



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

**Fifth Meeting of Advisory Committee**

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**American Bird Conservancy Report on Activities  
Benefitting ACAP Species**

**Author: Jessica Hardesty Norris, Seabird Program Director, American Bird  
Conservancy**

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## ABC Report on Activities Benefitting ACAP Species

### ***Conservation Framework and Goals***

The organization of the ABC Seabird program reflects the organization's activities as a whole, in that it has three components: advocacy, domestic habitat, and international projects. Our Conservation Goals for the program are three-fold:

- *Prevent extinctions of seabirds*
- *Maintain healthy and viable populations*
- *Ensure conservation infrastructure for the benefit of seabirds*

Setting conservation targets to protect the rarest and most endangered seabirds can be a challenging task. The ABC Seabird Program has used an iterative approach to identify its proposed conservation targets. Among the twelve focal species of the ABC Seabird Program, three are listed by ACAP: Waved Albatross, Black-footed Albatross, and Laysan Albatross. In recent years, ABC has undertaken the following projects to improve the conservation status of these species.

### ***Waved Albatross Conservation***

ABC is working on various aspects of the Waved Albatross Conservation Plan. Several of these activities are reported elsewhere by the implementing partners in this work, but they are summarized here so that readers can understand the scope of ABC activities.

#### *Improving Nesting Habitat*

In 2008, ABC supported an expedition to Isla Espanola to (1) establish plots and controls and to conduct inventories of nesting albatross on them to measure future response of nesting albatross to possible, experimental vegetation manipulations, (2) explore methods for conducting an island-wide, statistically robust survey of nesting albatross populations, and (3) secure information on the status of the Central Colony.

#### *Advancing seabird conservation in Peru's artisanal fisheries*

In 2009, we provided matching funds to two ACAP grantees in Peru, Pro Delphinus and APECO, to promote seabird conservation. ABC supported Pro Delphinus in their efforts to reduce deliberate take of WAAL, and assess and reduce accidental bycatch. APECO is working with ABC to continue their survey of longline fisheries to evaluate incidental seabird catch in northern and central Peru. APECO also developed an observer manual and data sheets to report the longline characteristics, activity of the vessel by date, hour and position of sets, abundance and interactions of marine fauna. Each organization has submitted a report on their activities to ACAP.

#### *WAAL Conservation in Ecuador*

ABC has worked with Ecuadorian partner Equilibrio Azul to investigate seabird interactions with fisheries and improve awareness of seabird conservation among fishermen and the Ecuadorian conservation community. This effort has produced novel information about WAAL behavior in Ecuadorian waters. In February of 2010, we conducted a technical exchange with members of Pro Delphinus in Peru and Australian bycatch expert Nigel Brothers. The primary objectives were to characterize the longline and other fisheries with the greatest likelihood of interactions with seabirds, and to coordinate data collection and observer protocols between the two countries.

#### *NPOA*

ABC is helping the Peruvian Government develop their National Plan of Action to reduce seabird and fishery interactions, in accordance with the FAO recommendations on bycatch reduction. In this

work, we are continuing efforts we began 9 years ago, when ABC joined the U.S. delegation on the UN agreement on National Plans of Action on Seabirds Fishery interactions in Rome and was part of getting the UN accord set up.

### **Understanding seabird bycatch in Mexican fisheries**

Off the coast of Mexico, where many US trust species breed, there are fleets of long-liners which have never been assessed for bycatch. However, banded Laysan Albatrosses are known to have been captured by longlining vessels there. Furthermore, recovery rates for electronically tagged birds show far lower recovery rates than albatrosses at other sites. In addition, fleets of literally thousands of artesanal fishers also ply the Mexican coast line, some employing longlines, but others using gillnets. ABC has been working with Dr. Bill Henry to understand the scope and severity of seabird interactions with these fleets.

### **US Policy to benefit albatrosses**

#### *ACAP Implementation*

ABC continues to lead the citizens' push to pass the implementing legislation needed for the US to accede to ACAP. ABC has worked with decision-makers on the Senate Foreign Relations and Environment and Public Works Committees, and collaborated with the National Audubon Society to find sponsors and build support for the legislation.

#### *Removing lead paint from Laysan Albatross breeding grounds*

The world's largest colony of Laysan Albatrosses breeds on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, where hundreds of thousands come ashore each year to breed. This remarkable spectacle has become marred in recent years by poisoned birds dying of starvation and dehydration. Lead-based paint is peeling from more than 90 aging buildings, and eaten by curious albatross chicks. The chicks soon develop a condition known as droopwing, whereby they are unable to lift their developing wings off the ground. As many as 10,000 chicks are dying this way each year. The only viable solution appears to be removal of the paint, the total cost of which, including sifting of sand around the buildings to remove fallen paint chips, is \$5.6 million. ABC has engaged other members of the Bird Conservation Alliance and the public in a campaign to secure this funding.

**Please contact Dr. Jessica Hardesty, [jhardesty@abcbirds.org](mailto:jhardesty@abcbirds.org), for further information about any of these projects.**