



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Threatened and Endangered Species

Innovative Partnerships Help Bring an International Endangered Species Back From the Brink of Extinction

What Happened?

Just over a hundred years ago, 1-5 million short-tailed albatrosses wandered the North Pacific. But after only a few decades of Japanese commercial hunting, they were thought to be extinct, the only evidence that they existed hidden within feather-stuffed mattresses and pillows. However, a few sexually immature birds remained at sea away from the breeding colony. By the 1950's, these birds became regular breeders on Japan's Torishima Island.

The species was listed in 1973 with the passage of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but only outside the U.S. In 2000, listing of the short-tailed albatross was expanded to include the U.S. (65 FR 46643). As of 2005, this graceful glider numbers over 2,000 individuals. This number is encouraging, but still alarmingly low for an entire species.

Industry Leads Charge for Reform

In a nearly unprecedented reaction by an industry to a resource management issue, Alaska's longline fishing industry acted rapidly to impose regulations upon themselves. They did this even before the species was listed throughout the U.S., after a couple short-tailed albatrosses were hauled up



A short-tailed albatross, some Laysan albatross, a black-footed albatross, and many northern fulmars vie for scraps.



A Japanese feather harvester poses with a mound of dead short-tailed albatrosses. The schooner in the background awaits its cargo of albatross feathers for use in mattresses.

dead on their longline gear. The industry drafted regulations designed to reduce bycatch, benefitting all seabirds throughout Alaska's Exclusive Economic Zone (3-200 nm offshore). The National Marine Fisheries Service then adopted these regulations at the recommendation of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. This action on the part of industry set off a ripple effect that has resulted in unique collaborations, leading to recovery actions that would not have otherwise been possible.

Partnering; The Gateway to Recovery

The model for implementing recovery of this species serves as an excellent example of partnering. Its success depends on a collaborative approach between industry, the governments of Japan and the U.S., three universities in Japan, three universities in the U.S., 16 NGO's in Japan, Russia and the U.S. and many private individuals in the fishing industry.

The commercial fishing industry has

been an indispensable advocate in obtaining federal funds needed to accomplish research and management that benefits albatrosses and other seabirds, while protecting the fishing industry.

The universities in the U.S. and Japan collect data that allow managers to guide recovery efforts and to draft meaningful and fair regulations. The cooperating NGO's, help us efficiently accomplish tasks that would be difficult or impossible for a government agency to address unaided. Finally, private fishing vessel owners and companies collaborate with researchers in developing and testing fishing techniques aboard their boats under real-life conditions, which helps us solve the problem of excessive seabird bycatch throughout the Pacific.

New Colonies: A Recovery Keystone

Unlike most endangered species that are threatened by habitat loss, the population of this endangered species is growing at a healthy rate of 6-8% per year. The biggest downside to their



Sporting a huge bubblegum pink bill, the short-tailed albatross is the largest of three albatross species found in the North Pacific Ocean. Adults, like the one shown above left, are black and white with a light gold head. Young birds (above right) are dark, but obtain the distinctive pink bill color about a month after fledging. Photo by Hiroshi Hasegawa.

current situation is that they are restricted to breeding on only two islands; one on a rock spire in a war zone, the other, the main colony, on a steep eroding slope of an active volcano. The recovery team has determined that new breeding colonies are the keystone to successful recovery of this species.

Who's who in Albatross Recovery

Participants in the short-tailed albatross recovery effort include:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Alaska's Marine Advisory Program
Alaska Longline Fishermen's Assoc.
American Seafoods Company
Australia's Antarctic Division
Cordova District Fishermen's United Fishing Vessel Owners Association
Glacier Fish Company
Groundfish Forum
Hokkaido University
International Pacific Halibut Comm.
Japan's Ministry of the Environment
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
National Marine Fisheries Service
North Pacific Fishery Mgmt. Council
North Pacific Longline Association
Oregon State University
Pacific States Marine Fisheries Comm.
Petersburg Vessel Owners Association
Pollock Conservation Cooperative
Russian Academy of Sciences
Southern Seabird Solutions
Toho University (Japan)
United Fishermen of Alaska
University of Massachusetts
University of Tokyo (Japan)
US Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS Southwest Science Center
Washington Sea Grant Program
World Wildlife Fund
Yamashina Institute of Ornithology

Some Recent and Ongoing Actions

North Pacific Longline Association

- Advocate for funds for recovery efforts and research projects;
- Help draft seabird bycatch reduction regulations.

