



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Second Meeting of Advisory Committee

Brasilia, Brazil, 5 – 8 June 2006

Report of the Advisory Committee

Author: Advisory Committee Chair & Vice Chair

REPORT of the ADVISORY COMMITTEE
to the 2nd SESSION OF THE MEETING OF PARTIES to
THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF ALBATROSSES AND PETRELS

Mark Tasker (Chair) and John Cooper (Vice Chair)

1. Introduction

This report has been written by the Chair and Vice-chair of the Advisory Committee, with the help of the Interim Secretariat. It follows the structure agreed in Resolution 1.5 (Annex 1) of the First Session of the Meeting of Parties. It has not been seen, reviewed or approved by the Advisory Committee. It is not a comprehensive description of the activities of the Advisory Committee – further detail may be found in the reports of the Advisory Committee meetings.

a) Establishment of the Committee

The Committee was established at the First Session of the Meeting of Parties, 10-12 November 2004.

b) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Mark Tasker, UK was elected as Chair, and John Cooper, South Africa was elected as Vice-Chair at the first Committee meeting. They have held their posts since that date.

c) Members, Alternates, Observers and Experts

Lists of members, alternates, observers and experts in attendance at each of the meetings of the Committee may be found at

http://www.acap.aq/index.php/advisory_committee/advisory_committee_meeting_1/first_meeting_of_advisory_committee and
http://www.acap.aq/index.php/acap/advisory_committee/advisory_committee_meeting_2

d) Establishment / review of rules of procedure

The Committee established its rules of procedure at their first meeting and reviewed these at the second meeting. Copies may be found at the web addresses listed at 1c).

e) Meetings and other correspondence since MOP1

The Committee first met formally 20-22 July 2005 in Hobart, Australia. Its second meeting was held in Brasilia, Brazil from 5-8 June 2006. The second meeting was preceded by one-day meetings of the Breeding Sites and the Status and Trends Working Groups. There has been considerable informal correspondence in association with the implementation of the Advisory Committee work programme, especially in relation to its working groups. The only formal correspondence was associated with a request to Parties to be allowed formally to approach relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations for official observer status for ACAP.

2. Overview of activities and meetings of the Advisory Committee

2.1 Activities of the Chair

2.1.1 Recruitment

There has been no recruitment activity during the biennium as the Secretariat has yet to be established.

2.1.2 Budgets

The Chair has been consulted by the Interim Secretariat on a number of occasions over spending decisions. In all cases, agreement was reached.

2.1.3 Consultations with the Agreement Secretariat

The Chair has conducted considerable correspondence with the Interim Secretariat (email on at least weekly, often daily basis; telephone conversations on approximately monthly basis) and others (e.g. Conveners of the Working Groups) less frequently. The Vice Chair is usually copied correspondence with the Interim Secretariat. The Vice-Chair has taken on the role of “News Editor” of the ACAP web site (www.acap.aq).

2.1.4 Other activities

The Chair and Vice-Chair have not formally represented ACAP at any outside meeting

2.2 Progress with Actions under Article IX of the Agreement

2.2.1 Provision of scientific, technical and other advice

Two Working Groups were established at the first Advisory Committee meeting – one to compile information on the status and trends of the populations of ACAP species and the other to compile information on the breeding sites of ACAP species. The first group has the broad objective of establishing the conservation status of the ACAP species, while the latter aims to produce an assessment of threats faced by ACAP species at their breeding sites. Excellent progress has been made by both Working Groups. Both Working Groups require data and information to be provided by Parties/Range States with populations of breeding ACAP species. Both Working Groups developed methods to gather this information and data in a uniform manner and have requested that Parties/Range States submit such information. Good progress has been made in the case of most Parties/Range States but moderate amounts of data still remain to be gathered. Revised submission deadlines have been agreed and it is sincerely hoped that all data can be gathered. Without these data it is difficult to conduct all of the analyses and provide the advice requested of the Advisory Committee.

The work of these two Working Groups will enable the drawing up of conservation assessments for ACAP species. A description of these proposed assessments is included as Attachment 2 to Annex 4 of the report of the 2nd Advisory Committee meeting. The assessments would be available as printed copy and in downloadable format from the ACAP website, and would be readily updatable. The Advisory Committee proposes that these assessments would form the basis of advice on individual ACAP species and recommends that funding be found to develop and maintain them. Annex 4 of the report of the 2nd Advisory Committee meeting provides summaries of the current status of ACAP species.

The second meeting of the Advisory Committee decided to establish a fourth Working Group – on Seabird Bycatch. This has been tasked with co-ordinating ACAP work in relation to fisheries interactions. The full terms of reference of this Working Group have not yet been agreed, but will include co-ordination of assessments of the overlap between the distribution of ACAP species and fisheries that might affect them, consideration of collation of available information on bycatch, possible co-ordination of guidance on bycatch mitigation and co-ordination of the interactions with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs). Productive interaction with these latter organisations is critical to the future success of ACAP; bycatch in fisheries is the most important factor behind the decline of albatross populations, and RFMOs are responsible for fisheries management on the High Seas. The second meeting of the Advisory Committee also recommended that a Party/Range State take responsibility for initial interactions with each RFMO on behalf of ACAP. Although full details still need to be agreed, and Parties/Range States need to

consult internally, broadly these initial interactions should include evaluating the best way of achieving productive interactions with each RFMO and perhaps initiating some of those interactions. The co-ordination of activities of Parties/Range States to ACAP within each RFMO will also be likely to be important.

