

Title **Southern Seabird Solutions – an Update**

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Abstract

This note describes the activities of an alliance of New Zealand government, fishing industry and environmental groups that has formed to promote fishing practices that avoid seabird capture by fishing fleets in the southern hemisphere.

Background

New Zealand is the world centre of diversity for albatross and petrel species. Its productive waters and safe offshore islands support more albatross and petrel species than any other country. Forty-seven albatross and petrel species breed in New Zealand; twenty of these are endemic. The rarest endemic albatross is the Chatham albatross that breeds on a single rock stack and has a world population of 5,000 pairs.

Many albatross and petrels undertake large migrations to productive waters in other parts of the world's oceans. For instance satellite tracking of Royal albatrosses has confirmed that this species undertakes circumpolar flights. At least five albatrosses breed in New Zealand and spend a significant part of their life feeding off Chile, Peru and Argentina. Several other species forage in both New Zealand and South African waters.

The wide ranging behaviour of albatrosses and petrels means that it is critical for countries to work co-operatively to conserve these species. This has been the key reason for the establishment of an Agreement for the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels under the auspices of the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

Southern Seabird Solutions

Within New Zealand, an alliance of government, fishing industry and environmental groups has formed to work co-operatively within New Zealand and with other countries to promote the adoption of fishing practices that avoid seabird capture. Southern Seabird Solutions members include longline and trawl skippers, fishing company managers, fishery skills trainers, ecotourism operators, international and national policy experts, environmental campaigners and communication experts.

Current and proposed projects include:

- Fostering exchanges of crew and technologies between fleets in different countries
- Hosting national and regional fishers forums to enable fishers from different fleets to exchange ideas and information
- Developing and testing new technology such as the underwater bait-setting capsule;
- Employing advisory officers in South Africa and South America to work alongside skippers and crew
- Establishing similar groups to Southern Seabird Solutions in other countries
- Producing videos, brochures, articles, media releases and a website to build awareness of the issue and the solutions
- Gathering and reviewing information about where birds feed, and their overlap with fisheries;
- Encouraging countries to join the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Further information on Southern Seabird Solutions can be found at www.southernseabirds.com or by contacting Janice Molloy at jmolloy@doc.govt.nz