Communications Committee Annual Report - 2023

Executive Summary of Communications Committee Accomplishments

The Communications Committee is composed of PSG members that volunteer to facilitate communications and publications by PSG or PSG-supported (i.e., Marine Ornithology). The Communications Committee maintains the PSG website, PacificSeabirds listserv, Marine Ornithology, Pacific Seabirds, Symposia, Technical Publications, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram. In addition, the Communications Committee maintains the news posts and work opportunities on the PSG website and social media accounts. Collectively, this team donates an enormous amount of time and in-kind support to PSG; for example, our social media team (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) volunteers upwards of 300 hours per year by posting news, work opportunities, and PSG announcements. General website updates and maintenance of the PSG Wild Apricot website (for membership management and Annual Meeting registration) required at least 200 hours of volunteer work. In addition, a substantial amount of time was put into revamping Pacific Seabirds. 9 people were involved in the ad-hoc committee to revamp Pacific Seabirds and 6 people are now on the editing committee for this publication. These folks dedicated at least 50 hours to developing the new look and feel of Pacific Seabirds, organizing old files, developing new protocols and best practices, and pushing out the new publication as a living webpage. In all, we estimate that maintaining the PSG website, Wild Apricot/Annual Meeting website, and social media require over 600 hours of volunteer time annually.

2023 Highlights

- The revamp and re-launch of Pacific Seabirds! We are thrilled to have this publication back on track and are excited to receive content submissions from our members and supporters (through this online form). Wieteke and Anna organized an ad-hoc Pacific Seabirds revamp committee to help develop the new version of this publication. That committee developed a plan that was approved by EXCO. Since then, a Pacific Seabirds editing committee has been developed and the first issue of the new version was published at the end of November. Find more details below.
- We are also streamlining other processes associated with Pacific Seabirds, namely Regional Report submissions. Instead of this going through Regional Representatives, Regional Reports will be submitted online through this form. Submissions will then be compiled and shared in a spreadsheet format where content can be sorted by region, seabird species, etc.
- Working closely with the Membership Committee, Local Committee, PSG EXCO, and Justine Miller, we helped to compile information/build new web pages related to PSG’s Annual Meeting on Wild Apricot and assisted with abstract submission, registration processes, and communicating news and information to meeting attendees.
- Wieteke and Anna (and the rest of the Communications Committee) continue to develop a comprehensive Communications Committee Handbook to outline all of the committee’s responsibilities and timelines for completing tasks.
- The Communications Committee supported webinars about federal employment that were hosted by the PSG HELPS, which were attended by hundreds of people!

**2023-2024 Committee Changes**

- We welcome Katelyn Gulley to PSG’s Facebook team and Kamya Patel to PSG’s X (formerly known as Twitter) team!
- Welcome Lilamarie Bowen, Lara Brenner, Amelia DuVall, and Sarah Ann Thompson to the Pacific Seabirds editing committee. This committee, along with Anna Vallery and Wieteke Holthuijzen, published the first issue of the new version of Pacific Seabirds and is working on the second issue (51[1]) now.
- Additional volunteers are sought to help with X (formerly known as Twitter) or other communications platforms if interested!

**Recommendations**

- Transition the PSG listserv to a new platform (potentially Google Groups) and help with post moderation; help with revising the listserv Code of Conduct.
- Complete the Communications Committee Handbook.
- Continue to grow/coordinate PSG’s use of Slack as a more comprehensive communications tool for PSG EXCO and within/among committees.
- Use PSG 2024 to recruit additional help for the Communications Committee. In addition, Anna and Wieteke will finish their terms in 2025 (coinciding with PSG 2025) and will not be eligible to serve as Committee Co-coordinators again. We need help to find folks willing to lead this (amazing!) committee!
- Increase the reach of Pacific Seabirds and continue to encourage membership to use the publication as a method for communicating their work and learning more about seabird research and other associated topics.
- Conduct live-tweeting and other social media communications during Annual Meeting (get photos, video, short quotes); post photos and congratulate award recipients (for student presentations and travel awards) vis social media channels following PSG 2023.
- Complete a website-wide update following PSG 2024 (e.g., update EXCO, Committee pages, etc.)
- Continue to develop/facilitate more activities throughout the year virtually/through social media, such as webinars, training, workshops, etc. Continue to support PSG HELPS and potentially apply for grants to provide more support to ECS and students.
- Implement methods to create a more inclusive website that reaches much more of the PSG membership (beyond the US/Canada) and investigate ways to make the website more accessible and user-friendly

