



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Fourth Meeting of Advisory Committee

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BirdLife International Implementation Agreement

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BirdLife International Implementation Report

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REPORT FROM BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF ALBATROSSES AND PETRELS (ACAP) 2006-2008

1. Species Conservation

<i>1.1 Outline of planned actions for national implementation over the next three years</i>	<i>Action Plan Reference</i>	<i>AC Programme Reference</i>	<i>Work</i>	<i>Agreement Reference</i>
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BirdLife International, and particularly the BirdLife Global Seabird Programme (GSP) has an international reputation for its policy and practical efforts to reduce seabird bycatch and more generally its marine and seabird conservation work. The GSP is in the process of finalizing a strategic plan for 2009-12 which will further strengthen our engagement on core projects to reduce seabird bycatch. This will be achieved through a combination of developing policy issues related to the assisting the development of improved techniques for avoiding and eliminating seabird bycatch, direct help to fishers to implement best-practice mitigation measures to eliminate seabird bycatch through the Albatross Task Force, high seas governance and engagement with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), In addition, the GSP will be increasing our work on marine Important Bird Areas, critically endangered seabird species, eradication of alien vertebrates, and will increase our engagement with emerging issues such as the impact of climate change on seabirds.

The delivery of this work will be strengthened through a model for GSP Regional Coordinators (as demonstrated by the success of GSP South American Coordinator; Esteban Frere, based at Aves Argentinas) based in key areas, as identified by BirdLife International's regional divisions and the conservation objectives of the GSP. BirdLife partners and collaborators are actively involved in seabird conservation issues in almost all the countries of ACAP Parties and Signatories, making the growth and consolidation of the GSP over the next three years of direct relevance to ACAP.

1.2 Measures to eliminate, control or prevent introduction of non-native species to breeding sites	Action Plan Reference		AC Programme Reference	Work	Agreement Reference
	1.4	3	III (1) b)		

Tristan da Cunha Islands Group

A project entitled 'An assessment of the potential for rodent eradication in the Tristan da Cunha Islands Group', was managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (the UK BirdLife Partner), the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the Government of Tristan da Cunha, was funded by the UK Overseas Territories Environment Programme, and ended in March 2008. The RSPB also coordinates the South Atlantic Invasive Species (SAIS) project, funded by the European Union, via the Government of the United Kingdom. These two projects have combined to deliver several actions that aim to reduce the impact of invasive alien species on ACAP species on Tristan, and to restore habitats.

Gough Island

The RSPB contracted a consultant to visit Gough Island in September 2007, and in consultation with the project team and external experts, a Feasibility Study for the Eradication of Mice from Gough was produced. This report was finalised in March 2008, and will be published in the next few months. It reports that eradication of mice may well be feasible on Gough Island, but that there are several key areas of uncertainty which need to be resolved before (a) a very high confidence of success can be achieved; (b) the exact method, and an Operational Plan, can be prepared. Further research identified as necessary was, specifically:

1. To develop and test poison-baits that are optimal for delivery to mouse populations in winter on sub-Antarctic Islands;
2. To examine whether an aerial bait-drop on Gough Island would put poison-bait into the home ranges of all mice, or whether some mice might dwell entirely within cave systems, and therefore not encounter surface-bait
3. To run a large scale trial bait-drop, and test its effectiveness at supplying bait to all mice within the drop area.

Funding has recently been received by RSPB/UCT from UK Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) to undertake the first two elements of this research, and it will commence in September 2008.

A PhD on the impact of house mice on the avifauna of Gough Island was completed by Ross Wanless (UCT), in December 2007, with funding and supervision from RSPB. This greatly increased our understanding of the situation. As a result of this and subsequent

fieldwork conducted by RSPB/UCT, several scientific papers have been produced or are in production. In addition, the project partners proposed the uplisting of Tristan Albatross to Critically Endangered on the global Red List, and this has been accepted by BirdLife/IUCN.

Tristan da Cunha Island

As part of the SAIS, a consultant visited Tristan in March 2008 to hold community consultations regarding the rodent eradication studies that had been carried out in 2005-7 for Gough and Tristan. The consultant reported on the outcome of the studies, and discussed the Islanders' concerns, questions and priorities with them. The Island Council decided: (1) that they did not wish to press ahead with rodent eradication plans for Tristan da Cunha, because public support was not unanimous, primarily due to fears about safety of people and livestock during an eradication operation; and (2) that they supported mouse eradication on Gough, and would like to see preparations for such an operation proceed. The consultant also worked with the Tristan Agriculture and Natural Resources Department to develop local rat control measures, primarily aimed at reducing rat impacts on remnant petrel colonies, and around the settlement.

