



**Initiative
Trilatérale
des Îles**

**Trilateral
Island
Initiative**

**Iniciativa
Trilateral
de las Islas**

2016 Summary Report

**Prepared for the Trilateral Committee of Wildlife and Ecosystem
Conservation and Management**

XXII Annual Meeting, Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico

May 15-19, 2017

by the Trilateral Island Working Group

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Background

The Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management was established in 1995 to effectively address priorities of continental significance and enhance the conservation efforts of North America marine and terrestrial bioregions of three countries. Under the umbrella of the Trilateral Committee, the first collaboration on seabird conservation was initiated in 2008. A Letter of Intent (LOI) was signed between Canada, United States, and Mexico in 2014. The purpose of the LOI is to promote collaboration on the conservation and restoration of island ecosystems and their adjacent coastal and marine environments. This includes islands located in the Pacific, Atlantic, and Arctic Oceans, Gulf of California, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea.

The Trilateral Island Initiative has the following goals: 1) Strengthen on-the-ground conservation and restoration of island biodiversity and their surrounding marine waters, 2) Improve coordination on island-related natural resource issues of mutual interest, 3) Strengthen institutional capacities within the three countries, and 4) Improve efficiencies and increase success of island-related conservation projects. The Trilateral Island Initiative is focusing efforts on invasive species, biosecurity, restoration, local communities, and climate change. In 2016, federal, state, non-governmental, and academic partners from Canada, United States, and Mexico collaborated on multiple island-related activities, some of which are highlighted below.

A. Collaborative Island Restoration Projects

Baja California Pacific Islands Seabird Restoration Project, Mexico. A bilateral partnership aimed at restoring seabirds on seven islands off the coast of Baja California. Partners include Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas (GECI), Montrose Settlements and S.S. Jacob Luckenbach Trustee Councils, National Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Friends of the Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and Alianza WWF-Fundación Carlos Slim. A partner planning meeting occurred on January 23-25, 2016 in Ensenada, Mexico. During the fourth year of project implementation in 2016, seabird restoration activities included social attraction, monitoring, outreach, education and training, biosecurity, and disturbance reduction. Key outcomes to date include the recolonization of 11 extirpated colonies, the establishment of 5 new breeding colonies, and an increase in the reproductive success of target species.



Photo credit: GECI, Jen Boyce (NOAA)



Guadalupe Island Restoration, Mexico. Feral cats on Guadalupe Island pose a serious threat to nesting seabirds, such as the Laysan Albatross and Guadalupe Murrelet. Collaborative efforts are underway to eradicate the feral cats with partners from GECI, NFWF, and Alianza WWF-Fundación Carlos Slim. In 2015, GECI completed a 735-meter long cat-proof fence along the southern tip of Guadalupe Island in order to protect the albatross and murrelet colony. In 2016, GECI continued with feral cat control and

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completed a new native plant nursery on-island where six native species are being grown. GECI also worked on soil restoration and fire prevention, all in support of the integral forest restoration project.



Photo credit: GECI, Annie Little (USFWS)



Gwaii Haanas, British Columbia, Canada. Parks Canada, the Haida Nation and international partners have been restoring seabird habitat on several remote islands in Gwaii Haanas. From 2011-2015, trilateral collaboration occurred during implementation of rat eradication projects across four islands. Partners included Parks Canada, the Haida Nation, Island Conservation, Coastal Conservation, Luckenbach Trustee Council, GECI, and NFWF. Parks Canada continued to monitor the response of seabirds to the absence of rats on these globally important islands. Parks Canada also focused on the Restoring Balance project which restores ecologically and culturally important plants to forest ecosystems that have been negatively impacted by invasive and introduced Sitka black-tailed deer.



Photo credit: Ian Jones, Parks Canada



Socorro Island Restoration Project, Mexico. This bilateral project focuses on the eradication of the feral cat in order to protect the critically endangered Townsend's Shearwater (TOSH) in the Revillagigedo Archipelago. In 2011, feral sheep were eradicated from the island. As a result there has been an increase in vegetation and native and endemic taxa of land birds. In 2016, collaborative efforts continued to eradicate the feral cats with partners from GECI, American Bird Conservancy, NFWF, and Alianza WWF-Fundación Carlos Slim. It is anticipated that the eradication project will be completed in 2017. GECI is also systematically monitoring for the status and recovery of the TOSH, both on Socorro and Clarión islands.



Photo credit: GECI, American Bird Conservancy



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B. Conferences and Workshops

CEC Marine Protected Area Workshops

19-21 January and 8-9 December 2016, San Francisco and Ventura, California:

As part of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation's project, *Marine Protected Areas: Strengthening Management Effectiveness and Supporting Coastal Community Resilience*, these workshops brought together marine protected area managers, staff and partners along North America's Pacific Coast to apply a rapid vulnerability assessment tool to selected habitats.



