

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p>Fourteenth Meeting of the Advisory Committee <i>Lima, Peru, 12 – 16 August 2024</i></p> <p>ACAP Priority Conservation Actions for 2026 - 2028.</p> <p>Draft Report to MoP8.</p> <p><i>Secretariat, SBWG Convenors, PaCSWG Convenors</i></p>
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[DRAFT DOCUMENT TO BE UPDATED FOLLOWING AC 14]

SUMMARY

This report presents collated information provided by ACAP Parties, some co-operating Range States, the Seabird Bycatch Working Group and the Population and Conservation Status Working Group to enable the Advisory Committee to meet its obligations to the Meeting of the Parties under Article IX(6)(c) of the Agreement. Based on this information, the Advisory Committee has identified priority conservation actions for the next triennium in order to progress the implementation of the Agreement and achieve a favourable conservation status for ACAP listed species. This is a draft report, which will be finalised following AC14, and submitted by the Advisory Committee to the Eighth Meeting of the Parties (MoP8) to reflect inputs, actions and decisions taken during AC14.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Advisory Committee is requested to:

1. Review the information contained in this document, and endorse reporting it to MoP8.
2. Agree the following recommendations to MoP8 - that Parties, and, where appropriate, participating non-Party Range States and APEC Member Economies:
 - a. address priority at-sea threats identified by the Advisory Committee, especially those associated with High Priority Populations;
 - b. address land-based threats in accordance with the conservation priorities identified by the Advisory Committee; and
 - c. support and implement the RFMO Engagement Strategy in full.
3. Suggest any additional recommendations for priority conservation actions that might arise from discussions during AC14.

1. BACKGROUND

This report was prepared to enable the Advisory Committee to meet its obligations under Article IX(6)c of the Agreement which directs the Committee to make recommendations to the Meeting of the Parties concerning the Action Plan, implementation of the Agreement and further research to be carried out. The report collates information provided to the Secretariat by Parties, some co-operating Range States, and the Advisory Committee's Seabird Bycatch Working Group and Population and Conservation Status Working Group. The document also addresses Item 5.2 of the Agreement's Action Plan, which tasks the Advisory Committee to identify gaps in information, with a view to addressing these in future priorities.

The Fourth Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC4) noted that there was considerable merit in developing a framework for prioritising conservation actions to help Parties to implement the Agreement more effectively and efficiently. The final framework for land-based threats was agreed by the Advisory Committee at AC6. The framework for at-sea threats was agreed intersessionally by the Advisory Committee following completion shortly after AC6. The Fourth Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MoP4) decided that the results of the framework should be used, together with other appropriate information, as a tool to guide the future work of ACAP and Parties to prioritise actions to achieve the objectives of the Agreement in the most effective way.

Overall, the status of ACAP-listed species continues to decline and so currently the Agreement is not succeeding in delivering a 'favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels. In response, the Advisory Committee has identified a suite of recommendations to the Parties that will progress the Agreement and contribute to its long-term success.

2. PRIORITY CONSERVATION ACTIONS AT BREEDING SITES OF ACAP SPECIES

Priorities for land-based conservation actions are divided into two types of threat categories where management action can be taken: habitat loss or destruction/predation by alien species, and impacts of parasites or pathogens. Previous priorities also considered increased competition with native species, however, the options for management actions for the single population where this threat is current, Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta* breeding on Pedra Branca, are very limited. Trials involving deployment of artificial nests have not been successful (storm surges appear to have dislodged the nests), and further options for intervention are lacking.

The three highest priority actions with regard to 'Habitat loss or destruction/predation by alien species' continue to be the eradication of house mouse *Mus musculus* from Gough Island, and permanent control of cats at breeding sites on Formentera and Menorca (**Table 1**). While the Gough Island Restoration Programme, led by RSPB and Tristan da Cunha Island Council, successfully completed aerial bait drop on the island in August 2021, unfortunately mice were detected in December 2021. RSPB have initiated an investigation into why the eradication was unsuccessful. This investigation has been undertaken by an independent panel of eradication, toxicology and mouse ecology experts to review all aspects of the Gough Island eradication attempt, after which decisions will be made about another eradication attempt. An anti-predator fence is planned for La Mola de Maò, a Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* breeding site on Menorca.