Rat-free islands (Biosecurity)

The consultant worked with the Tristan Agriculture and Natural Resources Department to improve bio-security, particularly in relation to rats, for the two outlying rodent-free islands of the Tristan group, Nightingale and Inaccessible, both of which are extremely important for ACAP species. This has involved deploying rat detection and control equipment on the islands, improving quarantine at the Tristan end, and conducting a dry run for a rapid reaction to a rodent incursion on Nightingale Island.

Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)¹

Falklands Conservation is working with national parties and the SAIS, coordinated by the RSPB, to address the risks of non-native species to breeding sites. An ongoing programme of rat eradications has cleared 19 islands of introduced rodents and one of these islands has confirmed sooty shearwaters breeding and suspected white-chinned petrels breeding subsequent to the eradication. A further island will be cleared this year. A generic review of best practice for inter- and intra- island biosecurity in relation to rodents has been completed and this will be used as the basis for site-specific action.

¹ A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (Islas Georgias del Sur e Islas Sandwich del Sur) and the surrounding maritime areas.

1.5 Single or multi-species conservation strategies / action plans	Action Plan Reference	AC Programme Reference	Work Agreement Reference
	1.1.3		

FAO International Plan of Action-Seabirds

As reported in AC3 Inf 9, BirdLife were successful in securing the support of the FAO Committee of Fisheries to hold an FAO expert consultation to develop 'best practice' guidelines for National Plan of Action-Seabirds. The best practice guidelines will greatly improve the delivery of IPOA-Seabirds by strengthening NPOA-Seabirds. Following discussions at the Seabird Bycatch Working Group held prior to the Third meeting of the ACAP Advisory Committee (Valdivia, June 2007), this initiative was recognised as a priority and the Committee agreed to provide AUD\$13,000 funding to support the initiative. In the interim BirdLife and the USA have been working with the FAO to finalise plans for the Expert Consultation, which will be hosted by the Government of Norway and will be held from 2-5 September 2008 in Bergen, Norway. ACAP have been invited to attend.

The GSP recently completed an assessment of the need for a FAO National Plan of Action-Seabirds (NPOA-Seabirds) for the three fisheries of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (Islas Georgias del Sur y Islas Sandwich del Sur)² which are the Patagonian Toothfish longline fishery, and the krill and Mackerel icefish trawl fisheries (Varty *et al.* 2008).

The assessment recommends that the steps already taken by and the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Living Marine Resources (CCAMLR) to reduce seabird bycatch are sufficient to mean there is no need for the drafting of an FAO NPOA-Seabirds. The document also makes recommendations to help further reduce bycatch in the icefish trawl fishery, to more thoroughly investigate seabird interactions in the krill trawl fishery and to ensure that bycatch remains at zero in the longline toothfish fishery.

Waved Albatross and BirdLife Action Plans

In June 2007, Sandra Loo-Vela (Aves y Conservacion, BirdLife Partner in Ecuador) and Esteban Frere (GSP South American Coordinator) attended the ACAP Waved Albatross Workshop held in Lima. In the following week, BirdLife International and the American Bird Conservancy hosted a workshop in Lima on seabird-fishery interactions. An early draft Action Plan for Waved Albatross and a draft report on the Implementation of the

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Plan of Action for Galapagos Albatross in Ecuador were included in discussions at this meeting. The objectives of the latter meeting were mainly to review the status of globally threatened seabird species in Peru, to identify the main Important Bird Areas for these and other congregatory species when breeding and to bring together the main individuals and organisations working on seabird-related topics in Peru in order to start to develop a coordinated plan of action in relation to seabird conservation and management priorities in the Peruvian EEZ and adjacent waters (BirdLife 2008a). In collaboration with the Ministry of Environment of Ecuador (MAE), and with financial support from ACAP, Aves & Conservación is co-implementing a national information process on conservation issues facing the Waved Albatross. This process is aimed at raising awareness of the species, both at the official and public level, of threats to the species from fisheries interactions. This constituency planned and held a second bi-national workshop on the Waved Albatross in Ecuador from May 5 – 6, 2008 in order to validate both the ACAP plan and the national implementation proposal, developed by Aves & Conservación and MAE.

Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)³

Following the OTEP-funded international workshop held in the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) in March 2006 (under the auspices of Falklands Conservation and BirdLife International) to consider priorities for the conservation of albatrosses and petrels in the South Atlantic, the proceedings of the workshop - “Albatross & Petrels in the South Atlantic: Priorities and Conservation” (Falklands Conservation 2006) has informed the work priorities in the region and progress has been measured against the tasks identified in this workshop. The workshop report has been adopted as the working species and site action plan.

New Zealand

In early 2008, New Zealand adopted a suite of new mitigation requirements for trawl and longline fisheries, targeting a range of fish species throughout the EEZ. This area, which has more nesting albatross species than any other EEZ in the world, has until this time had relatively limited mandatory requirements for seabird mitigation, relying on the largely voluntary codes of practice for fishers to adopt effective mitigation measures. With increased pressure and input, through the advocacy work of the Global Seabird Programme and BirdLife Partner Royal Forest & Bird New Zealand, a wide-reaching set of measures was introduced that brings New Zealand mitigation practice into line with other states and with Regional Fishery Management Organization requirements.

³ A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (Islas Georgias del Sur e Islas Sandwich del Sur) and the surrounding maritime areas.

2. Habitat Conservation

2.1 Measures (legal and policy instruments and actions) to implement protection and management of breeding sites including habitat restoration	Action Plan Reference		AC Programme Reference	Work Agreement Reference
		2.1	3	III (1) a)

Steeple Jason and Grand Jason combined hold the largest population of black-browed albatrosses in the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)⁴, and have significant populations of southern giant petrels. Falklands Conservation through funding from OTEP are currently drafting a management plan for the islands in consultation with local stakeholders and the Wildlife Conservation Society who own Steeple Jason. This plan will address all aspects of the islands management and land-use, and will include an assessment of the potential to conduct habitat restoration work

2.3 Management and protection of important marine areas for albatrosses and petrels	Action Plan Reference		AC Programme Reference	Work Agreement Reference
		2.3.2, 2.3.3		4

BirdLife International's Important Bird Area (IBA) programme aims to 'identify and protect a network of sites critical for the long-term viability of naturally-occurring bird populations, across the range of those bird species for which a sites-based approach is appropriate'. IBAs are identified using a set of quantitative, standardized, globally-agreed criteria. In 2007-8, BirdLife has expanded its programme of work on identification of marine IBAs. Marine IBAs have the potential to make a vital contribution to initiatives aimed at greater protection and sustainable management of the oceans, including towards the designation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). To date, over 2,000 candidate marine IBAs have been identified worldwide. Four types of marine IBA are identified: seaward extensions of breeding colonies; non-breeding (coastal concentrations) of waterbirds such as divers, grebes, and benthos-feeding ducks; migratory bottlenecks; and feeding areas for pelagic species which are not contiguous with breeding sites. A workshop is planned for 2009 to discuss methodology for identifying pelagic marine IBAs, particularly in relation to the application of remote-tracking and at-sea observation data.

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The identification of marine IBAs is being progressed in the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)⁵ by Falklands Conservation and by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland sponsoring a MSc project at Glasgow University to define the seaward extension of terrestrial IBAs to identify contiguous marine IBAs utilizing satellite tracking of species, including black-browed albatross. In addition, the South Georgia Heritage Trust have recently funded a 3-year project by the British Antarctic Survey to utilize satellite tracking data and at-sea observer data to identify important high sea areas for seabird foraging in the South Georgia (Islas Georgias del Sur)⁵ area and the drivers behind these distributions. This will inform the identification of non-contiguous high sea IBAs.

3. Management of Human Activities

3.2 Measures to reduce or eliminate incidental mortality in fisheries	Action Plan Reference	AC Programme Reference	Work Agreement Reference
	3.2	6	

Regional Fisheries Management Organisations

BirdLife has been working with the five tuna RFMOs since 2005, and this has continued in 2007-8. In addition to undertaking analyses of albatross and petrel tracking data under contract to ACAP, BirdLife has provided scientific and advocacy input in relation to proposals for seabird bycatch mitigation measures in IATTC, ICCAT, IOTC and WCPFC (papers tabled listed below). BirdLife is also providing input to the ecological risk assessments underway in some tuna commissions. In ICCAT, BirdLife is working with British Antarctic Survey and CSIRO to deliver the ICCAT seabird assessment, which is supported by funding from the UK and USA. This assessment is formed of six stages, and will be completed in March 2009. BirdLife has also been providing input to the WCPFC Ecological Risk Assessment and the IATTC Seabird Assessment.