Pacific Seabird Group Conference

22-25 February 2016, Hawaii: Multiple presentations were given by GECI and partners on the bilateral Baja California Pacific Islands Seabird Restoration Project. Annie Little of USFWS gave a presentation entitled "The Trilateral Island Initiative: International Collaborative Efforts for the Conservation and Restoration of Seabirds in North America".

Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management Meeting

16-20 April 2016, Ottawa, Canada: The Trilateral Island Working Group presented to the Migratory Birds, Species of Common Concern, and Executive Tables. In addition, the Trilateral Island Working Group participated in 100-year ceremony of the "Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds". This report is based on the first-ever conservation vulnerability assessment for all 1,154 native bird species that occur in Canada, the continental United States, and Mexico. A total of 1,154 species were analyzed, and 432 qualified for species of highest conservation concern based on high vulnerability. Ocean waters surrounding North America contain more than 150 seabird species and nearly 70% have decline populations since the 1950s. In the report, oceanic birds are identified as the group of highest conservation concern see: <http://www.stateofthebirds.org/2016/habitats/oceans/>.

IUCN World Conservation Congress

4-10 September 2016, Honolulu, Hawaii: The Trilateral Island Working Group participated in a workshop entitled: *Island Restoration and Biosecurity for a Resilient Planet*. Participating partners included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), GECI, and Island Conservation (IC). The goal of the workshop was to catalyze regional-scale actions for invasive alien species prevention, eradication and control through increased awareness, exchange of ideas, and identification of regional-scale pathways for the development and implementation of specific biosecurity proposals.



Photo credit: Gregg Howald (IC)



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Honolulu Challenge on Invasive Alien Species

During the IUCN World Conservation Congress, there was call from the Union and the host community in Hawaii, including experts, governmental and intergovernmental representatives, NGOs, and protected area managers for greater action on addressing invasive alien species in order to protect biodiversity and human wellbeing from their impacts. The outcome was the creation of the Honolulu Challenge on Invasive Alien Species that aims to multiply efforts in biosecurity and invasive species eradications and control. The Trilateral Island Initiative became a supporter of the Honolulu Challenge and will work to further the mission of the challenge.

Island Biosecurity Session, 9th California Islands Symposium

3-7 October 2016, Ventura, California: Practitioners from Canada, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand, and the United States presented in a session on biosecurity advances, challenges, and opportunities. Following the session, speakers and participants discussed biosecurity priorities and opportunities for future collaboration. A manuscript was subsequently developed entitled *Connecting Island Communities on a Global Scale: Case Studies in Island Biosecurity*.



Photo credit: Annie Little (USFWS)



UN Biodiversity Conference Convention of the Parties

2-17 December 2016, Cancun, Mexico: The Trilateral Island Working Group participated in the Convention on Biological Diversity- CBD Parties 13 conference. Federico Méndez of GECI presented about civil society and youth engagement in island conservation and Mexico's GEF Project on invasive species. The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity 2016 was presented to Dr. Alfonso Aguirre-Muñoz of GECI by the AEON Environmental Foundation from Japan and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Under his leadership, 58 populations of invasive mammals were removed from 37 islands throughout Mexico, representing the restoration of more than 50,000 hectares. These achievements are the result of the strong partnerships between local, national, and international partners, and a testament to the positive impact of island conservation efforts on global biodiversity.



Photo credit: Joana Bielschowsky (GECI), Gregg Howald (IC)



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C. Exchanges

Islands of the Californias Botanical Workshop

22-29 April 2016, Guadalupe Island, Mexico: Botanists and ecologists from the U.S. and Mexico held their annual workshop to discuss plant conservation on the California Islands archipelago. The group also assisted in seabird surveys and deploying Laysan Albatross decoys in an effort to grow the nesting colony on Guadalupe Island.



Photo credit: Annie Little (USFWS), GECI

Summer 2016: Egg Rock, Maine. Two biologists from GECI participated in the National Audubon Society's Seabird Management Internship program at Maine Coastal Island Sanctuaries. The 10-week field practicum focused on applied seabird management techniques.

8-10 October 2016: Santa Cruz Island, Channel Islands National Park. A team of U.S. and Mexico biologists visited Santa Cruz Island in order to enhance collaboration among the California Islands archipelago. Participants included The Nature Conservancy, National Park Service, USFWS, GECI, and Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas. During the visit, the group discussed terrestrial and marine management within the California Islands.



Photo credit: Jennie Duberstein (USFWS), Annie Little (USFWS)

D. Protected Area Designations

UNESCO Natural World Heritage site, Revillagigedo Islands, Mexico

In July 2016, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee named the Revillagigedo Islands a Natural World Heritage site. GECI, in close collaboration with CONANP, prepared the nomination file. These four islands support biodiverse flora and fauna, including multiple endemic bird species. The archipelago has an incredibly rich surrounding marine environment, including sharks, manta rays, tuna, and humpback whale populations.

