



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Fourth Meeting of Advisory Committee

Cape Town, South Africa, 22 – 25 August 2008

**Observer Report – IATTC (Inter-American Tropical Tuna
Commission)**

USA

Observer Report -- IATTC

The issue of seabird interactions with IATTC fisheries was discussed at meetings of the IATTC's Stock Assessment and the Bycatch Working Groups in 2007. The Stock Assessment Working Group suggested areas where mitigation measures for reducing seabird mortality could be most effectively adopted (*i.e.*, where bird distributions and longline effort overlap), as well as suggest possible mitigation measures in these areas of vulnerability. The Bycatch Working Group recommended that seabird bycatch data be collected from all tuna longliners, with consideration given to making the provision of such data mandatory. The Commission will consider these outcomes as well as the outcomes from the Stock Assessment Review Meeting at its annual meeting in June 2008. It is anticipated that a similar seabird bycatch mitigation measure, based on the WCPFC measure, will be submitted for discussion and possible adoption at the meeting. The United States attended and actively participated in all such meetings in 2007 and the Stock Assessment Review Meeting in 2008 and is attending the Commission meetings in 2008 to encourage nations to adopt a binding seabird bycatch resolution.

Since 2005, the IATTC has increasingly been addressing seabird-related issues via the following actions and recommendations:

- Resolution C-05-01 on Incidental Mortality of Seabirds (73rd Meeting IATTC, 2005);
- That the Commission coordinate with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), and other tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) as appropriate, in its implementation of seabird resolutions and the development of scientific information and reports that support this implementation. This could include practical areas of cooperation on the mitigation of seabird bycatch (7th Meeting of the IATTC's Stock Assessment Working Group (SAWG), 2006);
- The IATTC should develop, in coordination with the other RFMOs, a strategy to mitigate bycatches in the different fisheries involved. The program should include standardization of data collection (whenever possible), discussion of research programs and activities to be undertaken in each, and a mechanism for the timely sharing of results. This item could be included in the agenda of the upcoming Kobe meeting (7th Meeting SAWG, 2006);
- The Stock Assessment Working Group suggest areas where mitigation measures for reducing seabird mortality could be most effectively adopted (*i.e.*, where bird distributions and longline effort overlap), as well as suggest possible mitigation measures in these areas of vulnerability. The Commission should then consider mitigation measures at its June 2007 meeting (6th Meeting of the IATTC's Bycatch Working Group (BWG), 2007); and that
- Seabird bycatch data be collected from all tuna longliners, with consideration given to making the provision of such data mandatory (6th Meeting BWG, 2007).
- From the 8th Meeting of the Stock Assessment Working Group (SAR-8), 2007:

- ✓ a. Develop a standard format for reporting seabird bycatch information that CPCs are required to provide, in accordance with Resolution C-05-01.
 - ✓ b. Request that publicity materials be developed for fishermen that describe the disposition of bird bands collected on seabirds killed as bycatch, within appropriate IATTC areas, and advise that care should be taken not to offer incentives for these bands, however, as this might cause the intentional killing of the birds.
 - ✓ c. Note that, in addition to direct impacts, there are indirect impacts on seabirds of the fisheries under the purview of IATTC, which are included in the IATTC ecosystem model (IATTC Bulletin 22: 133-218).
 - ✓ d. Continue to examine the effectiveness of measures to reduce seabird interactions with fishing gear. This should include technologies that are under development and technologies currently in use.
- Spain proposed a resolution (G1A) to mitigate the impact on seabirds of fishing for highly-migratory fish stocks. Although there was considerable support for the proposal, ultimately it was not approved. Spain, supported by other delegations, indicated that it intended to pursue a proposal on seabirds in future meetings (Minutes of the 75th Meeting of the IATTC Commission, June 2007).

IATTC Stock Assessment Review Meeting (SARM-9), May 11-15, 2008, LaJolla, CA, USA

Three seabird-related reports were discussed at SARM-9 and are available at

<http://www.iattc.org/IATTCandAIDCPMeetingMay08ENG.htm> :

- SARM-9-11a “Seabirds and Fisheries in IATTC Area: An Update (USA)
- SARM-9-11b “Albatross and Petrel Distribution within the IATTC Area” (ACAP)
- SARM-9-11c “Preliminary Estimation of Seabird Bycatch of Taiwanese Longline Fisheries in the Pacific Ocean” (Taiwan)

The SARM-9 Report is also available at this IATTC website.

