



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Fifth Meeting of Advisory Committee

Mar del Plata, Argentina, 13 – 17 April 2010

ACAP: Indicators for Measuring Success

Author: BirdLife International

‘This paper is presented for consideration by ACAP and may contain unpublished data, analyses, and/or conclusions subject to change. Data in this paper shall not be cited or used for purposes other than the work of the ACAP Secretariat, ACAP Advisory Committee or their subsidiary Working Groups without the permission of the original data holders.’

AC5 Inf 8
Agenda item 14
BSWG Item 5.2, SBWG Item 5, STWG Item 7

ACAP: Indicators for Measuring Success

Introduction

BirdLife was unable to offer input to the draft of AC5 Document 28 prior to its submission, given the short lead time for comments. However, we felt it would be useful to contribute some suggestions, particularly for the discussions of this topic and document at the meetings of the ACAP Working Groups.

Doc 28 is a useful summary of the background and provides some valuable suggestions for approaches to this complex topic. However, the recommendations contained in Doc 28 have quite wide-ranging potential implications. There would be seen to be a number of issues needing consideration before ACAP Working Groups were in a position to endorse agreed guidelines, and to recommend a list of possible indicators, let alone to identify appropriate data and recommend a suite of indicators for use by AC6. This paper attempts to provide some suggestions and commentary which is complementary and additional to the proposals contained in Doc 28.

AC5 Doc 28 Recommendations

1. Guidance for developing indicators

1.1 The CBD principles are highly relevant and have been used quite extensively (with various modifications) in a range of analogue exercises. An important review of biodiversity indicators was undertaken by EASAC (2005) and two approaches of particular relevance to the marine environment (relatively neglected in most overviews) are those by Gubbay (2004) and Daan et al. (2005).

1.2 To the extent that the reference to guidance also refers to the sections in Doc 28 entitled “Requirements under ACAP” and “Developing ACAP indicators”, the scope suggested clearly needs to be more comprehensive, given that these sections mainly address indicators relevant to the conservation status of species. Except for the comment about potential sub-indicators for Implementation, this topic is not covered in this section, although, as Annex C emphasises, indicators of e.g. Capacity may be of considerable relevance.

1.3 We believe that indicators also need to reflect the status of breeding and feeding sites/areas (as indeed appears in Annex A) and also a variety of topics relating to Capacity (see relevant sections of Annex C), rather than relegating these at this stage to the status of sub-indicators.

2. Discuss and revise the proposed list of possible indicators

To assist discussion, we make suggestions under appropriate headings below. As a general comment, we would note that given the stated desire to consider State-Pressure-Response, it would be useful to develop and characterise indicators according to which of these elements they represent.

2.1 Population trends

There are relatively few options here, given the data mainly available to ACAP. Most data relate to time-series counts of breeding population size. In a few cases, this can be disaggregated into one or more of its major components (sub-indicators?):

- a) adult survival rate;
- b) juvenile survival/recruitment rate;
- c) breeding frequency;
- d) breeding success.

Most, if not all, of these may need expressing in relation to some reference or baseline value.

2.2 Breeding sites

2.2.1 Indices deriving from the threat assessment analysis are certainly worth formal investigation. In the interim, the number/proportion of sites with alien species affecting ACAP species (and distinguishing between animal predators and habitat modifiers) would be worth investigating.

2.2.2 “Condition” presumably refers to aspects like the status of vegetation in relation to erstwhile/pristine conditions (which could doubtless be exemplified by data which relate to the presence/cover of relevant species, state of erosion, etc) and possibly to presence/absence of alien species known to affect ACAP species. Either or both of these could be simplified into a categorical approach, as outlined in the BirdLife paper for AC5 on the monitoring framework for Important Bird Areas.

2.2.3 Protection status/management of sites. We will presumably need to consider potential sub-categories such as:

- a) proportion of sites with some Protected Area status;
- b) nature (minimum, average) of protection (e.g. according to categories such as those defined by the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas);
- c) existence of any management plan for all or part of sites;
- d) existence of management plans with specific mention of management action to improve the conservation status of ACAP species;

- e) implementation status of prescribed management measures to improve status of ACAP species.

The BirdLife IBA monitoring framework also provides, under the headings of conservation designation and management planning, some suggestions in this regard.

2.3 Feeding sites/areas

2.3.1 We believe that an explicit category is needed to cover this. Potential aspects to consider, e.g. for areas definable as core foraging/feeding areas during breeding and/or non-breeding seasons, might include:

- a) status of main prey species (when fish, the FAO, CITES, IUCN or Seas Around Us categories might be relevant);
- b) productivity status;
- c) ecosystem-integrity status;
- d) pollution (PCBs, hydrocarbons, plastics, etc.) status.

Not all of these have adequate indices at present, but researchers are currently investigating these and others in relation to potential application to oceanic areas, either as defined by FAO or as developed under the GOODS biogeographic classification, which is being applied within CBD.

2.4 Bycatch

2.4.1 Data on actual bycatch mortality levels and rates are, of course, a priority to generate a pressure index for feeding sites/areas.

2.4.2 Other indicators, relating indirectly to likely threat status in relation to bycatch might conceivably include:

- a) quality (and availability) of bycatch data;
- b) number of primary (i.e. proven effective) mitigation measures in place (and whether voluntary or mandatory);
- c) levels and extent of coverage by observers (and whether dependent or independent);
- d) rating of RFMO engagement/effectiveness;
- e) levels of IUU fishing.

2.5 Other indicators

2.5.1 In addition, we believe that serious consideration should be given to indicators reflecting Effectiveness and Capacity (e.g. as suggested in Doc 28 Annex C).

2.5.2 It might be argued that these are relatively distant proxies for measures of the success of ACAP. However, it is probable that if Effectiveness and Capacity indicators show decreases, the likelihood of ACAP success is probably reducing.

2.5.3 Also, many of the potential indicators identified earlier could change for the better without necessarily reflecting a beneficial influence of ACAP. It is surely important that we have some indicators that measure the amount and effectiveness of ACAP involvement in the overall agreement and in some of its key elements.

2.5.4 Indeed, given that ACAP was established in large part to create greater engagement in conservation of ACAP species (and their habitats) by the governments with range state responsibilities, it seems essential that we have some indicators that are able to track the level of commitment.

2.5.5 Therefore, one or more indicators addressing Capacity, e.g. in terms of resources available for work on ACAP species and for the sites where they breed (e.g. eradication/habitat restoration, site management, etc.) and to address priority issues in the areas where they feed (e.g. bycatch) would be valuable. We believe it could be useful for the various ACAP Working Groups to offer suggestions to the Advisory Committee in this regard.

References

Daan, N., Christensen, V., Cury, P.M. eds (2005) Quantitative ecosystem indicators for fisheries management. ICES Journal of Marine Science 62: 307-614.

EASAC (2005) A user's guide to biodiversity indicators. European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC), Royal Society, London.

Gubbay, S. (2004) A review of marine environmental indicators reporting on biodiversity aspects of ecosystem health. RSPB, Sandy, UK.