

# “CBC at Sea” Calls on Boaters to Log Seabird Sightings

## Managing the Waterway Author Diana Doyle Organizes First CBC at Sea

**BEAUFORT, NC** (June 7, 2011) — Every December, thousands of people lift their binoculars and submit their bird sightings in the longest-running citizen-science project in the world: the Christmas Bird Count or “CBC.”

But 70% of the world is ocean, and pelagic birds—those that spend their lives at sea—are sparsely documented. Ocean birding has been described as “the last frontier of bird knowledge.” For example, when the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill occurred, so little was known about seabirds on the Gulf of Mexico that early spill data had to function as baseline information.

Yet there is a huge untapped resource of watchkeepers already at sea. Long-distance boaters number in the thousands, belonging to organizations such as Seven Seas Cruising Association, Ocean Cruising Club, and Cruising Club of America.

It’s time to focus all those eyes, binoculars, and digital cameras beyond the boundaries of land in an annual “CBC at Sea.”

**CBC at Sea:** A call to those who spend time at sea to establish a worldwide annual bird count and contribute their ocean sightings to a citizen-science database for the study and conservation of pelagic species.

This first event, scheduled for December 2011, is being organized by a group of long-distance mariners from around the world who are also avid birdwatchers.

“If you’re on the water and interested in nature, then you can help, “ says organizer Diana Doyle. “The cruising community is a huge untapped resource for citizen science. We’re tuned into the environment, interested in the marine world, and explore less-traveled areas. And there are literally thousands of us out there.”

If you’ve spent time at sea, you know what Doyle is talking about. Have you experienced a seabird following your stern wake? Discovered a rookery along a rocky cliff? Hosted tired migrants on your deck?

“Research and conservation databases need reports from those of us who spend time on the water,” says Doyle. The central clearinghouse for the data will be Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s eBird website, which has easy online global lat/long reporting and is available in English, French and Spanish ([www.ebird.com](http://www.ebird.com)).

You don’t need to be a seabird expert to participate. If you’re on the water, even only a few miles from shore, your observations are valuable. Doyle reminds us, “We need to start somewhere and, just like land birding, pelagic birding awareness and knowledge will develop over time.”

###END###



**Caption** (Top Left): Katharine and David Lowrie logging seabird sightings on *s/v Lista Light* in the Eastern Caribbean. Photo by Jake Burnyeat.

**Caption** (Top Right): Diana Doyle scans the horizon for birds in the Sea of Cortez. Photo by Mark Doyle.

**Caption** (Bottom Left): A juvenile Wandering Albatross approaches in the South Pacific. Photo by Katharine Lowrie.

**Caption** (Bottom Right): A juvenile Little Bittern rests among *s/v Nereida's* lines off the west coast of Africa. Photo by Jeanne Socrates.

### **About the Organizers**

#### ***Diana Doyle on m/v Semi-Local, Founder & Coordinator***

Diana and her husband Mark write the *Managing the Waterway* cruising guide and electronic charting series ([www.managingthewaterway.com](http://www.managingthewaterway.com)). A former political science professor with a lifelong interest in environmental conservation, she holds a 50-ton USCG Captain's License and is a Commodore in the Seven Seas Cruising Association. She has been birding for 40 years, participating in CBCs and IBA surveys, and has written articles for *Birder's World* and *Birding* magazines. She and her husband sail the Atlantic coast between Canada and the Bahamas, including the Gulf of Mexico.

#### ***Beth Leonard on s/v Hawk, Advisory Board***

Beth has sailed more than 110,000 bluewater miles over the past two decades with her husband, Evans Starzinger. Their two circumnavigations have taken them from Cape Horn and the Southern Ocean to the Arctic seas north of Iceland. They have been honored for their voyages by the Seven Seas Cruising Association, Ocean Cruising Club and Cruising Club of America. In addition to writing magazine articles, including a popular series for *Bluewater Sailing*, Beth has written three books on bluewater cruising: *Voyager's Handbook*, *Following Seas* and *Blue*

*Horizons* ([www.bethandevans.com](http://www.bethandevans.com)).

