



## **Press Information for immediate release**

For further information please contact

Daria Blackwell  
OCC Press Officer

+353 87 954 2514  
[dariablackwell@gmail.com](mailto:dariablackwell@gmail.com)

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### **Ocean Cruising Club and SeaBC Announce Cooperative Effort to Record and Report Sea Bird Sightings**

The SeaBC Sea Bird Count is a citizen science project organized by a volunteer group of nine long-distance birding sailors from around the world. The mission of SeaBC is to benefit seabird conservation by mobilizing the worldwide boating community to document ocean bird sightings, providing critical and seldom-recorded data on seabird abundance and distribution, as well as on ocean migration routes.

SeaBC seabird count data goes to Cornell University's eBird database ([www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)), where boaters' sightings become a resource for scientists worldwide. Seabird knowledge is described as a frontier science. New species are still being discovered. Species believed to be extinct are being re-sighted. For some species, breeding or wintering areas remain unknown. This lack of knowledge is troubling given that BirdLife International estimates one-third of seabirds are now vulnerable or globally endangered due to threats from predators on nesting grounds, some fisheries practices, and marine pollution such as plastics.

Conservation efforts first require understanding. In the case of seabirds, study has traditionally focused on breeding grounds where the birds are easiest to study. Yet seabirds spend most of their life at sea, and the difficult logistics have curtailed understanding of all aspects of their life history. Hence the role of citizen scientists, in this case boaters who cruise offshore or along the coast.

"It's a logical activity for OCC members to take part in. Our members tend to be adventurous in long-distance cruising, often going places where others may not venture, like Greenland and Antarctica. They observe nature as it is, and this is one way that their observations can contribute to a larger body of knowledge," says John Franklin, Commodore of the Ocean Cruising Club. "In fact, three of the founding advisors of SeaBC are prominent

OCC members, Beth Leonard, Jeanne Socrates and Dorothy Wadlow. As an organisation, we are very pleased to support this effort.”

SeaBC Founder and yachtswoman Diana Doyle believes that “it is a natural fit to ask Ocean Cruising Club members—who are already out on the water, with global reach, in under-surveyed waters—to help out by taking digital photos of seabirds, uploading photos, and reporting sightings”. And she points out that “participants do not need to be ‘seabird experts’ or knowledgeable about seabirds. We have set up an online Facebook forum and work with a designated eBird seabird reviewer for identification help and to ensure the validity of the data. OCC members can make a huge contribution simply by photographing seabirds and recording the latitude and longitude.”

With budget cutbacks leaving research vessels with less sea-time—and concern about recent shifts in the ocean's ecology—the contribution of the "yachts of opportunity" that OCC members can provide is all the more important.

#### **Project Goals:**

- Educate mariners about seabirds and their conservation.
- Mobilize the long-distance boating community to contribute seldom recorded seabird data to an established international citizen science database.
- Benefit seabird conservation by contributing information on seabird abundance and distribution.
- Initiate an awareness of the urgency of collecting baseline data.
- Identify experienced and interested boaters with vessels, extending the land-based range of established projects such as Audubon's CBC and Cornell University's eBird.

#### **Resources:**

New resources and recording forms (including electronic versions) have been prepared to enable mariners to take part. Forms, posters, and other resources are available on the Facebook [Birding Aboard](#) group pages.



## **About The Ocean Cruising Club**

The Ocean Cruising Club exists to encourage long-distance sailing in small boats. Every full member has made a 1,000-nautical mile offshore passage in a vessel of 70 feet or less; associate members are committed to the achievement of that goal. This standard distinguishes OCC from all other sailing clubs. It's not about what you are or who you know, but simply what you have done, that matters. Our membership as a whole has more experience offshore than any other sailing organisation – in the number of circumnavigators, in the range of extraordinary voyages members have completed, in the number of solo sailors, and female sailors among our ranks. This is what sets us apart from other organisations, even as it draws us together as a group. We bring the spirit of seafaring to our association by always being willing to assist any fellow sailor we meet, either afloat or ashore.

With a central office in the UK, though it has no physical clubhouse, the OCC is, in a way, the “home port” for all of us who have sailed long distances across big oceans. With 48 nationalities and Port Officers in as many countries, we have a more diverse membership and a more international reach than any other sailing organisation. Our Port Officers and Regional Rear Commodores represent the frontline interaction with our existing members and the recruitment of new members.

For more information, please visit <http://www.oceancruisingclub.org/>.

## About SeaBC

The SeaBC is a citizen science project organized by nine long-distance birdwatching voyagers from around the world:

Diana Doyle on Semi-Local, Founder & Coordinator (US)  
Jeanne Socrates on Nereida, Advisory Board (GB) – OCC Member  
Beth Leonard on Hawk, Advisory Board (US) – OCC Member  
Dorothy Wadlow on Joyant, Advisory Board (US)—OCC Member  
Katharine Lowrie on Lista Light, Advisory Board (GB)  
Brenda Free on Willow, Advisory Board (US)  
Wendy Clarke on Osprey, Advisory Board (US)  
Devi Sharp on Arctic Tern, Advisory Board (US)  
Yvonne Katchor on Australia 31, Advisory Board (AU)

The 2012 inaugural SeaBC was promoted by three long-distance cruising rallies:

- ARC (Atlantic Rally for Cruisers) — Canary Islands to St. Lucia (200 boats)
- Baja Ha-Ha — San Diego, California to Cabo San Lucas (200 boats)
- Caribbean 1500 — Hampton, Virginia to Tortola (70 boats)

Citizen science projects are experiencing explosive growth as volunteerism adapts to technology. “It’s a new generation with new tools,” states Diana Doyle, founder of the project. “We’re taking environmental social projects like Earth Day cleanups to the next level. The Facebook, Flickr, and Google generation can now participate in their area of special interest by collecting and photographing geo-referenced data and uploading it to scientists for study.”

Research projects such as migration and nesting, climate change, and beach erosion are improved and accelerated by including a larger observation and data-gathering pool. SeaBC seabird count data goes to Cornell University’s eBird database, where boaters’ sightings become a resource for scientists worldwide.

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