As of April 2008, four of the five tuna commissions have some form of requirement for use of seabird bycatch mitigation measures in areas overlapping with albatross distribution, with IATTC being the exception, but a seabird proposal will be considered by them in June 2008. Future BirdLife goals include: (1) further strengthening of these mitigation requirements where needed; (2) ensuring that seabird bycatch is recorded within observer programmes and that observer coverage becomes adequate to record data on vulnerable non-target species; and (3) ensuring that emerging monitoring and compliance systems encompass monitoring of seabird bycatch mitigation requirements.

⁵ A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (Islas Georgias del Sur e Islas Sandwich del Sur) and the surrounding maritime areas.

BirdLife has attended/will be attending the following meetings since AC3:

- IATTC Commission meeting, 25-29 June 2007 (Cleo Small)
- CCSBT Ecologically Related Species Working Group, 3-6 July 2007 (Ben Sullivan)
- IOTC Ecosystem and Bycatch Working Group, 11-13 July 2007 (Samantha Petersen)
- WCPFC Ecological Risk Assessment Workshop, 6-10 August 2007 (Susan Waugh)
- WCPFC Ecosystem and Bycatch Specialist Working Group, 13-18 August 2007 (Cleo Small)
- WCPFC Scientific Committee, 20-24 August 2007 (Cleo Small)
- ICCAT Sub-Committee on Ecosystems, September 2007 (Cleo Small)
- IOTC Scientific Committee 5-9 November 2007 (Nature Seychelles)
- WCPFC Commission meeting, 3-7 December 2007, Guam (Susan Waugh)
- ICCAT Sub-Committee on Ecosystems, 10-14 March 2008, Madrid (Cleo Small)
- IOTC Commission meeting, 7-11 June 2008, Oman (Cleo Small, Samantha Petersen)
- IATTC Commission meeting, 23-27 June 2008, Panama (Cleo Small, Esteban Frere)
- WCPFC Ecosystem and Bycatch Specialist Working Group & Scientific Committee meeting 11-22 August 2008, Papua New Guinea (Susan Waugh)

Since AC3, BirdLife has submitted or provided input to the following papers/presentations at RFMO meetings:

WCPFC

- Waugh, S. 2007. Risk Assessment in the CCAMLR context. Paper submitted to the workshop on Ecological Risk Assessment, Honolulu, 6-9 August 2007.
- Small, C. and Black, A. 2007. Recording seabird bycatch in pelagic longline observer programs. Paper submitted to the third session of the WCPFC Ecosystem and Bycatch Specialist Working Group, 16 August 2007. EB-WP-06
- BirdLife International 2007. Update on albatross and petrel tracking data in the WCPFC area (presentation).
- Kirby, D. 2007. Ecological risk assessment for the effects of fishing in the Western & Central Pacific Ocean: productivity-susceptibility analysis. Paper submitted to the Third Regular Session of the Scientific Committee, 13-24 August 2007, Honolulu. WCPFC-SC3-EBSWG/wp1.

IATTC

- IATTC Secretariat 2007. Seabirds: Interactions with longline fisheries: areas and mitigation tools. SAR 8-14 and IATTC 75-07c. Submitted to the Stock Assessment Review Group May 2007 and the Commission meeting June 2007.
- ACAP 2008. Overlap of albatross and petrel distribution with IATTC longline fishing effort. Paper submitted to the Ninth meeting of the IATTC Working Group on Stock Assessment, La Jolla, California, 12-16 May 2008. (Prepared by BirdLife International under contract from ACAP.)

ICCAT

- Phillips, R.A. and Small, C. 2007. Results of the preliminary risk prioritization exercise for the ICCAT seabird assessment: updated. Paper submitted to the second meeting of the ICCAT Sub-Committee on Ecosystems, 29 September, Madrid. SCRS/2007/129
- Taylor, F and Small, C. 2008. Spatial and temporal overlap between seabird distribution in the Atlantic Ocean and ICCAT longline fishing effort – preliminary results. Paper submitted to the 2008 intersessional meeting of the ICCAT Sub-Committee on Ecosystems, 10-14 March 2008, Madrid. SCRS/2008/029 - Preliminary

IOTC

- ACAP 2007: Analysis of albatross and petrel distribution and overlap with longline fishing effort within the IOTC area results from the Global Procellariiform Tracking database. Paper submitted to the third meeting of the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch, Seychelles, 11-13 July 2007. IOTC-2007-WPEB-22. (Prepared by BirdLife International under contract from ACAP.)
- Petersen, S. 2007. Seabird and turtle bycatch in the South African pelagic longline fishery. Paper submitted to the third meeting of the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch, Seychelles, 11-13 July 2007. IOTC-2007-WPEB-20.

