Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Thirteenth Meeting of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group

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National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Seabirds in South African Fisheries II

S. Kerwath, A. Makhado, M.J. Masotla, G. Cilliers, A. Angel, J.de Goede, P. Ryan, L. Singh

Attachment: Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. 2026. *National Plan of Action II for the Conservation and Management of Seabirds in South African Fisheries 2026-2030*.

SUMMARY

South Africa is globally recognised as a seabird biodiversity hotspot. Within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), including the sub-Antarctic Prince Edward Islands, 132 seabird species have been recorded, making South Africa second only to New Zealand in terms of seabird diversity. Around 50 seabird species breed within the EEZ, with the majority nesting on the Prince Edward Islands, and 17 species classified as endemic breeders. These populations include several threatened and internationally significant species, highlighting South Africa's critical conservation responsibility.

At the same time, South Africa is a major fishing nation, ranking as the third largest in Africa by catch volume. The spatial and temporal overlap between seabird foraging areas and fishing activities creates multiple points of interaction between fisheries and seabirds. The most direct threat is bycatch, particularly incidental mortality in longline and trawl fisheries. However, seabirds are also affected by a range of indirect pressures, including collisions with vessels, competition for food resources, ingestion of plastics, entanglement in marine debris, and behavioural changes resulting from reliance on discarded fishing offal.

To address these challenges, South Africa has developed the second iteration of its National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Seabirds (NPOA-Seabirds II). This plan builds on the first NPOA-Seabirds and aligns with the FAO's International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA-Seabirds, 1999), which supports the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. NPOA-Seabirds II outlines updated and strengthened measures to reduce seabird mortality and disturbance associated with fisheries.

Importantly, NPOA-Seabirds II broadens the scope of action beyond longline fisheries alone. Consistent with FAO best-practice guidelines, it addresses all South African fisheries with significantly reduced by increasing and modernizing monitoring practices to account for fishing effects on all seabirds and by implementing effective mitigation measures in line with the vision of this plan.

Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross

NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION II

FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SEABIRDS IN SOUTH AFRICAN FISHERIES

2026 - 2030

forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

FOREWORD

The waters surrounding South Africa are home to extraordinary biodiversity, both above and below the surface. As custodians of the world's second-most diverse seabird assemblage and stewards of Africa's third-largest fishing industry, it is our responsibility to ensure that these two entities can thrive together, not in conflict. This second iteration of the National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Seabirds represents more than an environmental commitment; it is a blueprint for science- based, adaptive, and sustainable fisheries management. The health of our seabird populations serves as a barometer for the overall state of our marine ecosystems upon which our fishing communities, our blue economy, and our coastal heritage depend. When seabirds flourish, it signals healthy oceans and abundant, well-managed fish stocks. Conversely, declining seabird populations warn us of imbalances that threaten the very foundation of sustainable fishing.

The vision articulated in these pages: “Zero impact on the sustainability of seabird populations by South African fisheries" is ambitious, yet neither idealistic nor impractical. Rather, it reflects a mature understanding that conservation and commerce need not be adversaries. It highlights the importance of rational use of resources. By minimizing bycatch, reducing vessel strikes, and implementing robust science-based mitigation measures, we protect not only seabirds but also the ecological balance and long-term viability of our fisheries. Healthy seabird populations indicate productive fishing grounds; effective mitigation measures demonstrate our commitment to international best practices and responsible resource stewardship.

This plan builds upon the achievements of its predecessor while addressing the full spectrum of fishery-seabird interactions across all South African waters, from our mainland coasts to the remote Prince Edward Islands. Through enhanced monitoring, evidence-based management, and collaborative action among government, industry, scientists, and conservation organizations, we will demonstrate that economic prosperity and environmental stewardship are inseparable partners in achieving truly sustainable use of our marine resources.
Ultimately, the success of this plan will be measured not only in the recovery of seabird populations but in the resilience and sustainability of our fisheries, proving that when we fish responsibly, everyone benefits, now and for generations to come.

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GLOSSARY

ACAP	Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels
CCAMLR	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CMS	Convention for Migratory Species
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
DEAT	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
SEAFO	South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNFSA	United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Africa is a global seabird biodiversity hotspot. Within the South African Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), including the sub-Antarctic Prince Edward Islands, 132 seabird species have been recorded, second only to New Zealand in terms of Seabird diversity. Approximately 50 species breed in the South African EEZ, the majority on the Prince Edward islands, with 17 species being endemic breeders. South Africa is also a major fishery nation - the third largest in Africa in terms of catch volume - and many of these species' activities overlap with fishing, which can lead to interactions between fisheries and birds. These interactions can be in the form of bycatch (Incidental catch) and mortality but also include more indirect negative effects such as collision with vessels, competition for food, plastic ingestion and entanglements, and habituation to feeding on discarded offal.

The second iteration of South Africa's National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Seabirds (hereafter NPOA-Seabirds II) outlines plans to reduce the impacts of South Africa's fisheries on seabirds. Like its predecessor it originates from the Food and Agriculture Organization's' International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental catch of Seabird in Longline Fisheries (IPOA-Seabirds 1999), adopted during the 23rd Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries and aimed at enhancing the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. However, keeping in line with the first NPOA-Seabirds and the FAO Report in 2008 on best practice and technical guidelines for IPOA/NPOA-Seabirds, and recognizing the need to broaden the scope of actions, the NPOA-Seabirds II addresses all South African fisheries that have significant interactions with seabirds. After the implementation period of this plan, it is expected that the impact of fisheries on seabirds will be significantly reduced by increasing and modernizing monitoring practices to account for fishing effects on all seabirds and by implementing effective mitigation measures in line with the vision of this plan:

"Zero impact on the sustainability of seabird populations by South African fisheries"

This vision can only be achieved if clear objectives are put in place that are fulfilled in a collaborative effort by all stakeholders. South Africa is rich in marine biodiversity yet is it a developing country with limited human resources, which makes prioritization and collaboration even more important. Consequently, the NPOA-Seabirds II has four overarching priority goals, each with actionable items that will be fulfilled during the life of this plan:

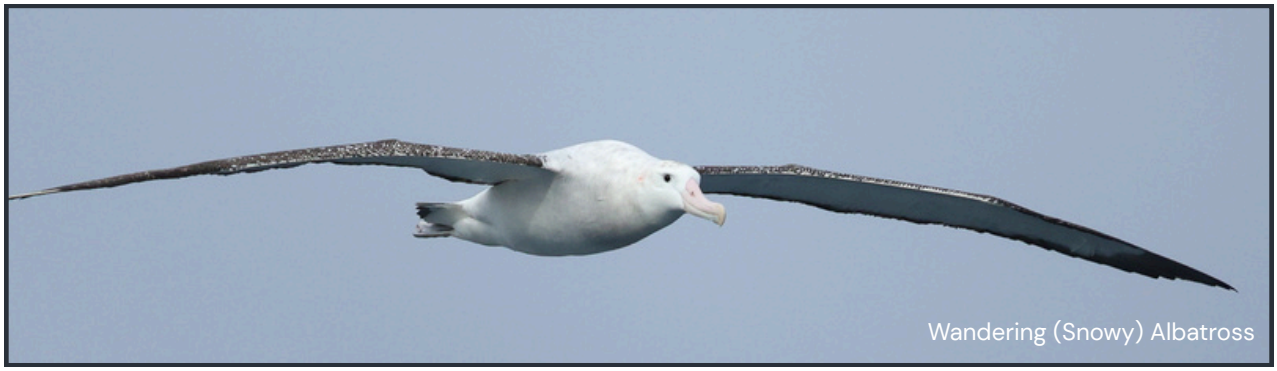
GOAL 1 **Tracking populations of all seabirds affected by fishing**

GOAL 2 **Quantification of the impact of South African fisheries on seabird populations**

GOAL 3 **Minimizing and mitigating negative impacts**

GOAL 4 **Education, collaboration, and integration**

In five years, the life span of this plan, the actionable items will be tracked, and the success of their implementation will be monitored against measurable indicators. This plan also includes a review of the achievements of the first NPOA-Seabirds and builds on the achievements and lessons learned, identifies gaps and considers priorities, and provides actions under the four priority goals. At the end of the life of this plan it is expected that significant progress will have been made towards all aspects of seabird research, monitoring, science-based management, mitigation, communication and knowledge transfer, and in so doing provide evidence for South Africa's leadership in conservation and management of its precious marine resources.