Washington Sea Grant Program

- Design and develop performance standards for streamer lines (tori lines);
- Evaluate performance of all seabird bycatch reduction measures (including streamer lines, integrated weight lines, buoy bags, night setting);

Streamer lines, when properly deployed, form a moving fence that keeps birds away from baited hooks and reduces bird bycatch by 88-100%. Collaborative efforts between fishermen, researchers, NGOs, and government agencies have made this device available free of charge to Alaska's commercial fishing fleet.



- Develop measures to reduce seabird bycatch in Alaska's trawl fishery, collaborating with the **Groundfish Forum**;
- Assist in drafting seabird bycatch reduction regulations, collaborating with **National Marine Fisheries Service**.

Alaska Marine Advisory Program

- Work with fishermen, **Washington Sea Grant** and **USFWS** to design and distribute streamer lines suitable for use on smaller fishing vessels;

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

- Manufacture and distribute over \$1 million-worth of streamer lines with funds from **USFWS**.

Yamashina Institute of Ornithology

- Develop and maintain artificial colony on a safer location on Torishima;
- Develop an artificial colony in Japan's Ogasawara islands, far from dangerous volcanos. Collaborating with **Japan's Ministry of the Environment** and **USFWS**.
- Rear translocated Laysan Albatross chicks as training in preparation for future translocation of short-tailed albatross chicks.
- Conduct satellite telemetry on

breeding short-tailed albatrosses to determine foraging grounds for parents feeding chicks. Collaborating with **OSU**, **U. Mass**, and **USFWS**.

Toho University

- Monitor breeding success on Torishima Island;
- Educate the public in Japan about the species and marine conservation;

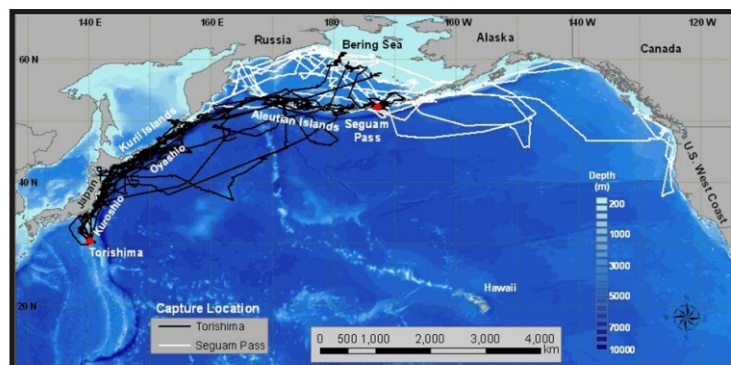
Oregon State University

- Conduct research into movements of albatrosses related to environmental factors and commercial fisheries; collaborating with the **University of Massachusetts, Australia Antarctic Division, Yamashina Institute**, and the **USFWS**.

World Wildlife Fund

- Introduce streamer lines to Russian fishermen (with support from **USFWS**);
- Conduct outreach efforts in Russia highlighting the economic benefits of reducing seabird bycatch (less bait loss leads to more fish in the hold).

For more information on any aspect of short-tailed albatross recovery, Contact: Greg Balogh, Endangered Species Branch Chief, USFWS/AFWFO, at Greg_balogh@fws.gov.



Movement tracks of short-tailed albatross carrying satellite transmitter backpacks. Birds captured on land in Japan and at