

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p><b>Fourth Meeting of the Population and Conservation Status Working Group</b> <i>Wellington, New Zealand, 7 – 8 September 2017</i></p> <p><b>Non-Target Species Management for the Macquarie Island Pest Eradication Project</b> <i>Keith Springer and Noel Carmichael</i></p>
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### SUMMARY

Mitigation of non-target species impacts was a major challenge for the Macquarie Island Pest Eradication Project (MIPEP). The project aimed to eradicate rodents and rabbits from Macquarie Island through the aerial application of brodifacoum bait, followed by a hunting program targeting surviving rabbits. Aerial baiting was attempted in Winter 2010 but was postponed due to sustained adverse weather that suspended helicopter operations. Following the limited baiting in 2010 (10% of the island), non-target mortality of 960 individuals across 6 bird species was recorded (primarily Kelp gull, Northern giant petrel and skua). In response, the Australian and Tasmanian governments conducted a review of the project. The review established that some species would be adversely affected by the project in the short term but that the island's ecosystem and most other island species would substantially benefit from pest eradication. Enhanced mitigation measures were recommended to minimise non-target species impacts. Two principal measures that were implemented included releasing Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus to reduce the rabbit population prior to baiting, thus minimising the number of poisoned rabbit carcasses available for consumption by scavengers; and increasing effort of field teams during and after baiting to remove carcasses to reduce exposure of scavengers to toxic residues. Aerial baiting resumed in May 2011 and two island-wide drops were completed by July 2011. Seabird mortality was monitored, with over 1,460 dead birds identified, primarily scavenging species including Northern and Southern giant petrels, kelp gulls and skua. No species was considered to have sustained impacts that threatened the viability of the local population. King penguin colonies were closely monitored during helicopter overflights and only minor and transitory impacts were observed. Wandering albatross nests were cleared of baits and chicks were not affected.

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