**A. PSG Website (Wieteke Holthuijzen, Anna Vallery)**

- We recently set up new Google Analytics for the PSG website via communications@pacificseabirdgroup.org. Because of this recent switch, we do not have accurate data about visitation and viewer statistics. In the past, Google Analytics
was registered under an old PSG email address. However, it is often challenging to login to this gmail account, as it is not under the PSG G-Suite Account. So, in an effort to bring together all PSG files, email accounts, and activities into one place, we now also have Google Analytics that will be tracked through the Communications Committee through our Google Account. In addition, analytics can also be viewed through the PSG website platform (WordPress).

- We have also set up Google Analytics for PSG’s Wild Apricot website, so we will be able to track visitors and viewer statistics going forward. Given that web pages related to the Annual Meeting were always the most viewed on the PSG website, comparing statistics between the PSG website and the Wild Apricot website will allow us to better understand how folks use and interact with our websites.
- 60 work opportunities posted to the PSG Job Board throughout 2023, up from 49 throughout 2022 (an increase of 12%). Almost all of the jobs that we post have been shared to us through our **PSG Job Board Submission Request form**, which explicitly asks folks to classify their work opportunity based on pay, work involved, and experience required. We are very grateful to the EID Committee for their help in developing this form and we feel that this is a great tool that increases transparency to job seekers and applicants alike.

**Proposal for PSG Website Updates and Changes in 2024**

- **General update (review all pages and links, update from 2024 Annual Meeting onwards)**
  - Ensure that all links are working and open in a new tab
  - Update all Annual Meeting links to go to new Wild Apricot PSG website
- **Update Students & Early Careers page and related pages**
  - Potentially add a map of current members, could possibly be under “About PSG”
  - Add more profiles of PSG ECS members
  - Add more profiles of PSG Corresponding Members
  - Update/find better placement for Student Presentation Awards page
  - Move Student Presentation Guidelines page to Wild Apricot
- **Update Volunteer page**
- **Update Awards page**
  - Lifetime/Achievement awards - change formatting of photos on landing page
  - Update Presentation Awardees and Travel Awardees following Annual Meeting
- **Update List of Committees on Committees and Delegates page**
  - Update descriptions for all Committees and Working Groups, as well as links for most recent reports
  - Find PSG Delegate to the American Bird Conservancy (EXCO)
- **Update all new officers and elected positions on PSG EXCO page**
- **Post any Conservation Letters from 2020 onwards**
- **Continue to post content regularly from PSG (News, Work Opportunities, etc.)**
- **Update Grants pages**
  - Update List of Conservation Grant Recipients
  - Build a list of Student Grant Recipients
- **Post-PSG 2024:**
  - [Update Past Annual Meetings page](#)
  - Add PSG 2024 Annual Meeting logo
  - Update [EXCO, Committees, and Delegates](#) contact info
  - Update [Lifetime Achievement Awards](#) (change formatting of photos) and [Student Presentation Awardees](#) and Travel Awardees (add this link to sub-menu)
- **Embed simplified/revised version of PSG handbook in the [Organizational Records](#) page**
The Website Coordinator spends +100 hours annually adding new posts, updating and adding content to pages, communicating with webmaster, EXCO, and external organizations wishing to share jobs.

B. Listserv (Verena Gill, Coordinator)

There are 1,095 members as of 5 January 2024. This is an increase from 1,063 subscribers on 16 January 2023. This is the largest number of subscribers to date. The PSG listserv has a 3,000+ subscriber capacity. A subscriber does not have to be a PSG member.

The Listserv Coordinator spends over 100 hours annually approving new subscriptions, delayed posts, tending to subscriber needs on their account, updating and archiving content, removing spam, responding to general inquiries, and dealing with complaints.

