



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Fourth Meeting of Advisory Committee

Cape Town, South Africa, 22 – 25 August 2008

**Summary of 2009 ACAP Project Applications and Funding
Recommendations**

Author: Working Group Convenors

Summary of 2009 ACAP Project Applications and Funding Recommendations

#	Project	SBWG	BSWG	STWG	Overall	Requested	Funded
1	Secretariat Capacity	H	H	H	H	46000	46000
3	Quintana SGP	M		M	M	60000	
4	BLI - bait pods	H			H	20000	20000
5	Cooper - House mice		H	H	H	4750	4750
6	Pro Delphinus WAAL	H			H	30080	40000
7	APECO WAAL	M			M	36635	
8	2010 World Seabird Conference	L	L	L	L	20000	
9	Pierre Black Petrel	M		M	M	35450	
10	BLI Tracking Database	H			H	10000	10000
11	Capacity Building Ecu-Arg-BLI	H			H	5000	5000
						267,915	125,750

Project Title: Increased capacity to progress ACAP Action Plan and AC Work Programme

Initiated by: Secretariat:

Project No. 1 **Cost:** AUD \$46,000

Project Manager: ACAP Executive Officer

Project Summary: The continued progress of ACAP, including the Working Groups, requires additional support from the ACAP Secretariat, the current capacity of which is limited. There an application will be made to MoP3 for an additional funded position at the Secretariat that would not only support the Working Groups, but also undertake other priority tasks as required. In the meantime, funding is sought to support an "ACAP Science Officer" to work with the Secretariat to assist and support the work of the Working Groups and the Advisory Committee. The tasks of the " ACAP Science Officer" would include ongoing management and development of the ACAP database, incorporation of new data and information from all Working Groups, and provision of support for priority activities identified in the ACAP Action Plan.

Project Title: The Southern Giant Petrel: steps towards the conservation of procellariiform birds within the Patagonian Shelf

Initiated by: Argentina

Project No. 3 **Cost:** AUD \$60,000

Project Manager: Dr. Flavio Quintana, Centro Nacional Patagónico (CONICET)

Project Summary: Albatrosses and large petrels of the family Procellariidae are the seabird species most commonly killed by longline fisheries in the Southern Oceans. This situation calls for research as an essential step for the conservation of these species and their habitat. Giant petrels and albatrosses are large birds that range through ample oceanic areas, exploit diverse marine habitats and are indicators of ecosystem health. Current knowledge about the ecology, biology and population dynamics of Southern Giant Petrel (SGP) is insufficient. The Agreement for the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) encourages the research on the ecology of listed threatened species as the giant petrels. Better understanding of this issue will help in the development of management and conservation tools. It is a priority to conduct research and long-term monitoring of this species for the development and implementation of effective conservation strategies.

We propose:

1. To continue monitoring key parameters of the breeding biology and to track changes in the distribution and abundance of the SGP breeding at all Patagonian colonies of Argentina.

2. To go on with studies on at-sea movements and behavior of SGPs from Patagonian colonies by using remote tracking techniques.
3. To assess how the at-sea distribution data studies can contribute to:
 - I. Identify Important Bird Areas and areas of risk at the Patagonian Shelf.
 - II. Contribute to governmental initiatives for the conservation of the SGP and other procellariiform seabirds.
4. To perform habitat modelling based on the interaction between the SGP and fisheries operating in the Patagonian Shelf.
5. To increase the capacity of Argentine graduate and undergraduate students to develop and implement conservation-oriented research projects.

Project title: At-sea trials to investigate the effectiveness of bait pods in reducing seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries

Initiated by: BirdLife International

Project No. 4 **Cost:** AUD \$20,000

Project Manager: Ben Sullivan, BirdLife International Global Seabird programme Coordinator

Project summary: AUS\$20,000 of funding is sought to conduct at-sea trials to collect initial data on the effectiveness of two types of pressure release 'bait pods' designed to reduce bycatch in a range of pelagic longline fisheries.

The concept of the 'Bait Pod' is a capsule for pelagic longline fisheries that prevents seabirds from accessing baits before a pressure sensitive valve operates at a pre-determined depth to release baited hooks. This device is based on capturing the inherently reliable and predictable forces of pressure to operate a release mechanism.

The BirdLife Global Seabird Programme has been working with Fishtek for 3 years to develop and test mitigation measures (e.g. Safe Leads). The two types of pods are operated by the same pressure release mechanism:

- 1) a 'bait pod' that encapsulates the entire hook and a large proportion of the bait and is attached to the mainline and re-usable for several thousand setting operations
- 2) a 'micro-pod', based on a miniature pressure release system that is designed to cover the hook.

Both pods are retrievable and re-usable for several thousands of replicates. The bait pod will be clipped to the mainline (see Annex 1) and when it reaches

a predetermined depth (10-15m), the pod releases and the branch line and hook sink to the fishing depth. When the line is hauled, the pods are unclipped and stacked ready for the next set. The micropod will operate in a similar manner but is designed to simply cover a proportion of the shank, and the point of the hook. The pods are made of a non-polluting polymer and can be produced at very low per-unit cost; making them an environmentally and economically attractive option.

