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A paper by BirdLife International

**BirdLife International Global Seabird Programme: its
relevance to the Agreement on the Conservation of
Albatrosses and Petrels.**



BirdLife International Global Seabird Programme: its relevance to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels.

Action Requested

The Meeting of Parties is invited to take note of this paper in regard to its future work

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1. BirdLife International

The BirdLife Partnership is a worldwide network of autonomous non-governmental organisations (NGOs) supported by a large grassroots membership, who work together to conserve biodiversity through shared priorities, programmes and actions. Together, the Partners form a powerful global conservation movement working together to achieve conservation results at local, national, regional and global levels. BirdLife works with like-minded organisations, national and local governments, decision-makers, landowners and managers, in pursuing bird and biodiversity conservation.

BirdLife is present in over 100 countries with a membership of over 2.5 million individuals. Table 1 presents the BirdLife Partnership in countries and territories that have a role in the development, negotiation, signing and bringing into force of ACAP. BirdLife representatives have played an active role in the development of the Agreement, including at the first meeting in Hobart in July 2000, and the second in Cape Town, where ACAP was concluded in February 2001.

BirdLife's work builds on a solid foundation of science and the objective study of birds bringing essential knowledge to conservation and sustainable development. BirdLife acts as the Red List Authority for birds for the IUCN Red List and coordinates input to annual updates on the status of the world's birds. *Threatened Birds of the World 2004* shows that all species of albatross and large petrel (*Macronectes* and *Procellaria* spp.) are under global threat of extinction. Nineteen species of albatross and five species of large petrel are listed in the categories Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable and a further two albatrosses and two large petrels are considered Near Threatened.

2. BirdLife International Global Seabird Programme

BirdLife, as noted above, mainly operates through in-country partners. However, seabirds pay little heed to national boundaries and many species spend the majority of their lives migrating and foraging in waters distant to their breeding grounds, including considerable time in high seas areas, where no national jurisdiction exists. Consequently in 1997, BirdLife International established a BirdLife Global Seabird Conservation Programme. This programme, international in its nature and scope, operates through a developing alliance of regional task groups, supplemented by close links to BirdLife partners based in, or closely linked to, each region (See Fig. 1). The headquarters of the programme was hosted by BirdLife South Africa until 2002, moving to the RSPB, the UK BirdLife partner, in 2004.

While the programme may address a range of issues in the future, its main focus, exemplified by BirdLife's 'Save the Albatross' Campaign, is the mortality caused by longline and other fisheries, the most critical global conservation problem facing seabirds. In broad terms, the programme focuses on local, regional and international advocacy to raise awareness of the issue within the fishing industry and wider community and to facilitate 'grass roots' implementation of onboard mitigation measures to reduce the level of seabird mortality. Programme personnel are also actively involved in lobbying at the level of international organisations and agreements to develop and implement appropriate regulatory frameworks.

3. Selected regional initiatives within the BirdLife Global Seabird Programme.

Some examples of regional initiatives of relevance to ACAP include:

3.1 Southern Africa

An integrated approach to the evaluation of incidental mortality of seabirds, turtles and sharks

This BirdLife South Africa project aims to quantify the extent of incidental mortality in South African fisheries (pelagic and demersal longline and demersal trawl), to understand the environmental and operational conditions under which incidental bycatch is highest and to investigate the effect this is having on the populations involved. The main initiative is to identify those mitigation measures most effective under the environmental and operational conditions experienced in South Africa's pelagic and demersal longline fisheries, line sink rate and tori line (bird line) trials are underway. Future mitigation trials will include measures to reduce turtle and shark bycatch. If high levels of mortality are identified in trawl fisheries, mitigation measures will also be tested and implemented in these fisheries.