In terms of addressing the remaining threats identified in this category, a study on the status of rats on all the islets of the Balearic Islands has been carried out to inform future eradication work. Feasibility plans have been produced for a number of other sites and in some cases, planning is well-advanced, with eradication programmes scheduled to commence during the next few years, including on Marion Island in 2025 (**Table 2**).

The prioritisation used to generate **Table 1** did not take account of the financial cost of the management action. Since the bulk of the costs would be associated with planning and mobilisation, economies of scale are substantial if an eradication campaign targets more than one species on the same island(s), or more than one island in the same group (cells highlighted using the same colour in Table 1). The analysis also excluded sites with <1% of the total number of global breeding pairs for a species.

The highest priority action with regard to a ‘Parasite or Pathogen’ is to continue addressing avian cholera at Amsterdam Island. Field operations to eradicate rodents (rats *Rattus norvegicus* and mice *Mus musculus*) which began in austral autumn/winter 2024, could assist with this target. Amsterdam Island’s rats have been suspected of being a carrier for the bacterium *Pasteurella multocida*, responsible for avian cholera which kills chicks of the Endangered Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche carteri* on the island.

Another priority is to better understand and address the new threat of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 panzootic for ACAP species. Two breeding populations of ACAP species have been affected by HPAI H5N1 thus far: Black-browed Albatross (*Thalassarche melanophris*) in the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)¹ and Wandering Albatross (*Diomedea exulans*) in South Georgia (Islas Georgias del Sur)¹. An intersessional group of experts created within the Population and Conservation Status Working Group is working on an emergency disease risk assessment of high pathogenicity avian influenza in albatrosses for the next triennium. This group is also continuously engaged in the update of the ACAP “[Guidelines for working with albatrosses and petrels during the high pathogenicity avian influenza \(HPAI\) H5N1 panzootic](#)”.

Previous priorities also included the impact of mosquitoes on Isla Espanola where mosquito biting is a known cause of egg abandonment by the Waved Albatross *Phoebastria irrorata*. However, the options for effective management actions of this threat are lacking.

Table 1. 2024 priorities for land-based conservation actions. Ranking of threats to ACAP breeding sites based on vulnerability of population, threat magnitude and likelihood of success of management action. Economy of effort would greatly reduce total cost for eradication campaigns for multiple threat species at the same island or island group (cells highlighted using the same colour). Excludes sites with <1% of global annual breeding pairs. (to be updated following WG and AC meetings)

Island	Threat	Rank	Explanation
Habitat loss or destruction/predation by alien species			
Gough Island	<i>Mus musculus</i> (House mouse)	High	Threat to two substantial/large ACAP populations

¹ A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty of 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.

Island	Threat	Rank	Explanation
Formentera ^b	<i>Felis catus</i> (Cat)	High	Major threat to substantial, declining population. Permanent control at breeding sites.
Menorca ^b	<i>Felis catus</i> (Cat)	High	Major threat to substantial, declining population. Exclusion feasible by physical barriers.
Marion Island	<i>Mus musculus</i> (House mouse)	Lower	Low threat to two ACAP populations
Cabrera ^{a, b}	<i>Felis catus</i> (Cat)	Lower	Low threat to substantial, declining population
Cabrera ^b	<i>Rattus rattus</i> (Black ship) rat)	Lower	Low threat to substantial, declining population. Eradication feasible
Formentera ^b	<i>Rattus rattus</i> (Black ship) rat)	Lower	Low threat to substantial, declining population
Ibiza ^b	<i>Rattus rattus</i> (Black ship) rat)	Lower	Low threat to substantial, declining population
Mallorca ^b	<i>Rattus rattus</i> (Black ship) rat)	Lower	Low threat to substantial, declining population
Menorca ^b	<i>Rattus rattus</i> (Black ship) rat)	Lower	Low threat to substantial, declining population
Kerguelen (Grande Terre) ^c	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i> (Reindeer)	Lower	Threat to two ACAP populations. High probability of eradication
Ile Saint Lanne Gramont	<i>Felis catus</i> (Cat)	Lower	High feasibility of eradication
Ile Saint Lanne Gramont	<i>Rattus rattus</i> (Black ship) rat)	Lower	High feasibility of eradication
Kerguelen (Grande Terre) ^c	<i>Felis catus</i> (Cat)	Lower	Threat to three ACAP populations
Kerguelen (Grande Terre) ^c	<i>Rattus rattus</i> (Black ship) rat)	Lower	Threat to two ACAP populations. Medium feasibility of eradication
Auckland Island	<i>Felis catus</i> (Cat)	Lower	Medium feasibility of eradication
Auckland Island ^c	<i>Sus scrofa</i> (Pig)	Lower	Medium feasibility of eradication
Parasite or Pathogen			
Ile Amsterdam	<i>Pasteurella multocida</i> (Avian cholera)	High	Major threat to several ACAP species
Isla Espanola	Mosquito	Lower	Low threat. Low feasibility of action
Albatross Island (AU)	Avian pox virus	Lower	Low threat. Low feasibility of action.
Bird Island	Avian Influenza	Lower	Low threat. Low feasibility of action.
Increased competition with native species			
Pedra Branca	<i>Morus serrator</i> (Australasian gannet)		Threat to small population