Project title: Under attack! The effects of predation by the introduced House Mice on the breeding success and interval of the Critically Endangered Tristan Albatross

Initiated by: South Africa

Project No. 5 **Cost:** AUD \$4,750

Project Manager: John Cooper, Conservation & Restoration Initiatives

Project Summary: The Tristan Albatross *Diomedea dabbenena* is a near-endemic species of Gough Island in the mid South Atlantic, a part of the United Kingdom Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha. In 2008, the species was recategorized as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International, because of the twin effects of longline-induced mortality at sea and low breeding success caused by predation of chicks by the introduced House Mouse *Mus musculus* on land.

In 2006/07 a long-term demographic study was commenced at Gough with approximately 200 breeding pairs being followed annually in two separate study colonies. All study nests are staked and breeding birds colour- and metal-banded and photographed (for assigning gender) each year. All surviving chicks are metal-banded prior to fledging in September. From the second year of the study nests have been checked monthly until chicks fledge, allowing the timing of breeding failure to be recorded. A third year of study will commence in September 2008 for which funding has already been secured.

Results from the first two years of study show that breeding success is much lower than would be expected for a great albatross, and that nest failures occur mainly after the brood/guard stage. This is also unusual for *Diomedea* albatrosses, where failure more usually occurs during incubation or during and/or shortly after hatching.

The study aims to ascertain what the effects of late chick failure, due to predation by mice, are on breeding success and breeding interval by studying the biennial species' demography for a fourth year. Because chicks have been metal-banded in the study colonies in most years since the 1980s, information will also become available on year of first breeding and whether age has an influence on breeding success. Information on mate fidelity and fidelity to breeding locality will also be gathered.

Note this application is for a single year of what is planned to be a long-term study. It is envisaged that funding will become available within the next half a decade for

monitoring of the Tristan Albatross on Gough as part of a mouse-eradication exercise. This application is thus being made to avoid a gap in the time series.

Project title: Assessment of waved albatross abundance and behaviour near Peruvian fishing vessels and of socio-economic aspects related to seabird interactions

Initiated by: Peru

Project No: 6 **Cost:** AUD \$30,080

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

Project summary: Recent research has indicated a decline in the population of the waved albatross (WAAL), resulting in its listing as Critically Endangered by the IUCN. Information suggests that the species' main at-sea threat is caused by interactions at their foraging grounds with Peruvian artisanal fisheries. Also, evidence of the use of these birds for human consumption reinforces the need to multi-disciplinary efforts to address their conservation.

In 2007 ACAP began work on the Action Plan for the WAAL. The draft Action Plan notes the need to improve our understanding of WAAL distribution at sea and behaviour around fishing vessels that may make them particularly vulnerable to direct capture. The action plan also notes the need to integrate socio-economic studies of fishing villages to help understand their perspective on seabird conservation.

This proposed project will address these identified research priorities and thereby advance WAAL conservation. The objective of this proposal is to establish and implement a methodology to quantify WAAL relative abundance at sea from artisanal vessels and to characterize WAAL behaviour around these vessels. An additional objective of this study is to better understand the use of seabirds (particularly WAAL) as a food source in coastal communities.

Project title: Albatross, petrels and fisheries in Peru: Evaluating bycatch and seabird distribution and abundance

Initiated by: Peru

Project No: 7 **Cost:** AUD \$36,635.50

Project Manager: Liliana Ayala, Peruvian Association for Conservation of nature (APECO)

Project summary: This project will evaluate the interactions between albatross and petrel and longline fishery (industrial and artisanal) between 6 and 10 degrees S using on-board observers and interviews in a year with the purpose to know spatial and seasonal distribution of that interaction. We will develop the major effort in the Peruvian coast. Besides, we will obtain information about the relative abundance of these seabirds in at least two fishing areas (longline and gillnet fishery) from two surveys at sea. This study will involve observers with experience (industrial vessels), and artisanal fishermen will be trained as observers (artisanal vessels), so they will be agents between other fishermen to conserve seabirds.

Also, we will develop an information and diffusion campaign about this conservation issue among fishermen associations and industrial fishery companies, we will inform about the possibility to participate in better markets through fishery certifications (Fishery of Common Dolphin) of the Marine Stewardship Council. Besides, we will take information about interaction with marine mammals, sea turtles among others.

Project title: Seed funding – 2010 World Seabird Conference

Initiated by: Canada and USA

Project No: 8 **Cost:** AUD \$20,000

Project Manager: Louise Blight, University of British Columbia & Pacific Seabird Group, Co-chair, Local Organising Committee

Project summary: The First World Seabird Conference (WSC) will be held in Victoria, Canada, 7-11 September 2010. This conference is being hosted by the Pacific Seabird Group (PSG), with participating groups including most of the world's seabird societies and BirdLife International's Global Seabird Programme. The explicit aim of the WSC is to foster collaborations among groups and individuals working on seabird conservation around the world. The WSC theme is "global conservation of the world's seabirds through information sharing". The WSC will be structured around a series of workshops and plenary sessions on many of the key issues in seabird conservation today, e.g., seabird-fishery interactions; island restoration and invasive species; climate change and seabirds. The focus of the WSC will be on: i) initial information-sharing, along with ii) developing subsequent conservation-related products through conference workshops and symposia (some suggested topics: a global seabird colony database; a comprehensive assessment of the status of threats to IUCN-listed species and initial action plans based on same), and iii) creating partnerships that will endure and contribute substantively to the next generation of international seabird conservation efforts.

