

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p>Twelfth Meeting of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group</p> <p><i>Lima, Peru, 5 – 7 August 2024</i></p> <p>Assessing seabird interactions with high seas demersal trawl fisheries from the southwest Atlantic: collaborative research between Spain and Uruguay</p> <p><i>Sebastián Jiménez, José Carlos Báez, Paolo Conti, Rodrigo Forselledo, Agustín Loureiro, José Luis del Río, Jose Vidal Miralles, Camilo Saavedra, Davinia Torreblanca, Pablo Abaunza, Andrés Domingo</i></p>
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SUMMARY

Incidental mortality in trawl fisheries poses a threat to pelagic seabirds. In the southwest Atlantic, the continental shelf extends into international waters adjacent to Argentina. This area beyond national jurisdictions, or high seas, is extensively used by many demersal trawl fisheries, among others, and is the only significant high seas fishing area worldwide not covered by any Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO). The continental shelf is also of high relevance for many albatross and petrel species listed in the ACAP. Despite this, very little is known about the interaction with seabirds. This document reports to the SBWG on ongoing collaborative research between Spain and Uruguay to assess the seabird interactions with the high seas' fleets operating in the southwest Atlantic based on scientific observer data (2023-2024). During three fishing trips on board Uruguayan (two trips) and Spanish (one trip) commercial fishing vessels, seabird dedicated observations on warp cables were conducted by observers. The trawl vessels conducted 88 fishing sets in high seas. Warp cable observations were conducted on 50 of these sets and cover 13.6% (66.7 h) of the total trawl effort (490 h) conducted during these trips. The following ACAP-listed species were confirmed in association with trawl vessels: Black-browed Albatross, White-chinned Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel, Southern Royal Albatross, Northern Giant Petrel and Northern Royal Albatross. A total of 180 collisions (2.7 collisions^{h⁻¹}) with warp cables were recorded. Five birds (three black browed albatross and two cape petrel) were classified as dead. The observed fishing effort is still very limited to draw conclusions. This collaborative research is expected to continue during 2025 to increase observation efforts in order to assess the impact on seabirds and report to SBWG13 in 2026. Efforts and resources should be dedicated to thoroughly characterise this interaction in collaboration with other fleets operating in the high seas of the southwest Atlantic.