

Youth Think Tank Competition

for the EAA Flyway



Youth Think Tank Competition for EAA Flyway Final Report

Instructions: Please complete all fields, and respond to all questions below before 1st October 2022.

1. Project background information

Project Title: <i>Seabirds of Tubbataha</i>
Country of project implementation: <i>Philippines</i>
Project Location: <i>Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park and World Heritage Site</i>
Is it an EAAFP Flyway Network Site (check here)? <i>No. Yes, Name of the Flyway Network Site: Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park</i>
Actual Project Start Date: <i>May 2022</i>
Actual Project End Date: <i>August 2022</i>
Project summary (max. 250 words, including background, project objectives, and deliverables): Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park (TRNP) is the largest no-take marine protected area in the Philippines. It is both an ASEAN Heritage Park and a World Heritage Site. TRNP also became an EAAFP Flyway Network Site in 2015. The two islets of TRNP support over 20,000 seabirds and serve as important nesting and rookery grounds for seven different seabird species, four of which are migratory. Seabirds are highly pelagic, spending most of their time at sea. Their limited interaction with humans due to their isolation may be one reason they are not popular subjects of environmental education activities in the Philippines. Through this project, we designed and implemented a webinar on seabirds and produced a video focusing on the plight of the Black Noddy <i>worcesteri subspecies</i> that was premiered during the webinar. The aim of the project was to increase awareness amongst Filipinos about seabirds, their importance, and the threats they face, a hundred people at a time. We aimed to highlight the conservation needs of the Black Noddy, which is threatened by loss of nesting habitat, and of Tubbataha generally as a vital seabird breeding ground in Southeast Asia. Through dissemination of the film at the webinar and beyond, we hope to inspire early career and future conservationists to espouse seabird conservation and glean recommendations for improving our management efforts.

2. Project Rationale:

Project purpose:

2.1. What was your identified 'Project purpose' in your proposal (i.e., what is the problem(s) you want to solve, what was the overall change you aimed to achieve in the project) (Max. 200 words)

Seabirds are highly pelagic, spending most of their time at sea and landing only on remote oceanic islands and islets to breed. Their minimal interaction with

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humans due to their marine lifestyle is one of the reasons why they are not popular subjects of environmental education initiatives in the Philippines. In 2021, the Philippines government began drafting the National Seabird Action Plan, which is still in development, but includes objectives to fill gaps in research and policy, and raise public understanding of seabirds in the country, particularly their status and threats. During the formulation of the Plan, Tubbataha was identified as one of the seabird sentinel sites in the Philippines. However, Tubbataha is not accessible to most people due to its very remote location, making it a particular challenge to meet the goal of raising public awareness about the seabirds of Tubbataha Reefs. Therefore, conducting awareness campaigns is essential for informing the public, and webinars are one valuable tool for doing so.

By holding our webinar and developing a video about the threats facing the Philippine endemic Black Noddy *worcesteri* subspecies (which is only known to breed in Tubbataha and has been declining since 2014 due to habitat loss and marine debris), we hope to contribute to advancing public understanding of seabirds and achieving one of the objectives of the country's Action Plan, as well as supporting international initiatives to raise awareness about seabirds.



Figure 1. Bird Islet is the largest of the two islets in Tubbataha - hosting 90% of the total seabird population in this EAA Flyway Network Site. Photo by Gerlie Gedorja. Right: Black Noddy is the official logo of this project.

2.2. Describe the new situation (and the change you achieved) you created through your project. What did you achieve in the context of Science, Society, Education, and awareness-raising (Max. 150 words)

The main objective of this project was to raise awareness about seabirds and the threats they face in the Philippines, highlighting in particular the seabirds of Tubbataha. To achieve this aim, the webinar included talks from multiple experts, who introduced the different seabirds of Tubbataha, their ecology and habitat, the threats they face. We also provided participants with a 'tour' of Tubbataha Reefs, a flyway site with the largest congregation of seabirds in the country. Through the video on the Black Noddy, we told the story of this endemic species and the

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efforts that are underway at Tubbataha to save their remaining population.

