



NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN SEABIRD SOLUTIONS

***Conservation through
International Co-operation***

**Newsletter Issue Two
February 2003**

Our Vision: Widespread adoption of seabird-safe fishing practices throughout the Southern Ocean

Second Newsletter

Hello everyone. Our first newsletter generated quite a lot of interest and people from a number of countries asked to be added to the distribution list. I had one request from as far away as the Virgin Islands!

Don't forget to drop me a note if you have anything you would like others to hear about.

Best Wishes
Janice Molloy
jmolloy@doc.govt.nz

Southern Seabird Solutions - first six months -

It's been six months since Southern Seabirds Solutions formed and over this period our main focus has been getting word out that we exist.

We have:

- Distributed a colour booklet that describes the group's purpose, and profiles some of the participants. This has been circulated to fishing

industry representatives, environmental groups, and government departments in key countries.

- Announced the formation of Southern Seabird Solutions at the most recent meeting of the International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (<http://www.icfa.net/>) in Iceland. The meeting passed a resolution encouraging fishing industry associations around the world to support the initiatives of Southern Seabird Solutions.
- Announced the formation of Southern Seabird Solutions at the International Fishers Forum held in Hawaii in November 2002. The profile of the group was raised further when one of its members won the Golden Albatross Award in acknowledgement of his commitment to eliminate capture of seabirds on his vessel (more on this later).

- Been invited to speak about Southern Seabird Solutions at the North Pacific Albatross Working Group meeting, the South American Albatross Conservation meeting, and an Asian Seabird Mitigation Technical Workshop.
- Prepared media releases and stories about the activities of Southern Seabird Solutions which have appeared in newspapers, on television and in stakeholder magazines.

We are now ready to begin a series of co-operative projects that will build commitment for seabird-safe fishing and result in transfer of seabird-safe technology and knowledge between fleets. I am currently putting a funding proposal together which I'll circulate to Southern Seabird Solutions participants for comment.

Meanwhile a number of initiatives are underway (see below).

International News

Second International Fishers Forum

Eight Southern Seabird Solutions participants flew to Hawaii to attend the second International Fishers Forum in November 2002. The purpose of the forum was to bring fishers, fishing gear manufacturers, scientists, and government and intergovernmental officials from around the world together to exchange ideas and information on ways to fish without catching seabirds and turtles. Two hundred and twenty people from 28 countries attended. People left the 4 day forum with clear ideas on what they could

do to contribute to solving seabird and turtle interactions with fisheries.

Proceedings will be made available at www.fishersforum.org

The first forum was held in New Zealand in 2000 and this event is now likely to be held every second year.

Golden Albatross Award

John Bennett, skipper of the New Zealand vessel *FV San Aotea II*, was the first recipient of the Golden Albatross Award at the International Fishers Forum. The award was presented by the convenor of the forum, Kitty Simonds who said the award was in recognition of John's "undying effort to continually innovate and improve seabird mitigation measures and inspire his crew, fleet and this forum by example." John and Sanford Ltd are actively involved in Southern Seabird Solutions.

Global Technical Mitigation

Co-ordinator

Another outcome of the International Fishers Forum was the decision to appoint a Global Technical Mitigation Co-ordinator for seabirds. The co-ordinator will ensure everyone is kept informed of new and existing mitigation methods, help find funding for new development and testing programmes, and promote collaborative research in different fisheries. Ed Melvin, from the Washington Sea Grant Programme, was named by forum participants as the most suitable person for this position. Ed has carried out extensive seabird bycatch mitigation research in Alaskan waters and is well respected for his "hands on" approach. Ed is based in Australia and New Zealand during 2003.

Skipper Exchange Project

Southern Seabird Solutions' participants Susan Waugh and John Bennett have sought funding from a US conservation fund to fly two Chilean longline skippers to New Zealand to take part in a 6 week fishing trip on the *F.V. San Aotea II*. This will allow the skippers to observe the seabird bycatch mitigation measures being used on the vessel. It is hoped that this will lead to the skippers returning to their fleets and seeding the introduction of these same practices and attitudes there. Sanford Ltd have offered to provide a *per diem* payment to the skippers while they are on board.

Asian Seabird Mitigation Workshop

A workshop will be held in Kaohsiung, Taiwan to discuss the research, development and effective implementation of best-practice mitigation measures within the Asian pelagic longline fleets. The workshop will be hosted by the *Wild Bird Federation of Taiwan* (BirdLife International's partner in Taiwan) and BirdLife's Asia Division and is planned for 12th -14th May 2003.

BirdLife International have invited me to attend the workshop and speak about Southern Seabird Solutions. Organisers of the workshop hope to use this workshop as a platform to encourage the Asian fishing community to participate more in international collaborative efforts towards reducing seabird bycatch.

Extension for Fishers' Competition

The first newsletter described an international competition open to fishers and other sea-farers, for new ideas on ways to fish without catching seabirds.

The original closing date was March 2003, but this has been extended until 30 June 2003.

The public launching took place during the month of January 2003 in several places in Spain (Galicia, Madrid and the Mediterranean) and in Brazil.

Entries for the competition can be made any time until 30 June 2003. They are accepted in any format which expresses the idea in a clear way. They will be judged by an international jury. Preference will be given to those entries where evidence is given that the system works effectively to reduce seabird bycatch. Carles says "Expressions of interest have come from New Zealand, Australia, the US, Spain, and several Latin American countries. Some of the ideas that have been proposed so far seem quite promising. It looks like this is going to be a great success. We can only hope that someone somewhere will come up with a really good solution. He/she can earn quite good money and will help a lot of birds!" The prize is \$US 18,000.