^a Eradication project in progress, nearly completed

^b Refers to affected colonies which may include offshore islets

^c Management at this site would also benefit small breeding populations (<1% global) of other ACAP species affected by the same threat.

Table 2. Islands with breeding population of ACAP species where eradication of introduced vertebrates is planned (Y) with year of planned eradication in brackets. N = alien present but no eradication planned. Blank cells = alien not present. (to be updated following WG and AC meetings)

Island	Management Responsibility	Cat <i>Felis catus</i>	House mouse <i>Mus musculus</i>	American mink <i>Neovison vison</i>	Polynesian rat <i>Rattus exulans</i>	Brown (Norwegian) rat <i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	Black (ship) rat <i>Rattus rattus</i>	Pig <i>Sus scrofa</i>
Albatross Islet	Chile			Y (2015)				
Amsterdam Island	France		Y (2024)			Y (2024)		
Bleaker Island	Disputed	2001				Y (2019)		
Mukojima	Japan						Y (2010)	
Auckland Island	New Zealand	Y	Y					Y
Marion Island	South Africa	1987	Y (2025)					
Cabrera	Spain	Y	N				N	
Gough Island	United Kingdom		Y					
Lehua	USA				Y (2017)			
Midway Atoll	USA		Y (2022)					
Wake Atoll	USA				Y			

3. PRIORITY CONSERVATION ACTIONS AT-SEA

An expert opinion-based framework was developed by ACAP to set, monitor and report progress on identified priority conservation actions for ACAP species. This prioritisation framework for at-sea threats is underpinned by information on fisheries, including those operating outside exclusive economic zones (EEZs), as well as the size and trends of albatross and petrel populations which might be impacted by those fisheries. Parties, and, where appropriate, participating non-Party Range States and APEC Member Economies are requested to review and update this information as needed. Twenty-five fisheries and 28 seabird populations were identified as priority targets for action during the latest (2021) iteration of the prioritisation process (**Table 3**).

ACAP Parties and RFMOs need to implement ACAP's Best Practice Advice for seabird bycatch mitigation in trawl and longline fisheries listed here as a fundamental first step at-sea conservation action. The target fisheries also need to be noted in the RFMO Engagement Strategy. As the priority fisheries also include non-Party domestic fisheries, some tangible actions for ACAP and its Parties in these cases could include targeted engagement with the relevant Range States. A workshop prior to SBWG 12 reviewed the priority fisheries with the aim to recommend fishery-specific actions.