In 2023 I encountered a new problem that involved being inundated with bot subscription requests. Somehow the list is being inundated with fake accounts requesting subscription. Sometimes this is hundreds a day and it is a huge chore to keep up as you have to go through each one and decipher if it is a real request or not. As soon as I decline the request it seems to trigger hundreds more requests so I have been letting a lot of them sit there so as not to trigger more. I comb through every few days looking for the real requests but it is highly time consuming and consequently some of the real requests go unanswered for a while. On 5 January 2024 alone there were 1,138 fake accounts requesting to join.

I wish to step down as Listserver coordinator. I created the listserver 20 years ago and it is time for me to hand it over as I no longer have the time to focus on this duty. There is room for growth but I just do not have the capacity. It’s been a pleasure to watch my vision flourish from a small local seed on a US Fish and Wildlife server in Alaska to a global listserver run by PSG. I feel very happy I was able to provide an invaluable service. The friendships and connections I have made as a result have given me great joy along with watching people connect with each other. The bot subscriptions pushed me over the edge as they fill my personal inbox every day and take hours to work through. I am happy to look for someone to replace me and would stay on until I find that person. If EXCO decides they want to conduct that search I ask they do this immediately. I would appreciate feedback on this decision right after the annual meeting.

C. Marine Ornithology Journal (Natasha Gillies, Managing Editor)

This year there have been significant changes in the volunteer editorial team of Marine Ornithology. After some time searching for a new Managing Editor, Natasha Gillies was recruited into the role in March 2023. As it was by then too late for a new Managing Editor to work independently on the journal, Dr. Gillies shadowed Dr. Blight for issue 51(1), before she took over fully in May 2023, and Dr. Blight fully stepped down from the role. Having served as Assistant to Online Editor for a couple of years, Iain Duncan has now taken over from Ben Saenz as Online Editor. The previously vacant Editorial Assistant role was filled by Martyna
To allow time for Dr. Gillies to assimilate into the Managing Editor role and build independence in the position, the next year of *Marine Ornithology* should look much the same as 2023. However, there has already been considerable discussion about the future of the journal as part of Dr. Blight's handover and departure. Following a long period of research and consideration, a decision has been made to move *Marine Ornithology* to an online-only format. This transition will be made in 2025, meaning 2024 will be the last year of the print publication. This decision is not taken lightly, but a substantial increase in printing and mailing-out costs, coupled with a notable and consistent decline in subscribers, means that a print model is no longer sustainable, both financially and from the perspective of the significant time and effort required to produce and mail out print copies of the journal. Subscribers will be officially informed of the change in February and their subscriptions will be carried through to the end of the year. This change should have a positive impact on the MO budget, which will hopefully free resources to increase honoraria and wages, as raised in the previous annual report. Over the much longer term, Dr. Gillies will continue Dr. Blight’s work to look for a formal publisher to take over the journal’s publication process. *Marine Ornithology* is becoming increasingly popular, and while we welcome this recognition, it is likely that our small team and modest budget will begin to strain under this pressure. Prior to her departure, Dr. Blight had some interest from Canadian Science Publishing, and Dr. Gillies will follow up on this in the coming year. Finally, the website has undergone substantial changes behind-the-scenes, with Iain Duncan rewriting the website's legacy code to help keep it future-proofed. He will continue to finish this work during his tenure and will additionally help us to establish DOIs for all current and future articles. However, the ultimate goal is to hand over the website to a longer-term editor, to use a publisher-provided website, or perhaps to join forces with a similar journal, such as *Seabird*.

Natasha Gillies, PhD

Managing Editor, *Marine Ornithology*

**D. Pacific Seabirds Bulletin (Amelia DuVall, Editor)**

In fall 2023, *Pacific Seabirds* shifted to an online format as a living webpage that will be updated twice yearly (fall/spring) with new content, including articles, reviews, art, photography, member updates, upcoming events, and more from PSG members. *Issue 50(1)* is the first version of *Pacific Seabirds* in this new form, published on 29 November 2023. Due to disruptions from the pandemic, this is the first issue published since 2020, when *Issue 47(1)* was published on 6 June 2020.