Wandering (Snowy) Albatross

INTRODUCTION 1

1.1. Background and History

Concern over the impact of fisheries on seabirds is not new. In the last 50 years, declines of the breeding populations of Antarctic and sub-Antarctic seabirds have raised alarm within the international community. Since the 1980s there has been global concern about the incidental catch of seabirds in fishing operations, in particular longline and trawl fisheries (Brothers 1991, Brothers et al. 1999, Croxall & Gales 1998, Nel et al. 2002, Sullivan et al. 2006, Dias et al. 2019). The incidental mortality of seabirds by various fisheries has been widely responsible for the declining populations and threatened conservation status of several albatross and petrel species (IUCN 2025; Dias et al. 2019).

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 (UNCLOS) requires states to consider the effects on species that are 'associated with or dependent on harvested species so as to maintain or restore their populations above levels at which their reproduction may be seriously threatened' in their Conservation Measures pertaining to their EEZ. Similar requirements have been included for high seas fishing (UNCLOS Article 119(1)(b)). Through the FAO and several international conventions and commissions, frameworks were put in place to reduce and mitigate against these impacts, most notably through the endorsement of the IPOA-Seabirds by the FAO Council and then by the FAO Conference, its highest decision-making body. Subsequently, in the 2000s, many countries developed and adopted their first iteration of their NPOA-Seabirds. The implementation periods of the first iterations of these plans have come and gone and today, incidental catch avoidance, mitigation and best practice are an integral part of international as well as national legislation.

Situated at the tip of the African continent, the South African EEZ straddles cool temperate to tropical ecosystems, including the two major ocean current systems of the Benguela and the Agulhas Currents. The South African EEZ also includes the sub-Antarctic waters of the Prince Edward Islands, a remote location that hosts important breeding colonies for Southern Ocean seabirds. Consequently, due to their location and exceptional diversity of marine habitats, South African waters are of global importance as feeding, resting, nursery and breeding grounds for Southern Ocean seabirds, both transient and endemic.

South Africa is also home to one of the largest fishing industries on the continent, comprised of 22 formal capture fisheries using a multitude of gear to

exploit marine living resources throughout its marine ecosystems. Many of these fisheries are known to have significant direct and indirect impacts on seabirds. Indirect impacts include pollution, habitat and behavioural alteration whereas direct impacts are related to interactions with gear, with the most severe leading to mortality. Some of these impacts, in particular seabird incidental catch, are well documented. Time series from observer data exist to track species specific incidental catch trends in several fisheries. 31 species of seabird recorded as incidental catch in South Africa's fisheries are included in Table 5; of those, 15 are threatened with extinction globally or regionally (IUCN 2025, Table 5). Most recent estimates of seabird mortality in South African waters reveal a decrease in the numbers of birds caught since the first NPOA-Seabirds was published in 2008. For example, seabird incidental catch rates are estimated to have reduced by approximately 95% in the offshore demersal trawl (Maree et al. 2014) and by 71% in the pelagic longline sector (Rollinson et al. 2017).

The reduction in seabird incidental catch is very encouraging, albeit that in many cases this coincides with significant declines of seabird populations and is subject to considerable uncertainty as estimates are derived from observer programs with low (<5%), uneven coverage, incidental observations during once off scientific studies and voluntary initiatives driven by environmental certification efforts and NGO activities. The results stem from good working relationships among diverse stakeholders, the South African Government, in particular the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, the fishing industry and NGOs (particularly BirdLife South Africa through the Albatross Task Force and the Responsible Fisheries Alliance) as well as the implementation of a number of mitigation measures in key South African fisheries (Maree et al. 2014, Rollinson et al. 2017).

The NPOA-Seabirds II aims to provide a mechanism towards improving the data on seabird incidental catch and conservation status by identifying gaps in monitoring and analyses, by including fisheries that had not previously been considered, and by recommending implementable mitigation which will find its way into policy. The Plan provides updated compendia of currently applicable legislation, information on population status and known fisheries impact for each South African fishery in which direct interaction with seabirds has been observed, or is conceivable, along with a brief description of each fishery. It also provides an account of current mitigation measures for each gear type.

1.2. Evaluation of Achievements

Table 1. *South Africa's first NPOA-Seabirds suggested a number of key objectives and activities: These activities, together with the status of their implementation are shown below. (0 = not implemented to 3 = fully implemented).*

Action	Implementation Status	Comments
Mitigation methods included in all relevant permit conditions and clearly specified	2	Mitigation measures are included in most of the relevant permit conditions, but there is a need to update and clarify the relevant methods for each fishery.
Effective deterrent devices developed, and technologies and practices Improved.	2	Research into effective mitigation and implementation has been conducted in most fisheries. Technologies have been improved for specific mitigation measures such as bird-scaring lines, with ongoing research into innovative technologies such as hook-shielding devices and electronic monitoring. There is a need to improve practices consistently across fleets and vessels.
Evaluate effectiveness of mitigation measures	2	Effectiveness of bird-scaring lines (tori lines), night setting and line weighting have been evaluated in experiments and in analyses of observer data for longline fisheries. Mitigation practices in fisheries operations have not been evaluated outside of experiments and their effect on seabird populations has not been established.
Operate onboard observer programmes at sufficient levels of coverage (both of vessels with observers aboard and percentage of hooks observed during hauling) that allow for reliable estimates of the levels of seabird mortality in all affected South African longline fisheries.	1	Observer programmes have been implemented in most trawl and longline fisheries in some form, but levels of coverage are low and not spatially and temporarily representative. They are insufficient to allow for estimates of impact. Observer programmes still need to be mandated through permit conditions across all relevant fleets.
Collect information on the levels of usage of prescribed mitigation measures in each relevant fishery.	1	There is insufficient information of levels of mitigation practice apart from observer information.