A summary of progress against the Work Programme for 2005-07 annexed to Resolution 1.5 of the first session of the Meeting of Parties is attached as Annex 1.

2.2.2 Progress with standard reference text on taxonomy of species covered by the Agreement

The Taxonomy Working Group has established a standard procedure for assessing the specific status of taxa. This procedure was agreed by the first meeting of the Advisory Committee. The Working Group then reviewed the status of three pairs of controversial taxa: Antipodean and Gibson's albatross *Diomedea antipodensis / gibsoni*; Shy and White-capped albatross *Thalassarche cauta / steadi*; and Buller's and Pacific albatross *T. bulleri / platei*. The Advisory Committee endorsed the Working Group's conclusion that available data do not warrant the recognition of Gibson's and Antipodean albatrosses or Buller's and Pacific albatrosses at the specific level. In contrast, Shy and White-capped albatrosses are divergent and diagnosable and warrant recognition at the specific level. The Advisory Committee also endorsed the Working Group's recommendation that six further pairs of taxa (Northern and Southern royal albatross; Indian and Atlantic yellow-nosed albatross; Chatham and Salvin's albatross; Northern and Southern giant-petrel; Black and Westland Petrel; White-chinned and Spectacled petrel) be reviewed and that the usefulness or otherwise of sub-specific status be examined. Evidence around Buller's and Pacific albatrosses would be further examined. A proposal to amend Annex 1 to ACAP has been put forward based on this work.

2.2.3 Recommendations concerning the Action Plan and further research

A draft Work Programme for the Advisory Committee has been prepared and is submitted as meeting document MoP 2 Doc 23. This aims to implement further the Agreement and its Action Plan. Further recommendations have been written in the form of draft Resolutions for the Meeting of Parties. The Committee has not examined the issue of research requirements and priorities holistically.

2.2.4 Development of indicators to assess progress towards achieving and maintaining a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels

As outlined in Annex 1, some progress has been made in developing indicators, with a recommendation that the "red-list index" would be a useful headline indicator that brings together the sum of the conservation status (as assessed using IUCN criteria) for ACAP species. Further indicators are still being developed, and require completion of data submission / gathering before they can be tested or recommended.

2.2.5 Progress with collation of information under Section 5 of the Action Plan and identification of gaps in knowledge

A report was collated, based on reports from nine Parties or Range States to the Agreement, at the Second Meeting of the Advisory Committee. This was drafted initially by the Interim Secretariat. The report follows the guidance of Section 5 of the Action Plan but it was felt that it was not appropriate, at this time, to include information on a number of topics as these were better described in e.g. the reports from the Working Groups.

In compiling the report based on submissions to the Interim Secretariat by the Parties and Range States it became clear that it would be possible to improve the submissions to a) help those

compiling the submissions understand what was needed and b) enable the production of a more informative report for the Meeting of Parties. A suggestion for an improved reporting framework for Parties is provided as meeting document MoP 2 Doc 29. The Interim Secretariat is thanked for drafting this framework.

2.2.6 Other Activities

The reports mentioned above and the Annex to this report describe the activities of the Advisory Committee.

An article has been submitted to the journal *Marine Ornithology* briefly describing the rationale, history, progress and future activities of ACAP, with the aim of enhancing awareness of the Agreement within the global seabird research community.

2.3 Meetings of the Advisory Committee

Reports from meetings of the Advisory Committee may be found at:

http://www.acap.aq/index.php/advisory_committee/advisory_committee_meeting_1/first_meeting_of_advisory_committee and
http://www.acap.aq/index.php/advisory_committee/advisory_committee_meeting_2/second_meeting_of_advisory_committee

3. Conclusion

The ACAP Agreement was negotiated very rapidly as the need for international action to improve the conservation status of albatrosses and the larger petrels was very clear to all those involved. We are pleased to say that this urgency and willingness to work together internationally has carried through into the implementation phase of the Agreement. Many individuals have worked together to move the programme of work forward. Three years into the Agreement, we can see tangible international work in the form of the outputs from the three working groups (on taxonomy, breeding sites and status & trends). The interactions between the three main institutional pillars of ACAP (the Meeting of Parties, the (Interim) Secretariat and the Advisory Committee) appear to be good although further active engagement from some Parties would be appreciated. There is a need to formalise some of the management arrangements around the Secretariat.

