

PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF SPECIES ON THE APPENDICES OF THE CONVENTION ON  
THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS

A. PROPOSAL: Inclusion of *Diomedea amsterdamensis* in Appendix I.

B. PROPONENT: Government of Australia

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

1.1 Class	Aves
1.2 Order	Procellariiformes
1.3 Family	Diomedeidae
1.4 Genus/Species	<i>Diomedea amsterdamensis</i> Roux <i>et al</i> 1983
1.5 Common Name(s)	Amsterdam Albatross (English) Albatros d'Amsterdam (French) Albatros de la Amsterdam (Spanish)

2. Biological Data

2.1. Distribution (current and historical)

The Amsterdam Albatross is endemic to Amsterdam Island (France) in the South Indian Ocean. It once bred over a wide area of the island but the present population is restricted to the central plateau region (170ha) by habitat degradation. Marine distribution is unknown because plumage similarities with immature *D. exulans* make the two species difficult to differentiate at sea.

2.2. Population

Breeding population estimated to be 20 pairs, which equates to about 90 birds in total (Gales, in press). Nineteen different pairs have bred at least once between 1982 and 1987, with 9 pairs seen breeding in 1992 (Jouventin *et al.* 1989). Census data shows that since discovery in 1981 the population has increased to its current level. This species is one of the world's rarest seabirds (Gales, 1993).

Biennial breeding frequency (when successful). Most eggs laid in February-March, chicks hatch in May and fledge in January-February of the following year (Jouventin *et al.* 1989). Juveniles begin to breed when they are between 4 and 7 years old.

2.3. Habitat

Marine and probably pelagic. Current nesting area is restricted to the highland plateau at 470-640m in an area of large peat bogs. Formerly known from lowland areas.

2.4. Migratory patterns

Pelagic movements unknown. Possible records south of Australia and New Zealand suggest migration in a easterly direction. Adult birds are absent from the island between breeding years.

**3. Threat data**

3.1. Direct threats to the population

Bycatch of *D. amsterdamensis* was reported on longline vessel operating south of Australia in 1992 (N. Brothers pers. comm. in Gales 1993). There is considerable potential for threats to *D. amsterdamensis* from fisheries, particularly longlining, as fishing vessels operate in the area around Amsterdam I. (Jouventin and Weimerskirch pers. comm. in Gales 1993).

Historical harvest by whalers, tradespeople and fishers for food has been reported (Jouventin 1994).

3.2. Habitat destruction

The species is restricted to breeding on the highland plateau on Amsterdam Island by degradation of the lowland. Woodcutting, fire and feral cattle grazing have degraded approximately 66% of the island making it unsuitable for albatross nesting (Jouventin 1994). Subfossil evidence suggests a causal relationship between increasing cattle grazing area and the contraction in albatross nesting area (Jouventin 1994). The threats to the habitat from cattle have been minimised, by restricting them to a small portion of the Island. The potential threat of fire still exists.

3.3. Indirect threat

Lack of dietary data precludes any assessment of competition with commercial fisheries for food resources.

3.4. Threat connected especially with migrations

Pelagic threats include fisheries bycatch discussed above.

3.5. National and International Utilisation

None known.

**4. Protection status and needs**

4.1. National protection status

Completely protected in Australia, including its Exclusive Economic Zone (to 200nm) and all external territories.

4.2. International protection status

None known.

4.3. Additional protection needs

Research studies should balance the need for knowledge with the threat of disturbance by scientists. Techniques used in the studies should be tested on more numerous species to determine their effects on study animals.

The banding and census studies which are currently conducted annually should be continued. Studies of diet and foraging behaviour should be initiated to assess any interactions with

fisheries.

The impact of cats and rats on the breeding success of *D. amsterdamensis* should be assessed. Habitat altered by fire and cattle should be managed to increase the area suitable for nesting. The effectiveness of the fence to exclude cattle should be ensured.

**5. Range states (\*Breeding Sites)**

France\*

International Waters (Indian Ocean, Southern Ocean)

**6. Comments from Range States**

**7. Additional remarks**

The status of *D. amsterdamensis* is *critically endangered* using the criteria of Mace and Lande (1991). It is considered critical by Collar *et al.* (1994). While the breeding population is considered stable, these classifications are based on the extremely low population numbers and restricted breeding range of the species.

**8. References**

See Reference at the very end of this document (pp.182-187)