The articles included in Issue 50(1) were:

- a welcome to the new *Pacific Seabirds* format
- upcoming events and conferences
• updates from the Conservation Committee; the Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Committee; and the Membership Committee
• updates from PSG members Lilamarie Bowen, Javier Quiñones, and Mark Rauzon
  an update regarding the 2024 annual meeting
• “Faces of Seabird Conservation”, featuring profiles of seabird researchers and enthusiasts ‘Auli’i Mahuna, Katie Propp, and Tim Halloran
• a highlight of the works of scientific illustrators from a trip to Año Nuevo Island
• updates from PSG HELPS recipients Maya Philipp and Miriam Lerma

Another significant change to this format is the handling of regional reports, which are a central component of *Pacific Seabirds*. Historically, Regional Reports were compiled by Regional Representatives, then sent along to the *Pacific Seabirds*’ Editor, who would painstakingly convert each report into the outlined formatting. A 2022 survey of the membership revealed that formatting was not a high priority. Based on this feedback, the *Pacific Seabirds* Committee updated and streamlined the method for reports. Moving forward, anyone can now submit their reports directly to *Pacific Seabirds* via a new online submission form. Regional Representatives will still serve as an important source of information and reminders for members of PSG in their respective regions. We hope this updated process will streamline the editing of reports and allow for members who live in one region but do work in another to submit their updates to the appropriate region with less confusion. Reporters will also be able to easily submit multiple shorter reports if they have projects going on in multiple different regions. In addition, this new process will be available to seabird researchers and conservationists who aren’t necessarily PSG members, allowing for the inclusion of more relevant information to PSG members. Regional Reports will be due by March 15th of each year and come out in each spring issue of *Pacific Seabirds*.

The current *Pacific Seabirds* Committee is composed of Lilamarie Bowen, Lara Brenner, Amelia DuVall, Wieteke Holthuijzen, Sarah Ann Thompson, and Anna Vallery. The committee volunteered at least 50 hours to develop the new *Pacific Seabirds* format, solicit submissions, edit articles, and publish Issue 50(1).

**E. Facebook (Katelynn Gulley and Cassidy Ruge, Co-Coordinators)**

Summary Statistics, March 1, 2023-Jan 16, 2024:

• Average post reach/month: 9,573 (down from 11,946 from March 2022-Jan 2023).
• Average page likes and reactions*/month: 176 (up from 108 average page likes and reactions/month)
• Total link clicks: 5,321
• Total page likes**: 4,247 (Up from 3,827 page likes last year)
• The post with the largest reach (6,339) was on January 16, 2024. It was a job posting for a Field Assistant position with Archipelago Research and Conservation LLC.
• The post with the most reactions and shares this year was on May 24, 2023 (124 reactions, 29 shares) was also for a field assistant at Seabird Oceanography Lab at Oregon State University.
*Facebook combined “likes” and “reactions” so the comparison to last year’s statistics isn’t direct.*

**Facebook combined “likes” and “follows” so we no longer have a separate statistic for number of followers**

Opportunities and Challenges

Cassidy Ruge returned for a second year as co-coordinator of the Facebook page, while Katelynn Gulley was recruited at the 2023 Annual Meeting to fill the second coordinator spot, and officially started her role of coordinator in March 2023. Cassidy and Katelynn continued to post PSG updates, seabird-related news, jobs openings, and other related information about every other day on average (0.64 posts/day from March 1, 2023-Jan 16, 2024). Multiple posts to promote World Albatross Day and the upcoming PSG 2024 Annual Meeting were created (original content) and shared (e.g., from pages such as the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels, the Seabird Group, World Seabird Union, and multiple seabird-related projects across the Pacific). An effort was made to share posts related to organizations and movements such as Birdability and Black Birders Week. The #FieldWorkFriday posts were continued on most Fridays and an effort was made to showcase fieldwork across the Pacific. Additional regular effort was made to include seabird stories from outside North America, including Japan, China, Tahiti, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, and Peru. Multiple posts were shared pertaining to the wildfires in Hawai‘i, as well as several re-posts.

Our biggest challenge was dealing with bots that occasionally spammed the comments sections of our posts. We had to block a few users because it became clear that they were not real people and were instead (badly) concealed bots.