We are requesting funds from ACAP to assist with the following:

- 1) Supporting the Local Organising Committee with expenses directly related to coordination efforts;
- 2) Funding a workshop on one of the four ACAP Working Group topics (Status and Trends, Taxonomy, Breeding Sites, Seabird Bycatch), or on the use of international conventions and agreements in achieving seabird conservation goals;
- 3) Covering travel expenses of one or more plenary speakers or workshop leaders;
- 3) Contributing seed money to a travel assistance fund for students and/or scientists from developing countries.

Project title: Population assessment and at-sea distribution of black petrels breeding on Little Barrier Island, New Zealand

Initiated by: New Zealand

Project No: 9 **Cost:** AUD \$35,450

Project Manager: Johanna Pierre, *Department of Conservation*

Project summary: The black petrel (*Procellaria parkinsoni*) is a globally vulnerable seabird that is also listed on Annex 1 of ACAP. This species only breeds in New Zealand, and is killed in longline and trawl fisheries. In addition to at-sea threats from fishing, black petrels are affected by invasive non-native predators on their main breeding colony (Great Barrier Island). The only other breeding colony of black petrels occupies Little Barrier Island, a protected predator-free nature reserve. This population has not been monitored for almost 20 years, and so its current status, population trend, and the at-sea distribution of its birds are unknown.

We will ascertain the current status of the Little Barrier Island black petrel colony, gather information reflecting population trend since last monitoring, and using loggers, conduct the first investigations of the at-sea distribution of birds breeding on Little Barrier Island. This will provide up to date information on the species threat status, and aid the management and conservation of black petrels, both on land and at sea. Preliminary field investigations conducted in the 2006/07 breeding season suggest the breeding population of black petrels on Little Barrier Island may be significantly smaller than previously realised. If this is the case and the species only has one breeding colony of significant size, it will be more threatened than currently understood. The estimated cost of the project is AUD\$60,000, of which \$35,450 is requested from ACAP. Loggers and all non-consumable field equipment are already available from the Department of Conservation.

Project title: Global Procellariiform Tracking Database

Initiated by: BirdLife International

Project No: 10 **Cost:** AUD \$10,000

Project Manager: Cleo Small

The Global Procellariiform Tracking Database was established in 2003 through the collaboration of scientists from around the world, incorporating around 90% of existing remote tracking data for albatross and petrel species. Since 2003, the database has continued to grow as new datasets have been

added, and it has proven a vital conservation tool. In particular, the database has facilitated analysis of the global distribution of ACAP species, and their overlap with fisheries. Analyses of tracking data have been presented to CCAMLR and to all five of the world's tuna commissions in relation to overlap with their fishing effort. However, key data gaps remain for some species and sites, which hinder overall estimates of albatross and petrel distribution. There are currently in the region of 50 remote tracking data sets being collected on albatross, petrel and shearwater species, of which at least 30 are on ACAP species, and more studies will commence in the near future. We hope that these data will be submitted to the database, and seek support for the processing of new data sets.

Project title: Capacity Building: Onboard Observer Technical Training

Initiated by: Argentina, Ecuador, BirdLife International

Project No: 11 **Cost:** AUD \$5,000

Project Manager: Argentina

In connection with the development of the Waved Albatross Plan of Action, the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) has recently identified a problem associated with information gaps in the levels of incidental mortality of seabirds in Ecuadorean fisheries. This is strictly linked to the fact that the National Observer Program of Ecuador is currently not gathering information (or is doing so at very basic levels) in relation to the interaction between seabirds and fishing vessels.

Upon discussion of this issue with representatives from the Department of Fishing Resources at the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries of Ecuador, the National Fisheries Institute (INP) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and, having discussed the possible mechanisms to enhance the quality of any data gathered, consideration was given to the possibility of developing an educational and training program within the framework of ACAP's Capacity Building efforts.

Argentina has in the past years developed an educational program on incidental by-catch of seabirds, sea mammals and marine turtles aimed at onboard observers within the Onboard Observer and Landing Sampling Sub-Program of the Oceanographic and Fisheries Information System of the INIDEP. This program involved a number of training courses, specific materials preparation and onboard observer training follow-up.

As a result of said enhancement, data sampling protocols were adapted in relation to the incidental by-catch of seabirds and the database was also improved. Institutions which provided support and resources to this program were: the Universidad de Mar del Plata and Aves Argentinas, particularly in relation to seabird issues. This strength was identified as ACAP for replication between all Spanish-speaking members of the Agreement..

BirdLife International is also undertaking a global initiative called 'Albatross Task Force' (ATC) with a view to building local capacity in order to reduce the incidental by-catch of seabirds caused by fisheries. Within this region, these groups are operational in Brazil, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina and comprise expert local individuals and institutions to address these issues.