EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The white-vented storm petrel (WVSP) project (2014) has resulted in a much greater understanding of this taxa, its at-sea behaviour and distribution and, once analyses are complete, confirmation of its taxonomic status and a full account its feeding ecology. It will no longer be regarded as data-deficient.

2. We have some strong leads as to which islands these birds are breeding on, but did not find any nest sites.

3. While commonly seen, the population does not appear to be as large as previous observers have suggested. Storm petrels have a strong sense of smell which they use to find food at sea. As a result WVSP can gather quickly in large groups over a food source and these groups can be very visible when close to human activity.

4. WVSPs' high visibility close to human activity and their wide distribution gives the impression of a large population. However, the number of re-sightings of banded birds obtained in the project to date suggests this might not be the case. We believe that breeding sites are likely to be scattered about the archipelago. Some of these localised populations are likely to be very small.

5. Potential habitat for a tiny storm petrel, such as crevices in cliff-faces, lava flows, rubble and scree slopes, and under light forest and low scrub, abounds on islands and on islets throughout the archipelago.

6. Elevation to full species status appears likely, which would make the WVSP a new endemic species for the Galápagos. However, the analyses to be undertaken in 2015 are needed to confirm the taxa's status.

7. Our study, together with subsequent analysis will provide a full description of the bird's feeding ecology and behaviour at sea.

8. Opportunistic collection of regurgitations, faeces and plankton sampling will provide insights into the birds feeding ecology and potentially confirm observations that they are resident in the Galapagos year round and do not migrate as some storm petrels do.

9. Storm petrels (and research into these birds) have a higher profile in the Galápagos than previously.

10. We recommend that follow-up field work continues through 2015 and into 2016 with a programme of surveys for re-sightings of banded birds.

11. Finding a breeding site or breeding sites remains the key conservation goal. Scattered small colonies surviving on islands may be under intense predation pressure. Although some islands where they survive are likely to be predator free maintaining the current distribution of the storm petrel throughout the archipelago may be necessary to protect the genetic diversity of the species and hence long term survival.

12. A second intensive capture and tracking programme is recommended for 2016. The importance of finding breeding sites is two fold:

    a/ To check whether sites are safe from threats like cats and rats,

    b/ To find a colony which will allow the taxa's biology to be fully studied. Long-term, WVSP could be a useful indicator species for changes in the Galápagos marine environment, especially if these birds are feeding at essentially a primary trophic level (ie. zooplankton and small fish), and, they are, as we believe, resident in the region (ie. do not migrate any significant distance). Planning for this stage of the project will be undertaken in 2015.