

MONITORING AND INVENTORY OF THE SEABIRDS  
AND THEIR BREEDING AREAS IN  
TUBBATAHA REEFS NATURAL PARK & WORLD HERITAGE SITE  
Cagayancillo, Palawan, Philippines

Tubbataha Management office, 2012

The seabird populations of the Tubbataha Reefs have undergone significant changes since the earliest known detailed inventory data from 1981 (Kennedy 1982) but probably also before (Kennedy 1982; Cruz & White 1989; Arquiza & White 1999). Some overall trends can be established by using the 1981 data as the baseline for the overall population development and then comparing the baseline with the data collected by WWF-Philippines and the TMO since 1997 (Jensen 2009). The key factors impacting the populations are both anthropogenic and natural. The anthropogenic factors have included egg collection, hunting, human disturbance of the breeding colonies, and climatic change related variations which significantly has reduced the size of North Islet and thereby reduced the available land area for ground breeding species. The main natural factor is the habitat development from a largely barren habitat to a relatively density forested habitat within just 100 years. With contrast to the limiting factors affecting the seabird population in Tubbataha, the seabird population development corresponds well with the anthropogenic development and improved management and enforcement since 1998. This year survey, ranked the highest count ever and total of 30,168 adult individuals of six breeding seabird species were documented on North Islet and South Islet. The result is the highest count ever and 120% higher than the first detailed count made in 1981 (Kennedy 1982). In comparison, the 2011 and the 2010 inventories showed a minimum of 24,338 birds and 28,663 birds representing the six breeding seabird species. The count result of 2012 is a result of high population densities of Great Crested Tern, Sooty Tern and Black Noddy representing more than 80 % of the total count. The result of this field survey may relate to the strict implementation of management system in the Park