Collection of all relevant information of bycaught seabird and collection of corpses in all relevant fleets and subsequent handover for analysis.	1	Seabird incidental catch information is largely confined to observer collected information. Collection of corpses is incomplete and not formalised.
Conduct analyses on returned corpses of seabirds to assess species, age classes, gender, population sources, diets, moult, etc.	2	Analysis of returned corpses is comprehensive, but the sharing and use of resulting information needs to be formalised.
Voluntary information on seabird activities related to fishing.	1	Ad hoc, occasional feedback given, but the information is not sufficient for any assessment of practices or trends.
Incentives for voluntary compliance in place.	2	Eco-certification schemes such as SASSI and MSC are well established in South Africa. Trawl and pole and line fisheries are currently certified by MSC, and all relevant fisheries are assessed by SASSI.
Non-adherence to mitigation measures monitored and permit conditions effectively enforced.	1	Data collected on compliance is available from observer programmes, but enforcement is inconsistent and has so far been limited to foreign flagged vessels.
Institute an education and awareness programme for fishers and for the general public on the reasons for adoption of mitigation measures.	3	Multiple awareness campaigns have been run through NGOs, RFMOs, government and industry. These programmes are ongoing.
Run training programmes for observers, fishers and compliance staff on bird identification, treatment of live birds and optimal use of mitigation measures.	2	Multiple awareness campaigns have been run through NGOs, RFMOs, government and industry. These programmes are ongoing but need to be formalised as mandatory training and procedures.
Encourage and support regular surveys and studies of population trends and at-sea distributions of affected seabird species at South Africa's sub-Antarctic Prince Edward Islands and in territorial and EEZ waters.	2	Studies are conducted at breeding sites and at sea through government and NGOs. The studies are however not integrated and are at this point insufficient to establish accurate trends of fisheries impacts.

Evaluation of the Implementation

Upon its endorsement the NPOA-Seabirds II will be in place for five years. The Oceans and Coast Branch of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment will be responsible for the overall coordination of the implementation of this plan, together with its partners in government, academia, NGOs and importantly the fishing industry. After the five-year operational period of the plan, the progress of the NPOA-Seabirds II will be measured against its deliverables.

Table 2. Assessment framework for NPOA-seabirds II.

Goal	Action	Output	Agency Responsible	Challenges / Reasons for not completing the action

1.3. Policy and Legislative Context

1.3.1. International

The NPOA-Seabirds II strives to harmonize South Africa's conservation and management efforts with regards to fisheries interactions with seabirds, so that these become consistent, effective and remain in line with international agreements and national law.

The update of the NPOA-Seabirds fulfils a number of international commitments, originating from the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries in 1995, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development's Implementation Plan and most recently through the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development. Although the NPOA remains a voluntary instrument, the need for NPOAs and specific actions contained in the NPOAs has propagated through relevant regional fisheries management organisations and international conventions and agreements that South Africa has acceded to.

1.3.2. National

South Africa's Constitution provides that everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being and to have the environment protected for the benefit or present and future generations through reasonable legislative and other measures that prevent pollution and ecological degradation; promote conservation; and secure ecologically sustainable development and the use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development. This right is supported through a suite of legislation, including that relevant to fishery management and the conservation of marine biodiversity. These, include, among others, the Marine Living Resources Act, the National Environmental Management Act, the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, the National Environmental Management Act: Biodiversity Act and the National Environmental Management Act: Integrated Coastal Management Act.

***Table 3**. Reference to South Africa's commitments and responsibilities under international agreements with regards to fisheries interactions with seabirds and their management.*

Organisation	Reference Document	Agreed Upon Actions
ACAP	Article I, II and III	Agreement with the objective to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels. To continue to apply ACAP's best practice mitigation measures. Requires reporting on progress to update the National Plan of Action (NPOA) on Seabirds.
BCC	Article IV	Protect vulnerable species and biodiversity within the BCC ecosystem.
CCSBT	Refers to other agreements such as IOTC, ICCAT and ACAP	Multi-year seabird strategy and action plan includes monitoring, data collection, mitigation, compliance and outreach.
	ERSWG-12 Multi-year seabird strategy Oct 22 CCSBT	
CMS	Refers to ACAP	
ICCAT	11-09	Monitoring of seabird interaction in longline fisheries within ICCAT area and implementing of mitigation thereof as specified, report on status of NPOAs.
IOTC	23-07	Monitoring of seabird interaction in longline fisheries within IOTC area and implementing mitigation thereof as specified. Theaim is to achieve zero bycatch (Incidental mortality). Report on the status and implementation of NPOAs.
SEAFO	25-12	Data collection, monitoring and mitigation for longline and trawl fisheries in the SEAFO area, with acknowledgement of the NPOA.
CCAMLR	CM 25-02 (2024)	Harvesting and associated activities are conducted in accordance with the conservation principles, maintenance of ecological relationships between harvested, dependent and related populations and the restoration of depleted populations; and the prevention of changes or the minimisation of the risk of changes in the marine ecosystem which are not potentially reversible over two or three decades. Monitoring of seabird interaction in fisheries within CCAMLR area and implementing of mitigation thereof as specified.

These measures are all reported back to the various commissions via annual reports and discussed at the various commission working group meetings. These responsibilities and obligatory reporting requirements are met by various teams within the Fisheries and the Oceans and Coasts Branches of DFFE. Additional information and details on seabird conservation measures adopted by international agreements and regional fisheries management organisations can be found here:

***Table 4**. Highlights certain of South Africa's commitments and responsibilities relevant to fishery management and the conservation of marine biodiversity in terms of national legislation.*

Act	Reference Document	Provisions of the Act
Marine Living Resource Act, 1998 (MLRA)	Act No 18 of 1998	Section 2 of the MLRA deals with objectives and principles. These include, amongst others, "the need to achieve optimum utilisation and ecological sustainable development" and "the need to protect the ecosystem, including species which are not targeted for exploitation..." (Section 2(a) and (e)) as guiding principles.
National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (NEMA)	Act No. 107 of 1998	NEMA is the overarching environmental legislation in South Africa. There are then numerous Specific Environmental Management Acts (SEMA), three of which are particularly relevant in the marine space including the conservation of seabirds. They are the: National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (No. 57 of 2003) (NEM:PAA): NEMPAA provides for the protection and conservation of ecologically viable areas representative of the country's biological diversity. In 2014, the Act was amended to include Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) which were previously regulated under the Marine Living Resources Act. National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (No. 10 of 2004) (NEM:BA): NEM:BA covers the protection, conservation and management of threatened species and ecosystems that are in need of protection; the sustainable use of the country's biological resources, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of bio-prospecting of indigenous biological resources. . Furthermore, in 2017, South Africa gazetted the Threatened or Protected Marine Species Regulations, in terms of which the majority of seabirds caught in longline fisheries are protected by law. National Environmental Management: Integrated Coastal Management Act (No. 24 of 2008) (ICM Act): The ICM Act covers the country's entire Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) establishes a system of integrated coastal and estuarine management in the country to promote the conservation of the coastal environment and maintain the natural attributes of coastal landscapes and seascapes.

2 SEABIRDS

Seabirds have been recorded as incidental mortality in various South African fisheries since the late 1990s. Various measures to mitigate incidental catch of seabirds have been included in South African fisheries regulations through permit conditions. These permit conditions are reviewed on an annual basis. Table 5 lists seabird species recorded by seabird scientists and observers as bycatch/incidental catch since 2008.