By providing participants with an Evaluation form we were able to document some of the impacts of our work. Through their responses to the Evaluation, we learned that before the webinar, the majority (65%) of participants felt that they knew nothing (rate: 1), very little (rate: 2), or average (rate: 3) about seabirds or Tubbataha Reefs. Some had not even heard of the terms before. Through the ratings they gave themselves, and the takeaways stated in the Evaluation form, the number of participants that rated themselves from 1-3 decreased to 16%. This 16% rated their knowledge as 3 (average). No participants rated themselves 1 or 2 after the webinar. Those that ranked themselves between 4 (knowledgeable) and 5 (expert knowledge) increased by 80% from 35%. The participants expressed in their takeaways an increased understanding of seabirds, including a new understanding of the distinction between seabirds and waterbirds in the Philippine context, as well as their significance, and the need to take action to protect the species against anthropogenic threats.

Project objectives:

2.3 List your 'SMART objectives' again as included in your proposal: (Max. 150 words)

1. Raise awareness of the status, habitat, and threats to the seabird populations of Tubbataha Reefs to at least 100 students from local universities and conservation partners during the webinar.
2. Encourage discussions about seabird ecology and conservation amongst the general public and experts on seabirds during the webinar.
3. Produce and launch a video on the plight of the Black Noddy subspecies *worcesteri* during the webinar.
4. Promote EAAFP's campaign 'Year of the Tern' in project implementation

2.4 Did you achieve these objectives? Use your project indicators to describe the progress. (Max. 150 words for each objective)

We feel that overall we were very successful in meeting each of our 4 documented objectives.

One hundred fifteen (115) individuals, primarily women (62%), answered the evaluation form. Half (52%) of the participants were between the ages of 21 and 30 (31%), followed by those under the age range of 11 to 20 (18%) and those ranging from the ages of 31 and 40 (16%). The remaining percentage included people aged 41 and older.

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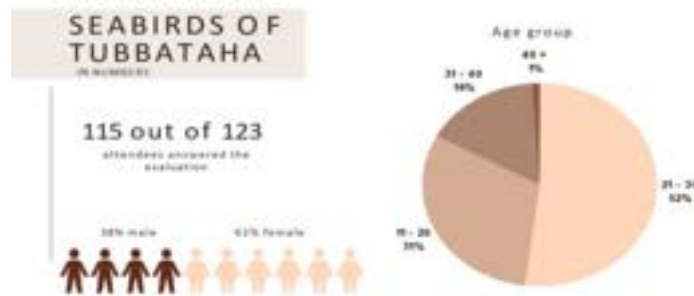


Figure 2. 123 people including the project members and speakers attended the webinar.

Objective 1:

We asked the participants about their prior knowledge of the seabirds. Before the webinar, most participants (75%) stated that they had previously heard of seabirds, but most (65%) also felt that their knowledge was average (rate: 3), very little (rate: 2) or no information at all (rate: 1) about this topic.

At the end of the webinar, 79% of the participants felt that their knowledge of seabirds had improved by rating themselves between 3 (average) to 5 (expert). The 21% were those that rated themselves already as an expert on seabirds before the webinar. No participants rated their knowledge 1 (no knowledge) and 2 (very little knowledge) after the webinar.

Sixty (60%) of participants expressed an increased understanding of seabirds, particularly of the diversity of seabirds and their threats, their current status in the country, and the seven species in Tubbataha. Meanwhile, 27% emphasized the need for urgent action to protect the seabirds against their threats.

They also recognized the gaps in the knowledge, including more research on their behavior and biology, which they believe can contribute to the species conservation efforts. Others expressed the desire to study seabirds in the locations where they had observed them, including Sarangani Bay in the Philippines. One of the participants emailed us asking for advice on the seabird counting method. Meanwhile, the live feed on the Tubbataha official Facebook page reached roughly 1.2k individuals from all over the country.

