

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Joint Twelfth Meeting of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group and Eighth Meeting of the Population and Conservation Status Working Group</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Lima, Peru, 8 August 2024</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Endurance or Extinction; long-term population trends in black-browed, grey- headed and wandering albatrosses</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Elizabeth K. Mackley, Sally Poncet, Rosamund M. Hall, Elizabeth Holmes, Sarah J. Manthorpe, Ashley Bennison and Phillips, R.A.</i></b></p>
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### SUMMARY

The wandering (*Diomedea exulans*), black-browed (*Thalassarche melanophris*) and grey-headed albatrosses (*Thalassarche chrysostoma*) are categorised globally as Vulnerable, Least Concern and Endangered, respectively, by IUCN, and the three populations at South Georgia (Islas Georgias del Sur)<sup>1</sup> are listed by the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels as High Priority for conservation. In December 2023, surveys of all known breeding sites of wandering albatrosses, and of a large sample of colonies of black-browed and grey-headed albatrosses at South Georgia (Islas Georgias del Sur)<sup>1</sup> were carried out by counting birds on the ground and in photographs. Comparison of breeding numbers (corrected for previous failures, attendance of nonbreeders and failed breeders, and time of day) with previous surveys indicated considerable variation in trends among sites, and continued declines overall. Annual trends from 2014/15 to 2023/24 compared with 2003/04 to 2014/15 indicated a slower decrease in all three species; black-browed albatross (-1.1% p.a. vs. 1.8% p.a.), grey-headed albatross (-4.1% p.a. vs. -5.0% p.a.), wandering albatrosses (-0.3% p.a. vs -1.8% p.a.). Updated population estimates for South Georgia (Islas Georgias del Sur)<sup>1</sup> in 2023/24 were; 1,278 breeding pairs, 55,119 breeding pairs and 18,475 breeding pairs of wandering, black-browed and grey-headed albatrosses, comprising 13.7%, 7.6% and 29.1% of revised global totals, respectively. This represents a huge decline (76% in <40 years) in particular of the grey-headed albatross, as South Georgia (Islas Georgias del Sur)<sup>1</sup> formerly held >50% of the global total. There are no terrestrial threats other than high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) for wandering albatrosses, and the main threats at sea are climate change - including the southerly shift of Antarctic krill *Euphausia superba*, which is a major diet component of the *Thalassarche* species – and incidental mortality (bycatch) in fisheries on continental shelves and in the High Seas. Addressing bycatch is therefore a clear management priority, particularly because there are effective technical solutions, and the main barriers are poor fisheries governance and the willingness of management bodies to mandate best-practice seabird-bycatch mitigation, and to monitor and enforce compliance.

<sup>1</sup> A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty of the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (Islas Georgias del Sur e Islas Sandwich del Sur) and the surrounding maritime areas.