Much of the work has though been aimed at colonies when it is apparent to all that the main problems relate to albatross and petrel interaction with fisheries. Many Parties/Range States and BirdLife International have made progress in addressing this issue, but there is still great potential for further gains through Parties and Range States working together. Steps towards this working together have started with the establishment of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group and the tentative agreement that individual Parties/Range States will, at least initially, take the lead in establishing connections with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations. It is important that these initiatives make good progress in the next triennium. In addition, ACAP has yet to engage fully with those nations (Range States) that have large fleets fishing in the waters frequented by ACAP species. Parties need to find mechanisms to engage more fully in dialogue with these nations (and their fishers) if ACAP is to be successful in meeting its objectives.

We hope that the recommendations in this paper and resolutions that the Committee has drafted will help the Meeting of Parties to drive forward the objectives of ACAP and look forward to serving ACAP in the future.

Annex 1. Progress with implementing the work programme (2005-07) for the Advisory Committee agreed at the First Session of the Meeting of Parties. *Italicised items have been added by the Advisory Committee*, items labelled with three numbers are sub-divisions of existing items.

Activity	Timetable	Completed?	Comment
1. Taxonomy Review			
1.1 Establishment of a working group to review the taxonomy of albatrosses (<i>and petrels</i>)	By Jan 2005	Yes	
1.2 Development of terms of reference	By Nov 2004	Yes	
1.3 Develop draft report	By July 2005	Partially	First report and further work programme agreed in June 2006
2. Review of Status and Trends			
2.1 Establishment of a working group to review the status and trends of species in ACAP Annex 1	By March 2005	Yes	
2.2 Development of terms of reference	By Nov 2004	Yes	
2.3 Development of data proforma and database format	By August 2005	Yes	
2.4 Identify national coordinators to compile and submit data	By August 2005	Partially	Some Parties still to identify national coordinators
2.5 Data collation and submission	By Sept. 2005	Partially	As above, and not complete from other Parties/Range States
2.6 Populate database	Prior to 1 st AC meeting	Partially	
2.7 Undertake initial gap analysis	Prior to 1 st AC meeting	No	Insufficient data available at present
2.8 Population data collection	2006/07		Work continues
3. Protection of Breeding Sites and Status on Non-Native Species			
3.1 Development of data proforma and database format	June 2005	Yes	
<i>3.1 (a) Establishment of Breeding Sites Working Group</i>	June 2005	Yes	AC1 considered that this Working Group was required
3.2 Identify national coordinators to compile and submit information	July 2005	Partially	Some Parties still to identify national coordinators
3.3 Data submission	Prior to 1 st AC meeting	Partially	As above, and not complete from other Parties/Range States
3.4 Assess breeding sites	At 1 st AC meeting	No	Insufficient data available at present
<i>3.4.1 Identify breeding sites that may require additional protection</i>	At 1 st AC meeting		
<i>3.4.2 Prioritise sites for eradication programmes</i>	At 1 st AC meeting		

3.4.3 Agree upon criteria for identification of sites that may require additional protection	At 1 st AC meeting		
3.5 Identify additional breeding sites requiring protection		No	
3.6 Undertake protection measures for breeding sites	2006/07		Work continues
4. Foraging Ranges and Overlap with Fisheries			
4.1 Accessing existing remote tracking data		Yes	Work undertaken by BirdLife International; some datasets not released by researchers
4.2 Additional data sources		No	Additional data sources known, but no progress on including this information
4.3 Continued data collection		Yes	BirdLife International continues to add data to the Global Procellariiform Database
4.4 Access fishing effort data	Year 1	Partially	Most effort data available on web
4.5 Convene workshop	Year 2	No	Decision taken to approach each RFMO individually rather than inviting them to a collective workshop. Individual reports on overlap of fisheries and ACAP species being drafted for each RFMO.
4.5.1 Produce Workshop Report	By Year 3	No	
4.5 (a) Establishment of a Seabird Bycatch Working Group			Given need to co-ordinate efforts by Parties at RFMOs, AC2 decided to establish a new Working Group.
5. Assessment of Impacts of Threats			
5.1 Access bycatch data	Prior to 2 nd AC meeting	No	Remit given to Seabird Bycatch Working Group
5.2 Plan a workshop	Year 3		
5.2.1 Conduct a workshop			
6. Mitigation of Threats			
6.1 Review of programmes that address identified priority threats.	Year 1	No	
6.2 Identify and promote adoption of current best practices	Start Year 2	No	
6.3 Develop fishery-specific mitigation measures	Start Year 3		Remit given to Seabird Bycatch Working Group
7. Criteria Development			
7.1 Identification of Internationally Important Breeding Sites	For 1st AC meeting.	Yes	Paper produced by IASOS; follow up paper delayed due to external factors

7.2 Addition of species to Annex 1	By AC3	Partially	First paper produced by South Africa and Australia, discussed at AC2, revised version to be prepared for AC3
8. Cross-Cutting Themes			
8.1 Capacity Building	Ongoing		Work continues
8.2 Education and Information Programmes	By Year 2	No	News section created on ACAP web site
9. Reporting for MOP			
9.1 System of indicators	For MOP2	Partially	Consideration occurred at AC2, but insufficient data exists to evaluate indicators
9.2 Additional reporting items	For MOP2	Yes	