Reserva de la Biosfera "Islas del Pacífico de la Península de Baja California", Mexico

Setting a benchmark for island conservation in Mexico, with relevant benefits to global biodiversity, Mexico's President established the 1,161,447.79 ha "Baja California Pacific Islands Biosphere Reserve"

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during the United Nations Biodiversity Conference held in Cancún, Quintana Roo, Mexico in December 2016. This Decree comes 13 years after GECI, together with artisanal fishing cooperatives—particularly the Cedros Island-based Pescadores Nacionales de Abulón—represented by their regional federation FEDECOOP, and backed by the Senate and the Congress of the Republic, requested Mexico’s federal government to protect these islands and their surrounding waters. This new Biosphere Reserve consists of 21 islands and 97 islets located within the California Current. It comprises 68,796.56 ha of land that correspond to the islands’ surface, and 1,092,651.23 ha of ocean waters surrounding the islands. Several of these islands are part of the “Baja California Pacific Islands Seabird Restoration Project” described at the beginning of this document.

Sister Parks Designation, United States and Mexico

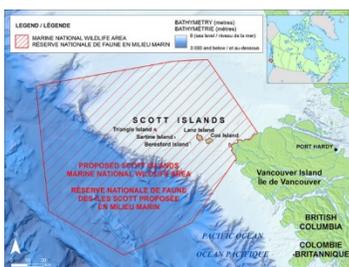
At the IUCN meeting in September 2016, the Sister Parks relationship between Parque Nacional Bahía de Loreto and the Channel Islands National Park was formalized. The main objective of this alliance is the exchange of experiences for effective management of the Protected Natural Areas, including topics such as monitoring, management, social involvement, and tourism. The Sister Parks and Sister Reserve relationships have been facilitated by the nonprofit Eco-Alianza de Loreto, which advocates for the protection and preservation of Bahia de Loreto ecosystems.



Photo credit: Eco-Alianza

Scott Islands National Marine Wildlife Area, Canada

31 December 2016: The Government of Canada announced proposed Regulations and Notice of Intent to designate the Scott Islands as Canada’s first ever marine National Wildlife Area. The Scott Islands and surrounding waters together make up one of the most productive and biologically diverse marine ecosystems on the Canadian Pacific Coast, particularly for seabirds. Over 1.5 million seabirds breed on the Scott islands (the highest concentration of breeding seabirds in the Canadian Pacific) including 50% of the world’s Cassin's Auklets and 7% of the global population of Rhinoceros Auklets. Additionally, 5-10 million migratory seabirds use the surrounding waters for foraging. Many of these seabirds use part or all of the California Current system connecting Canada, the U.S. and Mexico offshore in the Pacific Ocean.



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Photo credit: Environment Canada, Catherine Jardine, Chris Gill (Coastal Conservation), Greg Jones (ECCC)

E. Partnership Success Story:

In October of 2016, the USFWS announced that two Pacific seabird species, the Scripps's murrelet and Guadalupe murrelet, no longer warrant listing under the Endangered Species Act, due to the efforts of diverse stakeholders in addressing primary threats to the species. Proactive conservation measures including habitat restoration and invasive species removal have been conducted by land managers and partners such as the National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, Island Conservation, Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas, and Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas. The conservation success story for these species demonstrates the power of partnerships to protect island ecosystems and shared species. The Technical Committee for these species also recently selected David Mazurkiewicz (Channel Islands National Park) and Yuliana Bedolla (GECI) as bilateral co-coordinators.



Photo credit: Andrew Yamagiwa (California Institute of Environmental Studies), David Pereksta (BOEM)

F. Proposals/Agreements/Plans

Plan of Action: The Letter of Intent identifies the development of a Plan of Action aimed at strengthening cross coordination, setting priorities, and identifying collaborative projects. In 2016, the Trilateral Island Working Group worked on the Plan of Action for the initiative, including identifying goals, focal areas, and priority actions.

Memorandum of Understanding: An MOU between Island Conservation (IC) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was signed in 2015 at the Trilateral Meeting. The MOU reflects the commitment of the U.S. to further the Letter of Intent. The MOU will strengthen and expand the USFWS/IC partnership and allows for other partners to join effort. The MOU promotes a coordinated approach to island conservation through project implementation, information exchange, education and training, inventorying and monitoring.

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Coordination Calls

Trilateral Working Group coordination conference calls were held on February 4, March 8, and May 5-6, 2016. Participants in the Trilateral Working Group calls include: Patrick Nantel (Parks Canada), Robyn Irvine (Parks Canada), Annie Little (USFWS), Humberto Berlanga (Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad), Gregg Howald (Island Conservation), Alfonso Aguirre Muñoz (GECI), Federico Méndez Sánchez (GECI), Eduardo E. Iñigo-Elias (Cornell Lab of Ornithology), Jonathan Putnam (National Park Service), and Pete Davidson (Bird Studies Canada).

Partners