Training of scientific observers and skippers, production of awareness materials and the development of a multi-stakeholder forum

BirdLife South Africa is currently running monthly training courses for fisheries observers. These aim to raise observer's awareness of seabird biology (why the birds are vulnerable) and identification, and the effective implementation of mitigation measures. Each student is given a training manual and a set of seabird identification posters. These posters are also distributed to the vessels that the observers are placed aboard. The project is also developing a training video for distribution. This training course will be implemented in Namibia and Angola shortly and the training manual will be translated into Afrikaans and Portuguese. By the end of the year a multi-stakeholder forum for the pelagic fishery will be established, where government, fishers and conservationists can work together towards best-practice fishing methods.

BirdLife South Africa is also involved in a third seabird conservation initiative, which has an international focus. This is a collaborative programme between South Africa, Namibia and Angola (with South Africa taking the lead) through funding received from BCLME (Benguela Large Marine Ecosystem) with regional co-ordination from WWF-South Africa. The project involves an initial bycatch assessment to be followed by an implementation phase, including training of observers and mitigation trials.

3.2 Asia

Since longline operations began in the southern oceans, the fleets of Japan and then Taiwan have constituted the largest longline effort in the southern oceans. The two fleets comprise >1,100 distant water longliners, representing more than two-thirds of the global fleet. Korea also operates at a smaller scale in the region and China is increasing its fleet. Raising awareness of the issue of seabird mortality amongst East Asian nations is seen as a major priority of BirdLife International partners and the Global Seabird Programme.

Kaoshiung Workshop

In January 2004, BirdLife International and the Wild Bird Federation Taiwan (WBFT) hosted a workshop in Kaoshiung (Taiwan) to increase awareness of seabird mortality and the suite of mitigation measures and approaches available to tackle the problem. Dr. Chien-Chung Cheng (President of Wild Bird Federation Taiwan) defined the objective of the workshop as an opportunity for 'reducing seabird by-catch and promoting sustainable management'. Recognising the diversity of cultures and operational fishing practices was essential to

addressing the specific needs of the participants, and as such, the workshop provided a unique opportunity for government, industry and conservationists to establish the communication networks necessary to work toward reducing the impact of the East Asian fleet on seabird populations of global importance. The gathering also afforded an opportunity to emphasise the global importance of the East Asian longline fleet effectively tackling the problem. The workshop was well attended by stakeholders from within East Asia, including government, industry and NGO representatives from Taiwan, Japan and Korea. In addition, a range of experts from around the world, including Australia, New Zealand, UK and USA, attended.

[The workshop was the culmination of a long-term commitment by WBFT and the BirdLife Global Seabird Programme to engage the East Asian, particularly Taiwanese, distant-water longline fleet. Over two days, a range of presentations were given, addressing the global conservation status and trends of albatrosses and petrels impacted by longline fisheries and the mitigation measures adopted to reduce mortality. Summaries of the fishing effort and level of mitigation adopted by the longline fleets of Taiwan, Japan and Korea were also presented. These data formed the basis of discussions to identify knowledge gaps within regions and fleets.]

The workshop proved to be a catalyst for a range of positive outcomes and developments. Since January, considerable progress has been made on the drafting of a National Plan of Action-Seabirds for Taiwan and BirdLife are currently developing plans to conduct further workshops in Taiwan and to engage government, industry and public in other key East Asian countries by extending the workshop model to Japan and Korea. In conjunction with WWF, Dr Cheng is also currently organising a series of training workshops for Taiwanese fishers operating out of Cape Town, South Africa.

3.3 Australasia

New Zealand and Australia have both ratified ACAP, which is critical to the success of the agreement as these countries provide breeding grounds for the majority of the species listed in Annex I of the agreement. In the waters around both countries there are extensive longline fishing activity with over 50 million hooks being set in New Zealand waters annually. New Zealand fishing companies also have an expanding interest in targeting Antarctic tooth fish in waters close to Antarctica.

The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand (Forest and Bird) has been monitoring the developing of New Zealand's National Plan of Action-Seabirds and participating in technical working groups implementing the plan. The NPOA includes measures that focus on a wide range of fishing methods including longlines, trawlers and set nets. The effectiveness of the plan will be monitored using Ministry of Fisheries scientific observers. The plan also contains measures to control and monitor New Zealand vessels fishing on the high seas.

