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# Update on ACAP Activities and Advice on Reducing the Bycatch of Albatrosses and Petrels in SIOFA Fisheries

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

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<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The incidental mortality (bycatch) of seabirds in longline and trawl fisheries continues to be a serious global concern, especially for threatened albatrosses and petrels, resulting in a Conservation Crisis being declared by the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) in 2019. There are currently 31 species listed in Annex 1 of the Agreement. Of the 22 species of albatrosses, 14 breed or forage in the SIOFA Area, as do four of the nine listed petrel species. This paper provides an update on ACAP activities and advice since March 2022 (see <a href="#">SC-07-INFO-10</a> for activities prior to that date). In particular, there are several relevant outcomes from the Thirteenth Meeting of ACAP's Advisory Committee (AC13) and associated Working Groups held in the intervening period (May 2023).</p>

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<sup>2</sup> Documents available only to members invited to closed sessions.



Agreement on the Conservation  
of Albatrosses and Petrels

## Update on ACAP Activities and Advice on Reducing the Bycatch of Albatrosses and Petrels in SIOFA Fisheries

### Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

#### ABSTRACT

The incidental mortality (bycatch) of seabirds in longline and trawl fisheries continues to be a serious global concern, especially for threatened albatrosses and petrels, resulting in a Conservation Crisis being declared by the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) in 2019. There are currently 31 species listed in Annex 1 of the Agreement. Of the 22 species of albatrosses, 14 breed or forage in the SIOFA Area, as do four of the nine listed petrel species. This paper provides an update on ACAP activities and advice since March 2022 (see [SC-07-INFO-10](#) for activities prior to that date). In particular, there are several relevant outcomes from the Thirteenth Meeting of ACAP's Advisory Committee (AC13) and associated Working Groups held in the intervening period (May 2023).

#### CONSERVATION STATUS, POPULATION SIZE AND TRENDS OF ACAP SPECIES

New information on the populations of various ACAP-listed species was considered at the 2023 meetings ([AC13 Doc 09](#)). This will be used to update the current trend of each species during the upcoming Population and Conservation Status Working Group (PaCSWG) meeting in August 2024. The [ACAP Species Assessments](#) are a key resource summarising the most recent scientific information regarding albatross and petrel species listed under the Agreement and are in the process of being updated during the current intersessional period. These assessments provide data on each species' population status and trends, their distribution, the threats they face both at breeding sites and at sea, as well as the conservation measures that are in place to protect them. Updated assessments will be progressively available in 2024.

#### ACAP High Priority Populations

The Joint Meeting of ACAP's Seabird Bycatch and Population and Conservation Status Working Groups (SBWG11 and PaCSWG7) considered a paper ([Joint SBWG11-PaCSWG7 Doc 04](#)) which described the overlap of eight of the nine ACAP High Priority Populations with EEZs, and areas of competence of RFMOs (Regional Fishery Management Organisations) and CCAMLR. The paper highlighted the responsibilities of these management bodies for addressing the conservation crisis for the ACAP High Priority Populations and encouraged coordinated advocacy at relevant management fora. Six of the eight high priority populations

assessed occurred in the SIOFA area with the Crozet Island population of Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca* spending 47% of their time in the SIOFA Area and the Amsterdam Island population of Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche carteri* spending 35% of the time in the SIOFA Area, demonstrating the high importance of the area to these High Priority Populations.

## SEABIRD BYCATCH MITIGATION ADVICE

Much of the work of ACAP's Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG) focuses on routinely reviewing and updating best-practice mitigation advice for industrial fishing gear types (principally pelagic and demersal longline, and trawl gear). The ACAP review process recognises that factors such as safety, practicality and the characteristics of the fishery should also be taken into account when considering the efficacy of seabird bycatch mitigation measures and consequently in the development of advice and guidelines on best practice.

The 11th Meeting of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG11) was held in May 2023 in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, prior to AC13. SBWG11 reviewed a range of studies that reiterated and further endorsed current ACAP Best Practice Advice for trawl, pelagic longline and demersal longline fisheries. A number of minor improvements to these best-practice documents were made to improve consistency and to reference the latest scientific evidence.

For pelagic longline fisheries SBWG11 reviewed a range of studies that reiterated and further endorsed current best practice advice. ACAP recommends that the most effective way to reduce seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries is to use the following three best practice measures simultaneously: (1) branch line weighting, (2) night setting and (3) bird scaring lines. SBWG11 updated the best practice advice document to more clearly outline the rationale for recommending the simultaneous use of methods. The simultaneous use of the three ACAP recommended mitigation measures optimises seabird bycatch reduction in longline fisheries. All three recommended measures are demonstrated to be effective; however, each has limitations when used alone. There is a period of time when hooks are accessible to birds even when branch lines are weighted. Night setting used alone is less effective at reducing seabird bycatch for nocturnally active birds and during bright moon light conditions. Bird scaring lines used alone can rarely protect baited hooks beyond the aerial extent of the line. Consequently, the simultaneous use of the three ACAP recommended seabird bycatch mitigation measures compensates for these limitations. In addition, three hook-shielding devices (the 'Hookpod-LED', the 'Hookpod-mini' and the 'Smart Tuna Hook') and one underwater bait setting device (the 'Underwater Bait Setter, Skadia Technologies') have been assessed and incorporated into ACAP's Best Practice Advice as stand-alone mitigation measures.

For trawl fisheries, the Tamini Tabla was added to Bird Scaring Line minimum standards as this device has now moved from development stage to being readily available. A new mitigation measure for net captures in trawls, minimising the pooling area, was also considered and added to the review section of the advice document; however, there was insufficient evidence to recommend it as a best-practice measure at this time.

SBWG11 also reviewed new research relevant to lasers as a mitigation measure in trawl and longline fisheries, specifically research to determine if lasers cause eye injury in birds.

Available evidence shows that high-energy lasers are ineffective at deterring seabirds from danger areas around fishing vessels. The lasers in current use likely damage seabird visual systems, with negative effects on foraging behaviour. The use of high-energy laser technologies for seabird bycatch mitigation is strongly discouraged by ACAP, since there is currently no evidence of effectiveness, and serious concerns remain in terms of the potential impacts on the health of individual birds.

The updated advice documents, endorsed by AC13, are available for download through the following links:

- [ACAP 2023 Trawl mitigation review and best practice advice](#)
- [ACAP 2023 Demersal Longline mitigation review and best practice advice](#)
- [ACAP 2023 Pelagic Longline mitigation review and best practice](#)

## OTHER ACAP RESOURCES

Updates are also in progress for other key resources, including the [ACAP-BirdLife bycatch mitigation factsheets](#), and the [ACAP-FRA Seabird Bycatch Identification Guide](#). New [Guidelines for working with albatrosses and petrels during H5N1 avian influenza outbreak](#) were added in July 2022 and updated in November 2023. The guidelines include recommendations for dealing with seabirds accidentally landed onboard vessels in areas within the reach of outbreaks.

Other advice and guideline documents as highlighted in **SC-07-INFO-10** remain current.