

Project Update: January 2012

All our activities contributed to keep on consolidating the Global Penguin Society (GPS). During the execution of this project, we had the following objectives and accomplishments.

➤ **Build an international science-based conservation coalition, engaging partners interested in penguin-related marine conservation globally through strategic alliances.**

I organised meetings and workshops and defined our vision, mission and strategic objectives with colleagues and organisations engaged in penguin conservation and research in Africa, Oceania, South America, Europe and USA.

Through key activities we engaged penguin research and conservation groups from 12 countries. For example, we organised a World Penguin Conservation Status Symposium in Boston, at the VII International Penguin Conference where I was part of the Steering Committee and also organised another symposium at the International Marine Conservation Congress in Canada, May 2011. I also exposed in a Seabird Session at the Pew Annual meeting in Key Largo, Florida, USA, October 2011.

➤ **Assess the status and conservation priorities for all penguin species and Design a Global Penguin Conservation Strategy.**

We have worked with 53 researchers from 12 countries to prepare this material which is included in the recently finished book: "PENGUINS: Natural history and Conservation". It will be printed by University of Washington Press and will be available in English, Spanish and Japanese. It will have 355 full colour pages divided in 18 chapters. Main section include diagnostic characteristics, distribution, population size and trends, threats, research gaps and needs, current conservation efforts and conservation priorities.

➤ **GPS contributes in the organisation of the International Penguin Conferences.**

I was a member of the 7th Conference Steering Committee and I will continue this task for the 8th IPC to be held in Bristol UK in 2013.

➤ **Collaborate and formulate advice for governments based on scientific, technical and empirical evidence, aiming at influencing decisions and policies. The coalition will formally offer assistance to governments.**

I was invited by the Government of South Africa to participate in the design of the Management Plan of the endangered African penguin.

I also interacted with the Department of Conservation of New Zealand in the workshop about the Fiordland penguin.

At the Punta Tombo Advisory Management Commission, I fostered the creation and coordination of the Commission meetings by the Provincial Government, highlighting the need to create a multidisciplinary body to manage this colony.

During my research with penguins (with this project) we discovered a new Magellanic penguin colony at El Pedral. However, the site selected by this first 13 penguins pairs was far from pristine. Unregulated recreational activities took place there, with fishermen and visitors leaving garbage all around and setting on fire bushes, where penguins nest, to make barbecues. I coordinated a multisectorial management plan for the area and submitted the application for its designation as Provincial Wildlife Refuge, which was recently approved. Now penguins are protected and we designed a very restricted touristic operation that will allow to enforce rules. The colony increased 1300% after three years of this successful management.

We are contributing in the management plan of a recently designated Marine Park in Argentina that includes 14 penguin colonies that we first described and censused 19 years ago.

➤ **Design effective communication strategies to reach specific audiences with clear messages.**

We were the scientific and conservation advisors of the Punta Tombo Interpretation Center exhibits, at the largest Magellanic penguin colony in the planet, to be visited by 120,000 tourists per year.

GPS launched its website, www.globalpenguinsociety.org, which contains information on what we do, who we are, goals, activities, updated information on all species of penguins in the world, and news. It has already received visits from 46 countries.

➤ **Campaigning through the media in association with other worldwide conservation initiatives, highlighting the power of individual responsibility to make a change for ocean conservation through the penguins.**

I participated in newspaper articles, magazines, documentary films, TV programmes, radio interviews, symposium organisation, and lectures opened to the communities.

GPS activities (including television documentary films) were covered by the media in Argentina and several countries: *Boston Globe*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *The Telegraph*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Clarín*, *Perfil* and *TN Ecología*. Stories were in the media in Argentina, Brazil, Germany, France, England, the Netherlands and the United States, among others.

We also target local education efforts near colonies so that the next generation will value penguins more. We organised school trips of schools kids to visit nearby penguin colonies that were unknown to them. This was done in South Africa together with a partner organisation and also in Argentina.

➤ **Objective 10. Promote and help consolidate marine conservation initiatives, such as the designation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) or other more appropriate marine conservation tools in the Southern Oceans.**

I participated in the annual meeting of a forum of environmental NGOs related with the SW Atlantic and GPS is now part of it.

To promote the designation of new marine protected areas we obtained critical information about penguin colonies along Patagonia. We obtained information about foraging areas (satellited tracks) and estimated abundance.