

 <p data-bbox="220 577 467 618">Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p data-bbox="544 277 1385 371" style="text-align: center;">Twelfth Meeting of the Advisory Committee <i>Virtual meeting, 31 August – 2 September 2021 (UTC+10)</i></p> <p data-bbox="772 450 1118 490" style="text-align: center;">Secretariat Report</p> <p data-bbox="858 580 1035 616" style="text-align: center;"><i>Secretariat</i></p>
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SUMMARY

During the period 1 July 2020 - 30 June 2021, the Secretariat's activities continued to be shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic. We facilitated and implemented the intersessional decision-making process agreed by Parties, to enable the adoption of essential decisions for the 2021-2022 financial year. We continued to implement actions in the Advisory Committee and Secretariat Work Programmes. This included attendance at virtual meetings of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and other international bodies. Applications were sought for 2020 Small Grants and a revised Secondments Programme. There were no applications for secondments but many for grants. A number of grants have been awarded.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Advisory Committee take note of the outcomes achieved by the Secretariat over the past year and, if appropriate, use this information to suggest amendments to the Secretariat's Work Programme (**AC12 Doc 18**).

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the decisions taken by the Sixth Meeting of the Parties (MoP6), the Secretariat prepares two financial reports per year, one in February covering the first six months of the financial year, and a full-year audited report in September. MoP6 decided that the most recent such report would be presented to the relevant session of the Advisory Committee or Meeting of the Parties. On this occasion, the Secretariat has decided to prepare for the Advisory Committee the following Secretariat report and a provisional financial report (see **AC12 Doc 08**), for the year ending 30 June 2021. Both reports will later be sent as a Circular to ACAP Parties, together with an Auditor's report.

2. COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the Secretariat and the Agreement's operations in many ways. While Tasmania has not been as badly affected by the pandemic as many other parts of the world, the Secretariat, in consultation with the Advisory Committee Chair and the Parties, has had to develop ways of continuing to make an input into relevant RFMO and other deliberations while international travel has been suspended. Several organisations with which ACAP is in close contact have held meetings by virtual means, and ACAP has made an effort to keep abreast of these initiatives and to participate where possible. Two ACAP meetings (the Twelfth Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC12) and the Seventh Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MoP7)) were postponed, and a mechanism was agreed for proceeding with essential ACAP decision-making over the 2020-2021 year, through intersessional correspondence and voting. The constraints upon travel and the postponement of meetings led to considerable under-expenditure of some elements of the ACAP Budget in the 2019 - 2020 and 2020-2021 financial years (see **AC12 Doc 08**).

3. INTERSESSIONAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS (OCTOBER 2020 - MAY 2021)

Consultations were held in the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2021, firstly with Advisory Committee members and subsequently with ACAP Parties, about a number of essential decisions that needed to be made before the end of the financial year, to enable ACAP activities to continue in 2021-2022. This process began with preparation of a revised Advisory Committee Work Programme for 2019-2022. This was shared with Advisory Committee members for comment, together with information documents about projects stemming from AC11 that could have an impact on the extended Work Programme: a communications strategy for ACAP; ACAP engagement with certification schemes; and a report on World Albatross Day 2020. The next phase of the intersessional process involved the presentation to Parties of a draft Budget and related documents, for discussion and subsequent adoption. The Parties were asked to comment on and, in a subsequent phase, to vote on a draft budget and scale of contributions for one year only (2021-2022) and a number of related decisions. Parties made several key decisions (which can be found in a Record of Decisions) but were not able to reach consensus on the adoption of a Budget. For this reason, in accordance with the Agreement (Article VII, paragraph 2 b), the 2021 Budget has been carried over to 2022. This is unfortunate. The draft Budget, and subsequent additional scenarios prepared by the Secretariat at Parties' request, were directly related to actual costs (where known) and estimates for planned ACAP activities for the coming year. Because the draft Budget took account of the carryover of unspent funds from 2020 and 2021, it was also possible to assign additional funds to the Advisory Committee Work Programme, in accordance with the Agreement's priorities. With the failure to adopt this Budget, the Agreement must fall back on a Budget that was designed for the original, pre-COVID, activities and events for 2021, and does not relate directly to the activities or costs for 2022.

4. SECRETARIAT HEADQUARTERS

The Secretariat's office remains at Level 2, 119 Macquarie Street, Hobart, Tasmania.

5. STAFFING

Staffing of the Secretariat remains at two full-time positions, the Executive Secretary and the Science Officer. John Cooper continues in the position of Honorary Information Officer. Additional support is provided by volunteers, consultancies and internships, as well as by Advisory Committee officials. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, it has not been possible this year to receive translation students for a one week internship as in previous years. We hope to restart this programme in the coming year.

6. CONTRACTS/CONSULTANTS

OnCall Conference Interpreters and Translators continue to provide translation and interpretation services in accordance with their current contract with ACAP.

Anton Wolfaardt continued to assist with the implementation of ACAP's RFMO engagement strategy on a contract basis, representing the Agreement at several meetings. Marco Favero and Sebastián Jiménez have also attended RFMO meetings as ACAP representatives on a contract basis. Marco Favero has also assisted the Secretariat in preparation of budget estimates.

Wombat Data Solutions continued to provide database development services, and Web Monkey continued to provide web hosting and associated administration services.