SARM-9-11a addressed several of the actions and recommendations noted above and provided updates in the following key areas: Annual estimates of albatross bycatch from the Hawaii pelagic longline fishery and Laysan albatross studies on Guadalupe Island, Mexico.

Summary of SARM-9-11a Updates:

- Bycatch of Laysan and black-footed albatross in the Hawaii pelagic longline fishery continues to be relatively low;
- The Hawaii pelagic longline fishery for swordfish (shallow-set) has 100% observer coverage and the fishery for tuna (deep-set) targets 20% observer coverage;
- Seabird bycatch data is collected and reported on annually for both of these U.S. longline fisheries and is made publicly available;
- Multi-faceted and collaborative study of Laysan albatross is underway on Guadalupe Island, Mexico;
- Study topics include:
 - Satellite-tracking to identify geographic distribution;
 - Fisheries bycatch documentation and estimation;
 - Characterization of importance of breeding colonies;
 - Diet studies and at-sea utilization;
 - Land-based protections by reducing predator threats.

Information from other fisheries that overlap with Laysan albatross and experience bycatch may offer options to consider for reducing the potential for bycatch in IATTC fisheries. Biological information about the distribution and foraging patterns of these species may also offer valuable insights into the development of a suite of effective and practicable measures to reduce the likelihood of longline vessels fishing in the IATTC Area from interacting with these seabird species.

SARM-9-11b (ACAP) reported on albatross and petrel distribution in the eastern Pacific, based on remote tracking data. Three species (the critically endangered waved albatross and Chatham albatross, and the endangered black-footed albatross) have a high overlap with the IATTC Area. At a colony level, the IATTC Area also has a high overlap with black-browed albatross from Chile and Laysan albatross from Isla Guadalupe. No remote tracking data are currently available for Buller's and Salvin's albatross in the south-east Pacific, but at-sea observations indicate the importance of the IATTC area for these species. The analysis indicates that the mitigation areas suggested in IATTC Document 75-07c incorporate a high proportion of the distribution of albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters in the eastern Pacific, the species considered most at risk of bycatch in longline fisheries, however this needs to be kept under review as further information becomes available. It was also noted that a second waved albatross workshop recently concluded in Guayaquil, Ecuador, in May 2008 (the first workshop was held in Lima, Peru in June 2007). Representatives from ACAP, Ecuador and Peru government agencies, scientists, the IATTC staff, fishermen, and non-governmental organizations attended the meeting to discuss further development of an Action Plan to address both colony-based and at-sea threats, including fisheries bycatch. A population modeling exercise discussed at the workshop indicated that relatively few additional adult extractions (in the hundreds) from the population could hasten the extinction of this critically endangered species.

SARM-9-11c (Taiwan) noted the increasing global attention on the conservation of the ecosystem and that the issue of incidental catches of ecological related species in fishing operations has been of great concern. Taiwan made the first attempt to estimate seabird incidental catch of Taiwan longline fisheries in the Pacific Ocean. To collect scientific information for target species as well as incidental catch species, Taiwan has launched observer programs since 2002. There were 23 observer trips from 2002 to 2006 in the Pacific Ocean large-scale tuna longline fleets. The coverage rate by trips was 3.5% in average. The observed days were 1590. According to the data collected, the seabird incidental catch rate (BPUE) in each 5x5 degree grid square varied from 0 to 0.76 per 1000 hooks with the average BPUE of 0.054 per 1000 hooks. As for the seabird incidental catch distribution, the BPUE was the highest in the areas between 25-40°N and 165°W to 165°E and between 25-35°S and 165-180°W. On the contrary, the BPUE was low in tropical area. By using the total efforts data estimated from logbooks and the seabird BPUE from observers, the preliminary estimated average number of seabird incidental catch was around 1500 per year. The observer data showed the set up of bird-scaring lines could reduce the incidental catch of seabirds effectively.

IATTC Commission

A proposal was submitted by Spain to the 2007 IATTC Commission meeting to require specified seabird mitigation measures, with defined technical specifications, be used in a defined area by specified vessels. The proposal (based on the WCPFC seabird measure adopted in 2006 and specifications identified in 2007) although broadly supported, ultimately was not adopted. It is anticipated that a modified proposal may be submitted for consideration at the 2008 Commission meeting. An update from this IATTC Commission meeting will be provided at AC4 in Cape Town.