



SOUTHERN SEABIRD SOLUTIONS

Conservation through Cooperation

Newsletter Five
June 2004

Our Goal: Southern Seabird Solutions promotes the adoption of fishing practices that avoid mortality of southern hemisphere seabirds.

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Editorial

Hi everyone,

There are no less than four awards for seabird bycatch mitigation covered in this issue! There is real momentum in the search for new solutions, and it's good to see people leading this work getting acknowledged.

Southern Seabird Solutions would like to congratulate the winners and applaud the organisations which have offered awards and fellowships. This can only lead to better techniques and greater uptake in the future.

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Green Light for South American Fishers Forum

The South American Fishers Forum is definitely going ahead, thanks to sponsorship of over NZ\$80,000 from Care for the Wild International.

It's a regional extension of the International Fishers' Forum, a biennial meeting attended by fishers, gear technologists, researchers and government officials. The purpose of the international forum is to exchange ideas and information on measures being used or developed around the world to reduce capture of seabirds on longlines.

At the last International Fishers Forum held in Hawaii in 2002 it was suggested that regional forums would enable more fishers to attend, and allow more discussion on the specific bycatch issues fisheries are facing.

Southern Seabird Solutions held discussions with key contacts in South

America and confirmed that most people felt a regional meeting would be productive.

Now that funding has been secured, we're working out the best time of year for bringing fishers together in South America, and which country can best host the forum. Date and location will be confirmed by the end of June.

Although the forum is mainly aimed at fishers, governments, NGOs and research agencies will also participate.

The sponsor, Care for the Wild International, is a UK-based international conservation and animal welfare charity. We are very grateful for their support of this important initiative.

National Plan of Action

The New Zealand National Plan of Action on seabird bycatch (NPOA) has been completed and was released by the Ministers of Conservation and Fisheries on 9 April.

The plan covers seabird species absolutely or partially protected under New Zealand law. It addresses both commercial and non-commercial fisheries; all New Zealand fishery waters; and high seas fisheries in which New Zealand flagged vessels participate.

The plan outlines key measures, both voluntary and mandatory for reducing the incidental capture of seabirds. These are:

- Codes of practice
- Input controls (e.g. mandatory tori lines)

- Economic instruments (e.g. penalty or reward-based incentives)
- Legal action against individual vessels
- Bycatch limits

Fisheries are divided into three groups. These are: fisheries with known seabird interactions, high seas fisheries, and all other fisheries.

Fisheries classed as having known seabird interactions are required to develop codes of practice which specify bycatch limits, mitigation measures, education and training, and monitoring and reporting systems.

High seas fisheries will be expected to comply with international and regional agreements and conventions where these are in place, or the NPOA where there is not such formal agreement.

In the group labelled "other fisheries", the key objective is to develop better knowledge and understanding of their interaction with seabirds so that appropriate management measures can be put in place.

The NPOA also makes a commitment to information gathering and research to ensure the management measures are working.

You can read the NPOA in full on the Department of Conservation's website www.doc.govt.nz and the Ministry of Fisheries' website, <http://www.fish.govt.nz>.

Pew Fella

Congratulations to Graham Robertson on receiving a Pew Fellowship. Graham has been working for many years on seabird bycatch in longline fisheries.

He's been awarded the fellowship to test fishing lines with internal weighting systems, enabling them to sink as soon as they're set. He'll be working in Chile because the Spanish system vessels used in Chilean fisheries, which are also used extensively in the sub Antarctic longline fisheries of CCAMLR, tend to have slow sinking lines, and therefore have the most need for this kind of innovation. Chile also has quite generic problems, and solutions developed there can be readily applied to the CCAMLR Convention Area to reduce seabird mortality.

Graham says a big advantage of internally weighted lines (IWL) is they are potentially a 100% compliant mitigation measure.

"If boats have internally weighted lines installed, then even if skippers are not interested in mitigation they will still be minimising bycatch every time they set the lines."

Australia has given permission for a vessel to fish around Heard Island using the integrated weighted lines. "This is great news because it's basically the implementation phase of the whole research programme."

Graham says the Fellowship is the result of a group effort.

"If it wasn't for Mal(-colm McNeill, Sealord's fleet manager) and Sealord, and support from the NZ

Ministry of Fisheries, I wouldn't have had a hope of attracting the brass. It's important to realise how many collaborators there were."

However Malcolm McNeill thinks credit should be given where credit's due.

"The work he's done with us gathering the data, analyzing it, and his long term objective has sure helped us. We've been playing around with the IWL for some years now, and it's through Graham that we've been able to take it from something the guys are messing around with on the boats to getting it internationally recognized as an extremely successful mitigation tool.

We've now gathered enough information to convince ourselves that it works. However we're still doing trials so that Graham can monitor not just bird bycatch rates but also fish catch rates, with the long term goal of global implementation in all demersal longline fleets."

The Pew Fellows Programme is administered by the Pew Institute for Ocean Science, at the University of Miami, and can be found at www.pewmarine.org.