If you would like to enter the competition contact Carles Carboneras (ccarboneras@seo.org) or write to him at:

Carles Carboneras
SEO/BirdLife
Av. Mistral 61, 6 - 1
08015 - Barcelona
SPAIN

Albatross and Petrel Agreement

Five countries need to join this Agreement for it to become active. Once this occurs, governments will formally begin to work together on the conservation of albatrosses and petrels. Until recently only New Zealand and Australia had joined, but just

this week Ecuador signed on. Several other countries are working through the various legal processes so hopefully by mid this year, the magic number five will have been reached!!

Global Seabird Bycatch Database

One of the projects identified as a priority at the first Southern Seabird Solutions meeting was development of a global seabird bycatch database. This would overlay fishing effort and seabird bycatch information. The database could be used to generate more reliable estimates of bycatch for at-risk seabird species around the world, and allow a more complete analysis of fisheries effects on seabird populations.

Three scientists (Geoff Tuck, CSIRO Australia; Deon Nel, Birdlife International South Africa; and Rebecca Lewison, Duke University USA) have teamed up to get such a project off the ground. Funding for the project is pending from several international sponsors.

Later this year, Birdlife International is hosting a meeting of scientists who have studied the distribution of albatrosses using satellite tracking. The meeting, which will be held in South Africa will attempt to bring all of this tracking information together so areas of the ocean that are used most intensively by albatrosses can be mapped. This will help define the areas where fishing and albatrosses overlap and thereby help to quantify bycatch risk. Currently the satellite tracking results are scattered in numerous scientific papers.

A related project is nearing completion here in New Zealand. Chris Robertson and

several colleagues are putting together a report for Southern Seabird Solutions that shows the foraging areas of albatrosses and petrels that breed in New Zealand. A summary of all of the world's seabirds that are known to be caught in fisheries will also be included to provide a global perspective.

New Zealand News

Underwater setting capsule

Dave Kellian, inventor and tuna fisherman, is busy testing and refining his underwater setting device on Daren Coulston's vessel, *FV Gold Country*. The device carries baited hooks down to 10m where it releases them out of reach of petrels and albatrosses. Dave is confident that he has overcome all of the major problems and is building the final prototype. The latest series of testing and refinement couldn't have happened without the support and input from skipper Steve Harvey and crew.

Donation from Oceanwings

Lynette and Dennis Buurman, and Ian Bradshaw of Oceanwings (www.oceanwings.co.nz) have donated \$1500 to Southern Seabird Solutions. The funds were raised through sale of Oceanwings teeshirts featuring an Antipodean wandering albatross and will be used to cover the cost of manufacturing Dave Kellian's underwater setting prototype. The device could have wide application in tuna fisheries around the world if it is found to be practical and effective.

Dennis, Lynette and Ian will continue to donate \$5 from the sale of each albatross

teeshirt, so keep the sales coming! Check out their website for ordering.

Bird Baffler

The New Zealand Hoki Management Company has announced it plans to fit Bird Bafflers on all 52 trawl vessels in the hoki fleet. Bird Bafflers are designed to create a physical barrier in front of the trawl warps, preventing seabirds from becoming caught on them. If the bafflers are as effective as skippers report, the Hoki Management Company's decision will result in a dramatic reduction in numbers of seabirds caught in this fishery. Although skippers and crew feel confident that the bafflers are effective, the company recognises that it is important for this to be quantified through an independent research programme. This will be initiated in the next few months.

Moonpool

One of the few vessels in the world with a moonpool has been leased by New Zealand Longline Ltd. A moonpool is a circular hole in the hull that the demersal longline is hauled through. There are potentially several advantages to this system, such as reducing the amount of fish lost during the hauling stage, and safer conditions for crew hauling the line. In addition, the chances of catching a seabird on the line during the haul are greatly reduced. Use of the moonpool will be tested by the skipper and crew of the *F.V. Avro Chieftain* over the next few months.

Weighted Line Trial

The last newsletter described a new type of weighted fishing line that holds promise as an effective measure to reduce incidental capture of seabirds on demersal autoline vessels. A trial of the weighted

line was conducted in November on the vessel *F.V. Janas* which is owned by New Zealand Longline Ltd. The results were better than anyone expected. The trial was carried out over a two week period, during which time less than 2% of the seabirds caught were on the weighted line. A tori line was used on all sets. The experiment was conducted in an area known to be a hotspot for white-chinned petrels, one of the most proficient diving seabirds encountered by fishing vessels anywhere in the world. This experiment was jointly funded by New Zealand longline Ltd, Gourock New Zealand, and Australian Antarctic Division. The fishing gear manufacturer A.S. Fiskevegn produced the fishing line for the experiment. The line will continue to be trialled to test its longevity, incidence of line breakage, hook-ups on the seabed and effectiveness in minimising seabird capture in other areas and seasons. Once all performance criteria are met, the line will be promoted in other autoline fisheries around the world.

National Plan of Action – Seabirds

A summary document outlining the various management approaches that could be taken to address seabird bycatch in New Zealand has been submitted to the Ministers of Conservation and Fisheries for their consideration. Following the Ministers' approval the next stage in the process will be consultation with stakeholders. I will give you a further update in the next newsletter.