

BirdsCaribbean Cuba Conference Connects Scientists and Promotes Conservation ^[1]

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July 26, 2017—Topes de Collantes, Cuba—Over 200 scientists, teachers and conservationists came together in Cuba this month at BirdsCaribbean's 21st International Conference. Held every two years, it is the only time when this far-flung community has a chance to work face-to-face to improve how birds are studied and protected. The event included nearly 150 presentations and workshops over five days.

"This year's theme was *Celebrating Caribbean Diversity*," explained BirdsCaribbean Director Lisa Sorenson. "We love the variety of birds here, but the diversity of our members is even more

important. We brought people here from dozens of islands. We have different cultures and languages, but we all face similar challenges. The chance to share ideas improves our work all over the region.”

BirdsCaribbean is the region's largest conservation group. Programs like the Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival, which highlights birds found only in the region, reach over 100,000 people each year. At the conference, festival coordinators on different islands share ideas and activities. Others are inspired to launch festivals on their islands for the first time.

Researchers sharing their work give ideas that can help save birds. Members learn how birds recover after hurricanes or prosper when farmers plant shade trees over their coffee. Then they can bring bird-saving tools back to their own islands. This year, one highlight was the large number of Cuban scientists.

“For almost 30 years, BirdsCaribbean has helped share the work of Cuban scientists with the rest of the world,” said BirdsCaribbean President Andrew Dobson. “Helping this collaboration has been a very rewarding part of our mission. It was also a joy to spend time with so many Cuban friends in one of the Caribbean’s most beautiful nature reserves.”

After five days of sharing stories and bird-sightings, members flew home to their islands. Each one brought back new skills and ideas. Tools developed on one island will soon be helping birds on others. Though many may do their work alone, they have friends and allies across the sea. In two years, the next conference will unite them again.

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About BirdsCaribbean

BirdsCaribbean is a vibrant international network of members and partners committed to conserving Caribbean birds and their habitats. We raise awareness, promote sound science, and empower local partners to build a region where people appreciate, conserve and benefit from thriving bird populations and ecosystems. We are a non-profit (501 (c) 3) membership organization. More than 100,000 people participate in our programmes each year, making BirdsCaribbean the most broad-based conservation organization in the region. You can learn more about us, our work, and how to join at: <http://www.birdscaribbean.org> [2].

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