



Agreement on the Conservation
of Albatrosses and Petrels

Eighth Meeting of the Advisory Committee
Punta del Este, Uruguay, 15 -19 September 2014

2014 Implementation Report – United Kingdom

United Kingdom

Report for the Meeting of Parties - MOP-5 (2015)

Submitted by - United Kingdom

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Highlights 2004-2014 and challenges remaining

1. Please provide a summary of the Party's key achievements in improving the conservation status of albatrosses and petrels over the last decade (or the period since joining the Agreement).
- Since its accession, the UK has reduced seabird mortality to negligible levels in the longline (Patagonian toothfish) fisheries of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. More recently, bycatch monitoring has focused on evaluating undetected seabird mortality in Falklands trawl fisheries. Research at South Georgia, Falklands, Tristan and Gough has provided detailed data for many ACAP species on population trends, demography and at-sea distribution, and revealed numerous insights into their biology and ecology, leading to more than 80 papers published in international journals since 2004. The results have been incorporated into submissions to, and materials produced by ACAP, international fisheries bodies, NGOs and others that highlight population declines, assess fisheries overlap and risk, and advocate for improved conservation policies, including better bycatch assessment and mitigation, and the identification and protection of key marine areas. In particular, the UK worked with others to assess risks to seabirds from ICCAT fisheries that led directly to improvements in bycatch mitigation. The collective work of ACAP and in particular its Seabird Bycatch Working Group has been essential in achieving this progress. There have been major advances made toward eradicating introduced mammals from ACAP breeding sites. Rats have been eradicated from two thirds of the infested area of South Georgia, and eradication of reindeer and house mice is nearly complete. On the Falkland Islands, rat eradication has been carried out on over 60 islands, including some ACAP breeding sites. Feasibility studies to eradicate house mice on Gough Island have been undertaken.
2. Please provide a brief summary of key challenges remaining for the Party in achieving and maintaining a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels in the coming years.
- The eradication of house mice from Gough Island is the greatest immediate challenge facing the UK. Without eradication the major seabird populations on the island will be lost and the Tristan Albatross would be at high risk of extinction. Such a project is predicted to cost in excess of £5 million, and without careful planning and implementation would carry a substantial risk of failure due to the highly complex logistics and the local weather conditions. For the same reasons, the success of the third phase of the rodent eradication at South Georgia is far from certain. At sea, there is still further work required to improve assessments of bycatch rates and use of mitigation measures in order to reduce bycatch in trawl fisheries around the Falkland Islands. However, there are far greater challenges to the populations of ACAP species breeding in UK territories from bycatch in the waters of other states, and in High Seas fisheries. The UK will continue to work with its ACAP partners to address these issues. Although planned censuses at Tristan da Cunha and Gough in the near future should address some gaps, obtaining reliable data on breeding numbers and trends remains a major challenge for several globally-important populations of ACAP species breeding in UK territories, including Light-mantled, Sooty and Atlantic Yellow-nosed albatrosses, and White-chinned Petrel.

1. Overview of implementation of Agreement and Action Plan

- 1.1 Has action been taken to implement the decisions of previous MoPs? Yes
- In order to meet the obligations of ACAP in a co-ordinated and effective manner, the UK and its South Atlantic Overseas Territories (SAOTs) have funded an ACAP co-ordination project, including the establishment of a co-ordinator post, for the UK and its SAOTs since March 2008. This post is funded by a number of UK and UKOT government organisations, including Defra, the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI), Falkland Islands Government (FIG), the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (British Antarctic Territory), and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). The ACAP co-ordination project was developed to ensure coherence of action between the UKOTs, to assist with the planning and implementation of ACAP-related work (particularly in the territories with limited internal capacity), to take responsibility for reporting requirements, and to lead on critical seabird bycatch mitigation work, both within OT waters, and importantly, in international fisheries fora. The ACAP co-ordination project has been successful to date, and has contributed significantly towards a unified and effective approach to implementing ACAP in the South Atlantic. Not only has it facilitated better co-ordination of activities and reporting by SAOTs and the UK, but it has also led to better co-operation with other key countries in pursuing cross-boundary conservation issues. ACAP action plans have been developed for each of the SAOTs. These identify the range of requirements to be met under ACAP, prioritise these, and recommend how best to implement them, thus serving as a tool to guide ACAP-related work in the OTs and internationally. A co-ordinated strategy to reduce seabird bycatch in external fisheries has been developed and progressed.

