Circumpolar Seabird Expert Group (CBird) Implementation Update
Japan, 2020

The Circumpolar Seabird Expert Group (CBird) promotes, facilitates, and coordinates conservation, management and research activities among circumpolar countries and improves communication between seabird scientists and managers inside and outside the Arctic.

Links with National Priorities

Based on its Arctic Policy, Japan aims to make full use of its strength in science and technology and promote Arctic Research to contribute to policy decision making and problem solving. Scientific input and partnership via strengthened research and projects such as the Arctic Challenge for Sustainability Project (ArCS) with CBird activities under CAFF is an excellent opportunity for us to contribute as an observer country to the Arctic Council.

Current CBird Priorities

- Implementation of the species-specific conservation strategies and action plans, as well as the Circumpolar Seabird Monitoring Plan
- Advancing, developing and reporting on CBird work e.g. to CAFF and within respective countries (e.g. participation in annual meetings, updating workplan, providing country reports, representing CBird in meetings)
- Designing and testing CBird colony database
- Contributing to CBMP Marine (e.g., implementing and developing SAMBR)
- Contributing to Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (AMBI) (e.g., implementing the Circumpolar Flyway Workplan, participating in the Plastics Project)
- International Ivory Gull Survey
- Assessment of seabird bycatch in Lumpsucker fisheries
- Murre harvest study and scientific recommendations to international and national harvest schemes
- Black-legged Kittiwake conservation strategy

www.caff.is/cbird
Study on St. Lawrence Island seabirds in the summer of 2019

A joint Japanese and US research team conducted colony-based seabird studies on St. Lawrence Island, in the northern Bering Sea. Researchers stayed in the native village of Savoonga and worked on five seabird species (black-legged kittiwakes, thick-billed and common murres, crested and least auklets) in late June - August, with the help from local Yup'ik Eskimo community. They examined the bird’s behaviour and physiological stress during the breeding season and migration by attaching tracking devices and collecting physiological samples. Seabird breeding successes were low, especially for two species of auklets that experienced colony-wide breeding failures.

Responses of seabirds to the recent sea-ice loss in the northern Bering Sea

Northern Bering Sea experienced record-low winter sea-ice extent in 2018 and continued to experience warm summer conditions in 2019. By analyzing physiological samples collected during 2016-2019, Japanese and US research teams found that nutritional stress levels of five seabird species breeding on St. Lawrence Island were elevated in years of low winter sea-ice concentrations around the Island. These and some other results on seabirds will appear in the forthcoming Deep Sea Research II special volume on ecosystem changes in the northern Bering Sea.

Tracking of murres reveal threats both inside and outside the Pacific Arctic

Identifying key seasonal habitat is essential to evaluate the impact of environmental change and enhance conservation effort on Arctic seabirds. Such information has been limited on seabirds breeding in the Pacific Arctic region, compared to the North Atlantic-Arctic. Japanese and US research teams tracked the year-round movements of thick-billed and common murres from St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, using geolocators. The two murre species migrated seasonally to different regions, both inside and outside the Pacific Arctic, where they faced various conservation threats, such as perturbations of oceanographic conditions and overlap with human activities. Post-breeding thick-billed murres showed higher nutritional stress levels (based on feather corticosterone assay) in years of lower fall sea-ice extent, suggesting that sea-ice loss might negatively affect murres in the Pacific Arctic. This study contributes to the circumpolar flyway workplan of CBird and AMBI.


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