



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Sixth Meeting of Advisory Committee

Guayaquil, Ecuador, 29 August – 2 September 2011

Progress with the Development of a Priority Setting Framework for the Identification of ACAP Conservation Priorities

Secretariat, WG Officials

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Agenda item 8

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Progress with the Development of a Priority Setting Framework for the Identification of ACAP Conservation Priorities

Secretariat, WG Officials

This document provides an overview of progress achieved with the development of a priority setting framework for the identification of ACAP conservation priorities.

The actual outputs of this process are presented in two separate working group papers, Joint BSWG4/STWG5 Doc 08 and SBWG4 Doc 29, where conservation priorities and the status of the framework for land based and at-sea threats, respectively, are analyzed.

Background

The need for a process to identify conservation priorities was first identified at AC3, to assist in the identification of priorities for conservation action to be undertaken by ACAP Parties and range States, Working Groups, the Advisory Committee and the Agreement as a whole. At AC4, two meetings papers were submitted on the subject, one by New Zealand (AC4 Doc 15) and the other by various authors (AC4 Doc 48). Discussions in Working Groups meetings and in the margins of AC4 led to the development of a basic framework for setting priorities for conservation actions, however considerable work remained to be done on the development of this process.

AC4 agreed to support the continuation of this work and accepted New Zealand's offer to lead the process. An *ad-hoc* Working Group on Priorities (PWG), convened by New Zealand, was established to further develop the framework.

The PWG developed a quantitative assessment methodology. Under this methodology, scores are assigned to variables relating to the vulnerability of a particular seabird population, the severity of threat faced by that population and the likelihood of success of taking management action. Management actions with similar scores are then grouped together and assigned a rank accordingly, such as "Highest priority".

AC5 noted the substantial progress that had been achieved by the PWG and agreed to the following intersessional work being undertaken to complete the framework:

At-sea threats

- Completing the peer review of all data.
- Migrating the data onto an ACAP database and linking to the current ACAP databases.
- Creating a system for updating the data and assessments as and when new information becomes available.
- Developing a quantitative scoring system for identifying the cumulative threats posed to a species or by a fishery.
- Delivering on the potential of the framework to address all of the secondary objectives identified in AC5 Doc 15.

Land-based threats

- Determine the likelihood of success for conservation actions.
- Test weighting criteria of factors determining priorities.

Progress achieved since AC5

From 16 March to 30 April 2011 a secondment, funded with a voluntary contribution from New Zealand, was conducted to assist the ACAP Secretariat and Advisory Committee with the completion of the above tasks. Mr Juan Pablo Seco Pon from the National Research Council (Argentina) undertook this secondment at the ACAP Secretariat in Hobart. Following is a summary of the progress made against each of these tasks.

At-sea threats

Completing the peer review of all data.

A workshop was held at the ACAP Secretariat's office in October 2010 to conduct a peer review of all 'at sea' data in the prioritisation database.

A workshop was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in September 2010 as part of a project funded by the Advisory Committee (project ACAP 2010-11). Although the primary purpose of this workshop was to improve data collection on the incidental mortality of seabirds in South American observer programmes, the opportunity was taken to make use of the expertise available in the workshop to review 'at-sea' data in the prioritisation database for South American fisheries (these outcomes are detailed in AC6 Inf 1).

A simulation exercise was also carried out to determine if modifications to the weighting regime being used would generate rankings that closely correlate with those of two experts in this field.

Migrating the data onto an ACAP database and linking to the current ACAP databases.

Although most fields were able to be filled with data extracted from the ACAP database for the terrestrial threats, this was not the case for the at-sea threats. The addition of relevant fields and appropriate links to existing ACAP data has yet to be carried out.

Creating a system for updating the data and assessments, as and when new information becomes available.

Currently the data exist as a stand-alone excel file, which needs to be updated independently of the existing ACAP database. The ability to update data on-line by multiple users will be developed as part of migrating the excel file into the ACAP database. This work has not yet commenced.

Developing a quantitative scoring system for identifying the cumulative threats posed to a species, or by a fishery.

A semi-quantitative scoring system has been developed by the PWG, capable of identifying the cumulative threats posed to a species or to a fishery.

Delivering on the potential of the framework to address all of the secondary objectives identified in AC5 Doc 15.

- Identifying priority research areas relating to effective conservation of albatrosses and petrels – to be addressed in Working Group meetings.
- Examination of all threats to a particular population or species – to be addressed in Working Group meetings.
- Examination of all threats to ACAP species stemming from a particular fishery – to be addressed by SBWG meeting.
- Providing guidance on priorities for conservation actions that may require capacity building initiatives – to be addressed by Working Groups and Advisory Committee.

Land-based threats

Verification of, and updates to, the data held by ACAP on population size and status, threats listed for each breeding site, and the likelihood of success and cost of conservation actions have been completed by the BSWG Convenor (Richard Phillips) through consultation with BSWG members and other experts following AC5. Wieslawa Misiak (ACAP Science Officer) and Mike Double (TWG convenor) have incorporated these revisions into the ACAP database and the Excel spreadsheets which constitute the prioritisation framework. These spreadsheets include embedded macros that make it possible to test the effects of varying the weighting criteria, and to readily incorporate future updates to any of the underlying data.

In addition, members of the BSWG developed an initial methodology for prioritising conservation actions taking into account the cumulative effects on multiple species of addressing each threat.

Outcomes

The peer-reviewed data were incorporated into the Agreement's prioritisation framework, to assist the ranking of conservation priorities for each Party and ACAP listed species.

One significant issue arose from this process, namely the lack of consistency among certain characteristics, such as the likelihood of success scores for conservation actions at sea. **Further work will be required during the intersessional period to address this issue.**

Reports have now been produced by the Secretariat to aid discussion on this issue by the Working Groups meeting in Guayaquil.

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Recommendations

Land-based threats

1. That the detailed outputs from the framework be used, together with other appropriate information, should be used 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.
2. That AC6 report to MoP4 on those high priority conservation actions that are necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the Agreement.
3. That the Status and Trends, and Breeding Sites Working Groups make use of the information provided in the prioritization reports to address the secondary objectives identified in AC5 Doc 15, namely:
 - a. Identifying priority research areas relating to effective conservation of albatrosses and petrels;
 - b. Examine terrestrial threats to a particular population or species;
 - c. Examine all threats to ACAP species stemming from a particular land-based threat; and
 - d. Provide guidance on priorities for conservation actions that may require capacity building initiatives.

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4. That the STWG and BSWG provide advice to the Advisory Committee on these secondary objectives.
5. That AC6 determine the time frame for its next review of conservation priorities.

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At-sea threats

6. That the Secretariat and, where appropriate, the relevant Working Groups, be tasked with completing those aspects of the framework that are not finished or require refinement.
7. That the Advisory Committee considers funding as a matter of urgency those aspects of the framework that are not finished such that funds are available immediately to complete the framework.
8. That the Advisory Committee considers the outputs from a completed at-sea framework intersessionally, in order that the Advisory Committee can report to MoP4 on those high priority conservation actions that are necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the Agreement.

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