Recommendations for 2024

- Continue to maintain an average of 1 post per day encompassing seabird news, job opportunities, PSG news, and recent publications
- Participate (via multiple posts leading up and on the day of) in promoting important seabird conservation events (e.g. World Albatross Day, World Seabird Day, World Oceans Day, National Wildlife Refuge Week)
- Increase promotion for virtual and in-person educational/involvement opportunities for ECS, current students, and citizen scientists (e.g. virtual seabird symposia, free “talks”, seabird die-off monitoring training)
- Continue to highlight ECS within PSG

Managing the PSG Facebook account has taken approximately 100 hours (between Cassidy and Katelynn) from March 2023- January 2024 to create and share content.

**F. X (formerly Twitter; Kamya Patel and Jenna Schlener [outgoing], Co-Coordinators)**

- The @PacificSeabirds Twitter account was revived in 2016.
- Since revival, follower count has shown steady increases with significant annual growth of ~450 new followers per year.
  - 101 followers in 2016
As of January 2024, @PacificSeabirds now has 3,376 followers.

Twitter managers prioritized the use of quote tweets instead of regular retweets where possible.

Jenna Schlener and Kamya Patel were the primary co-leads on curating content for the PSG Twitter account, with an adhoc schedule of responsibility.

At the beginning of 2023 it was apparent to PSG managers that overall user activity (e.g., impressions, follower count, and profile visits) decreased or decelerated following new corporate management at Twitter. This trend remained throughout the 2023 year. In 2024, managers may want to consider migrating to similarly functioning platforms.

Recommendations for 2024

- The Twitter Manager should engage with the World Seabird Union (worldseabird@gmail.com) regarding opportunities to promote PSG over social media.
- The Communications team should consider additional opportunities for engagement. The #30EarthMonthHeros was a successful campaign in 2020, and there may be other similar opportunities. In addition, explore the possibility of a member takeover as an additional outreach opportunity.
- With the outgoing position of one of the twitter managers, the introduction of an additional manager would be beneficial.

G. Instagram (Ariel-Micaiah Heswall and Olivia Townsend, Co-Coordinators)

- The Instagram account was created in May 2016
- The number of followers has continued to increase over time and has steadily increased by about 200 followers each year since 2019:
  - 60 in Feb. 2017
  - 505 in Jan. 2018
  - 1,004 in Jan. 2019
  - 1,217 in Jan. 2020
  - 1,465 as of Feb. 2021
  - 1,635 as of Jan. 2022
  - 1,824 as of Jan. 2023
  - 2,037 as of Jan. 2024 (reached 2000 followed on 17 Nov 2023)
- The website link in the PSG’s Instagram bio (linktr.ee/pacificseabirdgroup) was added in January 2021 as a landing page for links to the Seabird Research Labs, Job Postings, Marine Ornithology and PSG Website. Since it was added, it has been opened 1.3k times (views) and used 1.39k times (clicks).
- In the first 2 weeks of 2024, the PSG Instagram profile has had 5435 impressions and 133 profile visits
Current top cities of our followers:
- Honolulu, HI
- Santiago, Chile
- Auckland, NZ
- San Diego, CA
- Lima, Peru

Current age distribution of our followers supports that Instagram is overall a younger audience:
- 0.1% between 13-17
- 8% between the ages of 18-24
- 41.5% between the ages of 25-34
- 26.6% between the ages of 35-44
- 12.2% between the ages of 45-54
- 11.2% above the age of 55

Total of 76 posts in 2023 (6-7 posts per month)

Top 5 posts of 2023:
- Seeking submissions: Faces of Seabird Conservation (171 likes)
- Media needed for Global Albatross Map at the Royal Albatross Centre (139 likes)
- Work opportunity: Graduate Position: Multi-decadal response of a seabird to rapid warming in the Arctic (132 likes)
- Work opportunity: Paid Technician: Seabird Technician – Infrastructure Monitoring and Minimization Project (HI) (130 likes)
- Work opportunity: General Manager of an Avian Rehabilitation Centre (NZ) (128 likes)

Top 5 stories of 2023:
- Seabird getting banded at a rescue center (363 views)
- ‘Fieldwork for All’ - article by Jenny McKee (346 views, total of 17 link clicks and 1 website tap)
- Commencement of the 50th annual PSG conference (322 views, total of 3 website taps)
- The final talk of the 50th annual PSG conference (312 views; total of 1 website tap)
- PSG 2024 abstract submission and awards are open (306 views, total of 10 link clicks and 1 website tap)