- Shy Albatross (Juv)

***Table 5**. Seabird species recorded as incidental mortality in South African fisheries with their global IUCN and regional status and date of last assessment. Global IUCN population trends and Small scale fisheries included under their respective gear types i.e. TLF, NF. Fisheries not listed here operate gear that has negligible risk to incidental seabird catch (see Fisheries section).*

Global IUCN and Regional status with date of last assessment:	
CR	Critically Endagered
EN	Endangered
VU	Vulnerable
NT	Near Threatened
LC	Least Concern
Global IUCN population trend:	
↓	Decreasing
↑	Increasing
→	Stable

Breeding Status	
B	Breeding
en	Southern African endemic
PE	including Prince Edward Islands

Fisheries interaction by fleet ranked:	
1	*Confirmed* based on verified & partly quantified through observers or seabird scientists
2	*Incidental* verified by fishers or incidental observation
3	*Perceived* based on gear type or fishing operations

Fishery Fleet Codes	
CTD	KZN Crustacean Demersal Trawl
HLL	Hake Longline
HIT	Inshore Demersal Trawl
MWT	Mid-water Trawl
NF	Net Fisheries
HDST	Deep-Sea Demersal Hake Trawl
PL	Pole and Line
LPL	Large Pelagic Longline
SLL	Demersal Shark Longline
SJF	Squid Fisheries
SP	Small Pelagic
TLF	Traditional Line Fishery
TLL	PEI Toothfish Longline

Common Name	Scientific Name	Global IUCN	Regional	Global Trend	Breeding Status	Fisheries Interactions
Penguins						
African Penguin	*Spheniscus demersus*	CR (2024)	EN	↓	B en	NF 2
King Penguin	*Aptenodytes patagonicus*	LC (2015)	NT (2025)	↑	B (PE)	LPL 1
Albatrosses						
Wandering (Snowy) Albatross	*Diomedea exulans*	VU (2018)	VU (2025)	↓	B (PE)	LPL 3, TLL 3, HDST 3
Tristian Albatross	*Diomedea dabbenena*	CR (2018)	CR (2025)	↓	NB	LPL 1
Northern Royal Albatross	*Diomedea sanfordi*	EN (2018)	EN (2025)	↓	NB	LPL 1

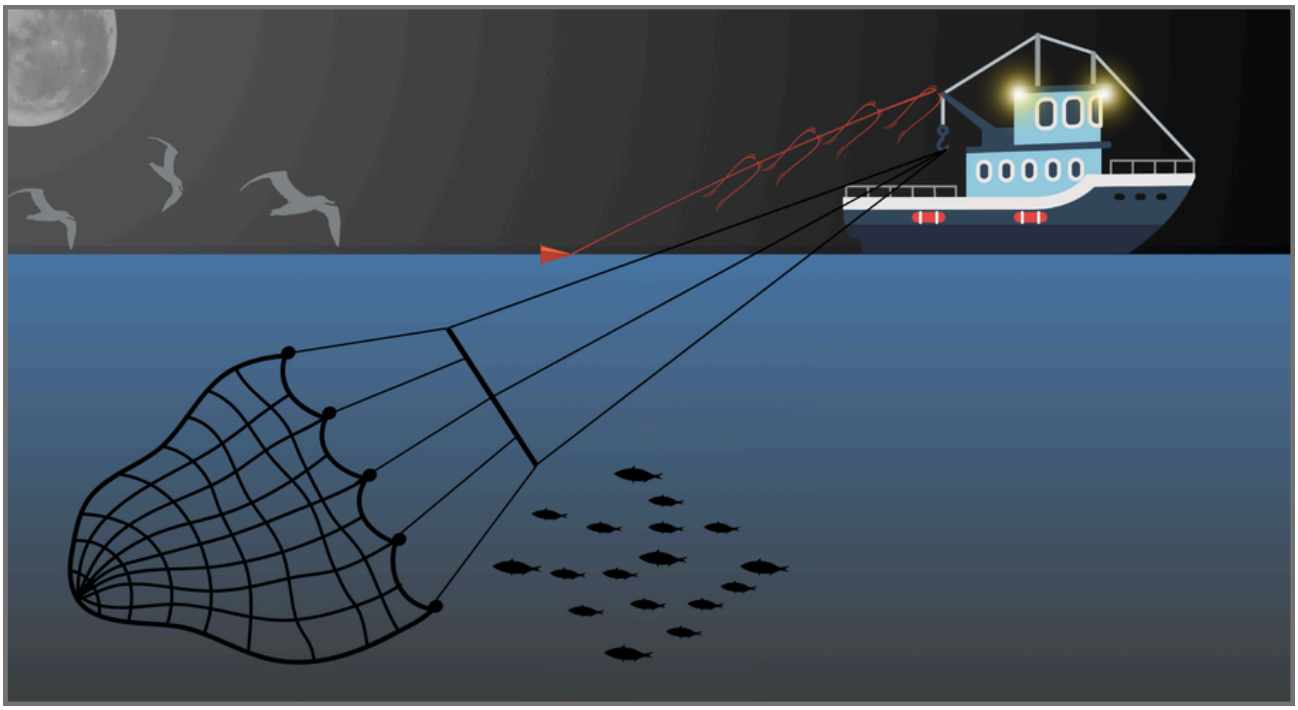
Southern Royal Albatross	*Diomedea epomophora*	VU (2018)	VU (2025)	→	NB	LPL 1
Grey-headed Albatross	*Thalassarche chrysostoma*	EN (2018)	EN (2025)	↓	B (PE)	LPL 1, TLL 1
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross	*Thalassarche carteri*	EN (2018)	EN (2025)	↓	B (PE)	LPL 1, TLL 1, HLL 1, SLL 3, HDST 1, HIT 1
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*	EN (2018)	EN (2025)	↓	NB	LPL 1, HLL 1, HDST 1, HIT 1
Shy Albatross	*Thalassarche cauta*	NT (2022)	NT (2025)	→	NB	LPL 1, HDST 1, HIT 1, PL 1, TLF 3
White-capped Albatross	*Thalassarche steadi*	NT (2018)	NA	↓	NB	LPL 1, HDST 1, HIT 1, PL 1, TLF 3
Black-browed Albatross	*Thalassarche melanophris*	LC (2018)	EN (2025)	↑	NB	LPL 1, TLL 1, HDST 1, HIT 1, PL 1, TLF 3
Sooty Albatross	*Phoebetria fusca*	EN (2018)	EN (2025)	↓	B (PE)	TLL 1
Petrels and Shearwaters						
Southern Giant Petrel	*Macronectes giganteus*	LC (2018)	NT (2025)	↑	B (PE)	LPL 1, TLL 1, HDST 1
Nothern Giant Petrel	*Macronectes halli*	LC (2018)	NT (2025)	↑	B (PE)	LPL 1, TLL 1, HDST 1
Spectaled Petrel	*Procellaria conspicillata*	VU (2018)	VU (2025)	↑	NB	LPL 1
White-chinned Petrel	*Procellaria aequinoctialis*	VU (2018)	VU (2025)	↓	B (PE)	LPL 1, HLL 1, SLL 3, TLL 1, HDST 1, HIT 1, PL 1, TLF 3
Great-winged Petrel	*Pterodroma macroptera*	LC (2018)	NT (2025)	↓	B (PE)	LPL 1
Cape Petrel	*Daption capense*	LC (2018)	NA	→	B (PE)	LPL 1, TLL 1, HDST 1
Grey Petrel	*Procellaria cinerea*	NT (2021)	EN	↓	B (PE)	LPL 1, TLL 1
Cory's Shearwater	*Calonectris borealis*	LC	NA	NA	NB	HDST 2, HIT 2