Table 3. 2021 Priorities for at-sea conservation actions **summarised by fishery**. Note that this table only includes fisheries that have been reported on by Parties or Range States, and therefore the number of possible fisheries that could be assessed is likely to be higher than those currently included. RFMO fisheries have not been reviewed. *(to be updated following WG and AC meetings)*

Fishery	Population (breeding island group) affected
Angola Pelagic LL	Tristan Albatross Gough Island
Argentina Demersal trawl	Northern Royal Albatross Chatham Islands
	Southern Giant Petrel Islas de los Estados & Observatorio
	Wandering Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
Australia Demersal trawl	Black Petrel Great and Little Barrier Islands
	Indian yellow-nosed Albatross Amsterdam Island
	Shy Albatross Albatross Island
	Shy Albatross Pedra Branca
Australia Gillnet	Black Petrel Great and Little Barrier Islands
	Indian yellow-nosed Albatross Amsterdam Island
	Shy Albatross Pedra Branca
	Sooty Albatross Iles Crozet
Australia Pelagic trawl	Black Petrel Great and Little Barrier Islands
Brazil Demersal LL	Northern Royal Albatross Chatham Islands
	Tristan Albatross Gough Island
	Wandering Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
Brazil Pelagic LL	Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross Tristan da Cunha
	Northern Royal Albatross Chatham Islands
	Tristan Albatross Gough Island

Fishery	Population (breeding island group) affected
	Wandering Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
	White-chinned Petrel SG (IGS) ¹
Brazil Pelagic LL (Itaipava fleet)	Tristan Albatross Gough Island
	Wandering Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
	Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross Tristan da Cunha
	White-chinned Petrel SG (IGS) ¹
Namibia Demersal trawl	Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross Tristan da Cunha
Namibia Pelagic LL	Shy Albatross Pedra Branca
Namibia Pelagic trawl	Shy Albatross Pedra Branca
Peru Demersal LL	Black Petrel Great and Little Barrier Islands
Peru Pelagic LL	Black Petrel Great and Little Barrier Islands
	Grey Petrel All sites
Spain Demersal LL	Balearic Shearwater Balearic Archipelago
Spain Pelagic LL	Balearic Shearwater Balearic Archipelago
Spain Purse seine	Balearic Shearwater Balearic Archipelago
Spain Trawl	Balearic Shearwater Balearic Archipelago
Uruguay Demersal trawl	Northern Royal Albatross Chatham Islands
RFMOs	
CCSBT Pelagic LL	Antipodean Albatross Auckland Islands
	Black-browed Albatross Antipodes Islands
	Black-browed Albatross Campbell Island
	Black-browed Albatross Iles Crozet
	Black-browed Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
	Black Petrel Great and Little Barrier Islands
	Grey-headed Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
	Grey Petrel All sites
	Indian yellow-nosed Albatross Amsterdam Island
	Indian yellow-nosed Albatross Crozet Island
	Northern Giant Petrel Prince Edward Islands
	Northern Royal Albatross Chatham Islands
	Sooty Albatross Iles Crozet
	Sooty Albatross Prince Edward Islands
	Southern Giant Petrel Prince Edward Islands
	Tristan Albatross Gough Island
	Wandering Albatross Iles Kerguelen
	Wandering Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
White-chinned Petrel SG (IGS) ¹	
IATTC Pelagic LL	Laysan Albatross Central Pacific - Laysan
	Waved Albatross Islas Galapagos
ICCAT Pelagic LL	Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross Tristan da Cunha
	Black-browed Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
	Grey-headed Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
	Grey Petrel All sites

Fishery	Population (breeding island group) affected
	Northern Royal Albatross Chatham Islands
	Tristan Albatross Gough Island
	Wandering Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
	White-chinned Petrel SG (IGS) ¹
IOTC Pelagic LL	Grey-headed Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
	Grey Petrel All sites
	Indian yellow-nosed Albatross Amsterdam Island
	Indian yellow-nosed Albatross Crozet Island
	Indian yellow-nosed Albatross Prince Edward Island
	Northern Giant Petrel Prince Edward Islands
	Shy Albatross Pedra Branca
	Sooty Albatross Iles Crozet
	Sooty Albatross Prince Edward Islands
	Southern Giant Petrel Prince Edward Islands
	Tristan Albatross Gough Island
	Wandering Albatross Iles Kerguelen
SEAFO Demersal trawl	Black-browed Albatross SG (IGS) ¹
SPRFMO Demersal trawl	Black Petrel Great and Little Barrier Islands
	Northern Royal Albatross Chatham Islands
WCPFC Pelagic LL	Antipodean Albatross Antipodes Islands
	Antipodean Albatross Auckland Islands
	Black-browed Albatross Antipodes Islands
	Black-browed Albatross Campbell Island
	Black Petrel Great and Little Barrier Islands
	Grey Petrel All sites
	Laysan Albatross Central Pacific - Laysan
Northern Royal Albatross Chatham Islands	

¹ A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty of 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.

