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

# Fifth Meeting of Advisory Committee

*Mar del Plata, Argentina, 13 – 17 April 2010*

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# Outcomes of projects supported by the Advisory Committee during 2008

**Author: Secretariat, Chair Advisory Committee**

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Seven projects were supported during the 2008 call for applications. A progress report was sought in October 2009 using the proforma in Annex 1. All seven projects submitted a report using the template provided and are available from the Secretariat. All projects have made significant progress in meeting the outcomes indicated in the initial application as summarised below. All funds were spent or are being spent as proposed in original budgets; however there was some temporary re-allocation of funds in project 2008/04 to ensure no delays to the progress of the work planned. This re-allocation of funds was approved by the AC Chair. Project 2008/04 has experienced some delays due to technical issues but this has not been a major setback to the overall direction to the project. Project 2008/07 was also partially curtailed due to unforeseen winter weather conditions, but was scheduled to continue in the 2009/2010 summer. There was some delay with project 2008/10, but it is now progressing well. All the projects supported were successful in laying foundations for potential future work to benefit the Agreement's objectives.

### *2008/01. Increased capacity to progress ACAP Action Plan and AC Work Programme*

***Project Manager**:* ACAP Executive Officer

***Funding provided:*** AUD $46,000

***Summary of Activities/Outcomes:*** The Science Officer position was essential in maintaining the ability of the Secretariat to support the work of the Advisory Committee (AC) and its Working Groups and progress the AC work plan, including:

1. Progress with the conservation prioritisation process and bycatch data collection
2. Management and further development of ACAP database and web portal to facilitate data submission and use
3. All species assessments completed and 24 assessments now also translated into Spanish
4. Preparation of reports and provision of information from the ACAP database/species assessments to Working Groups, Parties, fisheries management organisations and other stakeholders

### *2008/04. At-sea trials to investigate the effectiveness of bait pods in reducing seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries*

**Project Manager***:* Ben Sullivan, BirdLife International Global Seabird Programme Coordinator

***Funding provided:*** AUD $20,000

***Summary of Activities/Outcomes:*** In December 2009, Dr. Ben Sullivan (BirdLife International Global Seabird Programme) and Oliver Yates (BirdLife Albatross Task Force) undertook at-sea trials to test the operational effectiveness of the current bait pod prototype.

We trialled three techniques to identify the most effective and efficient method for stowing the pods in the setting bin in a manner that was quick, safe and easy to achieve during the haul and also facilitated a quick and smooth setting operation. The simplest way to store the pods was to put the hook through the swivel (bait pod adjacent) then slot the hook into the top section of the clip. This technique is the most commonly used method in many South American pelagic longline fisheries (e.g. Brazil and Chile). This worked very well and the crew commented that it possibly made the setting operation easier than their traditional method.

- In total, 401 bait pods were set and 95.5% released as expected.
- We incorporated a 60g lead weight into the pod. TDR data (n=12) indicated that the baited hook inside the pod sank to two metres at 0.4725 m/sec, which is around twice the speed of the 'standard' gear (0.2400 m/sec), and to five metres at slightly less than twice the speed of the 'standard' gear (0.5083 m/sec vs 0.3120 m/sec).
- These findings are considered very promising and we are confident that we can have a new prototype for testing in mid 2010.

We have discussed with AC Chair (Marco Favero) temporarily using the remaining AUD$11, 592 to conduct further on-shore development of the pod to address the technical modifications required to conduct further at-sea trials, which are scheduled for August-October 2010. If ACAP funds can temporarily be used to fund development work, we then back-fill ACAP funds as other money comes on-line in April/May, to ensure that ACAP money is used to fund bait at-sea trials.

### *2008/05. Under attack! The effects of predation by the introduced House Mice on the breeding success and interval of the Critically Endangered Tristan Albatross*

***Project Manager**:* John Cooper, Conservation & Restoration Initiatives

***Funding provided:*** AUD $4,750

***Summary of Activities/Outcomes:*** John Cooper (CORE Initiatives) and co-investigator Peter Ryan (FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town) spent the period of the annual relief of the South African weather station on Gough Island during September/October 2009. The following activities were successfully completed:

1. Complete-island count of Tristan Albatross *Diomedea dabbenena* chicks utilizing the standard count areas. A total of 488 large chicks was counted.
2. All surviving chicks were metal-banded in the three long-term demographic study sites of Gonydale, Hummocks and Tafelkop.
3. Two field assistants placed on the island for a full year were trained in continuing the long-term study into its fourth year, including site orientation, and practicing the banding of chicks, as well as conducting whole-island counts of chicks and incubating birds.