Sooty Shearwater	*Ardenna grisea*	NT (2019)	EN	↓	NB	TLL 1, HDST 1, PL 2
Great Shearwater	*Ardenna gravis*	LC (2021)	NA	→	NB	LPL 1, HLL 1, SLL 3, HDST 1, HIT 1, PL 1, TLF 3
Gannets and Boobies						
Cape Gannet	*Morus capensis*	EN (2018)	VU (2025)	↓	B end	LPL 1, HLL 1, SLL 3, HDST 1, HIT 1, PL 1, TLF 3, MWT 1
Cormorants and Shags						
Crowned Cormorant	*Microcarbo coronatus*	LC (2021)	VU	→	B end	NF 3
Bank Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax neglectus*	EN (2018)	EN (2025)	↓	B end	NF 3
White-breasted Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax C. lucidus*	LC (2018)	NA	↑	B	NF 3
Cape Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax capensis*	EN (2018)	EN (2025)	↓	B	NF 3
Gulls, Terns and Skimmers						
Kelp Gull	*Larus dominicanus*	LC (2018)	NA	↑	B	HDST 1, HIT 1
Skuas						
Subantarctic Skua	(Stercorarius *antarctica)*	LC (2018)	EN (2025)	↓	B (PE)	LPL 1, TLL 1, HDST 1, HIT 1

Cape (Pintado) Petrel

3 FISHERIES

3.1. TRAWL



Trawling involves using warps (thick steel cables) to tow a net (or nets) at depth behind a vessel. Both the warps and trawl nets pose threats to seabirds. Seabirds are attracted to and feed off discarded fish waste, offal and fish which spill from the net when it is on the surface. The risks to birds include collisions with the trawl warps during trawling operations, and in particular during the deployment of the net, and entanglement in the net during hauling.

In South Africa trawling is divided into four sectors; namely a demersal offshore (deep sea) sector that operates on the west and south coasts, a demersal inshore sector that operates on the south coast only, a crustacean trawl sector on the KZN coast, and midwater trawl which operates predominantly on the south coast.

The demersal trawl fishery offshore and inshore sectors mainly target hake (Merluccius spp.). The offshore sector has 30 wet-fish and 21 freezer vessels, most of which are stern otter trawlers. The inshore trawl fishery comprises 27 vessels; some with dual (offshore and inshore) fishing permits operate in waters down to 110 metres on the Agulhas Bank and also fish for sole.

The South African midwater trawl fishery targets adult horse mackerel (Trachurus capensis). The bulk of the catch is taken by a single freezer-trawler, the biggest fishing vessel operating in South African waters.

The crustacean trawl fishery is based in KwaZulu-Natal on trawl grounds comprising soft sediment (sand/mud), currently with five stern trawlers active.

3.1.1. Mitigation and Permit Conditions

Seabird mortalities are minimised through the deployment of bird scaring lines (tori lines), management of offal discharge and regulation of the nature of the grease on the trawl warps. Data shows that most fatal interactions occur with warp strikes, and the implementation of bird scaring lines can reduce this mortality by 90% when implemented correctly. Management of offal discharge and regulation of the nature of the grease on the trawl warps is mandatory for midwater trawl, offshore trawl and inshore trawl vessels. Bird-scaring lines are mandatory for midwater trawl, offshore trawl and inshore trawl vessels fishing offshore. The crustacean trawl fishery has no formal mitigation measures in place. Although the impact of the fishery on seabird interactions and mortality is unknown, there have been no reports of incidental catch of bird from this fishery according to historic observer accounts.

3.1.2 Observer Coverage

According to permit conditions the midwater fishery has 100% observer coverage with two observers who monitor a suite of catch limits and move-on rules as mitigation management measures aimed at reducing incidental catch of seabirds. Demersal trawl has a voluntary observer programme with 10% ODT observed and 8% IDT in terms of trips, but the coverage is not stratified across areas, vessels and seasons. The crustacean trawl does not currently have observer coverage.

3.2. GILLNET AND BEACH-SEINE

Gillnets (also known as set nets) are characterized by their “long rectangular walls of netting that catch fish by gilling, wedging, snagging, entangling or entrapping them in pockets”. Such nets are maintained in a vertical alignment by a combination of floats and weights, and can be used either singly, or in long strings of nets. Gillnets are a widely applied fishing method and are used by both small-scale and artisanal coastal fisheries. This fishing method is a huge potential risk to diving seabirds such as penguins, gannets, and petrels, with foraging seabirds becoming entangled and drowning in the nets. Captures can occur during deployment (setting or hauling) or soaking (whilst the gear is fishing) depending on the species of seabird and the nature of the net setting. Nets deployed overnight close to breeding colonies are considered to pose the greatest risk to seabirds, especially penguins, as they often transit to and from colonies at dawn and dusk.

Beach-seine netting gear is composed of a net bag and long wings attached to ropes for towing the seine to the beach. The headrope with floats is on the surface, the weighted footrope is in permanent contact with the bottom and the seine is therefore a barrier which prevents fish from escaping from the area enclosed by the net. This type of fishing has very minimal risk of catching seabirds. Occasionally diving birds that feed in the net get entangled and dragged onto the beach, from where they are released.

The net-fish sector is the oldest commercial fishery in South Africa. The fishery mainly targets harder (Chelon richardsonii) and comprises a beach-seine and a gillnet component with 28 beach-seine and 162 gillnet Right Holders operating on the West Coast from Port Nolloth to False Bay. Knowledge of the fishery using gillnets is poor, with up to 85% of catch and effort unaccounted for. Excessive gillnet catches of 100 or more penguins in the 1990s (Spheniscus demersus) around Dassen and Robben Islands prompted management intervention in the late 1990s. Gillnet fishers were setting their nets across penguin approaches because of the guano slicks on which harders feed. Gillnet exclusion zones now prohibit gillnets being set within 1–2 km of seabird breeding islands. High seabird mortality, especially in unattended nets, led to legislation and permit conditions that prohibit unattended gillnets (either set or drift).

3.2.1. Mitigation and Permit Conditions

Setting gillnets away from sensitive areas and observing the nets throughout their soak time are the best way of mitigating against seabird mortality in these fisheries. Gillnets are only permitted at selected sites north of Saldanha Bay away from the bird islands and breeding colonies. Gillnet exclusion zones now prohibit gillnets being set within 1–2 km of seabird breeding islands and permit conditions require Right Holders being on site- throughout the fishing operation.

3.2.2. Observer Coverage

There are no observer requirements in the permits for these fisheries.

3.3. PURSE -SEINE

Purse seine nets are used in South Africa to target dense schools of small pelagic fish. A vertical net 'curtain' is deployed from a vessel to surround the school of fish, the bottom of which is then drawn together to enclose the fish, rather like tightening the cords of a drawstring purse, and fish are then skipped or sucked out of the closed net. Purse seine fishing operations are not the main source of industry-related seabird mortality globally, although some species may be more susceptible to incidental catch in specific fisheries. Seabird mortality in purse seine fishing operations primarily results from the entanglement of animals in different parts of the fishing gear. Small pelagic forage fish in South Africa include anchovy(Engraulis encrasicolus), sardine (Sardinops sagax) and West Coast redeye round herring (Etrumeus whiteheadi), with these three species generally accounting for more than 95% of the total pelagic purse seine catch. The small pelagic sector in South Africa consists of 64 vessels.