Volunteer hours
- Average about ~3.5-4hr per month per person (about 120 hours/year)
- Includes finding content, editing/uploading photos, writing captions, responding to DMs, and engaging with followers

Recommendations for 2024:
- Try to find more PSG members to feature on IG posts and stories especially in less highlighted areas such as the South Pacific Islands i.e. Taihiti, Fiji etc, and SE Asia
- Highlighting more posts and stories from the Seattle PSG 2024 conference including symposiums, talks and posters.
- Add more posts and stories regarding research and seabird articles
- Continue photo promotions, such as our successful series in the past highlighting students and early-career scientists that won awards from PSG. We can continue this following PSG 2024.
- Try to increase the number of posts and stories per week.
- Be more diligent about posting on Saturdays for #SeabirdSaturday, and use it to highlight seabird species, research articles, job openings, etc.
Continue utilizing Instagram stories to reach followers, as this feature is continuing to grow in popularity on the platform.
Consider also using IGTV to engage with our followers (e.g., we can do live Q&As with seabird researchers on IGTV)

H. Annual Meeting Website - Wild Apricot
(Wieteke Holthuijzen, Anna Vallery, Justine Miller, LoCo, Program Chair)

Overview

The Wild Apricot website went live in October/November 2022 as a replacement for Cvent and hosts membership management as well as all information related to the Annual Meeting (i.e., Annual Meeting information will not be duplicated on the PSG website). The PSG Wild Apricot website has 15 active pages including:

- Home
- Annual Meeting*
  - Abstracts
  - Abstract Submission
  - Agenda
  - Field Trips
  - Online Store
  - Past Annual Meetings
  - Registration
  - Scientific Program Highlights
  - Silent AUKtion
  - Sponsorship
  - Travel and Accommodations
- Join Us
- Donate
- Contact

*Other pages we could add for future Annual Meetings include Sponsor/Exhibitor Booths and Plenary Speaker Bios

This year, we made several updates to the Wild Apricot website. Most importantly, we have set-up Google Analytics for the PSG Wild Apricot website, which will help us to keep track of visitors and viewer statistics. We also noticed that the Wild Apricot pops-up as the second option when folks search for “PSG Annual Meeting” on Google, which is great! In general, because we had put so much work into the Wild Apricot website for PSG 2023, we were able to duplicate and modify much of the existing content with minimal editing. Managing Wild Apricot for PSG 2024 was a much more straightforward and efficient process. As a team, we estimate that at least 50 hours was spent on updating Wild Apricot in regards to the Annual Meeting.

Following the Annual Meeting, we will keep all of the PSG 2024 pages in Wild Apricot but set them to “admin-only” and update/publish them once we have information for PSG 2025. In
addition, we can easily duplicate the PSG 2024 event registration for PSG 2025. On average, we spent 3-8 hours/week to maintain the website, troubleshoot errors, and share/coordinate news about the Annual Meeting through social media, the listserv, and the PSG website.

Recommendations for PSG 2025

- Wieteke is willing to volunteer with Wild Apricot maintenance updates with respect to the Annual Meeting in 2025 in tandem with the Communications Committee, LoCo, and Annual Meeting facilitators/organizers/meeting planner(s).
- We recommend setting up a “Communications Calendar” among everyone involved in planning for the Annual Meeting. This way, we can ensure that 1) we are all on the same page about information regarding the Annual Meeting and 2) we can share information through our communications channels in a timely and organized manner.
- Although Wild Apricot has good documentation and help available online, we recommend developing a sort of manual/guide with information and timelines for future Annual Meetings. This would be a useful document to develop with both LoCo and the meeting planner to document institutional knowledge.
- We recommend starting efforts to plan the Annual Meeting and update the PSG website and Wild Apricot alike earlier in the fall, ideally by August (if not earlier). Initial planning efforts should include (at the minimum) PSG Chair, PSG Program Chair, LoCo, Communications Committee, and the Meeting Planner.
- For PSG 2025, all relevant pages need to be up and running prior to September 1st (logo, meeting location, registration costs, hotel booking information).