



Partnership for  
nature and people

## **BirdLife International Report to the Thirteenth meeting of the Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG13)**

### **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 through collaborative work with fishers, fishery managers and scientists. The sections below provide an update to our work since ERSWG12.

### **2. Albatross Task Force (ATF)**

The ATF is currently working in five countries in South America and southern Africa (Brazil, 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 minimize seabird bycatch in the 14 fisheries in which the Albatross Task Force works. These fisheries include 2 demersal longline, 5 pelagic longline and 7 trawl fisheries. The Albatross Task Force is operated by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, the UK BirdLife Partner) on behalf of the BirdLife Partnership.

In Namibia, the ATF has been working to reduce seabird bycatch in two fleets (hake longline and trawl), which were identified as one of the deadliest in the world for seabirds. Following the introduction of regulation in 2015 the longline fleet has had a 95% reduction in bycatch rate, equating to 22,346 birds saved per year (11,498-42,287).

### **3. BirdLife engagement with high seas fleets**

In 2017, the RSPB and British Antarctic Survey (BAS), undertook an analysis of the overlap between the distribution of South Georgia albatrosses and global fishing fleets to identify fleets, areas and seasons of likely highest bycatch risk (ERSWG13 Info 06). This identified Taiwanese and Japanese pelagic longline vessels as having the highest overlap with these vulnerable and declining albatross populations.

To support efforts to reduce bycatch, we have undertaken two seasons of port-based outreach and education work in Mauritius, where a large proportion of the Taiwanese longline fleet spend time in port. We have also been working with Taiwan Fisheries Agency on design of bird scaring lines for vessels <35m and held a workshop in April 2019 with industry representatives and international experts on bird scaring line design.

As an educational tool we have launched South Georgia albatross 'stories'. We are working with BAS to document the lives of individual albatross on Bird island, South Georgia, using two cameras, to raise awareness of the birds and the conservation issues they face. This is promoted on social media/online in Japan, Taiwan, Brazil and the UK.

#### 4. *Global Seabird Bycatch Assessment*

Under the FAO Common Oceans Tuna Project, BirdLife International coordinated a workshop in South Africa in February 2019 which was the culmination of a two-year process to undertake a global albatross bycatch assessment across the global tuna fisheries. This assessment quantified the current level of albatross bycatch across global tuna fleets, and its impact on populations (ERSWG13 Doc 23).

#### 5. *Tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organisations: developing tools for independent monitoring of mitigation use*

BirdLife collaborated with Global Fishing Watch to develop a new method for monitoring night setting use using AIS data, this was shown to accurately determine if vessels were overlapping with daylight by more than two hours. The results were presented at the CCSBT Compliance Committee meeting (CC Info Doc 3).

#### 6. *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 811 datasets from 195 scientists, contributing over 12 million data points for 119 species.

BirdLife made a request to the tracking database data owners to produce an updated analysis of global albatross distribution (ERSWG13 Info 07), which was inputted into the global albatross bycatch assessment (ERSWG13 Doc 23).

The RSPB (UK BirdLife Partner) has also collaborated with the British Antarctic Survey to fill tracking data gaps. ERSWG 13 Info 09 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.

#### 7. *Terrestrial conservation work for albatrosses*

The RSPB continues planning and fundraising towards the eradication of mice from Gough Island, which is vital for the protection of the Critically Endangered Tristan Albatross. Working in partnership with the Tristan da Cunha Island Council, BirdLife South Africa, Island Conservation, and the Department of Environmental Affairs in South Africa, the RSPB is now planning to implement a mouse eradication operation in the Southern Hemisphere winter of 2020.

## Annex 1

### Summary of papers submitted to ERSWG

#### Working Docs

Doc 9 (BirdLife International and the Secretariat) Draft proposal to enhance education on and the implementation of ERS measures (ERSWG Agenda Item 6)

Doc 22 (ACAP and BirdLife International) An Update on the Status and Trends of ACAP-Listed Albatrosses and Petrels in the CCSBT Area (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.1)

Doc 23 (BirdLife International) Report of the Final Global Seabird Bycatch Assessment Workshop, part of the Seabird Bycatch Component of the Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna Project (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.2)  
Info Docs

Info 6 (BirdLife International) A comprehensive large-scale assessment of fisheries bycatch risk to threatened seabird populations (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.3)

Info 7 (BirdLife International) Mapping the global distribution of seabird populations: a framework for integrating biologging, demographic and phenological datasets (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.3)

Info 8 (BirdLife International) Observer coverage for monitoring bycatch of seabirds and other ETP species in pelagic longline fisheries (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.3)

Info 9 (BirdLife International) At-sea distribution and fisheries bycatch risk of juvenile grey-headed albatrosses from South Georgia (Islas Georgias del Sur) (ERSWG Agenda Item 5.1.3)