4. ACAP HIGH PRIORITY POPULATIONS

Nine ACAP populations (at island or island group level) are currently designated by ACAP as High Priority Populations (**Table 4**) (those declining at more than 3% per year, more than 10% of the global population, and at risk from fisheries).

The Agreement has used priority populations as emblematic case studies to highlight threats to albatrosses and petrels in other international fora. There is an expectation that urgent and coordinated international action would be taken by Parties and other relevant stakeholders to address threats to High Priority Populations (AC6 Report, para 12.8.1). The High Priority Populations correlate well with the wider at-sea priorities identified by experts, with all nine High Priority Populations affected by the fisheries identified as priority targets for action (see **Table 3**).

Table 4. Populations that have been identified as meeting the criteria for **ACAP High Priority Populations**.

Year Added	Species	Breeding Site or Island Group	Action Plan
2011	1 <i>Diomedea exulans</i>	South Georgia (Islas Georgias del Sur) ¹	http://www.gov.gs/albatross-action-plans/
	2 <i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	South Georgia (Islas Georgias del Sur) ¹	http://www.gov.gs/albatross-action-plans/
	3 <i>Diomedea dabbenena</i>	Gough Island	Required Generic Tristan da Cunha Plan: http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/pub10_TristandaCunhaACAPplan.pdf
	4 <i>Phoebastria fusca</i>	Crozet Island	Required
2016	5 <i>Thalassarche chrysostoma</i>	South Georgia (Islas Georgias del Sur) ¹	http://www.gov.gs/albatross-action-plans/
	6 <i>Thalassarche carteri</i>	Amsterdam Island	Required Second National Plan of Action for the Amsterdam Albatross 2018-2027 includes some actions relevant to this population: https://reserve-australes.taaf.fr/en/protection/national-action-plan-for-the-amsterdam-albatross/
	7 <i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>	Balearic Islands	International Species Action Plan for the Balearic shearwater, <i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i> 2011 (currently being updated)
	8 <i>Phoebastria irrorata</i>	Espanola Island	AC4 Doc 50 Rev 4 and AC6 Doc 29 (currently being updated, see PaCSWG5 Inf 21)
2017	9 <i>Diomedea antipodensis</i>	Antipodes Islands	CMS Concerted Action Plan (New Zealand, Chile, Australia)

¹ A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty of 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.

5. ACAP RFMO ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Engagement with RFMOs has been and continues to be a paramount component of ACAP's strategy to mitigate and reduce the incidental mortality of seabirds. The ACAP Engagement Strategy with Regional Fisheries Management and Conservation Organisations aims to:

1. Strengthen implementation of measures by regional fisheries management and conservation organisations to prevent, minimize or reduce the incidental taking of seabirds.
2. Strengthen implementation of measures by regional fisheries management and conservation organisations that ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of fishing operations to prevent, minimize or reduce the incidental taking of seabirds.

3. Ensure the ongoing review by regional fisheries management and conservation organisations of measures to prevent, minimize or reduce the incidental taking of seabirds to update such measures in the light of changes in best practice.

The Engagement Strategy recommends individualised approaches with target outcomes for each regional fisheries management and conservation organisation, which were last reviewed at AC14.

The Advisory Committee urges Parties, and, where appropriate, participating non-Party Range States and APEC Member Economies to support and implement the strategy in full.

6. NEXT STEPS FOR THE AGREEMENT

6.1. Amendments to the Action Plan

No amendments are proposed to the Action Plan (Annex 2 to the Agreement).

Key challenges for the Agreement in the next triennium remain the same as those identified in the past, namely to continue to improve the collection of data on seabird bycatch in relevant fisheries; to implement ACAP's Best Practice seabird bycatch mitigation measures in relevant domestic and high-seas fisheries; and to address threats from introduced vertebrates and pathogens at breeding sites where management actions are possible. The effectiveness of these actions will need to be assessed by monitoring population status and trends, particularly for the species which are currently in decline.

All of the above activities are essential to the ongoing effective implementation of the Agreement and require continued support from Parties over the next triennium.