The deaths of albatross and petrels on trawl warps from trawlers targeting squid and hoki has been the focus of research by working groups involving all interested parties. Further research is required to determine the most effective means of reducing seabird deaths from trawlers.

Forest and Bird has been engaged in public awareness on the species and number of birds caught by both long-line vessels and trawl vessels. This has included developing criteria to assess the environmental impact of different fisheries and publishing a "best fish guide" based on the best available scientific information.

3.4 South America

Due to the large fishing fleets that operate in and South American waters and in adjacent areas of high seas and rich seabird foraging resources provided by regions such as the Patagonian Shelf, and Humboldt Current, South America is critical to the overall success of international policy and regulatory initiatives such as IPOA-Seabirds (S) and ACAP.

In September 2001, BirdLife International organised the first South American Workshop on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels. At this meeting, in Uruguay, the temporal and spatial scale of seabird mortality in the South American region was assessed and a South American Strategy for the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ESCAPE) was drafted. This meeting also led several countries to state in their reports to the 25th FAO -COFI meeting that the assessments of their fisheries indicated a need for developing a NPOA-Seabirds. Since this time considerable advances have been made in the region in the level of information available on seabird mortality in various longline and trawl fisheries, and advocacy and outreach has greatly strengthened the links between government, industry and NGOs involved with the issues.

To coordinate progress, FAO and BirdLife jointly hosted the South American Workshop on Implementation of NPOA-S and Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels, in Valdivia, Chile in December 2004. This workshop provided the opportunity to initiate the development of some NPOA-S, review the status of plans in progress and to discuss albatross and petrel conservation, in general. The status of the adoption of NPOA-S and ratification of ACAP within the region is as follows. Currently, The Falkland Islands has an adopted plan and Brazil and Chile have plans in advanced stages of adoption. Since the meeting, Uruguay has also expressed their intent to develop a plan. Ecuador and Peru and the Falkland Islands (as part of the UK ratification) have ratified ACAP; Brazil, Chile and Argentina have signed the agreement and appear likely to ratify soon.

International Albatross and Petrel Conference

The Third International Albatross and Petrel Conference was held in Uruguay in August 2004. The conference was attended by 150 scientists, and government and NGO representatives from around the world. A majority of the 120 oral and poster presentations dealt with issues relevant to albatross and petrel conservation. The conference also provided an opportunity for an *ad hoc* meeting of the BirdLife South American Task Group and a range of people involved with seabird issues in the region to discuss various issues, including the potential appointment of a South American Seabird coordinator located within the region. Subsequent to the meeting the South American group have developed a preliminary discussion paper on the objectives, role and responsibilities of such a post.

3.5 Europe

Longline vessels belonging to Member States of the European Union (EU), especially Spain, operate in various distant water regions of the world. As such, the European Commission has a significant negotiating position in RFMOs. The UK and France have particular relevance to ACAP through their responsibilities for overseas territories in the South Atlantic and South Indian Ocean, respectively. Many of these island territories hold critically important concentrations of globally threatened seabirds and petrels. In addition to these EU States, Norway, is a major innovator, manufacturer and exporter of longline vessels and technology.

Spain was one of the five ratifying countries which enabled ACAP to enter into force in February 2004. Soon after, the UK also ratified ACAP along with their Overseas Territories

(British Antarctic Territory, South Georgia/South Sandwich Islands, Falklands/Malvinas). The UK is expected to extend ratification to Tristan de Cunha in the near future.

BirdLife has pressed the European Commission to fulfil its commitment to develop and adopt a Plan of Action under the FAO's IPOA-Seabirds. The EU has now made a commitment to adopt a Community Plan of Action on seabirds by 2006 with progressive implementation thereafter.