In the second half of 2020, the Secretariat hosted a PhD candidate from the University of Queensland, Jeremy Bird, who is researching petrels breeding on Australia's subantarctic Macquarie Island. Jeremy reviewed and updated information on the ACAP-listed Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*.

7. PROVISION OF SUPPORT TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been many consultations between the Secretariat and the Chair of the Advisory Committee about how to ensure the continuation of ACAP's core business and the adoption of essential decisions (see 3, above).

The Secretariat, together with the Small Grants Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee, managed the call for applications for the Agreement's 2020 Small Grants Programme. This engendered a great deal of interest, with a large number of projects proposed. Grants for the selected projects have now been awarded (see **AC12 Inf 01**).

The secondments awarded in 2019 remain on hold until circumstances permit. In the meantime, Advisory Committee members agreed on expanded criteria for the 2020 secondments round, enabling secondments to be proposed that would not necessarily involve travel. A call for applications for these secondments was issued in November 2020 but no applications were received.

The Secretariat and Advisory Committee officials have worked closely together during preparations for AC12 and the decision to hold a virtual meeting.

The Secretariat also worked with Advisory Committee members and many other contacts in encouraging commemoration of World Albatross Day 2021. Following last year's World Albatross Day theme of "*Eradicating Island Pests*", the chosen theme for 2021 was "*Ensuring Albatross-friendly Fisheries*". ACAP published posters, three infographics and other material

on its website in the three ACAP official languages and in Portuguese. The Secretariat made contact with marine ornithologists, environmental NGOs, academic and government departments and other bodies worldwide to encourage them to mark the day. The ACAP Information Officer facilitated much of this outreach, which was expanded to include fisheries management organizations, marine rehabilitation centres, pelagic tour operators and selected zoological gardens. The response was pleasing and more bodies than in 2020 arranged their own activities, including competitions, media releases and website and social media posts. In addition, the day was marked on the ACAP website with seven posts during 'WADWEEK2021', up to 19 June.

8. REPRESENTATION AT RELEVANT MEETINGS

Within the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat and AC officials represented the Agreement at a number of meetings during the period from July 2020 to June 2021. All were held virtually, using an array of different platforms:

- Anton Wolfaardt represented ACAP at the 16th Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB16) of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) in September 2020. He also attended the 15th Compliance Committee meeting (CC15) and the 27th Annual Meeting of the Extended Commission and Commission (EC27) of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), in October 2020. In December 2020 Anton took part in the 23rd meeting of the IOTC's Scientific Committee (IOTC SC23).
- The Executive Secretary and the Science Officer attended the 39th meetings of the Commission and the Scientific Committee of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR-39) in October 2020.
- The Executive Secretary and Anton Wolfaardt participated in the 24th session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC S24) and the 7th Meeting of the Parties to the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA MoP7), both in November 2020.
- The Executive Secretary attended the 17th Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC17) in December 2020, the Ninth Commission meeting of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO 9) in January 2021, the 34th meeting of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI 34) and the eighth meeting of the FAO Regional Fisheries Secretariats Network (RSN 8) in February 2021, the 16th meeting of the IOTC Compliance Committee and the 25th meeting of the IOTC Commission (IOTC 25) in June 2021.
- Igor Debski attended the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) Stock and Ecological Risk Assessment Working Group (SERAWG 3) and the SIOFA Scientific Committee (SC6) in March 2021.
- Sebastián Jiménez represented ACAP at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) Sub-committee on Ecosystems and Bycatch (SC-ECO) in May 2021.
- Marco Favero represented ACAP at the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) 10th Working Group on Bycatch and 12th Scientific Advisory Committee Meeting.

In every case, these meetings operated on a restricted agenda and with a reduced time allocation, leaving many decisions for future consideration. An advantage of the virtual format was the ability of a larger number of participants to attend, given the absence of travel and accommodation costs.

The attendance at RFMO and CCAMLR meetings reflected the priorities for ACAP's engagement strategy, as discussed at AC11. AC11 and its associated meetings also discussed the desirability of Parties, the Advisory Committee, and working group members receiving regular feedback on ACAP attendance at RFMO and other meetings. This information is now provided regularly by the Secretariat.

In addition to these meetings, the Secretariat and ACAP SBWG experts are participating in a new e-group established under CCAMLR's discussion group arrangements and jointly chaired by Norway and New Zealand, to discuss net monitoring cable trials in trawl fisheries, taking place under a derogation of CCAMLR conservation measure 25-03.

9. ARRANGEMENTS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

As decided by MoP6 (in Resolution 6.7), the Secretariat had, earlier in 2020, approached the IOTC Secretariat seeking to renew the ACAP/IOTC Memorandum of Understanding. The IOTC proposed a revised text in the form of a Letter of Understanding (including some updated language), which was discussed at IOTC S24. Following that discussion, the IOTC was in touch about concluding an arrangement (now called Letter of Intent) closely resembling the former MOU. This was signed in February 2021.

The intersessional decision-making process (see 3, above) adopted a resolution ([6.11](#)) concerning the 'Authority for Secretariat to enter into arrangements with relevant international and national organisations and institutions'. This will facilitate the timely renewal of ACAP's cooperation arrangements with various bodies.