1.2 Is action for national implementation planned to occur in the next three years? Yes

ACAP action plans have been developed and formally adopted for each OT. These plans identify the obligations of Parties in respect of ACAP, based on information taken from the text of the Agreement and its Action Plan. Actions necessary to meet effectively the obligations of ACAP are identified and prioritised. The first audit and review of these plans began in 2011. Detailed information regarding planned activities for the next three years can be obtained from the actual plans, which can be downloaded from: <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=4374>. Broadly, and consistent with the ACAP Agreement and Action Plan, work will be focussed in the following areas: - Management of threats at breeding sites - Monitoring the status and trends of populations - Analysis of foraging ranges of ACAP species, and spatial and temporal overlap with fisheries - Reducing seabird bycatch, both within the jurisdictional waters of the OTs, but also internationally, by working, with partners, towards improving the effectiveness of RFMOs (Regional Fisheries Management Organisations) - Further development and implementation of seabird bycatch mitigation - Improving education and awareness of seabird conservation issues - Robust data management - Sourcing funding for the implementation of albatross and petrel conservation projects. The UK ACAP co-ordination project was funded for an initial three year period, from March 2008 to March 2011. Additional funding was provided until September 2014. Recently secured funding will now extend the project to September 2016.

2. Species conservation

2.1 Has the Party provided any exemptions to prohibitions on the taking or harmful interference with albatrosses and petrels? No

2.2 Has any use or trade in albatrosses or petrels occurred? No

2.3 Has the Party implemented any new single or multi-species conservation strategies / Action Plans? Yes

TRISTAN DA CUNHA A revised Biodiversity Action Plan for Tristan da Cunha has been completed, and will shortly be available online. The Gough and Inaccessible Island World Heritage Site Management Plan has been revised and adopted. The annexes, including management policies and prescription guidelines are yet to be adopted or published online. Both plans will be available at <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/projects/details/227979-tristan-da-cunha-programme>. A draft management plan for Nightingale Island is in production. A marine incident plan for Tristan is currently being developed particularly to deal with oiled wildlife, building on the experience after the MS Oliva wreck in 2011. SOUTH GEORGIA The ACAP implementation plan is currently under revision. FALKLAND ISLANDS The ACAP implementation plan was updated and adopted by FIG in September 2013. This is an update of the implementation plan published in 2010. A Species Action Plan for Southern Rockhopper Penguins has been produced and adopted by FIG in 2014. The plan includes actions of relevance for Black-browed Albatross, including with regard to fire risk in mixed species colonies which include Black-browed Albatross; avian pox and unknown disease outbreaks in mixed colonies; and annual and five-year census work covering multiple species including ACAP species. Falklands Conservation have begun work on a Darwin-funded Biodiversity Action Planning project. This aims to provide a more effective means of managing biodiversity actions and a system of prioritisation that helps decision makers to allocate funding to the most essential and cost effective actions in the Falkland Islands. It is also hoped that this project will provide an electronic hosting system and an Action Plan template, so that actions are more easily accessible, clearly defined and performance measures are achievable. A workshop will be held in June 2014. This project should have a positive impact upon ACAP implementation plans, as it will be possible to streamline actions, resulting in a better understanding of what actions have been achieved against targets.

1) ACAP_Plan_Falkland_Islands_final_Sept_2013.pdf (size 1455137 bytes) 

2.4 Has the Party taken any emergency measures involving albatrosses or petrels? Yes

TRISTAN DA CUNHA During a 2011 incident, when the bulk carrier (65,000 mt soya) MS Oliva hit Nightingale Island, there was a large international oil-spill recovery effort to mitigate the risks to bird and marine life. This incident impacted on the Rockhopper Penguin population and threatened the rock lobster fishery. However, it is thought that only one albatross was found oiled.

2.5 Has the Party conducted any re-establishment schemes? No

- 2.6 Has the Party introduced any new legal or policy instruments for species protection of albatrosses and petrels? Yes
- SOUTH GEORGIA The Wildlife and Protected Areas Ordinance came into force in 2011 and provides comprehensive protection to all wildlife in the Territory. Section 6 of the Ordinance gives specific protection to wild birds and mammals and makes it an offence to interfere in any way with a wild bird (including capturing, killing, handling, damaging breeding sites, taking eggs, or disturbance of breeding or moulting birds). FALKLAND ISLANDS The National Plan of Action for reducing incidental catch of seabirds in trawl fisheries in the Falkland Islands (NPOA-S Trawl) was due for revision in 2013. This work will now be conducted in 2014. The National Plan of Action for reducing incidental catch of seabirds in longline fisheries of the Falkland Islands (NPOA-S Longline) was originally published in 2004, and has now been revised. The revision was adopted by Falkland Islands Government and was published in December 2011.
- 1) Wildlife and Protected Areas Ordinance 2011.pdf (size 131590 bytes) 
- 2) FI-NPOA-S_Longline_2011_Final.pdf (size 397597 bytes) 
- 2.7 Has the Party implemented any legal or policy instruments for environmental impact assessments? No
- 2.8 Does the Party have any species it would like to submit for addition to Annex 1? No
- 2.9 Are there any other conservation projects for ACAP species not already mentioned? No

