



Partnership for  
nature and people

**BirdLife International Report to the Fourteenth meeting of the Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG14)**

1. Introduction

BirdLife International is a global partnership of over 120 conservation organisations. Since 1997, in response to the dramatic declines in many albatross populations worldwide, BirdLife International has undertaken a body of work to try to improve the conservation status of albatrosses and petrels through collaborative work with fishers, fishery managers and scientists. The sections below provide an update to our work since ERSWG13.

2. Albatross Task Force (ATF)

The ATF is currently working in four countries in South America and southern Africa (Argentina, Chile, South Africa, Namibia). The ATF works collaboratively with fishers and fishery managers in ports and at-sea, to find solutions to albatross bycatch. Our aim is to minimise seabird bycatch in the 10 core fisheries in which the ATF works. These fisheries include 2 demersal longline, 1 pelagic longline and 6 trawl fisheries. The ATF is operated by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, the UK BirdLife Partner) on behalf of the BirdLife Partnership.

In January 2021, we published work that demonstrated we have been able to help the Namibian hake longline fishery reduce seabird bycatch by 98.4% since 2015, when the use of bird-scaring lines became mandatory. This equates to around 22,000 birds saved per year. By the end of 2021, our Argentina team had worked with the hoki trawl fleet to implement a system of electronic monitoring that has helped drive up compliance with bird-scaring line use to >80% - from ~30% in 2019. In Chile, our team trained over 400 observers, compliance officials and industry representatives in seabird bycatch mitigation, making the most of the pandemic-necessitated online learning to reach people from across the country's vast coastline.

3. BirdLife engagement with high seas fleets

To support efforts to reduce bycatch, the RSPB (the UK BirdLife partner) are working with the Taiwan Wild Bird Federation and the Taiwan Fisheries Agency on design of bird scaring lines for large- and small-scale high seas vessels. Bird-scaring line trials of a new design have been conducted on five tuna longline vessels fishing in both the Indian and Pacific Ocean since May 2021.

We have continued our educational work through South Georgia 'albatross stories'. We have worked with the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) to document the lives of individual albatross on Bird island, South Georgia to raise awareness of the birds and the conservation issues they face. This has been promoted on social media/online in Japan, Taiwan, and the UK.

#### 4. Engagement with the tuna supply chain

In Japan, BirdLife have continued to build on our engagement with the tuna supply chain. An in-person seminar was held in November 2019 and two webinars on seafood sustainability with a focus on bycatch were held in July 2021 and were attended by tuna supply chain companies. Speakers included; Seafood Business for Ocean Stewardship (SeaBOS), ASDA (a large UK-based supermarket), Marine Stewardship Council and Japanese MSC certified fishing companies.

BirdLife have also been collaborating with SeaBOS providing technical input to the development of their new Endangered Species Strategy and best practice advice for seabirds.

#### 5. Global Seabird Tracking Database

BirdLife continues to manage the Global Seabird Tracking Database, which was established in 2003 ([www.seabirdtracking.org](http://www.seabirdtracking.org)). Through the collaboration of scientists worldwide, the database now includes 1097 datasets from 257 scientists, contributing over 26 million data points for 147 species. A new front facing website for the database will be launched in the first half of 2022 and will highlight the conservation impact of our work with tracking data.

The RSPB (UK BirdLife Partner) has also collaborated with the British Antarctic Survey to fill tracking data gaps. ERSWG Info 13 documents progress made in understanding the distribution of juvenile grey-headed albatrosses, providing a valuable addition to our understanding of bycatch risk for this species.

#### 6. NACES Marine Protected Area

The North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea-basin (NACES) MPA was designated on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 by the OSPAR Convention and protects one of the most important concentrations of migratory seabirds in the Atlantic. BirdLife led the analysis of seabird tracking data that led to the identification of the site, and it is the first high seas MPA identified based on tracking data.

BirdLife convened a workshop with seabird researchers in 2016 to discuss the data available and the analytical approach, and from this analysed all available data (>2,000 tracks from 23 species) that led to the identification of this important bird and biodiversity area (IBA), and the initial MPA proposal. The site was first proposed to the OSPAR Commission in 2017, and BirdLife supported the proposal as it moved through the OSPAR process, including incorporating a range of feedback, revisions and edits over the years. In March 2020, the MPA proposal was agreed by all contracting parties to move towards designation, and in October 2021 the MPA was formally designated by the OSPAR Commission. The MPA covers 595,000km<sup>2</sup> and protects an important foraging ground for 21 species, with up to 5 million birds estimated to use the site throughout the year, travelling from 16 different countries.

#### 7. Terrestrial conservation work for albatrosses

Mouse predation of seabird chicks affects the population viability of at least four globally threatened albatross and petrel species on Gough Island. In the austral summer 2021 an international consortium led by the RSPB and Island Conservation attempted to eradicate mice from Gough using an aerial broadcast of poison bait. The operation was performed to highest standards and spread

bait at least twice over all parts of the island, leading to immediate mouse mortality. In December 2021, however, a single mouse was detected on camera traps, and intensive trapping effort since then has confirmed that the mouse eradication was not successful. A temporary increase in breeding success has occurred for Atlantic Petrels (December 2021) and MacGillivray's Prion (April 2022) due to the currently minute mouse population. Further research is now urgently needed to understand where and how mice survived the eradication attempt, when they will predate seabirds again, and to eventually prepare for another mouse eradication in the future.

## Annex 1

### Summary of papers submitted to ERSWG

#### **(CCSBT-ERS/2203/)**

17. (BirdLife International) Threats to seabirds a global assessment (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.1)
18. (BirdLife International) Variation in live-capture rates of albatrosses and petrels in fisheries, post-release survival and implications for management (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.1)
19. (BirdLife International) Update on the "Project proposal for enhancing education on and implementation of Ecologically Related Species seabird measures within CCSBT fisheries" (ERSWG Agenda Item 6)

#### **(CCSBT-ERS/2203/BGD )**

5. (BirdLife and CCSBT) Update on the Project for Enhancing the Implementation of Ecologically Related Species Seabird Measures within CCSBT Fisheries (*Previously CCSBT-CC/2110/22 (Rev.2)*) (ERSWG Agenda Item 6)

#### **(CCSBT- ERS/2203/Info )**

2. (BirdLife International) BirdLife International report on recent activities (ERSWG Agenda Item 3)
3. (BirdLife International) SeaBOS Endangered Species Strategy (ERSWG Agenda Item 3)
4. (BirdLife International) Environmental drivers of movement in a threatened seabird (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.1)
5. (BirdLife International) Movements and diving behaviour of white-chinned petrels: Diurnal variation and implications for bycatch mitigation (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.1)
6. (BirdLife International) Global political responsibility for the conservation of albatrosses and large petrels (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.1)
7. (BirdLife International) Tracking juveniles confirms fisheries-bycatch hotspot for an endangered albatross (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.1)

8. (BirdLife International) Review of CCSBT work to protect seabirds 2007-2021 (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.4)

9. (BirdLife International) SeaBOS Best practices for reducing negative impacts on endangered elasmobranchs and seabirds (ERSWG Agenda Item 3 )