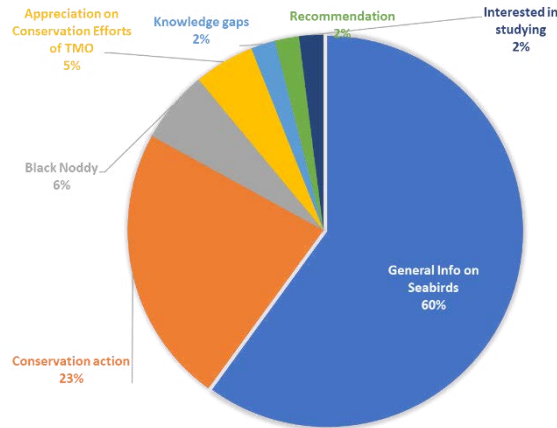


Figure 3. Most of the participants main take aways were learning about the seabirds, population, and their threats.

Objective 2:

During the webinar, participants asked the speakers questions. The ten questions asked covered topics including:

- Research needs and opportunities related to seabirds in the Philippines and TRNP.
- Sightings of rare species (i.e., Chinese crested tern) and breeding occurrence in other sites, e.g., Luzon areas.
- Conservation actions of the country to combat threats to seabirds.
- Management action of TRNP for the erosion of the islet
- Agricultural crops (e.g., coconut, corn, ipil-ipil) as a threat to the seabird population.

There were still more than 15 questions unanswered from the Facebook live stream, Zoom, and Evaluation forms, due to the interest of time. These questions were compiled, answered, and sent to the participants after the webinar.

Objective 3.

During the seabird webinar, a short film about the Black Noddy *worcesteri* premiered. In the Evaluation, the participants stated that one of their key takeaways was learning that the Philippines has a seabird species endemic to the country and is exclusively found in Tubbataha. The video was posted to the Tubbataha Reefs' YouTube channel. The video has currently received 104 views on the YouTube platform.

Some of the participants made recommendations for Tubbataha management to consider. One involved determining how management actions, such as providing nesting structures and materials, improved the population. They also inquired about the long-term maintenance costs of the artificial structures, particularly if

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sea level rise becomes a significant issue in the future. To raise funds for the conservation of the species, they also suggested implementing a program like "Adopt-a-seabird."

Objective 4.

We included the 'Year of the Tern' campaign logo in all social media posts for the entire project implementation. It was also mentioned by the host and one of the speakers during the webinar at least twice.

Project activities and deliverables:

2.5 List your activities from your proposal. date, target audiences, number of participants respectively, etc. You can include photos or links of videos. (Max. 150 words for each activity)du

Activity 1. A video highlighting the plight of the Black Noddy *worcesteri*
Produced in July 2022

Target Audiences: Students from the local universities, members of private and public organizations, and the general public

Additional information: The short film highlighted the diminishing population of the *worcesteri* subspecies, management strategies to restore its breeding habitat, and a

call to action to decrease the use of single-use plastics, educate people about seabirds, and increase awareness. We have since uploaded the video to Tubbataha's social media pages (Facebook and YouTube). We will share the video with schools, hobbyists, and other government organizations with environmental management responsibilities.



Figure 3. The short film was premiered during the webinar and was posted on YouTube and other social media pages. This will be put to use by Tubbataha in its future CEPA activities.

Link: [Plight of the Black Noddy - Seabirds of Tubbataha - YouTube](#)

Activity 2. Webinar: Seabirds of Tubbataha

Date: 19 August 2022

Target audiences: 100 students from local universities and conservation partners

Additional information: The webinar took place via Zoom and was live-streamed on Facebook using the official Tubbataha account. Without counting the speakers and project members, there were a minimum of 115 participants who participated on zoom and answered the evaluation form. Of these, 70% were students from different local universities, including Bulacan State University, Surigao State Colleges and Universities, Rizal Technological University, University of the

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Philippines, Silliman State University, Palawan State University, Holy Trinity University, and Western Philippines University, among others.

The other attendees included professionals employed by or connected with governmental and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and hobbyist organizations. Participants include representatives from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Asian Development of the Philippines, Wild Bird Club of the Philippines, and Palawan Council for Sustainable Development, among others.

