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Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Third Meeting of the Parties
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Listing of New Species

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(To assist Parties to consider the proposal to amend Annex 1 (MoP3 Doc 26) the United Kingdom has requested that the following document that was prepared for AC4 be submitted as an Information Paper for MoP3)

LISTING OF THE THREE NORTH PACIFIC ALBATROSSES WITHIN THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF ALBATROSSES AND PETRELS

John Cooper¹, Ken Morgan² and Mark L. Tasker³

¹*ACAP Information Officer, c/o CORE Initiatives, 9 Weltevreden Avenue, Rondebosch
7700, South Africa
(john.cooper@uct.ac.za)*

²*Environment Canada, c/o Institute of Ocean Sciences, 9860 W. Saanich Rd., Sidney,
British Columbia, V8L 4B2, Canada*

³*Vice-Chair, ACAP Advisory Committee, c/o Joint Nature Conservation Committee,
Dunnet House, 7 Thistle Place, Aberdeen AB10 1UZ, Scotland, United Kingdom*

Summary

The Advisory Committee of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels at its Third Meeting (Valdivia, Chile, June 2007) agreed to consider the addition of the three North Pacific albatrosses, the Short-tailed *Phoebastria albatrus*, the Laysan *P. immutabilis* and the Black-footed *P. nigripes*, to Annex 1 of the Agreement. The Advisory Committee requested that a supporting document assessing the species' conservation status be prepared for consideration at its Fourth Meeting, to be held in 2008. If support was then forthcoming, the Advisory Committee would seek agreement from a Party or Parties to submit a resolution to list the three North Pacific albatrosses on Annex 1 of the Agreement at the Third Session of the Meeting of Parties, scheduled to be held in 2009. This document briefly sets out the history and rationale for including the North Pacific albatross species within ACAP. It is believed that there would be mutual benefits to both ACAP and existing domestic and international efforts to conserve the three species of North Pacific albatrosses.

Introduction

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) is an international instrument that aims to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels. It was developed because of global concern over the parlous conservation status of albatrosses in particular, and the knowledge that highly migratory species that cross national boundaries require international efforts to conserve them (Cooper *et al.* 2006). So far, ACAP is essentially a regional agreement, with only

species breeding in the southern hemisphere being listed in its Annex 1. However, the Agreement text does not make any geographical restrictions, allowing for geographical expansion by adding new species of albatrosses and petrels to those already listed within it.

At its First Meeting of Parties, ACAP agreed to consider which new species might be added to Annex 1 in the future, and requested that a discussion paper on the subject be prepared for consideration by its Advisory Committee (Resolution 1.5, Annex 2 Work Programme for the Advisory Committee for 2005 to 2007; ACAP 2004). Accordingly, a paper (AC2 Doc 21, www.acap.aq) co-drafted by Australia and South Africa was submitted to the Second Meeting of ACAP's Advisory Committee. In consideration of this submission, the committee decided after discussion that a new version should be prepared for its 2007 meeting. A revised paper (AC3 Doc 18) was considered at the Third Meeting of the Advisory Committee held in Valdivia, Chile in June 2007.

At its Third Meeting, ACAP's Advisory Committee agreed as a first priority that the addition of the three North Pacific albatrosses should be progressed intersessionally by requesting the ACAP Interim Secretariat to prepare a supporting document assessing the species' conservation status, to be considered at its next meeting, due to be held in August 2008 in South Africa. If support was then forthcoming, the Advisory Committee would seek agreement from a Party or Parties to submit a resolution to list the North Pacific albatross species on Annex 1 of the Agreement at the Third Session of the Meeting of Parties in 2009 (ACAP Secretariat 2007).

Progress to Date: Ranking the Three North Pacific Albatrosses

The approach taken (in AC3 Doc 18) was to assess all existing species of procellariiform seabirds against eight selected criteria, using a semi-quantified scale. The individual scores were then totalled for each species. Total weighted scores for the 26 ACAP-listed species ranged from 19 to 29, with a mean of 24.7. Scores for non-listed species ranged from four to 27, with a mean of 12.5. Only eight non-listed species (range 19-27, mean 22.4) attained total weighted scores equal to or greater than the lowest weighted score of a listed species. The three remaining unlisted albatrosses, Short-tailed *Phoebastria albatrus*, Laysan *P. immutabilis* and Black-footed *P. nigripes*, all scored highly in the above exercise (24, 26 and 27, respectively).

Existing Conservation Assessments and Plans for the North Pacific Albatrosses

The World Conservation Union has categorised the Black-footed Albatross as Endangered, and the Laysan and Short-tailed Albatrosses as Vulnerable in its Red List. In addition, the Short-tailed Albatross is listed under Appendix I (migratory species categorised as being in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant proportion of their range) of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild

Animals (CMS, or Bonn Convention). The Black-footed and the Laysan Albatrosses are listed under Appendix II (migratory species that have an unfavourable status or would benefit from international co-operation) of the CMS.

The Government of Japan designated the Short-tailed Albatross as a Natural Monument in 1958 and as a Special Bird for Protection in 1972. Torishima Island, the species' main breeding colony, is also a Japanese Natural Monument (USFWS 2005). The Short-tailed Albatross was federally listed in the United States (USA) as Endangered throughout its range in July 2000; and in 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published a draft recovery plan for the species (available at: http://ecos.fws.gov/docs/recovery_plan/051027.pdf). In October 2007, the USA released its first version of a conservation action plan for both the Black-footed and Laysan Albatrosses (available at: <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/migratorybirds/conservation.htm>).

In 2003, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC 2003) designated the Short-tailed Albatross as Threatened (a wildlife species likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed) in Canada. In 2007, COSEWIC listed the Black-footed Albatross as a species of Special Concern (a wildlife species that may become a threatened or an endangered species because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats; COSEWIC 2007). In May 2008, Canada posted the "Recovery Strategy for the Short-tailed Albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*) and the Pink-footed Shearwater (*Puffinus creatopus*) in Canada (Final Version)" on the Species at Risk Public Registry (available at http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/document/default_e.cfm?documentID=1354). These documents have been used as starting points for the species assessments under development.

The Way Forward

As was noted in AC3, Doc 18, ACAP has from its negotiation and inception concentrated almost exclusively on albatrosses and petrels of the southern hemisphere; explaining why the three North Pacific albatrosses were not included from the outset. However, based on the scoring exercise presented in AC3 Doc 18), the inclusion of these three species does appear warranted. Inclusion will have far-reaching implications in terms of increasing the number of range states, and thus the potential membership of ACAP. Further, as listed here, domestic and international efforts are underway to address the conservation concerns of these species (e.g. via the Black-footed and Laysan Albatross Conservation Action Plan, the Canadian and the US/Japan Short-tailed Albatross Recovery Teams, and the international North Pacific Albatross Working Group; <http://npawg.wikispaces.com>). The synergy created by coordinating with the above-noted multinational arrangements; the information exchange that is fostered by ACAP; and the potential for increased involvement in the relevant North Pacific Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs), are three convincing arguments for adding the three North Pacific albatross species to Annex 1 of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels.

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