BirdLife's Spanish partner (SEO) launched a global competition, with a substantial cash prize (ca US\$20,400) for fishermen to devise effective new mitigation measures to prevent seabirds getting caught on longlines. The competition attracted 87 innovative entries from around the world. The winning entry from New Zealand, which used the deployment of fish grease to deter seabirds from settling on the water near baited hooks, will now be subjected to extensive trials to determine how safe and effective it is. Apart from the winner, the main aim of the competition to raise awareness, especially among Spanish-speaking fleets, was achieved. The competition caught the imagination of the Spanish longline fishing industry, and a DVD illustrating entries from the competition will be distributed widely among fishermen so that they can incorporate new ideas into their fishing practices.

SEO/BirdLife has also successfully obtained EU LIFE funding for a project to identify and designate marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs) for threatened seabirds in the Mediterranean and Atlantic. The Spanish Ministry of Environment is also a co-funder. The SEO initiative runs in parallel with a similar project by the Portuguese BirdLife partner SPEA. The project takes a multi-faceted approach (satellite tracking, radio transmitters, ocean features etc) to identify potential hotspots. Once areas of high concentration or importance for birds (IBAs) are mapped, the challenge is to arrive at an agreed set of criteria for defining boundaries. This initiative fits with BirdLife's satellite tracking database for albatrosses to help inform the process of site identification and designation as one of the potential tools for addressing the impacts of longline fishing on seabirds.

4.0 Selected global initiatives within the BirdLife Global Seabird Programme

4.1 Global Procellariiform Tracking Database

Effective reduction of the threat to albatross and petrel species requires accurate knowledge of the distribution of albatrosses and petrels throughout their life cycle stages and annual migrations. Such data are invaluable in identifying important foraging and migratory areas, and in assessing the potential susceptibility of albatrosses and petrels to mortality from interaction with fishing vessels, as well as to other changes in marine systems, including climate change. These data can also be used to provide vital information on links between States (including ACAP members and non-members) in terms of the migration of albatrosses and petrels between breeding grounds, Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of different States, and high seas areas managed by Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

Given the substantial value of these data for planning for the conservation of albatrosses and petrels, BirdLife coordinated a collaboration between scientists from around the world, establishing a global database on the at-sea distribution of remote-tracked albatrosses and petrels. Over 90% of all extant albatross and petrel tracking data (satellite tracking (PTT) data, and geolocator (GLS) tracking data) has been submitted to the database, representing 17 of the 21 species of albatross and 3 species of petrel.

Analysis was conducted to explore variation in the distribution of species in relation to stage of breeding cycle, sex, year and colony. Multi-species summaries were compiled for four regions (North Pacific, South America/South Atlantic; Indian Ocean; Australasia). Assessment was made of albatross and petrel distribution in relation to fishing effort, EEZs, RFMO areas and FAO areas.

The database is an active and vital international conservation tool for albatrosses and petrels that has substantial relevance to ACAP's conservation objectives. It will continue to be updated with new data, and will be used to pursue key topics relevant to albatross distribution and conservation, including:

- Further assessment of spatial and temporal overlap between fishing effort and albatross and petrel distribution to identify areas of higher risk, especially to identify needs for development of appropriate mitigation measures
- Identification of areas within EEZs and areas managed by RFMOs which have significant risk of incidental bycatch of albatrosses and petrels
- Assisting in the identification of the most important foraging and migratory habitats, and in the development of management plans for them
- Identification of marine areas critical to survival of albatrosses and petrels

The database is likely to be a key tool for furthering the work of ACAP. There is a need to consider the long-term future of the database, particularly in terms of maximising its usefulness as a resource, both to scientific research and international conservation.

4.2 Review of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations

Effective reduction of the incidental mortality of albatrosses and petrels in fisheries requires the involvement of fishery management organisations. Since albatrosses are such widely-ranging species, this crucially depends on collaboration between States. Vital roles for Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) include: encouragement of/requirement for mitigation measures; coordination of data-collection on bycatch rates, levels of compliance and monitoring the effectiveness of measures; and coordination of education programmes, outreach to, and feedback from, fishers.

