

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p>Thirteenth Meeting of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group</p> <p><i>Swakopmund, Namibia, 27 - 29 May 2026</i></p> <p>Seabird interactions with trawl cables on U.S. West Coast vessels targeting Pacific hake</p> <p>Jason E. Jannot, Thomas P. Good, and Vanessa J. Tuttle</p>
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SUMMARY

Incidental mortality of seabirds in fisheries (a.k.a., bycatch) has been an international conservation concern for decades. In trawl fisheries, seabird mortalities are mostly caused by birds striking cables (i.e., trawl warp cables, data cable). Documenting seabird mortality on trawl vessels is challenging because seabird carcasses are infrequently recovered from cable strikes. In this study, we document environmental and fisheries operations that are correlated with seabird-cable interactions and mortalities in the U.S. West Coast pelagic trawl fleet targeting Pacific hake (*Merluccius productus*). From 2016 through 2019, on every trip and every catcher-processor vessel in the fleet, each of two fisheries observers monitored cables for seabird strikes daily. Previous studies in other trawl fisheries have focused on a smaller subset of vessels, over shorter time periods. Our results suggest that the presence of a discharge plume and the Beaufort sea state can increase bird densities around vessels, increasing the potential for injury or mortality from striking the data cable, whose characteristics (e.g., aerial extent, proximity to offal plume) contribute to the risk of cable strikes. Species of seabirds observed striking cables included: black-footed albatross (*Phoebastria nigripes*), northern fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*), common murre (*Uria aalge*), and sooty shearwater (*Ardenna grisea*). We estimate that this fleet kills 0 to 176 birds per year, although fisheries observers were unable to determine the outcome of most of the cable strikes. The comprehensive nature of this study (every vessel in the fleet, every trip, over a four-year period) provides more accurate estimates of mortality in this fleet and helps to solidify the causes of seabird mortality on trawl vessels.