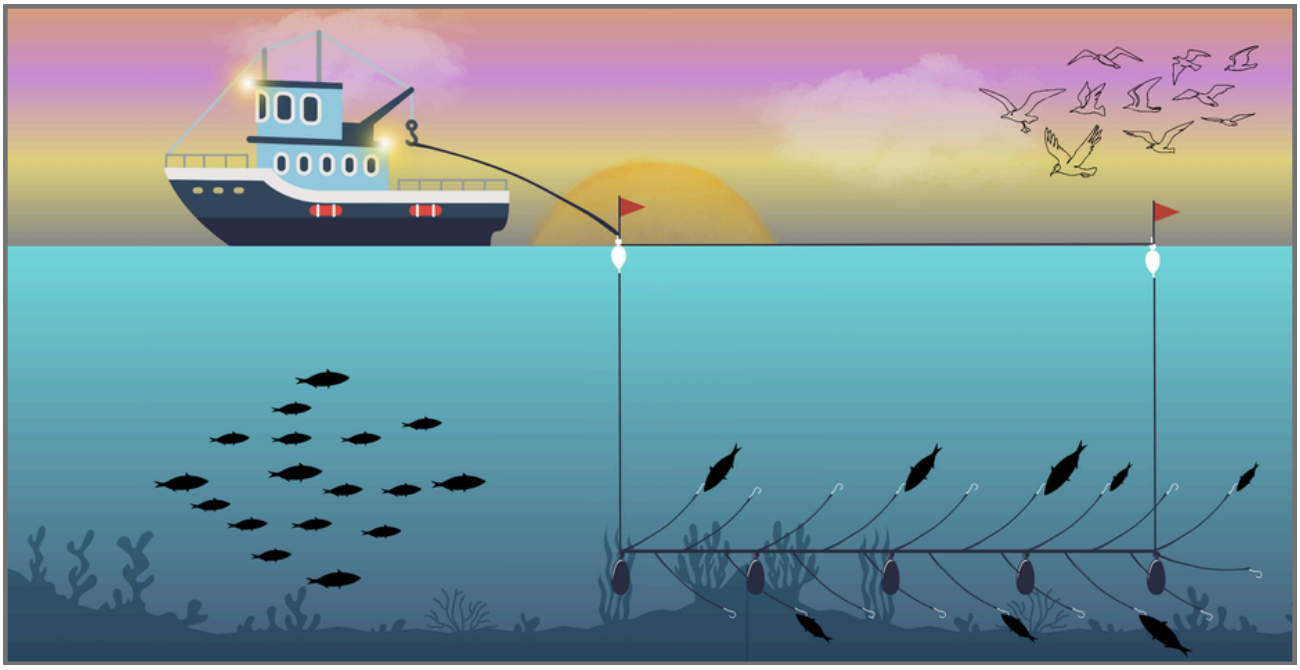
3.3.1 Mitigation and Permit Conditions

Permits prohibit the dumping or discarding of pelagic fish into the sea or deliberately freeing fish from the net as a mitigation measure to prevent bird attraction to the fishing operation. The surface aggregation of fish, however, is an attractant. Reports of seabird mortality are not quantified but are considered to be negligible. Permit conditions make mention of the NPOA-Seabirds and legislation to conserve threatened species, albeit with few specific mitigation measures.

3.3.2. Observer Coverage

Observer coverage of at least 10% is stipulated in the permit conditions for this fishery but the fishery is currently exempt from this provision. A voluntary observer programme has been operating since 2017 with observer coverage ranging from 6.6% to 12.4% of total landed catch.

3.4. LONGLINE



Large-scale pelagic and demersal longlines are known to range in length from several hundred metres to over 100 kilometres. There are two categories of longline fishing. Surface (pelagic) longlining uses gear suspended from the sea surface with floats, a fishing method used to catch tuna and other large pelagic (midwater) species one fish at a time; bottom (demersal) longlining uses gear sunk to the seabed using weights. The demersal longline fishing gear consists of a main line anchored to the seafloor and baited hooks deployed on branch lines, designed to be suspended near or just off the bottom. Surface longline gear is used to target species such as tuna and swordfish in the upper 100–400 metres of the water column, whilst bottom longline gear is used to target demersal species such as hake and Patagonian toothfish in waters up to 600 metres deep. Seabirds can be attracted to longline vessels by discharged offal and baits. Seabirds can get caught on baited hooks during the setting or soak of longlines, and less frequently, hauling of longlines.

The South African longline fisheries comprise of four fisheries sectors which use longline fishing gear which is set at different depths to target specific species such as hake, Patagonian toothfish, demersal shark and large pelagic species (tuna or swordfish).

Hake longline is a coast-wide fishery, split into inshore and offshore, which has 40 registered vessels operating from Port Nolloth to Port Elizabeth.

Patagonian toothfish occur at depths between 70 and 1 600 m. A longline fishery for this species has developed in the South African exclusive economic zone around the Prince Edward Islands (PEI-EEZ). Currently South Africa has one approved vessel in the fishery. Various gear configurations have been employed to exploit the resource since the inception of the fishery, but the one vessel is currently using Autoline.

South Africa has only one shark-directed fishery, the demersal shark longline fishery, with smoothhound shark (Mustelus mustelus) and soupfin shark (Galeorhinus galeus) comprising the bulk of the catch. In terms of operation, the demersal shark longline fishery is permitted to operate in coastal waters from the Orange River on the West Coast to the Kei River on the East Coast but fishing rarely takes place north of Table Bay. The fishery with one permitted vessel operates in waters generally shallower than 100 m.

The large pelagic sector targets four tuna species: albacore (Thunnus alalunga), yellowfin tuna (T. albacares), bigeye tuna (T. obesus) and southern bluefin tuna (T. maccoyii), as well as swordfish (Xiphias gladius). In addition, blue shark (Prionace glauca) and shortfin mako shark (Isurus oxyrinchus) are abundant in South African waters. This fishery consists of 60 Right Holders with between 13 and 20 active vessels.

