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|  <p>Agreement on the Conservation<br/>of Albatrosses and Petrels</p> | <p><b>Eighth Meeting of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group</b></p> <p><i>Wellington, New Zealand, 4 – 6 September 2017</i></p> <p><b>Albatross Task Force: 2018-2020</b></p> <p><b><i>BirdLife International</i></b></p> |
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## SUMMARY

Following discussions with experts of the ACAP SBWG, BirdLife International and the RSPB launched the Albatross Task Force in 2006 to tackle seabird bycatch in targeted fisheries. The ATF subsequently expanded to work in eight countries in southern Africa and South America. The role of the ATF has been to support the development and demonstration of effective mitigation measures in longline and trawl fisheries that overlap with the distribution of vulnerable seabirds. The collaboration with government, industry, local organisations and institutions of ACAP parties has been critical in achieving advances in mitigation research and the transition from practical demonstrations to the adoption of fishery regulations. Recognising the present challenges of fleet-wide implementation and monitoring of mitigation measures, BirdLife International invites the ACAP SBWG to provide input into the role of the ATF ahead of a strategic workshop that will be held in March 2018 to define future priorities and objectives.

## 1. BACKGROUND

### 1.1. Albatross Task Force

In the sidelines of the first meeting of the ACAP Advisory Committee in Hobart, July 2005, a group of international experts on seabird conservation identified the gap that existed between the scientific knowledge related to mitigation measures and the practical implementation in fisheries with known or suspected impacts on threatened seabirds. In 2006, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and BirdLife International responded by launching the Albatross Task Force (ATF), an international team of seabird mitigation experts tasked with bridging the gap between the science and the fishing industry. The aim was to demonstrate and support the uptake of seabird bycatch mitigation measures in fisheries with a known impact on albatrosses and other vulnerable seabirds.

The main objective of the ATF is *to reduce the bycatch of albatross and petrels in targeted fisheries, and ultimately to improve the conservation status of threatened seabirds.*

The ATF has been active in the following countries and years (in parenthesis) focussing on the main target fisheries in each case.

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1. Argentina (2008 - 2017): Demersal factory trawl fleet, mid-water trawl fleet;
2. Brazil (2008 - 2017): Pelagic longline fleet;
3. Chile (2007 - 2017): Pelagic longline fleet, demersal central-southern trawl fleet, mid-water trawl fleet, artisanal purse seine fleet;
4. Ecuador (2010 - 2013): Demersal longline fleet, purse seine fleet;
5. Namibia (2008 - 2017): Demersal longline and trawl fleets, pelagic longline fleet;
6. Peru (2012 - 2017): Demersal longline fleet, demersal and surface gillnet fleets;
7. South Africa (2006 - 2017): Demersal longline and trawl fleets, pelagic longline fleet;
8. Uruguay (2008 - 2014): pelagic longline fleet, demersal trawl fleet.

The ATF is supported in each location by local NGOs which provide invaluable contributions to the overall running of the project. In-country partners include Aves Argentinas, Projeto Albatroz, SAVE Brasil, CODEFF, Aves y Conservación, Namibia Nature Foundation, BirdLife South Africa and Proyecto Albatros y Petreles – Uruguay.

## **2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS**

### **2.1. Experimental research**

#### **2.1.1. Trawl fisheries**

Since 2006, the ATF has provided recommendations on Best Practice mitigation measures for demersal trawl fisheries through several reports and publications that demonstrate the efficacy of bird-scaring lines at preventing seabird interactions with trawl cables. Results indicate reductions in the interaction rate of >95% (BirdLife International, 2010; BirdLife International, 2011b; BirdLife International, 2013; Maree et al., 2014; Suazo et al., 2014; Tamini et al., 2015; Tamini et al., 2016; Watkins et al., 2008).

#### **2.1.2. Longline fisheries**

In addition to trawl fisheries, the ATF has also provided recommendations on Best Practice advice for demersal and pelagic longline fisheries through experiments into the efficacy of bird-scaring lines, line weighting and night setting. Results demonstrate bycatch reductions of between 50% from use of a single measure and 98% with a combination of measures are possible (BirdLife International, 2010; BirdLife International, 2011a; BirdLife International, 2011c; BirdLife International, 2011d; Claudino dos Santos et al., 2016; Domingo et al., 2011; Domingo et al., 2013; Gianuca et al., 2013; Jiménez et al., 2009; Jiménez et al., 2012; Jiménez et al., 2013; Paterson et al., 2017; Sullivan et al., 2012).

#### **2.1.3 Other net fisheries**

While the main emphasis of the ATF has been related to longline and trawl fisheries, more recent efforts have also involved testing potential mitigation measures in purse seine and gillnet fisheries. Early results indicate that seabird bycatch can be reduced by >95% in purse seine fisheries by modifying nets and the use of illumination on drift nets in Peru can reduce the bycatch of marine mammals, seabirds and marine turtles (Suazo et al., 2016; BirdLife International, 2017).

## 2.2. Education and outreach

The ATF was designed as a grass roots project, to work “shoulder to shoulder” with fishing crew and fishery stakeholders with the specific objective of raising the profile of seabird bycatch in fisheries and encouraging the use of available mitigation measures. Collectively, since the ATF was launched, the teams have completed over 5,000 days of at-sea monitoring, attended more than 900 meetings with government, industry and fishery stakeholders, and conducted over 3,400 port visits.

## 2.3 Adoption of regulations

For the purposes of this document, “adoption” refers to the decision to include new / modified requirements in the legal framework governing fishery permit conditions/ fishery regulations.

