



**Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels**

**Third Meeting of Advisory Committee**

Valdivia, Chile, 19 - 22 June 2007

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**BirdLife International Global Seabird Programme**

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**BirdLife International  
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Format follows that provided for the Second Meeting of the ACAP Advisory Committee (Brasilia, June 2006)

**Species Conservation**

Legal and Policy instruments for species protection of albatrosses and petrels

*FAO Best Practice Guidelines*

At the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Committee on Fisheries (COFI), BirdLife with assistance of several FAO Member States, which are also ACAP Parties (Australia, Chile, New Zealand) and also signatories (Brazil and the USA), amongst others, were successful in securing the Committee's support for holding an FAO expert consultation to develop 'best practice' guidelines for National Plan of Action-Seabirds. ACAP, CCAMLR and BirdLife were identified as were identified at the COFI meeting as some of the most relevant bodies in this context.

This initiative was discussed at the second meeting of the ACAP Advisory Committee, and has been identified as a potential priority for the Seabird Bycatch Working Group. BirdLife look forward to working closely with ACAP and other stakeholders to greatly improve the delivery of IPOA-Seabirds by strengthening NPOA-Seabirds.

**Management of Human Activity**

Measures to reduce or eliminate incidental mortality in fisheries

*Regional Fisheries Management Organisations*

Since the second meeting of the Advisory Committee the BirdLife International Global Seabird Programme has continued to work closely with the five tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs). BirdLife has attended meetings of ICCAT (Standing Committee on Research and Statistics, Oct 2006; Sub-Committee on Ecosystems, Feb 2007), IOTC (Bycatch Working Group July 2006, Scientific Committee November 2006), WCPFC (Ecosystem and Bycatch Working Group & Scientific Committee August 2006, Commission December 2006), IATTC (Stock Assessment Review Working Group, May 2007).

This work has used data from the BirdLife Global *Procellariiform* Tracking Database (BirdLife 2004) to identify the areas where there is overlap between albatross and petrel distribution and longline fishing effort, and to provide input to RFMO assessments of the impact of their

fisheries on seabird populations. Within ICCAT, BirdLife is working with the UK funded project to support the ICCAT seabird assessment, in conjunction with British Antarctic Survey and CSIRO. This assessment is a critical step to addressing the rapid albatross population declines in the South Atlantic. BirdLife is also providing input to the WCPFC Ecological Risk Assessment. In addition, in line with recent developments within tuna RFMOs, BirdLife has also provided scientific and advocacy input to recommendations for adoption of seabird bycatch mitigation measures in RFMO fisheries, particularly in relation to WCPFC and IATTC.

BirdLife was recently awarded a grant from the David And Lucille Packard Foundation to support and further develop BirdLife's work with Pacific tuna RFMOs to reduce seabird bycatch.

### **Research and Monitoring**

#### Ongoing research and monitoring programmes relating to the conservation of albatrosses and petrels

##### *Global Procellariiform Tracking Database*

The Global *Procellariiform* Tracking Database is the result of a pioneering initiative in 2003 in which scientists from around the world are collaborating to assemble and analyse a global database that includes over 90% of existing remote tracking data for albatrosses and petrels. New data continue to be added to the database. In the past year, the database has expanded to include shearwater as well as albatross and petrel species. GPS data have also been added for the first time. Many new data have been added for North Pacific albatross species, as well as Southern Hemisphere species such as Antipodean Albatross and Southern Giant-petrel. The database has been used to provide information to RFMOs, particularly the tuna commissions, on the overlap between their fisheries and albatross and petrel distribution. The database has also provided information to a risk assessment pilot project in New Zealand, and will be used to provide maps for species assessment fact sheets, and for CCAMLR's workshop on Marine Protected Areas in August. Many new tracking studies currently underway, and the hope is that the data holders will continue to submit these data to the database to enable it to go from strength to strength. Funding received through ACAP will support development of the database in 2007. BirdLife is currently working to find funds to support future development of the database.

##### *Tristan da Cunha group rodent eradication project*

A project entitled 'An assessment of the potential for rodent eradication in the Tristan da Cunha Islands Group' is being managed by RSPB, University of Cape Town and the Government of Tristan da Cunha. It is funded by the UK Overseas Territories Environment Programme. An eradication expert is currently drafting a first draft feasibility study for Gough Island, pending a detailed site visit. At the same time, a detailed desk 'Review of the impacts of introduced rodents on the islands of Tristan da Cunha and Gough' was produced, and is now published. The feasibility studies and review of impacts were discussed at a stakeholder workshop in Cape

Town, October 2005. The conclusions were that:

(1) rodents have had massive detrimental effects on the biota of both islands; these impacts are continuing, and recovery can only take place if rodent impacts are drastically reduced; the presence of rodents on Gough and Tristan presents a grave threat to the rodent-free status of Inaccessible and Nightingale.

(2) there are no viable options at present for reducing rodent impacts at a useful scale, except by eradication: control is not an option.

