



Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Fourth Meeting of Advisory Committee

Cape Town, South Africa, 22 – 25 August 2008

**Observers Report: Fourth International Fishers Forum
(IFF4)**

Author: BirdLife International

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Submitted by: BirdLife International

Reporting Back after Attending an International Meeting for ACAP

Meeting Title: *Fourth International Fishers Forum (IFF4)*

Meeting Organisation: *Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, in partnership with Instituto Costarricense de Pesca y Acuicultura (Costa Rica Fisheries and Aquaculture Institute, INCOPECA).*

Date and Location: *Puntarenas, Costa Rica, November 12-15, 2007.*

Website Address: <http://www.fishersforum.org>

Your Name/Affiliation: *Dr. Ben Sullivan, BirdLife International Global Seabird Programme (GSP)*

Capacity of Attendance: *Invited speaker/Session Chair (Dr Ben Sullivan, BirdLife Global Seabird Programme Coordinator). The GSP were also represented at the meeting by John Croxall (Chair, GSP), Esteban Frere (South American Coordinator, GSP)*

Relevant Paper(s) Tabled: *Chair – of seabird session titled: Seabird Bycatch and Artisanal Fisheries*

Summary of Content:

The fourth International Fishers Forum (IFF4) was held in Costa Rica in November 2007. The agenda for the three day meeting was extremely tight and covered a wide range of topics, which limited opportunity for detailed discussions and tangible outcomes.

There was only a single session dedicated to seabird bycatch and this focused on efforts to compile an encyclopedia of operational characteristics of artisanal longline fisheries in central and South America. The outcomes of the session have been limited because of a lack of resources to undertake the work.

It is recommended that ACAP consider carefully the utility of attending future IFF meetings unless seabird bycatch is given greater emphasis.

Outcome (e.g. summary of relevant discussion, resolution, etc):

The original IFF was held in Auckland, New Zealand in 2000. The meeting was focused on bringing together fisheries stakeholders, particularly fishermen, to identify collaborative means of reducing seabird bycatch. Subsequent IIF have continued to expand the scope of issues they address to the point where IFF 4 covered an extremely wide range of diverse topics. These included, but were not limited to:

- institutional frameworks supporting artisanal fisheries,
- Regional Fisheries Management Organisations
- bycatch in longline and gillnet fisheries
 - seabirds,
 - marine turtles,
 - cetaceans, and
 - elasmobranchs
- fisheries sustainability –ecolabelling and certification

Addressing all these issues during a three day meeting greatly limited the number of opportunities to discuss issues in detail, and even less opportunity to identify concrete actions to be delivered as a result of the meeting.

Prior to the meeting, the BirdLife Global Seabird Programme worked closely with Dr Martin Hall (IATTC) to develop the objectives and structure of the seabird session. Dr Hall assisted in the design and circulation of a questionnaire to commence the process of collating information on artisanal fisheries in Central and South America.

The seabird session was scheduled for 140 minutes on day 2 of the meeting, and ran concurrently with a session on marine turtle bycatch. The session was reasonably well attended considering that it ran alongside the turtle session. Given that the meeting was in Central America, one of its key focuses was artisanal fisheries. The seabird session was targeted at taking the initial steps towards building an encyclopedia of the operational characteristics and degrees of overlap with seabirds of South and Central America and Mexico's artisanal fleets. This information will be a tool to help achieve two primary objectives:

- (1) Currently, there are a variety of gear and vessels configurations used to target the same or similar species, some of which have markedly different levels of seabird bycatch. The example that will be discussed in detail in this session when we compare the different modalities of longline fisheries in the region (shallower and deeper, side-setting or not, etc.). By contrasting and comparing these fisheries we aim to identify potential cross-over in fishing methods that can be exchanged/exported to reduce seabird bycatch, and potentially improve fishing efficiency.
- (2) A wide ranging survey of the characteristics (e.g. vessel and gear characteristic) of artisanal fisheries South America, together with information on seabird distribution and interactions with fisheries, would enable us to conduct a preliminary risk assessment of the fisheries most likely to pose a threat to seabirds, and ultimately to target our resources more efficiently. Data from a subset of artisanal longline fisheries in South and Central America will be discussed at the session.

Some productive discussions were had and some good contacts were made during the session. In addition, we discussed the possibility of fishermen exchanges to share experiences and practices between 'deep set' mahi-mahi fisheries in Central America and 'surface-set' mah-mahi fisheries in South America, which could lead to the uptake of 'deeper-set' fisheries in more southerly regions where bycatch of ACAP listed species is an important issue.

Outlook for Future ACAP Involvement:

Future IFF meetings may provide some useful networking opportunities for ACAP, but, the range of issues and topics now covered by the meeting seriously limit opportunities for detailed and meaningful discussion on seabird bycatch. ACAP would need to consider very carefully whether attendance at future IFFs was likely to help deliver core components of the work programme. In December 2006 the first South American Fishers Forum was held in Sao Paulo, Brazil (AC 3 Inf. 12) and future regional IFFs are considered much more likely to deliver tangible results as they have a much more focused agenda and are designed to focus on information exchange and networking designed to lead to tangible results to reduce seabird bcyatch.

Recommended Actions for ACAP:

ACAP would be advised to review the agenda for IFF5 carefully prior to deciding whether the meeting was a priority for the Agreement.

Have relevant papers been forwarded to Secretariat: No