Black-capped Petrels and Communication Towers

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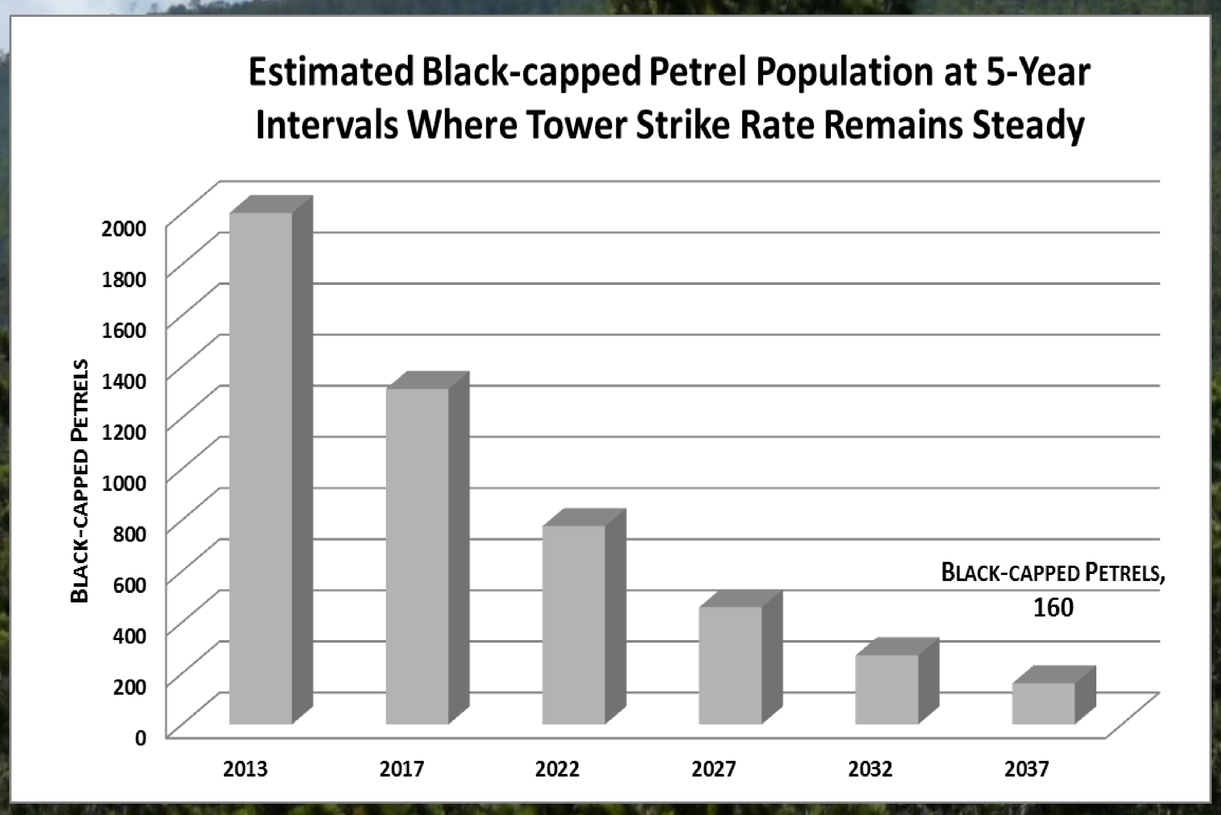
What Happened? On the evening of 9 February 2013, three Black-capped Petrels were found alive and two others were found dead under the communication towers on Tet Kay Jak in La Visite National Park, Haiti. Over that entire night, dozens of other petrels were recorded striking the guy wires attached to the towers.

Above: Scenes from the summit of Tet Kay Jak on evening of 9 February 2013.
Below: Loma del Toro, location of only confirmed petrel breeding in the Dominican Republic

Why Should I Care? Attraction to lights and collision with communications towers, guy wires, and powerlines is a pervasive threat for night-flying seabirds that share their nesting islands with humans. There are estimated to be only **1,000** pair of Black-capped Petrels remaining globally, the majority of which nest on the high ridge tops of Hispaniola. These same locations support numerous communication towers.

The rate of grounded petrels due to tower strikes at the Tet Kay Jak towers alone, extrapolated over an entire breeding season, leads to an estimate totaling 10% of the entire global Black-capped Petrel population.

Communication towers are thus a major threat to these endangered petrels. Working with companies and agencies that place and maintain communication towers throughout Hispaniola and providing bird-friendly tower options is a critical step in the conservation of petrels.



Manville, Albert. 2013. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Revised Guidelines for Communication Tower Design, Siting, Construction, Operation, Retrofitting, and Decommissioning -- Suggestions Based on Previous USFWS Recommendations to FCC Regarding WT Docket No. 03-187, FCC 06-164, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, "Effects of Communication Towers on Migratory Birds," Docket No. 08-61, FCC's Antenna Structure Registration Program, and Service 2012 Wind Energy Guidelines

What Can Be Done? In 2013, the USFWS (Manville 2013) made recommendations to the FCC to substantially reduce bird/bat strikes at communication towers. They are as follows:

- **All towers should be <61m**
- **No lighting at all (not required by FAA on towers <61m)**
- **If using lights they should be strobing**
- **There is no known difference found in light color**
- **No guy-wired towers**
- **Co-allocate resources on a single tower**
- **No security lighting**
- **If you must have security lighting then:**
    a. **Reduce to the lowest-light wattage possible**
    b. **Hood lighting on top and sides**
    c. **Place motion detector on light so that it is only on when needed**