Subsequent to the relief, the two field assistants have continued monthly checks of banded chicks in the three study sites until fledging, allowing for calculation of breeding success to be made. All corpses/remains of banded chicks were recorded.

### *2008/06. Assessment of waved albatross abundance and behaviour near Peruvian fishing vessels and of socio-economic aspects related to seabird interactions*

***Project manager***: Joanna Alfaro Shigueto and Jeffrey Mangel, Pro Delphinus

***Funding provided:*** AUD $30,080

***Summary of Activities/Outcomes:*** Our first project objective was to establish and implement a methodology to quantify WAAL relative abundance at sea and to characterize WAAL behaviour around these artisanal fishing vessels. A separate protocol was designed to quantify relative at-sea abundance of the WAAL which can then be compared with the distribution of fishing effort in the area.

- WAAL relative abundance: Transect counts of WAAL and other seabirds were completed during 14 gillnet trips from February to November of 2009. These data were then analysed in ArcGIS to develop maps of WAAL distribution and density. Results indicate that WAAL were sited regularly throughout continental shelf waters, including very close to shore.

- WAAL behaviour around fishing vessels: Multiple protocols were developed to monitor WAAL behaviour and abundance during gillnet and longline fishing (both during the set and haul and while gear was soaking). A total of 19 gillnet trips (129 sets) were monitored. WAAL were frequently seen around the nets during the soak and WAAL were about 3 times more abundant at the end of gear hauls in comparison with gear setting.

Our second objective was to better understand the use of seabirds (particularly WAAL) as a food source in coastal communities.

- Anthropologist work at Salaverry: Ms. Katherine Valenzuela (Valenzuela from Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos) conducted two site visits to Salaverry during which she interviewed fishermen, local officials and boat owners and builders to assess and understand the history of use of seabirds for human consumption and how this relates to cultural and socio-economic factors in the community. An important finding from Katerine's work was that WAAL are consumed when fishermen go sea with little or limited food supplies. In some cases fishermen have developed a taste for WAAL. Also, some fishermen reported that during El Niño, the catch of traditional target species was very low and this also contributed to the use of WAAL as a food source. Katherine's full report is also available for further information.

### *2008/07. Albatross, petrels and fisheries in Peru: Evaluating bycatch and seabird distribution and abundance.*

***Project manager***: Liliana Ayala. Peruvian Association for Conservation of Nature. APECO

***Funding provided:*** AUD $36,635

***Summary of Activities/Outcomes:*** We continued the survey of longline fishery to evaluate the incidental seabird catch in northern and central Peru. We have developed an observer manual and some fact sheets to report the longline characteristics, activity of the vessel by date, hour and position of sets, composition of sets, abundance and interactions with marine fauna.

Also, we conducted surveys in four fishing towns in the north and central Peru. We interviewed 48 fishermen from Paita (n=15), Chimbote (n= 16), Pucusana (n=16) and Ancon (n=1). Seventy-three percent (n=35) of these fishermen mentioned the bycatch of albatross and petrels, at least one of them in all 2008. The average of seabird bycatch was 2.3 (Max=10, Min= 0) for 2008. They mentioned Waved Albatross *Phoebastria irrorata* (40%), *Procellaria* sp. (42%), *Macronectes* sp. (16%) and *Thalasarche* sp. (2%).

In artisanal fisheries, we surveyed 8 fishing trips on longline vessels that are fishing around Chimbote. They were targeting Common Dolphin Fish. Almost 100000 hooks were observed during these trips. We report no seabird bycatch.

Finally, we have developed a website: Alas y Olas (Wings and Waves). It is particularly aimed at fishermen. We offer some information about waves, tides, surface temperature of the sea, etc. in order to interest fishermen in our final objective: albatrosses and petrels conservation.