NPOA-Seabirds

NPOA-Seabirds were produced by Falklands Conservation under contract to RSPB, and adopted in the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)⁶ in 2004. Falklands Conservation have been contracted to review and upgrade the NPOA-Trawling for the same area.

4. Research and Monitoring

4.1 Ongoing research programmes relating to the conservation of albatrosses and petrels	Action Plan Reference	AC Programme Reference	Work	Agreement Reference
	4.1			

The Global Procellariiform Tracking Database has proven an invaluable conservation tool over the last 4 years. Thanks to the collaboration of scientists worldwide, it continues to expand as new data sets are added. In 2007-08, new datasets have been added on Antipodean Albatross (including Gibson’s Albatross), Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Black-footed Albatross, Laysan Albatross, Sooty Albatross, Short-tailed Albatross, Tristan Albatross, Wandering Albatross, Northern Giant-petrel, and Cory’s Shearwater. In 2008, Albatross and petrel tracking papers for RFMOs will be

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produced for ACAP for IATTC, ICCAT and WCPFC.

At the Fourth Albatross and Petrel Conference in August 2008, a side-meeting will be held to discuss future development of the database and review success so far. A website is planned to facilitate sharing of data analysis tools and data submission. Requests that have been made to the database and approved by data holders in 2007-08 include data to input to the CCAMLR's workshop on Marine Protected Areas in August 2007, input to the Wildlife Conservation Society Sea & Sky project, maps in relation to development of Argentinean NPOA-Seabirds, maps for a Shaffer & Burger paper in Auk, maps for US species assessments for North Pacific Albatross species, and data provided to New Zealand Department of Conservation for a project on sub-Antarctic marine protection planning.

4.2 Observer programmes to monitor fisheries bycatch of albatrosses and petrels	Action Plan Reference	AC Programme Reference	Work Agreement Reference
	4.2	5.1	

Albatross Task Force

Through the BirdLife partnership and collaborators, the GSP is continuing to expand the Albatross Task Force (ATF), an international team of mitigation instructors working with fishermen and fisheries managers in global seabird bycatch 'hotspots'. The initial focus of ATF deployment was in South Africa and Brasil in 2006, followed by Chile in early 2007. These countries were selected on the basis of a high level of threat (from both longline and trawl fisheries), and the level of domestic support and industry structures available to provide relatively rapid, tangible returns. Since then the Task Force has expanded to Uruguay (December 2007), Argentina (February 2008) and Namibia (April 2008). Key in country collaborating partners include:

- Argentina- Aves Argentinas (BirdLife Partner)
- Brasil – Projeto Albatroz,
- Chile- Centro Ballena Azul and Universidad Austral de Chile
- Namibia- Namibian Nature Foundation and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
- South Africa- BirdLife South Africa
- Uruguay- Proyecto Albatros y Petreles de Uruguay and Aves Uruguay (BirdLife Partner)

To meet the coordination requirements of the greatly expanded ATF, in September 2007 Oli Yates was employed as the ATF Coordinator. Oli is based in La Serena (Chile) and is responsible for internal and external communication and the development of systems and structures to ensure an integrated and effective team.

A detailed summary of the achievements and future objectives of the ATF is provided in

the 2007 Albatross Task Force Annual Report (BirdLife Global Seabird Programme 2008b).

5. Education and Awareness

5.1 Dissemination of information / training for 'user audiences' e.g. scientists, fishermen, conservation bodies, and decision-makers	Action Plan Reference	AC Programme Reference	Work	Agreement Reference
	6.1			

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 (for details see BirdLife Global Seabird Programme 2008b). A range of educational materials are developed as part of this work.

The RSPB, BirdLife International and Falklands Conservation worked with the BBC on the Saving Planet Earth series and in July 2007 a documentary highlighted the plight the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)⁷ Black-browed albatross population and the work of the ATF in Brazil.

5.2 Dissemination of information to the general public	Action Plan Reference	AC Programme Reference	Work	Agreement Reference
	6.2			

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 International has been running the 'Save the Albatross' campaign since 1997. The current website (www.savethealbatross.net) will be re-launched in 2008.

BirdLife South Africa has an on-going display on seabird bycatch and the work of the ATF in the Two Oceans Aquarium, Cape Town.

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