Thanks to a proactive response from many of the ACAP parties to the scientific evidence presented to the SBWG by a range of institutions and organisations, the majority of the principle target fisheries that were initially identified for the ATF to work with have now adopted fishery regulations that require the use of some combination of mitigation measures to be used in all fishery operations.

## 2.4 Implementation of regulations

For the purposes of this document, “implementation” refers to the process of *putting into practical effect* the requirements in the fishery permit conditions / fishery regulations.

At the second meeting of the SBWG, Robertson (2008) concluded that “Teamwork is of the essence, and the work of Birdlife’s Albatross Task Force and the implementation phases of the mitigation sciences can benefit greatly by the existence of an effective multi-national agreement like ACAP.”

Almost a decade has passed since that paper was presented, and despite an improved understanding of the efficacy of measures, within the same time frame there is only one example of demonstrable fleet-wide implementation of mitigation measures in the [active] target fleets the ATF has been working with (Maree et al., 2014). Moving from mitigation research to the adoption of regulations and on to implementation of those regulations has been a major challenge to which we must give greater emphasis if we are to halt the continued decline of ACAP-listed species. To do so we must generate increased synergies between the factors that affect implementation.

According to Cox et al. (2007) there are three common themes to successful implementation of bycatch reduction measures: long-standing collaborations among the fishing industry, scientists, and resource managers; pre- and post-implementation<sup>1</sup> monitoring; and compliance via enforcement and incentives. Through discussions at ATF workshops the ATF teams identified a series of factors that contribute toward adoption and implementation of seabird bycatch mitigation measures (Table 1).

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of this document, pre- and post-adoption is more relevant terminology

Table 1: Factors that contribute to the adoption and implementation of mitigation measures

| <b>Factor</b>  | <b>Attributes that contribute to implementation</b>   |
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| Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focal point network in each country</li> <li>▪ Platform for collaboration and focussed research priorities</li> <li>▪ Presentation of scientific experimental research</li> <li>▪ Identification of Best Practice advice</li> <li>▪ Dissemination of information (Fact Sheets / Latest News)</li> <li>▪ Small grants initiative</li> </ul> |
| Regional Fishery Management Organisations              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Presentation of scientific experimental research</li> <li>▪ Adoption of Best Practice advice</li> <li>▪ Reporting and monitoring obligations</li> </ul>  |
| National Plans of Action - Seabirds                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National framework for issues of seabird bycatch</li> <li>▪ Recommendations for fishery-specific mitigation measures</li> <li>▪ National seabird bycatch working group formation</li> </ul>  |
| Fishery certification                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incentive to establishing base line evaluation of fisheries</li> <li>▪ Incentive to trial mitigation measures</li> </ul>   |
| Awareness and dissemination                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provision of relevant information across the target fishery</li> <li>▪ Facilitates feedback from industry on efficacy of measures</li> </ul>   |
| Observer programmes                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monitoring of seabird bycatch</li> <li>▪ Monitoring of compliance with mitigation measures</li> <li>▪ Facilitate collaborative at-sea research</li> </ul>  |
| Government   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Governance</li> <li>▪ Adoption of seabird bycatch mitigation regulations</li> </ul>  |
| Fishing industry                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaborative / pilot research projects</li> <li>▪ Voluntary uptake of Best Practice</li> <li>▪ Technical feedback and expertise</li> </ul>  |
| Non-governmental organisations                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaborative / complementary research projects</li> <li>▪ Strategic alliances for and support networks and advocacy</li> <li>▪ Collaborative funding</li> </ul>   |

### **3. ATF NEXT STEPS: 2018 - 2020**

Upon the decision to introduce the requirement of seabird bycatch mitigation measures in fishery permit condition / regulations, there are a series of steps or phases that are inherent to the successful implementation of those measures. Those steps are unique to each country and / or fishery but are likely to include a combination of the following:

- a) instruction by government that the regulations are in effect;
- b) provision of mitigation measures or specification of standards for their construction;
- c) demonstration of the practical deployment and retrieval of mitigation measures;
- d) capacity building and training for observers and crews;
- e) generation of a feedback mechanism for industry;
- f) monitoring and reporting frameworks; and
- g) the introduction of industry incentives.

In this context, and recognising the factors that affect implementation in table 1, plus noting the importance of the input of SBWG experts leading up to establishing the ATF in 2006, BirdLife International would again welcome suggestions and discussions with regard to the current work priorities and challenges that member states are experiencing.

Essentially, what support from the ATF would be most useful to expedite the implementation process in your target fishery(ies) between now and 2020, and beyond?

### **4. LIMITATIONS**

The ATF is a project with the BirdLife International Marine Programme, and financed via donations and grants, and managed through a network of collaborating NGOs. As such there are limitations to what conservation action can be conducted.

- a) Our projects are funding-dependant, and as such our capacity is limited to a small number of staff per country;
- b) As a collaborating network of NGOs, we can only conduct ATF projects in countries where permissions and collaborations are facilitated to conduct mitigation research.

Despite these limitations, we have successfully maintained the projects over the past ten years and BirdLife International and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds are dedicated to maintaining support to the ATF up to and beyond 2020.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

The ATF was launched following collective advice from the SBWG recognising the need for a group of practitioners to demonstrate mitigation measures to the fishing industry. Ten years on, there have been advances in the understanding and practical use of mitigation measures, but serious challenges remain before mitigation is implemented across all target fisheries. BirdLife International therefore invites the SBWG to once again provide feedback on the role of the ATF to support seabird bycatch reductions across priority fisheries.

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