***Brenda Free on s/v Willow, Advisory Board***

Brenda and her husband, John Magruder, have been cruising aboard their Mason 44 since 2000. Brenda is an artist who works in mixed media. Her “birding backyard” has spanned from Maine to Trinidad, including the Rio Manamo Venezuela, Bonaire, Colombia, Panama, and lots of islands and water in between. She has logged nearly all of those lumpy Caribbean miles with binoculars around her neck.

***Devi Sharp on s/v Arctic Tern, Advisory Board***

Devi and her husband Hunter have been cruising the Eastern Caribbean, Venezuela, Bonaire and Curacao for the past five years aboard their sailboat *Arctic Tern*. Devi spent her working career as a wildlife biologist, mostly for the U.S. National Park Service. Her jobs ranged from fire ecology to control of non-native vegetation to salmon research, but her passion has always been studying birds. In her last assignment she helped design and implement a comprehensive monitoring project for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. Devi has authored several articles about sea birds for *All At Sea* magazine, as well as other general interest articles for the *Caribbean Compass*. Devi keeps a blog at: <http://www.sailblogs.com/member/arctictern/>.

***Jeanne Socrates on s/v Nereida, Advisory Board***

Jeanne, a former mathematics professor and a RYA Ocean Yachtmaster, holds the title of the oldest female solo circumnavigator after successfully arriving in Cape Town from the Falklands in May 2011 after rounding Cape Horn nonstop from the Pacific coast of Canada ([www.svnereida.com](http://www.svnereida.com)). She also solo-circumnavigated in 2007 to 2008 (less 60 miles!) and completed the Singlehanded TransPac in 2006. She has been interviewed by BBC, ITN, ATV, CBC and numerous magazines. Jeanne was awarded the Ocean Cruising Club’s Rose Medal in 2008 and the OCC Award in 2010. When she’s not troubleshooting her boat systems, she enjoys watching the birds that keep *Nereida* company at sea. Before she took to the sea, she ran a youth Ornithology Club for several years in West London.

***Katharine Lowrie on s/v Lista Light, Advisory Board***

Katharine and her husband David began their adventure with a transatlantic crossing from the U.K. to the Caribbean on a 75-year-old wooden gaff ketch ([www.listalight.co.uk](http://www.listalight.co.uk)). Using their boat as a survey platform, they recently completed a two-year *Seabird Breeding Atlas of the Lesser Antilles* in partnership with EPIC (Environmental Protection In the Caribbean) and in association with Bird Life International. In addition to research, they met with each island government, presented to over 2,000 people at colleges, schools and interest groups, published articles, and gave interviews. The Atlas, to be published soon, will be the first complete breeding study of the Eastern Caribbean. Katharine formerly worked for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in the U.K. as an ecologist. The pair have recently sailed from the Caribbean to southern Chile documenting all birds and cetaceans encountered. They are planning to continue seabird surveys in Chile.

***Wendy Clarke on s/v Osprey, Advisory Board***

Wendy, her husband John, and her two children departed Annapolis in 2008 aboard their Adams 45’ steel sloop. They have sailed the Atlantic, Caribbean, and eastern Central America, homeschooling along the way. Wendy is a columnist for *Cruising World* magazine—filing stories such as “Bird, Interrupted” about a hitchhiking migrant warbler. Wendy and John are both commodores in the Seven Seas Cruising Association and, along with their 14-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter, are avid birdwatchers. They’ve helped band fledgling ospreys in the Chesapeake Bay’s Jug Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, naming their boat *Osprey* after their favorite raptor.

***Yvonne Katchor on s/v Australia 31, Advisory Board***

Yvonne has cruised worldwide for 17 years, sailing to birding sites over five continents rather than opting for a circumnavigation. Nearly 70 years old, she’s built a bird life list of 2,500 birds from Newfoundland to Africa, Australia to Tierra del Fuego ([www.berniekatchor.com](http://www.berniekatchor.com)). She recently enjoyed spectacular sightings of the endangered Tuamotu Sandpiper in French Polynesia. Yvonne is a Charter Captain Grade 4.

Media Contact: For further information, including high-resolution images, contact Diana Doyle

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Information about participating in this inaugural CBC at Sea will soon be available at [www.birdingaboard.com](http://www.birdingaboard.com).