Green Ribbon for Quiet Achiever

New Zealand fisher Dave Kellian has won a Green Ribbon Award, presented annually by New Zealand's Ministry for the Environment for outstanding efforts in reducing business impacts on the environment.

Dave was nominated by Southern Seabird Solutions for his lifelong commitment to seabird conservation and sustainable fisheries, and his invention of an underwater bait-setting capsule for pelagic longline fishing.

Dave has had many technical and financial set-backs over the nine years he's been developing the underwater setting device, but has never given up it. At one stage he totally scrapped the design and started again from scratch, after a five week sea voyage uncovered major problems. Several times he has run out of money and has temporarily put the capsule aside until he has been able to generate more funds. For instance, a small New Zealand eco-tourism company, Oceanwings, decided to support the project by selling t-shirts to tourists and donating the profits to Dave for the capsule's development. It has been a reflection of Dave's hard work and reputation that so many others have been prepared to back his venture.

Dave now takes any opportunity he can to talk to other fishers about the need to modify their fishing practices to avoid catching seabirds. He is currently undertaking a short stint of fishing in Australia, and you can be assured he will be motivating other fishers in his port to think about the issue and take action.

Fish Oil not Snake Oil

A simple solution perfectly executed has won a Leigh fisherman NZ\$17,000.

Alex Aitken has won Birdlife International's "competition of ideas" for his use of fish oil to deter birds from taking bait in long line fisheries.

Mr Aitken, a skipper of 24 years, noticed that birds avoid surface oil on the sea. So he started trailing fish oil behind his boat when setting, and reduced his seabird bycatch by 95%. Mr Aitken also used a tori line.

A panel of 12 fishing and seabird conservation experts judged the entries on viability, effects on fishing, originality, cost, and applicability to other fisheries.

Birdlife International pronounced the fish oil solution to be "simple, cheap, easy to use and totally effective in the tests we have carried out; just what we were looking for."

Mr Aitken shares the total NZ\$34,040 prize with an Australian fisherman who independently came up with the same idea.

Trials are now needed to determine how effective the oil is in different sea states and against different suites of seabirds.

...But wait, there's more!

The Marine Wildlife Bycatch Consortium of Canada has offered a \$25,000 prize for innovative fishing gear that reduces bycatch of any non-target species.

The International Smart Gear Competition was announced on 3 May at the start of the 4th World Fisheries Congress in Vancouver.

There are three categories for entries: gear that reduces sea turtle bycatch, gear that reduces cetacean bycatch, and gear that reduces bycatch of any other non-target species (including seabirds).

The prize is open to anyone and will be awarded to the entry judged to be the most practical, cost-effective method for reducing bycatch of any species. The winner will also be given assistance to bring the product to market.

For more information visit www.smartgear.org.

Coming to a Port Near You

Southern Seabird Solutions is planning to tour a workshop in New Zealand on seabird bycatch mitigation.

At a meeting last year with fishing companies there was a general consensus that it would be good to reach fishers in their home ports with a minimum of fuss. The workshops will acknowledge progress fishers are making and encourage continued effort.

Southern Seabird Solutions is currently looking for sponsorship, and we hope to take the workshop to key ports around the country within the next six months.

ACAP Meeting

Now that the Agreement on Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) has come into force, it will hold its first meeting before February next year.

This will be a good opportunity for Southern Seabird Solutions to

promote its activities and assist other countries with the expertise we've developed over the past two years. At the same time, Southern Seabird Solutions could assist ACAP by providing a ready-made network of fishers, governments and NGOs.

The three year old agreement became active on 1 February when South Africa became the fifth country to ratify it. The UK ratified soon after, and New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador and Spain are the other ratified signatories. Australia is acting as interim secretariat. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, France, and Peru have signed the agreement and will hopefully ratify it soon.

ACAP is an agreement between fishing nations to work cooperatively in albatross and petrel conservation by sharing expertise and skills, training and education, and undertaking joint research.

Smash Hit Video Gets International Release

"Fishing the Seabird Smart Way", the compelling story of seabird lifesaving innovation on the high seas, is breaking into the tight South American video market.

The Southern Seabird Solutions video features interviews with a range of role model fishers within the New Zealand fishing industry about mitigation measures in use on their vessels.

The South American version will begin with an interview with Chilean

swordfish skipper Luis Uribe Varas, who recently visited New Zealand to look at mitigation techniques used by Sanford on the San Aotea II.

The video will be distributed through South American fisheries networks in the next few months.

Looking Ahead>>>

- We'll have feedback on Malcolm McNeill's August visit to Reunion Island. He will be sharing information about mitigation techniques with French longline fishers on the island. Malcolm is the chair of the NZ Ling Longline Working Group. Accompanying him will be Jakob Hals, from the fishing gear manufacturing company A.S. Fiskevegn.
- The Third International Albatross and Petrel Conference, IAPC, will be held in Uruguay from 23-27 August. Visit www.iapc2004.com for more information.

If you'd like to find out more about Southern Seabird Solutions or be involved in any of our projects, please feel free to contact me.

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