3. Habitat conservation

- 3.1 Has the Party introduced any legal or policy instruments or actions to implement protection and management of breeding sites, including habitat restoration? Yes
- The Darwin project 'Developing knowledge to eradicate house mice from UK OT islands' related to the impacts of House Mice on Gough (Tristan da Cunha), Steeple Jason (Falkland Islands) and South Georgia is complete, with a draft final project report produced in March 2014. This project did not however investigate the impact upon any ACAP species on Steeple Jason. TRISTAN DA CUNHA An Operational Plan for Gough Island for the eradication of House Mice has been revised and updated as part of the 'Developing knowledge to eradicate house mice from UK OT islands' project. An OTEP project on invasive plant control at the ACAP breeding sites of Gough, Inaccessible and Nightingale is nearing completion. This project has included practical control work at all sites, as well as a review of the current Sagina procumbens control programme on Gough, and ongoing control of introduced New Zealand flax on Nightingale and Inaccessible. SOUTH GEORGIA Biosecurity policy covering all elements of operations in South Georgia including tourism and logistics is reviewed and updated annually. The Wildlife and Protected Areas Ordinance has been enacted (see 2.6). The GSGSSI reindeer eradication project has completed its main phase of operations. The 2,000-strong herd of reindeer in the Busen area has been completely eradicated using a combination of herding and ground shooting. In the Barff Peninsula area, ground shooters were used to eradicate more than 4,500 animals. Only a few reindeer now remain in this area and they will be eradicated in the coming months (2014/15). The South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT) Rodent Eradication Project is also drawing to a conclusion with bait now dropped on two thirds of the infested area of the island. The Trial Phase took place in March – April 2011. All indications are that the trial was successful, proving that the methodology of using helicopters to spread bait across areas with invasive rodents was an effective eradication strategy on South Georgia. Phase 2 (February – June 2013) covered the affected areas west of Cumberland Bay out to the western tip of the Island. More than 55,000ha of land were treated in the largest operation of its kind ever undertaken. A yacht-based monitoring trip investigating the success of the previous year's fieldwork was undertaken in March - April 2014, finding no evidence of surviving rats or mice in the Phase 2 areas. SGHT plan to return in February - May 2015 with a field team and three helicopters to complete the baiting of the remaining portion of the island, from the Barff Peninsula to Drygalski Fjord. Successful completion of this Final Phase would mean that South Georgia would be free of rats and mice for the first time in well over 100 years, with major benefits for the native petrel populations such as White-chinned Petrels. GSGSSI have a monitoring programme in place to track the resulting seabird recovery. As part of the 'Developing knowledge to eradicate house mice from UK OT islands' project mouse bait acceptance trials were undertaken and the results have been published in scientific reports; and knowledge on the ecology of mice and of breeding seabirds present on South Georgia has been increased. FALKLAND ISLANDS As part of the Falkland Islands Rat Eradication Project baiting exercises have been conducted on several small islands. Two feasibility study documents have been produced in the last year, for the key ACAP sites of Steeple

Jason and New Island. A third study document is in progress for Bleaker Island, another key site. The Falkland Islands Rat Eradication Register documents all eradications and the results of the follow-up post-baiting checks, including references to relevant reports on each.

3.2 Has the Party implemented any sustainable management measures for marine living resources which provide food for albatrosses and petrels?

