFF, Circumpolar Seabird Group, CBird XI, Aberdeen, Scotland

**A draft on the Ivory Gull Conservation Strategy was nearly completed in 2004 and a final will be completed by CBird XII.**

## **Assessing and Monitoring Arctic Biodiversity**

3.1 Complete the framework for a circumpolar seabird monitoring network in 2005. *Lead: Iceland and US*

**The seabird monitoring network long-term plan is to develop a Circumpolar Seabird Monitoring Plan. Interim objectives were to develop a Circumpolar Seabird Monitoring Network (CSMN) Framework. We have completed a draft CSMN Framework by CBird XI and will complete the final by CBird XII.**

3.2 Complete a review of the status and trends of Arctic seabirds in 2006. *Lead: Iceland*

**Work has begun on the review of the status and trends of Arctic seabirds and the report will be completed in early 2006.**

## **Appendix II: Additional CAFF Projects Under Development or Consideration**

1. Complete the third edition of the Circumpolar Seabird Bulletin in 2005. *Lead: US*

**Ideas for the seabird bulletin were discussed at CBird XI, a third bulletin will be published in early 2006.**

2. Evaluate the need for a CAFF Technical Report “Circumpolar Status and Trends of Arctic Seaducks”. *Lead: US*

**The need for a report on the Circumpolar Status and Trends of Arctic Seaducks was discussed and based on what is known and has already been written by other groups, including a recent North American Status and Trends Report, it was decided that CBird should not pursue this project at this time.**

3. Evaluate the need for a CAFF Technical Report “Circumpolar Status and Trends of Arctic Kittiwakes”. *Lead: Norway*

**An inventory of all data on Black-legged kittiwakes in the Arctic was completed and a summary of general trends showed that kittiwakes are declining throughout the Arctic. CBird decided to continue examining the data more carefully and discuss ideas for a publication on the status and trends of kittiwakes.**

4. Complete a CAFF Technical Report “Circumpolar Murre Monitoring Plan” in 2005.  
*Lead: US*

**The plan was discussed at CBird XI and the plan will be completed in 2005.**

5. Complete eight action items in the CAFF Murre Conservation Strategy by 2006.  
*Lead: US, Canada, Norway*

**Countries continued to implement applicable action items in the CAFF report “International Murre Conservation Strategy and Action Plan” and related national implementation plans, and report progress at the CBird XII meeting. A draft**

**“Thick-billed Murre Population Model for the Atlantic Region” was completed and sent for review; comments were received and will be incorporated. The paper on murres and climate change was completed and submitted to the journal Nature, where it was rejected. It will be submitted to Ecology. Canada wrote a national proposal for a Coordinated North Atlantic Thick-billed Murre Banding Program. Norway proposed using the existing software that is used for the Seabird colony database of the Barents Sea region, ARC IMS, for putting the Circumpolar Murre Colony Maps on the web. Vidar Bakken has completed a paper and it was accepted to be published, two other papers are still being written. There are no plans for doing the banding recovery atlas as discussed at the last meeting, it would require more funding to complete this task.**

## ***II. Additional Projects that CBird would like to add to the 2004-2006 Work Plan and the status of those projects***

### **1. Arctic Council Oil and Gas Assessment**

Arctic Council has taken the initiative of an Arctic oil and gas assessment. It is quite a multidisciplinary approach including industry perspectives and socioeconomic besides the ecological assessment. The assessment is organized by AMAP. The CBird group decided to contribute to Chapter 7: Environmental status and impacts on populations, habitats and ecosystems in the Arctic, (lead author: Hein Rune Skjoldal from Norway). This chapter is organized around Large Marine Ecosystems. The CBird group will contribute by providing a description of seabird population sizes, status, trends, conservation concerns, threats and data gaps.

**Lead: Greenland-Mosbech**

**Schedule:**

**Write needed sections**

**April 10, 2005**

**Review**

**June 15, 2005**

**Status: Sections were written and reviewed**

## **2. Collaboration of CBird and Ecosystem Studies of Sub-Arctic Seas (ESSAS)**

The CBird Chair, David Irons, attended a GLOBEC meeting in Victoria, BC, in May 2005 where there was a discussion of a new circumpolar GLOBEC Regional Program called Ecosystem Studies of Sub-Arctic Seas (ESSAS). The primary objective of ESSAS is to assess the impact of climate variability on marine ecosystems and their productivity at a circumpolar scale. As part of IPY, the leaders of ESSAS are interested in collaborating with others that are working on upper trophic level species to help understand how changes in the climate may affect fish, birds, and mammals. Through discussions with the leaders of ESSAS it became apparent the Circumpolar Seabird Group (CBird) and ESSAS are in the position to help each other through collaboration in IPY activities. Both are circumpolar in scale, ESSAS is looking at ocean productivity and how it will be affected by changes in climate, in many of the areas where CBird is involved. CBird has data on seabird population trends around the world, but no complimentary data on ocean productivity. Collaboration will allow CBird to compare seabird trend data and ocean productivity data, hopefully the results will provide information on how changes in ocean productivity and seabird populations are linked at a circumpolar scale.

In addition there is a chance to participate in IPY as an ESSAS partner. ESSAS has submitted an "Expression of Intent" to IPY. CBird may be able to participate in collaboration with ESSAS. I have attached an "Expression of Intent" that I put together and will submit to the leaders of ESSAS. Becoming part of IPY may help some of the CBird representatives to obtain new IPY funds for CBird work in their respective country.

This collaboration with ESSAS has been added to the CBird 2004-2006 Work Plan. The objective would be to use the data that CBird has brought together on population trends and compare to the data on changes in ocean productivity that ESSAS will be collecting.

### **3. Potential joint CAFF/African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement project on migratory Arctic birds**

Sergey Dereliev, who works with UNEP/AEWA, came to the CBird meeting to discuss the possibility of a joint project between CAFF and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement. Sergey made a presentation and ideas were discussed. One possible project would be to examine the impact of climate change on harvest of waterbirds in the Arctic and implications i.e., cultural, economic, and spiritual importance of waterbird subsistence use by indigenous peoples throughout the circumpolar north.

### **4. CBird 2020, the next 15 years...**

We discussed where CBird should be going in the next several years and decided: CBird should continue to be responsive to the Arctic Council and CAFF. The value of CBird is bringing circumpolar data together to view issues at the circumpolar scale, also the group can respond quickly to international issues because we have existing connections and working relationships among the Arctic countries. The two main issues for the near term are climate change and biodiversity monitoring, but CBird should also integrate into ecosystem studies where appropriate.