AMBC General Sessions Notes

2023 Notes & Actions (yellow highlight)

October 9, 2023, 8:15a - 5:10p

Meeting Attendees: See attendees spreadsheet available on website

Thanks to Helen Manning, Holly Goyert, and Sarah Wong for taking notes, and monitoring the chat for remote participants

**AMBC Overview, Website, and Updates (Caleb)**

- AMBC founded in 2005

* Nearly annual meetings since 2012
* Caleb has been coordinator since 2016

- Geographic focus: Atlantic Canada to N. Caribbean + Gulf of Mexico where species overlap

- MAIN PURPOSES:

* Facilitate the Coordination of Science, Management and Conservation Activities
* Prioritize Species In-Need & Associated Threats
* Help Resource Mgrs Address Needs → i.d. & Fill Information and Data Gaps
* Identify and Develop Science-driven Conservation Actions
* Share Results of Science and Management Activities w/ Multiple Stakeholders

- AMBC Membership:

* 275 listserve members (though not all active)
	+ ~50-75 regularly “active”
* >100 organizations
* Canada, US, Caribbean

Q: What about NOAA participation? Few representatives at meeting this year.

A: Regional differences in NOAA NMFS participation (NE more staff engaged vs. SE)

* though notable collaboration in GOMx (e.g., use of radar on NOAA ships for seabird monitoring)

- Working Groups:

* AMBC actions are guided and implemented through topic-based working groups
* Max 6 working groups, currently 4 active

-Formal Steering Committee established 2019

* As of 2023, we have 2 Canadian members on steering committee!

-Where we’ve made recent progress as a group:

* Offshore wind development
* Initiating projects and providing reccs to BOEM on offshore marine bird interactions
* E.g.s,
	+ Letter on BOEM avian survey guidelines led to development of Guidance document on pre- and post-construction monitoring to detect changes in distribution (<https://www.nyetwg.com/avian-displacement-guidance>). Expected release – Dec/Jan
	+ recommendations letter on compensatory mitigation sent late Aug
* Species management and threats assessment
* Thinking about better ways to cooperatively monitor colonies at flyway scale
* Marine debris project
* Marine bird health
* Several new actions being facilitated:
	+ Understanding disease
	+ Using citizen science to understand mortality rates better

-Atlantic Marine Bird Cooperative website: atlanticmarinebirds.org - Caleb gave demo

* Place for sharing info and collaborating
	+ **About tab** gives general info and group members/partners
	+ **Working group tab** gives info on working groups
	+ **Resources tab**: catch all for useful information/resources
* Caleb manages website content & updates, Deb Reynolds (USFWS) provides technical management of website and adds content/features, with technical support from web designer

**Working Group Updates, Review of Team objectives & Breakout Meeting Goals**

Forage Fish (Linda Welch)

* Linda welcomes new members and effort to group
* Pew charitable trust has a lot of info and news
* Forage Fish Conservation Act (H.R. 2236)
* Would be huge if it gets passed
* Hopefully will be taken up again in congress
* Sand lance legislation
* Colony-based monitoring efforts
* fecal sampling
* diet monitoring
* GPS tracking
* stable isotope analysis in blood and eggshell samples
* satellite tagging
* Survey of colony managers (who is collecting what?) will present results and see how to move forward during breakout session – potential to expand fecal collection efforts to more colonies
* How much is this group interacting with fisheries management?
* Worked with SeaGrant
* Once we have more/better data we can be taken more seriously with them and approach them more

Seabird Colonies and Adjacent Waters (SCAW) (Ruth Boettcher)

* Focal species (BLSK, LETE, COTE, DCCO, LAGU)
* Goals
* Provide accurate seabird breeding estimates
* Coordinate and facilitate historical and current seabird breeding data storage, sharing and analysis
* Joined forces with forage fish working group (joint breakout session today). Objective is to gain buy-in from Atlantic coast states to collect diet and productivity data on COTE and BLSK in a coordinated and standardized fashion

Marine Spatial Planning (Holly Goyert)

* Recent accomplishment: Drafted letter defining the need for an avian compensatory mitigation plan and request support for the process.
* Written to BOEM and USFWS
* Sent in August
* Requested BOEM and USFWS to be in stakeholder workshop in 2023
	+ USFWS & BOEM responses that they are planning on stakeholder workshops as part of developing compensatory mitigation
* ACTION: **Holly/Caleb** will add most recent recommendation letter to BOEM & associated News tab story
* Symposium held by TNC at Roger Williams University in April
* Marine net gain (avoidance, minimization, restoration, offset)
* Timeline of offshore wind energy development
* 30GW by 2030 goal under Biden administration (areas being developed, some experimental)
* ~8 RODs expected in 2023
* WG planning to develop perspectives paper (perspectives on avian compensatory mitigation and voluntary conservation measures) in upcoming months
* Sara Schweitzer comment: Might be helpful to review who has jurisdiction over what and how states are engaging
	+ Several states – F&W divisions are not as engaged in offshore wind than other state agencies like energy & wildlife