3.4.1 Mitigation and Permit Conditions

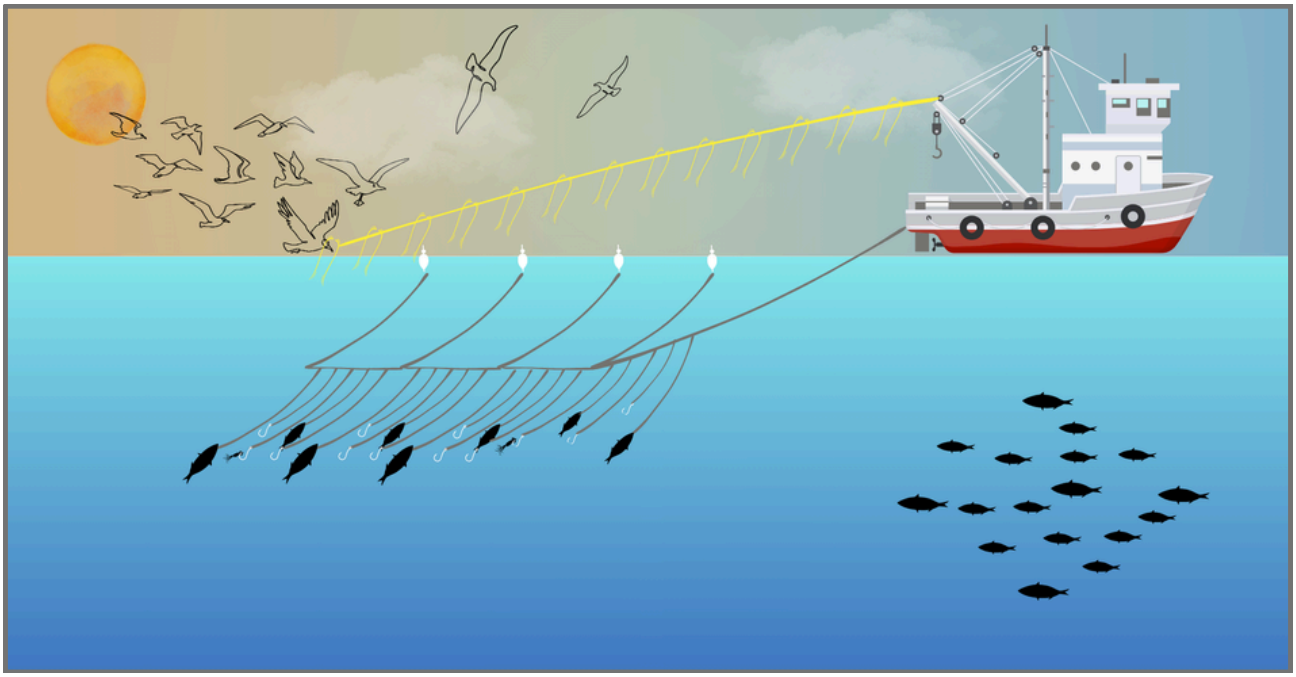
Several mitigation measures that have shown to be effective for longline fisheries are included in permit conditions for South African longline fisheries, including various combinations of night setting, offal management, line weighting and bird-scaring lines. Longlines may be set at night only (i.e., during the hours of darkness between the times of nautical twilight). During longline fishing at night, only the minimum ship's lights necessary for safety may be used. All deck lights should be shaded in such a way that the beam is directed down towards the deck. Dumping of offal must be minimised and take place only on the opposite side of the vessel from that on which lines are hauled. No dumping of offal may take place during setting. Fishing operations must be conducted in such a way that hook-lines sink beyond the reach of seabirds as soon as possible after they are put in the water. Bird-scaring lines deployed during longline setting operations deter birds from approaching the baited branch lines before they sink out of reach. Specifications of the bird-scaring line and the method of deployment are provided in the permit conditions.

Every effort must be made to ensure that birds captured alive during longlining are released alive and that wherever possible hooks are removed without jeopardising the life of the bird concerned. All banded birds killed must be retained whole (frozen or on ice) and returned to port. Other birds killed must be retained, either whole (preferable) or heads and feet (the head and feet from each bird to be tied

together) and returned to port. On landing the birds must be handed over to the Fishery Control Officer (FCO). The Patagonian toothfishery is also required to deploy a bird exclusion device (BED) designed to discourage birds from accessing baits during the hauling of longlines. Finally, hook shielding devices are permitted as alternative mitigation methods.

3.4.2. Observer Coverage

The Pelagic longline fishery has between 10% and 20% observer coverage, stratified by season, area and across the entire fleet. Foreign-flagged vessels that fish under a joint venture for a South African Right holder have 100% observer coverage. The demersal shark fishery has mandatory observer coverage for one trip per season and an experimental electronic monitoring system is deployed on the vessel. The Patagonian toothfish longline fishery has 100% double observer coverage. The Hake longline fleet has a voluntary observer programme between 5% and 7% coverage in terms of trips.



3.5. LINEFISHING

Recreational Angling; Pole & Line; Traditional Linefishing; Hake Handline; Squid Jig

Angling is a technique that uses a baited hook or artificial attractant at the end of a single line to catch fish. Pole fishing uses bamboo poles instead of lines; and lines can be deployed either by hand or with a rod and reel to assist casting away from a vessel or into the sea from the shore and to retrieve the catch. Angling can be done with relatively low environmental impact. However, bottom snags and cut lines can remain in the ecosystem and result in ghost fishing. Seabird mortality from ghost fishing and the baited hooks are a potential threat to seabirds. Occasionally seabirds attack the bait and get hooked but can be pulled in and released with appropriate handling.

Linefishing in South Africa is defined as the capture of fish with hook and line but excludes the use of longlines. Together, the three sectors of the linefishery (commercial, recreational, and small-scale) target between 95 and 200 of South Africa's 2 500 marine fish species. The commercial linefishing sector is exclusively boat-based. The recreational fishery uses rod and reel from ski-boats (5-8 m) to target numerous game fish. The commercial longline fishery has 455 active boats. The recreational linefishery has by far the largest number of participants (>450 000) of all fishery sectors in South Africa. There are approximately 7 200 active small-scale fishers along the South African coastline and an estimated 85% of

them harvest linefish. The hake directed handline, and the pole fishery were separated from the traditional commercial linefishery and permitted separately since 2000. Tuna directed pole and linefishing is carried out from 163 vessels with albacore and yellowfin tuna as the main targets. The squid jig fishery for chokka (Loligo reynaudii) constitutes a separate fishery with approximately 130 vessels, mostly confined to the South African South Coast. There are approximately 7 200 active small-scale fishers along the South African coastline and an estimated 85% of them harvest linefish. The hake-directed handline and the pole fishery were separated from the traditional commercial linefishery and permitted separately since 2000. Tuna-directed pole and linefishing is carried out from 163 vessels with Albacore and yellowfin tuna as the main target. The squid jig fishery for chokka (*Loligo reynaudii*) constitutes a separate fishery from ca. 130 vessels, mostly confined to the South African South Coast.

3.5.1. Mitigation and Permit Conditions

Bird mortality is unknown, and the monitoring thereof is very difficult as the fishery is diverse and spreads across multiple ecosystems throughout the EEZ. Permit conditions in the tuna pole sector include bird handling best practice, otherwise there are no specific permit conditions towards bird protection in these fisheries.

3.5.2. Observer Coverage

There is currently no at sea observer coverage required in any of the line fishing sectors, but the tuna pole fishery started deployment of observers as part of a fisheries improvement.

White-capped Albatross

FROM ISSUES TO ACTIONS

Since the first NPOA-Seabirds in 2003, South Africa had major advancements in the conservation and management of seabird interactions with its fisheries. The remaining challenges mirror those faced by most fishing nations, but specific actions, crafted with regards to the unique South African context will help to overcome these challenges. The following 24 actions were identified to meet the goals identified in the vision for South Africa's NPOA-Seabirds II.