The obligations of RFMOs to undertake such tasks have been established by developments in the international legal framework governing the oceans. Agreements such as the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the UN Fish Stocks Agreement established the duty of RFMOs to conserve all non-target species affected by fishing, and established the duty of States to collaborate within RFMOs.

BirdLife has conducted an assessment of the 13 (of 19) RFMOs whose areas overlap with albatross distribution, to evaluate their performance in fulfilling their duties to minimise bycatch within their fisheries. The assessment used criteria based on the principles established by the Code of Conduct and UN Fish Stocks Agreement, and included assessment of participation and transparency, measures to manage target fish stocks and measures to combat IUU fishing as well as measures to collect data on, and reduce bycatch of, a wide range of bycatch species, as well as seabirds. It was important to include this wide range of criteria, both to assess all factors affecting bycatch mitigation, and to get a broader understanding of the factors within each RFMO that are either aiding or preventing it from fulfilling its duties and responsibilities.

Of the 13 RFMOs, the top five in terms of overlap with albatross distribution were the Commission for Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) whose area overlaps with over 70% of breeding albatross distribution, followed by the new Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT), and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

CCAMLR had the highest performance of the RFMOs in almost all categories that were assessed, and has undertaken a wide range of measures to collect data on, monitor and reduce seabird bycatch. The other RFMOs lag substantially behind: of the top 5 RFMOs for albatross distribution, CCSBT is the only other to require that its vessels use seabird bycatch mitigation measures.

However, there has been positive progress in recent years. BirdLife's report examines these developments, identifies key needs and key factors limiting bycatch mitigation within each RFMO, and identifies the key role that States and NGOs have to play in assisting RFMOs to fulfil their duties. The strengthening of RFMO capacity has been identified by FAO as a crucial step if sustainable management of the world's oceans is to be achieved. Action by ACAP members within the RFMOs of which they are members has the potential to bring substantial gains to albatross and petrel conservation.

4.3 The Ridgway Voyage

In June 2004, John and Marie Christine Ridgway completed an 11-month, 28,000 mile voyage around the world to highlight the plight of the albatross. They sailed from their home in Scotland with a dedicated crew to Cape Town, Melbourne, Wellington and the Falklands (Malvinas). At the various stopovers, BirdLife partners mounted awareness-raising events; notably in South Africa, New Zealand and the Falklands (Malvinas). On the yacht's return to London in June, UK Environment Minister Elliot Morley emphasised the UK government's commitment to combat pirate fishing and other threats to albatrosses. A letter from HRH Prince Charles to the Ridgways was read out at the homecoming, just one of several initiatives the Prince has taken to support albatross efforts this year.

The Ridgways' voyage focused on gathering signatures for a petition urging governments to take urgent action to stamp out pirate (IUU) fishing. The petition called on the world's governments to outlaw Flag of Convenience vessels and deny them access to markets and ports, to ratify international agreements including the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and ACAP, and to resource efforts to intercept and prosecute IUU vessels as well as sharing intelligence to produce a globally agreed blacklist of offenders. Together with Forest & Bird, our NZ BirdLife partner, 105,570 signatures were collected from 131 different countries. The petition was presented by John and Marie Christine Ridgway, and Euan Dunn (BirdLife) in Rome on 25 June at a meeting of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reviewing progress on combating IUU fishing. Signatures on the petition included New Zealand's Prime Minister and its Minister for the Environment.