(3) rat eradication from Tristan da Cunha is technically possible, but very challenging and expensive, especially due to the presence of a human population and livestock. Any such eradication would have a probability of also eradicating mice. Consequently, there is a substantial possibility that a rat eradication on Tristan would leave the island with an increasing mouse population. This might ultimately cause problems for both human activities and biodiversity. Conversely, the best way to facilitate the eradication of mice would certainly be to eradicate the rats first.

(4) mouse rat eradication from Gough appears to be technically feasible, but more detailed expert visits to the island are needed, and there also remain significant unknowns surrounding mouse eradications. The causes of failure of some operations are not well understood, and more research and medium-scale tests are likely to be required.

A consultant has been appointed to conduct a detailed feasibility study of mouse eradication on Gough Island in September 2007. If the feasibility study is positive about the prospects for an eradication, then an Operational Plan would be commissioned. Otherwise, further research into mouse eradication technology would be called for.

In the meantime, field research on the ecology and impacts of mice on Gough has been completed. The research makes it clear that mice are indeed major predators of at least Tristan albatrosses and Atlantic petrels, and probably several other species. Reproductive output in these species is low enough to drive population declines, and appears to occur in the large majority of years.

At the end of 2007/early 2008, the main stakeholders will draw together the scientific information, and the various feasibility studies, and plan the way forward for the coming years. This may include fundraising and planning for full-scale eradication(s), and/or research to develop mouse eradication technology to a point at which it could be used on Gough with high confidence of success.

#### Observer programs to monitor fisheries bycatch of albatrosses and petrels

##### *Albatross Task Force*

Through the BirdLife partnership and collaborators the GSP is continuing to expand the Albatross Task Force, an international team of mitigation instructors to work with fishermen and fisheries managers in global seabird bycatch 'hotspots'. This involves conducting at-sea trip

and holding on-shore workshops with fishermen and fisheries managers, as well as key government personnel such as fisheries observers and compliance officers. We currently have three instructors based in Cape Town, South Africa with BirdLife South Africa (two in longline fisheries and one in the hake trawl fishery); two in Brazil (Projeto Albatroz), working in pelagic fisheries, including the first engagement with the pelagic fleet operating from Itajai. In March 2007, we also employed three instructors in Chile, two (one full-time, one half-time) working in the swordfish fishery operating from Coquimbo and one half-time position based in Valdivia. The Chile team are working with Prof. Carlos Moreno and Rodrigo Hucke-Gaete (Centro Ballena Azul).

The results achieved by the South African team which has been in place for 12 months are extremely encouraging, with baseline bycatch data collected for the demersal hake longline and trawl fisheries, and the pelagic tuna longline fishery. In addition, >120 pairs oftori lines have been manufactured and distributed to demersal and pelagic longliners and trawlers, workshops with fishermen, fisheries and compliance officers and other key stakeholders have been held in all ports for these three critical fisheries. In addition, these fisheries have seen the introduction of mandatory mitigation measures for longline and trawl fleets, and the first fine for breach of these regulations in March 2007. Results from the Brazil team, which has been in place for 6 months and focuses on pelagic longline fisheries based in Santos and Itajai look similarly promising.

The GSP are currently in the final stages of negotiations to deploy a instructors in Uruguay, Argentina and Namibia by July-September 2007. This will exceed the stated objective of the ATF to have a team of ten instructors in place by the end of 2007.

### **Capacity Building**

The expansion of the Albatross Task Force is providing training and skilled capacity in developing countries that are critical to the conservation objectives of ACAP.

### **Education and Public Awareness**

In 2006, the Volvo Ocean Race adopted the BirdLife Global Seabird Programme 'Save the Albatross Campaign' as their environmental partner for the race. This involved the development of numerous educational materials and in-port events in various Southern Ocean ports, many of which are key to ACAP Action Plan (South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Brasil) and many important Northern Hemisphere countries (USA, UK, Spain and Holland and Sweeden). This collaboration has enabled us to reach a new global audience with our messages. The GSP are currently in discussion with race organisers to investigate a similar relationship for the 2007/08 race which will take a very different route, visiting ports in the Middle East and Asia, as well as South Africa, Brazil and the USA.

BirdLife has an on-going involvement with fundraising through the IAATO 'Save the Albatross'

initiative and is involved in the managing and dissemination of funds to successful applicants.

BirdLife South Africa is currently running a series of workshops with fishermen and fisheries managers (as part of the Albatross Task Force project) to demonstrate the effective use of mitigation measures in pelagic and demersal longline and trawl fisheries to reduce mortality. This has included the first brochure on reducing seabird mortality in trawl fisheries 'Keeping our seabirds safe in trawl fisheries: How to prevent drownings and collisions – Practical solutions for the fishing industry'

The BirdLife partner in New Zealand (Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society) has an on-going programme for producing and disseminating educational materials to raise awareness of the seabird mortality in fisheries.

### **References**

BirdLife International (2004). Tracking Ocean wanderers: the global distribution of albatrosses and petrels. Results from the Global *Procellariiform* Tracking Workshop, 1-5 September 2003, Gordon's Bay, South Africa. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.