Link of the Facebook live stream: [Livestream - Seabirds of Tubbataha](#)



Figure 4. Presentations on seabirds of the Philippines and of Tubbataha followed by film showing of the Black Noddy video were the highlights of the webinar.

2.6 List and describe the project deliverables, such as publications, materials developed, and multi-media materials such as photos and videos, you can submit the digital materials as attachments in session 5.

- The plight of Black Noddy worcesteri Video
- Official logo of the project
- Photos during the webinar

3. Lessons learned

3.1 Describe what worked well in your project (Max. 150 words)

Identifying each member's strength, weakness, and skill set at the beginning has become an advantage and one of the things that worked well throughout the competition. Tasks were distributed based on these factors at the beginning so along with proper communication, achieving the targeted result was guaranteed.

With a reliable mentor who is always one email away, the project went smoothly and as planned. The constant guidance and encouragement made wonders and helped the team see through setbacks encountered throughout the project.

3.2 Describe what didn't go so well in your project, and how you addressed the challenges you encountered. (Max. 150 words)

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We have different roles to fill and are sometimes sent out to the field in remote places with no means of communication. Multitasking and proper time management ensured that the project was progressing as planned.

We also have personal emergencies during the project implementation. During this unforeseen circumstance that cannot be helped, other members would step in and fill the gaps as needed to make sure the project is still moving forwards despite the setback.

3.3 If you have a chance to improve your project, what would you do? (Max. 150 words)

If given a chance, we would like to conduct this kind of public outreach face-to-face in schools starting with local ones. Raising awareness among youth is one of the best things we could do to help with conservation. This ensures that the next generation knows what is needed to conserve what we currently have and perhaps help them thrive even more. Making sure the youth, especially the ones in proximity know enough and have been instilled with the desire for conservation guarantees the future of what we are working hard for right now.

3.3 Do you have any future plan developed from this project? If yes, please briefly tell us how you would sustain the project. (Max. 150 words)

We will turn over the short film on Black Noddy to the Tubbataha Management Office to be used in their CEPA programs. We will also send this to our partner agencies, e.g., the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. We hope to conduct more webinars on seabirds in the future at other schools and also at sites in Palawan and in the Philippines where seabirds are recorded to contribute to the local community and site managers in increasing their knowledge. We will probably look for funding through the Tubbataha Management Office to make this a possibility.

4. Financial report

4.1 Fill in the form of table to show the actual project expenses

	Items	Unit	Amount (USD)
1. Equipment	Action camera with accessories	1	758.58
2. Venue booking	Rental of space with stable internet and uninterrupted power supply	1	30.00
3. Deliverable production	4–6-minute video on the plight of the Black Noddy	1	1,660.00
4. Others – specify	Miscellaneous - honoraria for speakers	1	200.00
	Miscellaneous - Tokens/Prizes	1	200.00
	Miscellaneous - Delivery fee, meals, transportation, etc	1	99.38

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	Miscellaneous - 1 month zoom subscription for 500 pax	1	56.68
		Total (USD)	3,002.64

4.2. Did you get funding of financial resources to continue this project?

Yes

No

5. Attachments

Links of a shared folder of your project's digital deliverables (photos and videos could be shared as zip files)

Link: [EAAFP Project - Materials and Video](#)

Link of project video in mp4 format (3-5 mins, this video will be shared publicly)

To follow

6. Declaration

Click the boxes below if you agree:

- Consent to disclosure of personal information: The project team's personal information (such as contact information) will not be publicly disclosed, but will be disclosed to the judging panel for review.
- Consent to the permission of the use of project-related materials to EAAFP: The project team agreed to grant the EAAFP Secretariat free access to any project materials developed under the Youth Think Tank Competition for the EAA Flyway. Ownership of the materials still belongs to the project team.
- I confirm the truth of all statements made by me in this report, and agree to all the terms, conditions, responsibilities, and obligations as set out above.

 (Signature)

Name of Team leader: Gerlie Gedoria
 Name of Team:
 Ira Patricia Alitagtag, Anthea Kristha Valenzuela
 Date: 5 September 2022

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