Table 1. The BirdLife Partnership in countries and territories that have a role in the development, negotiation, signing and bringing into force of ACAP (as of 4th October 2004)

Country	BirdLife Partnership	BirdLife Partnership Status	Contact details
Argentina	Aves Argentinas (AOP)	Partner	25 de Mayo 749 2° piso, oficina 6 1002ABO Buenos Aires Argentina nfo@avesargentinas.org.ar
Australia	Birds Australia	Partner	415 Riversdale Road Hawthorn East VIC 3123 Australia mail@birdsaustralia.com.au
Brazil	BirdLife International – Brazil Programme	Country Programme	Alameda Grécia 297 06474-010 Barueri, SP Brazil birdlifebrasil@uol.com.br
Brazil	Instituto Albatroz	Supported by BirdLife Brazil's Country Programme	
Chile			
China			
Ecuador	Corporación Ornitológica del Ecuador (CECIA)	Partner	Joaquín Tinajero E3-05 y Jorge Drom Casilla 17-17-906 Quito Ecuador cecia_de@uio.satnet.net
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)	Falklands Conservation	Partner Designate	PO Box 26, Stanley, Falkland Islands or Falklands Conservation, 1 Princes Avenue, Finchley, London N3 2DA, UK conservation@horizon.co.fk

Country	BirdLife Partnership	BirdLife Partnership Status	Contact details
France	Ligue Pour La Protection des Oiseaux (LPO)	Partner	La Corderie Royale B.P. 90263 17305 Rochefort Cedex France lpo@lpo.fr
Germany	Naturschutzbund Deutschland German Society for Nature Conservation (NABU)	Partner	Herbert-Rabius-Str. 26 D-53225 Bonn Germany NABU@NABU.de
Indonesia	BirdLife Indonesia	Affiliate	Indonesian Association for the Conservation of Birds & their Habitats PO Box 310/Boo Bogor 16003 Indonesia birdlife@burung.org
Japan	Wild Bird Society of Japan (WBSJ)	Partner	International Centre-WING 2-35-2 Minamidaira Hino City Tokyo 191-0041 Japan int.center@wing-wbsj.or.jp
Korea			
Namibia			
New Zealand	The Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society	Affiliate	P O Box 631 Wellington New Zealand office@forestandbird.org.nz
Norway	Norsk Ornitologisk Forening Norwegian Ornithological Society (NOF)	Partner	Sandgata 30 B N-7012 Trondheim Norway nof@birdlife.no
Peru			

Country	BirdLife Partnership	BirdLife Partnership Status	Contact details
Poland	Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP)	Partner Designate	Ul. Hallera 4/2 PL-80-401 Gdansk Poland office@otop.org.pl
Portugal	Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (SPEA)	Partner	Rua da Vitória 53 - 3º Esq PT 1100-618 Lisboa Portugal spea@spea.pt
Russia	Russian Bird Conservation Union (RBCU)	Partner Designate	Shosse Entuziastov 60 Building 1 Moscow 111123 Russia mail@rbcu.ru
South Africa	BirdLife South Africa	Partner	P O Box 515 Randburg Johannesburg 2125 South Africa nfo@birdlife.org.za
Spain	Sociedad Española de Ornitología Spanish Ornithological Society (SEO)	Partner	Melquiades Biencinto 34 E-28053 MADRID Spain mjarmesto@seo.org
Taiwan	Wild Bird Federation Taiwan	Partner	1F, No. 3, Lane 36 Chinglung St 116 Taipei Taiwan wbft@bird.org.tw

Country	BirdLife Partnership	BirdLife Partnership Status	Contact details
Ukraine	Ukrainske Tovaristvo Okhoroni Ptakhiv Ukrainian Union for Bird Conservation (UTOP)	Partner Designate	PO Box 33 Kiev-01103 Ukraine utop@iptelecom.net.ua
United Kingdom	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	Partner	The Lodge Sandy Bedfordshire SG19 2DL john.osullivan@rspb.org.uk
Uruguay	Aves Uruguay (GUPECA)	Affiliate	Casilla de Correo 6955 Correo Central Montevideo Uruguay gupeca@adinet.com.uy
USA	Audubon	Partner	700 Broadway New York NY 10003-9562 USA first initial & surname @audubon.org

Figure 1 The structure of BirdLife International's Global Seabird Programme