Community Science & Marine Bird Health (Stephanie Avery-Gomm)

* SEANET continues at a smaller scale, but lacks resources/active leadership 🡪 less of a working group focus than previously
* Generally interested in mortality events, emerging pathogens (HPAI), plastic ingestion and entanglement, collection of carcasses for research and teaching
* iNaturalist Beached Bird Project
* how can iNaturalist be used to understand mortality events
* filters observations of dead seabirds and waterfowl reported in AMBC region
* HPAI response resources
* Google drive of resources compiled – living document – more being added
* Global seabird mortality listserv
* Can be used to share info about mass mortality events affecting seabirds

**World Seabird Union Update (Juliet Lamb)**

* Five-year strategic business plan 2023-2027
	+ Reach out to Juliet for copy
* Priorities
* More regular communication/engagement with member societies
* Facilitate coordination on important issues (e.g., plastics working group, what about other issues?, coordinate among committees DEIJ, early-career development)
* Develop a sustainable funding model
	+ Currently no membership dues so funding for strategic business plan and hiring of communications person comes from grant funding (e.g., Jennifer Wheeler applies)
* Figure out how to channel resources to under-resourced regions and species
* New communications coordinator – Carrie Kovalick
* 4th world seabird conference in 2026
* Currently accepting expressions of interest for hosting – so far only Australia (Tazmania) has submitted plan
* Twitter conference
* Plans in the works to facilitate regional meetings in underserved areas (Asia pacific)
* Reviving online events
* If you want to engage:
* www.seabirds.net
* worldseabird@gmail.com
* Pacific Seabird Group listserv
* Contact your member society representative(s) – for AMBC this is Caleb and Linda Welch

**AMBC Organization & Development**

Steering Committee

* Established in 2019
	+ • Composition/Structure/Selection process finalized in 2022 (available on website Resources Tab: https://atlanticmarinebirds.org/resources/steering-committee/)
* Composition
	+ Coordinator (1) – Caleb (standing)
	+ Working Group Leads (3 minimum to 6 maximum WGs at a time) – Stephanie, Linda, Holly, Ruth
	+ At Large (2 to 4, 2yr term) – Scott, Pat, Sarah (there is 1 empty space if someone wants to fill it)
* Responsibilities/Function (also on website):
	+ Plan/facilitate annual meetings & follow-up actions
	+ Develop/refine organization & development (processes/foundational docs, co-lead subcommittees & WGs)
	+ Support Working Groups (guidance, communications, follow-ups)
	+ Communications/Info Sharing (website, listserv, partner accomps, liase w/ partner meta orgs - World Seabird Union)

Partner Projects (and accomplishments) Summaries

* Uses: Outreach, Identifying Contacts, General Awareness
* 2022 Meeting discussion: Do we need a new way to share accomplishments and summaries?
	+ No widespread agreement, BUT clear that summaries served on website over last several years are project summaries for more internal audiences, not as useful for external outreach/accomplishments reporting
	+ Next steps:
		- Will keep compiling project summaries doc.
		- ACTION: If **any team members** are interested in putting together a subteam to examine needs/audiences for external accomplishments/news reporting let Caleb know, and send e-mail to listserv soliciting interest
			* Deb Reynolds could support
			* Link to State of the Seabirds effort (see notes below)
* ACTION: **All AMBC Members** Submit project su8mmaries by December 15th. Submit to: helen\_manning@fws.gov

Voting/Decision Making Processes:

* December 2022 – finalized three decision-making processes:

(1) Selection of At-Large Steering Committee Member

(2) World Seabird Union (WSU) decision request, including selection of a

 WSU board member or representative

(3) Changes/additions to AMBC organizational processes or steering

 committee composition

* Can view current processes on website: https://atlanticmarinebirds.org/resources/decision-making-processes/
* Pending Process not resolved: How to provide recommendations or comments for science-based management & conservation priorities on behalf of AMBC?
* Iain Stenhouse (BRI) facilitated subteam to work on suggestions for Steering Committee consideration
	+ Carolyn Mostello – MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
	+ Yvan Satgé – SC Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit / Caribbean Seabird Working Group
	+ Arielle Santos – Seatuck Environmental Association
	+ Sara Schweitzer – NC Wildlife Resources Commission
	+ Caleb Spiegel – AMBC Coordinator, USFWS
* Look at how other groups have tackled this issue -- found commonalities among:
	+ NABCI: “we aim to educate not advocate”
	+ GOMAMN
	+ Waterbirds
* AMBC goal is also ‘to educate not advocate’
* 3 Step Process Identified:

1) Knowledgeable members can draft science-based letters or informed opinions/comments on conservation and management issues relevant to marine birds in Atlantic region

2) letters vetted and approved by Steering Committee

3) Given approval, letters signed by AMBC representative on behalf of AMBC as a whole

* + All approved letters will include:
		- Description of who we are (Partners listed on website, but not individuals)
		- General disclaimer: “the views and opinions do not necessarily state or reflect views…”
	+ Concerns to address:
		- Some industry reps – Might need additional disclaimer added for industries specifically
			* Could also apply to other concerned groups: Should every organization that wants to be included in disclaimer have option to put their names in the disclaimer?
		- Need to figure out process for approving or not (does Steering Comm need 100% consensus, do we go with majority, etc?)
		- Does Steering Committee need rep from every sector to adequately represent members? How could this happen if some groups won’t volunteer to serve?
* 2 options for signatures:

A) Anyone can lead comment development submitted directly to Steering Committee for vetting/approval. Signed by AMBC Coordinator, appropriate WG coordinator, or to non-agency member (if conflict of interest/ethics concern) on behalf of the group as a whole

B) Form new official WG (“Conservation Issues Working Group”) for this task. Reccs are submitted to this working group, then to Steering Committee for final vetting/approval. Signed by new WG Coordinator on behalf of whole organization.

* Considerations:
	+ Coordinator is USFWS staff member – may mean running signatures by Ethics Officer – could delay process
	+ New WG formation entails having a dedicated WG coordinator
	+ Could we do combination of both options?
		- Informal in-person vote: Option A: 13 / Option B: 9
* ACTIONS:

(1) **ALL** provide opinion on preferred alternative to Iain ASAP

(2) **Iain** sends recommendation to Steering Committee for consideration (as described in “*Changes/additions to AMBC organizational processes or steering committee composition*” decision-making process) BEFORE NEW YEAR

State of the Seabirds outreach discussion (Scott)

* Seabirds will be added to national State of the Birds (SOTB) in 2024 (Marc Romano – USFWS Alaska leading Seabird component) BUT will be short and very broad
* 2-pager seabird outreach document Scott thinks it should be developed because SOTB not a great outreach tool
	+ Forage Fish working group has previously considered doing this for some species
	+ Audience: Congressional members, foundations, partners. Consider using during Congressional “fly-ins” – product is helpful for congress-person’s staff.
		- Need to put more thought into other audiences and how to reach them.
		- Any link to website? How can we use website creatively?
* Scott is happy to start an AMBC group to work on this – Looking for a co-chair
	+ Sea McKeon said he could help with some coordination (not co-lead)

ACTION: Scott will organize a call with members who have previously expressed interest in this idea BEFORE NEW YEAR

Other Business:

* **BBC Blue Planet III Topics Request** - asking for topic ideas for seabirds that they could feature in upcoming movie
	+ Needs to focus on animals not people/projects (no humans will be shown)
	+ A couple of meeting participants warned group about this ask:
		- BBC asks biologists and other professionals to work for them without compensation -- can be a lot of work (Caribbean seabird group was also reached out to and found this out the hard way).

ACTION: send Ideas directly to Joanna Haley ASAP

* **2024 AMBC Meeting Venue** - looking for ideas for meetings to combine with
	+ No Waterbirds meeting until early 2025 in Costa Rica – not a good fit
	+ Could hold stand-alone, but logistically challenging b/c not allocated budget & USFWS has restrictions on hosting
	+ A couple of suggestions from group members:
		- Gulf of Maine Seabird Working Group (Maine - Sep 2024)
		- American Oystercatcher WG (TBD/flexible - Nov 2024)
		- AFC (Delaware - early fall 2024)

ACTION: send Ideas to Caleb by late January 2024

* **AMBC Priority Species List Revision**
	+ Last list developed 2014 to support State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) which had previously not much considered marine birds
		- Developed via expert opinion
		- Led by subteam
	+ Informal Atlantic Flyway Council Nongame Tech Section request for group to develop new list for 2024 SWAP revisions
	+ Suggestion: Review & consider GOMAMN species list criteria (rules) <https://gomamn.org/priority-birds>
	+ Interest expressed by group members: Iain, Holly, Yvan, Sea, Jeff Gleason, Sarah Wong (suggested adding other CWS staff - Jeff Rail, Sabina Wilhelm)

ACTION: Caleb will organize a call with this group by late January 2024

**Working Group Breakouts & Brief Working Group Session Report Outs**

- SEE individual working group breakout session notes available on website