Table 6. *NPOA-Seabirds II goals and actions. Estimated timeline for the completion of an action at s=short; m=medium; l=long. Priority for actions to be completed (ascending 1–3). Collaborating institutions for actions, including potential funding thereof.*

#	Actions	Outputs	Agencies Responsible	Timeline (S, M, L)	Priority (1, 2, 3)	Collaboration/ Funding
GOAL 1		**Assessing the population trajectory of seabird species interacting with fisheries within SA EEZ**				
1.1	Identify all seabird species that interact with fisheries	List of species with fisheries interactions complete with all relevant information on interactions produced and presented to relevant working groups.	OC: MBR	S	1	BLSA

1.2	Collate historical and current seabird colony data relevant for population assessment - age classes, gender, genetics, diet, moult, etc. for species that interact with SA fisheries.	Database available with all parameters necessary for population modelling.	OC: MBR	M	1	BLSA, ACAP, Academic institutions and other data custodians
1.3	Estimate population trends (SA colony) & global species (if data is available/regional Red Data Book or IUCN) (e.g. JARA model).	Population trends modelled and collated for all species interacting with fisheries and threat levels determined.	OC: MBR	M	1	Academic institutions with quantitative ecology expertise
GOAL 2		**Quantifying the impact of South African fisheries on seabird populations**				
2.1	Review existing observer programmes and levels of observer cover per fishery – spatial/temporal/vessel effect representativeness. Conduct a power analysis and identify gaps.	Scientific paper produced and presented at relevant working groups.	FM: FRD	M	2	OC:BCR,FM:MRM, Observer companies, NGOs
2.2	Review available electronic monitoring options from international best practice to guide implementation in SA fisheries.	Report produced and presented at appropriate working group.	DFFE: FM	M	2	OC: BCR, FM: MRM, Observer Companies, NGOs
2.3	Investigate post release and cryptic mortality within SA fisheries	Review literature and research e.g. electronic monitoring footage in selected fisheries and present results to relevant groups.	DFFE: FM	M	2	NGOs & Academic Institutions.

2.4	Establish, maintain and improve observer programs to collect accurate and representative data on incidental catch of seabird information and interactions with fishing gear, and use of mitigation measures.	Observer programmes established in all relevant fisheries that produce sufficient data.	FM:MRM	L	3	OC:BCR, Fisheries Companies, Observer Companies, NGOs
2.5	Formalise electronic monitoring programme and data management options to help increase observer coverage for target catch and endangered, threatened or protected species management.	Electronic monitoring frameworks (technical and data specifications) developed and standards established such that electronic monitoring can be included in permit conditions as alternative or addition to observer programmes.	FM: FRD, MRM	L	3	OC:BCR, Fisheries companies, Observer companies, NGOs
2.6	Collate seabird bycatch/incidental catch data from all relevant fisheries through observer and logbook data, including interaction data, mortality, and post-capture outcome.	Data collated, available per species, presented at relevant working groups.	FM: FRD	L	3	FM: FRD, Observer Companies
2.7	Review existing modelling frameworks for applicability with SA bycatch data available (e.g. model Bayesian; SEFRA; Ratio based Estimate). Identify gaps and update methodology.	Most appropriate model framework to quantify impact of bird interactions identified for each fishery.	OC: MBR	M	3	FM: FRD Academic Institutions with Quantitative Ecology Expertise
2.8	Quantify seabird incidental catch level on seabird populations/species (data dependent), identify gaps (including cryptic and post-release mortality) and update methodology.	Spatially explicit fisheries risk assessment model framework.	OC: MBR	M	1	Academic Institutions with Quantitative Ecology Expertise
2.9	Integrate seabird incidental mortality data with population data and conduct population viability analyses.	Fisheries impact on all species interacting with fisheries modelled and data gaps identified, and advice developed accordingly.	OC: BCR & FM: FRD	M	2	Academic institutions with quantitative ecology expertise

GOAL 3		Mitigation and minimisation of negative impacts				
3.1	Determine the most appropriate mitigation measures for all relevant fisheries nationally including international best practice and local research.	Report with appropriate mitigation measures identified for each SA fishery.	OC: MBR	M	2	BLSA, FM: FRD
3.2	Determine the most appropriate spatio-temporal management measures to minimise negative impacts on seabird population by all relevant fisheries.	Report with appropriate spatial and/or temporal management measures identified for each SA fishery.	OC: MBR	M	2	BLSA, FM: FRD
3.3	Review and amend permit Conditions and policies annually across fisheries to be in line with best practice measures (e.g. ACAP) including spatio-temporal avoidance techniques that are effective in reducing the impact on seabird populations.	Permit conditions and policies reviewed and amended appropriately for all SA fisheries that interact with seabirds.	DFFE: FM	L	2	OC; Fisheries; Observer Companies; NGOs
3.4	Annual review of compliance with permit conditions related to seabird incidental mortality, mitigation and protection.	Compliance report with individual transgressions reported annually and communicated to all relevant stakeholders.	FM:MCS	L	3	All relevant stakeholders

GOAL 4		Education, collaboration, and integration of actions				
4.1	Review existing information and develop compliance and enforcement tools associated with non-compliance with seabird management measures in permit conditions (e.g. fine catalogue). Communicate relevant penalties to stakeholders.	Compliance information and incentives are communicated to individuals and all relevant stakeholders. Transgression framework, i.e. fines, should be communicated to Right Holders and enforcement tools should be updated annually.	FM: MCS	M	3	Fisheries, OC
4.2	Integration of information flow between industry, observer programmes and relevant departmental sections (including scientific, management, compliance).	Establishment of bycatch working group inclusive of all relevant stakeholders.	FM: FRD	S	3	
4.3	Seabird impact risk assessment across all relevant fisheries through stakeholder engagement.	Report on risks and mitigation completed and presented to appropriate fora.	OC: MBR	M	2	FRD; NGOs
4.4	Education and training programmes for fishermen to raise awareness of bycatch issues, solutions and benefits.	All fishing sectors should be encouraged to share experiences and exchange skills through existing networks. development of training manuals and infographics materials, video training materials to make awareness to all fishing sectors.	NGOs	M		NGOs

4.5	Develop best-practice guidelines for seabird management (handling; mitigation; avoidance) for all relevant fisheries.	All fishing sectors should consider the use of training and extension programs for fishers, and the production of best-practice seabird identification and seabird handling guides. Education and extension activities are particularly important for recreational fisheries where regulatory oversight of fishing practices is limited.	FRD, OC, NGOs	M	2	All relevant stakeholders, public
4.6	Develop seabird management plans for each relevant fishery in South Africa [Noting: including permit conditions specific in fleet context].	Seabird management plans for all fisheries completed and endorsed.	FM: MRM	L	3	All Relevant Stakeholders, Public
4.7	Disseminate information to the public, aimed at building trust and transparency between various stakeholders based on scientific data. [e.g. Status of the South African Marine Fishery Resources report; Annual Science Report (O&C)].	Template of summary report with info-graphic developed to disseminate information related to endangered, threatened or protected species bycatch and first report published. Annual bycatch report from the Bycatch Working Group/Marine Top Predator Scientific Working Group/Annual Science Report.	MBR	M	3	FM: FRD, OC: NGO's DFFE: CD comms.
4.8	Establishment of a bycatch working group, co-chaired by FM and O&C to address bycatch and mitigation issues, provide recommendations and disseminate related information to relevant stakeholders.	Working group established and capacitated.	FM: FRD, MRM; OC: MBR	S	1	OC, FM; NGOs; Academic Institutions

Abbreviation	Name of Institution
DFFE	Department of Fisheries, Forestry and the Environment
MBR	Biodiversity and Coastal Research
OC	Oceans and Coasts
FM	Fisheries Management
FRD	Fisheries Research and Development
MRM	Marine Resource Management
MCS	Monitoring and Compliance Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

LINKS

Additional information for South African fisheries and relevant permit conditions for each fishery can be found here:

Link to: Status of South African Marine Fishery Resources Report 2025

Link to: South African Fisheries Permit Conditions 2024/25

Link to the annual report 2014 - 24

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Picture credits: Trevor Hardaker, Daniel Engelbrecht, Vanessa Stephens, Balobi.

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Northern Giant Petrel

forestry, fisheries
& the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
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