Yes

TRISTAN DA CUNHA The Tristan da Cunha Fishery Limits Ordinance, 1983 (as amended in 1991, 1992, 1997 and 2001) defines the fishery limits of Tristan da Cunha as 200 nautical miles around each of the islands, and makes provision for the regulation of fishing activities within these limits. The main commercial fishery at Tristan is for Tristan Rock Lobster. This fishery is managed by means of a quota system, size limits, and a closed season, and has relatively little impact on the seabird populations of the Tristan Islands. Since 2009 there has been no licenses granted for vessels (longline) to fish for Bluenose. The number of licences for tuna longline vessels is not limited, as these vessels only stay in the area for a short period whilst they are following the tuna through Tristan's EEZ. The longline vessels may not fish within 50 nautical miles of Tristan da Cunha, Nightingale, Inaccessible or Gough islands. SOUTH GEORGIA Fisheries in South Georgia waters adopt CCAMLR measures as a minimum standard. The South Georgia fishery for Patagonian Toothfish was certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) as a well-managed and sustainable fishery in 2004, as was the Mackerel Icefish fishery in 2010. Since 2008 GSGSSI have employed, through the British Antarctic Survey (BAS), a higher predator scientist based at King Edward Point (KEP). This post monitors the foraging ecology of higher predators, especially in the eastern component of Subarea 48.3 thus complementing the work conducted by BAS in the western area. This work will contribute to the informed management of fisheries in the area. The South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands Marine Protected Area provides seasonal and spatial protection for prey species as set out in 3.3. FALKLAND ISLANDS The conservation of sustainable fishery resources through effective management is a primary objective for FIG. Fishing activities in and around the Falkland Islands are thus strictly regulated and managed. Whilst the needs of ACAP listed species are not specifically taken into account, the Fisheries (Conservation and Management) Ordinance 2005 has as a key objective that exploitation of fisheries resources and related activities are conducted in a manner consistent with the need to have regard for the impact of fishing activities on non-target species and the long term sustainability of the marine environment. Falkland Islands Conservation Zones are rich fishing grounds particularly for two squid species, *Illex argentinus* and *Loligo gahi*, and a number of finfish species. Please note that nomenclature for *Loligo gahi* has been officially changed to *Doryteuthis gahi*. This species is still referred to locally as *Loligo*, and for the purposes of this report it will continue to be referred to as such. Daily reporting allows for real time assessment of the two squid species using depletion models, and pre-recruit surveys are conducted prior to each *Loligo* season. If conservation targets are not met for *Illex* and *Loligo* then an early closure of the fisheries results. Finfish species are monitored on a daily basis, assessed annually and recommended catch limits are set in order to maintain stocks. In 2007 the Falkland Islands fishery for Patagonian Toothfish entered pre-assessment for MSC certification. Following a hiatus in the process the fishery entered full assessment in August 2012. On 2nd April 2014 it received MSC certification as a sustainable fishery.

3.3 Has the Party implemented any management or protection of important marine areas for albatrosses and petrels?

Yes

SOUTH GEORGIA In February 2012 GSGSSI announced the creation of a large, sustainably managed Marine Protected Area (MPA) that encompasses the SGSSI Maritime Zone north of 60 degrees. This initial designation enshrined in law much of the existing protection and created a 1.07 million km² MPA. Extensive no-take zones (IUCN Category) were created around South Georgia, Clerke Rocks, Shag and Black Rocks and the South Sandwich Islands, totaling 20,431 km², to avoid competition between fisheries and land-based foragers. Following the initial designation a scientific workshop was convened to determine if further protection was necessary and a range of additional temporal and spatial protections were implemented to further safeguard marine and land-based predators. Additional protection included a seasonal closure of the krill fishery and a 12 nm pelagic closed area around the South Sandwich Islands. A revised MPA Order came into force on June 13th 2013.
1) MPA Order 2013.pdf (size 2434939 bytes) 

4. Management of human activities

4.1 Has the Party completed any new environmental impact assessments related to albatrosses and petrels?

Yes

SOUTH GEORGIA The Environmental Impact Assessment for Phase II and III of the SGHT Rodent Eradication Project has been overseen by GSGSSI. GSGSSI conducted its own Environmental Impact Assessment for the eradication of reindeer that was reviewed by an independent panel of experts.

- 4.2 Has the Party implemented any new measures to minimise discharge of pollutants and marine debris (MARPOL)? Yes
SOUTH GEORGIA Following on from a consultation process GSGSSI are in the process of finalising a policy on the use of heavy fuel oils within its territorial waters.
- 4.3 Has the Party introduced any new measures to minimise the disturbance to albatrosses and petrels in marine and terrestrial habitats? Yes
SOUTH GEORGIA Site visitor management plans are updated and reviewed as necessary. GSGSSI briefs International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO) members each year at their annual conference to ensure that expedition leaders have the most up to date information about visitor management and disturbance to nesting birds is minimised. FALKLAND ISLANDS There is concern over disturbance to the breeding Southern Giant Petrel population on Sea Lion Island, both from humans (tourists) and Elephant Seals. The Sea Lion Island Management Group plan to carry out practical management work before the start of the next breeding season (September 2014) in order to prevent the complete loss of the breeding colony.