The winds along the Peruvian sea have been very strong during the winter and fishers do not recommend carrying observers in such conditions because the vessels move a lot and it is dangerous for them. However, we are planning to have more observers in artisanal vessels in summer (4 per month). We have no observations for industrial vessels because the fishery company dedicated to capture Dolphin fish decided capture only anchovies and Peruvian hakes.

### *2008/10. Global Procellariiform Tracking Database*

**Project manager***:* Cleo Small, Frances Taylor

***Funding provided:*** AUD $10,000

***Summary of Activities/Outcomes:*** In 2009, ACAP provided AUS $10,000 to enhance and secure the future of the Global Procellariiform Tracking Database and in particular to support the processing of new tracking data submitted to the database. In 2009, key activities were:

- Input to the ICCAT seabird assessment, in particular data holders approved the input of data to population models for ICCAT (wandering and black-browed albatross from Bird Island, South Georgia; Tristan and Atlantic yellow-nosed albatross from Tristan da Cunha; Cory's shearwater, various sites)
- Completion of the five RFMO tracking overlap papers for ACAP
- Development of the www.seabirdtracking.org as the web portal for the database
- Production of case studies for presentation to the Convention on Biological Diversity in relation to its 2012 targets for establishing marine protected areas (short-tailed albatross, Antipodean albatross)
- Addition of 17 new data sets (199 tracks), of which 13 new data sets (172 tracks) covered ACAP species

The project aimed to incorporate 30 new data sets on ACAP species, and this has not yet been achieved. The website has experienced delays, but is now being launched in March-April 2010. With this launch we hope to encourage ACAP members to submit data that have not yet been added to the database.

### *2008/11. Capacity Building – Observer Workshop*

***Project manager:*** Argentina, Ecuador and BirdLife International

***Funding provided:*** AUD $5,000

***Summary of Activities/Outcomes:*** The technical training program for observers on board was developed in two stages:
1) From 26 to 28 May 2009 Aves & Conservación with the collaboration of Aves Argentinas organized the first workshop. The aim was to train program staff as Ecuadorian fisheries observers and develop working protocols and introduce concepts and methods for the conservation of

seabirds associated with fisheries in Ecuador. Attended by 37 observers from 4 observer programs currently in operation in Ecuador: Subsecretaria de Pesca de Ecuador, Instituto Nacional de Pesca, Programa Nacional de la Rejilla, and WWF – CIAT.

2) The second stage took place from 16 to 20 November 2009 in Argentina. This stage was hosted by Aves Argentinas and the National Institute for Fisheries Research and Development (INIDEP) in collaboration with Bird & Conservation (Ecuador) and supported by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, the Undersecretary of Fisheries and Aquaculture and Argentina Foreign Ministry. The main objective was to complete the training of observers from Ecuador programs through workshops, discussion and transfer of experience from their Argentine counterparts. Attended by 4 observers, one from each programme in Ecuador.

Workshop outcomes:
(1) Transfer of experience on the process of training observers.
(2) Provide basic knowledge about different types of interaction between birds and fisheries and the methods available for proper evaluation.
(3) Provide basic knowledge for the identification of species of seabirds that interact with fisheries and highlight the key aspects for proper on board recording.
• identification guide for Ecuador seabirds that potentially interact with fisheries.
• on board protocols were developed to record abundance and mortality of seabirds in fisheries.
• discussed fishing practices and gear configuration to reduce interactions with seabirds.
• the Subsecretaria de Pesca de Ecuador representative called for the use of seabird protocols in all government fisheries observer programs in Ecuador.
(4) Exchanged ideas for the implementation of sampling protocols on board and data storage (databases) on bycatch in fisheries, with agreement reached on:
- Promoting the development of a database for free use, compatible with the various programs / projects (eg Excel or Access).
- Developing a list of materials and basic equipment for observers and managing funds to acquire them, depending on the needs of each program.

## ANNEX 1. PROJECT REPORT TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

| **Project Title:** |
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| ***Project initiated by:*** |
| ***Project Manager:*** |
| ***Summary of project activities (max 300 words)*** |
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| ***Project outcomes (detailed by objective) (max 300 words)*** |
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| ***Were the funds spent in accordance with the original budget? (max 100 words)*** |
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| ***Were there any unforeseen difficulties with the project? (max 300 words)*** |
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| ***Have you identified any questions or issues that need to be addressed further? (max 300 words)*** |
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