5. Research programmes

- 5.1 Does the Party have any ongoing research programmes relating to the conservation of albatrosses and petrels not already reported on? Yes
TRISTAN DA CUNHA Ongoing monitoring of Tristan Albatross, Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross and Southern Giant Petrel at Gough Island by RSPB and University of Cape Town. Ongoing monitoring of Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross at Tristan and Nightingale by Tristan Conservation Department. SOUTH GEORGIA Long term monitoring of all ACAP species breeding on Bird Island by BAS. Ongoing monitoring of Wandering and Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses, and Northern and Southern giant petrels at Albatross and Prion islands. GSGSSI funds monitoring of Wandering Albatross on Albatross and Prion islands. Long-term monitoring sites have been developed to track recovery of ground nesting seabirds following removal of rats, mice and reindeer. FALKLAND ISLANDS Long term monitoring of all Black-browed Albatross at Steeple Jason Island and New Island by Falklands Conservation and Paulo Catry/New Island Conservation Trust respectively. Annual monitoring of population trends and breeding success of Southern Giant Petrels at Steeple Jason by Falklands Conservation. Ongoing studies of the demography, foraging ecology, year-round spatial ecology, predation and disease of Black-browed Albatross at New Island (Paulo Catry and colleagues), and more recently at Steeple Jason (Falklands Conservation and Paulo Catry), with the involvement of the FIG Fisheries Department through the provision of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data.

- 5.2 Does the Party have any additional national institutions (authorities or research centres), or NGOs involved in albatross and petrel conservation? Yes
• Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) • University of Cape Town (UCT) • British Antarctic Survey (BAS) • South Georgia Surveys • South Georgia Heritage Trust (SGHT) • Falklands Conservation • New Island Conservation Trust • Eco-Ethology Research Unit, ISPA • University of Newfoundland • Antarctic Research Trust • UK Government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) • Government of South Africa Department of Environmental Affairs (SA DEA) • Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

6. Education and public awareness

- 6.1 Has the Party conducted training or provided information for user audiences (eg scientists, fishers, etc)? Yes
TRISTAN DA CUNHA TDCG staff have provided information to RSPB, South Africa DEA, and University of Cape Town research staff. SOUTH GEORGIA GSGSSI staff have made presentations at annual IAATO stakeholder meetings. Staff participated in workshops where they have provided information about South Georgia conservation issues. Government Officers based at King Edward Point (KEP) disseminated ACAP leaflets on safe removal of hooks from seabirds to all toothfish vessels this most recent fishery season.

- 6.2 Has the Party conducted training or provided information to the general public? Yes
School children have gained knowledge of the role of invasive species in Tristan da Cunha, Falkland Islands and South Georgia through the production and use of an invasive species game. This was produced as part of the Darwin project 'Developing knowledge to eradicate house mice from UK OT islands'. TRISTAN DA CUNHA Regular and ongoing information provision to educate the general public and tourists. SOUTH GEORGIA All fee paying visitors to South Georgia receive a visitor pack which has recently been reviewed and updated. The pack contains information about ACAP, biosecurity measures and the 'wildlife code of conduct' that sets out how to manage interactions with native biota. The GSGSSI website is regularly updated with press releases and reports on a range of conservation projects. BAS also has a website

which is regularly updated and a media department that interfaces with the general public to raise awareness of BAS science, including that conducted at Bird Island and KEP. The SGHT Rodent Eradication Project relies upon charitable donations and so is very active in raising awareness about conservation issues on South Georgia. FALKLAND ISLANDS Paulo Catry gave a public presentation on his research on Black-browed Albatross on New Island, arranged in conjunction with FIG Environmental Planning Department (EPD). Falklands Conservation have delivered various presentations to the general public and to the local school in Stanley. Falklands Conservation Watch Group, an environment group for children and teenagers, continues to run practical conservation and environmental learning sessions. FIG EPD funds an annual wildlife trip to Kidney Island for pupils at Stanley Infant Junior School. These trips are focussed on the environment and conservation.

7. Other

Does the Party have any new information to report on research into observed impacts, or mitigation of, climate change on albatrosses and petrels?

Yes
SOUTH GEORGIA The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) have funded a 3.5 year project that began in January 2013, which is examining the effects of fisheries and environmental (climatic) change on the demography of the globally threatened Wandering, Grey-headed and Black-browed albatrosses at South Georgia.

8. Additional Comments

TRISTAN DA CUNHA RSPB are working on a marine project at Tristan da Cunha with the objective of identifying sensitive marine sites that are important for fisheries or biodiversity. This project is funded by Darwin Plus, and began in 2013. It is not directly related to ACAP work, but may result in the designation of marine protected areas in the future, which may lead to positive outcomes for albatross and petrel species which use those waters.

Final submission details

Report is closed for editing.

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Report by Anne Saunders