

**5th Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the
CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC5)**

Online, 28 June – 9 July 2021

UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC5/Inf.2

**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCERTED ACTION FOR
THE ANTIPODEAN ALBATROSS
UNEP/CMS/ CONCERTED ACTION 13.12**

PROGRESS REPORT: MAY 2020-APRIL 2021

1. CONCERTED ACTION

Title: Concerted Action for the Antipodean Albatross (*Diomedea antipodensis*)

Document number: UNEP/CMS/Concerted Action 13.12

2. REPORTING GOVERNMENT or ORGANIZATION

This report is completed by the Governments of New Zealand and Australia.

3. TARGET SPECIES

Class: Aves

Family: Diomedeidae

Order: Procellariiformes

Species: *Diomedea antipodensis*

4. PROGRESS IN ACTIVITIES

New Zealand and Australia have undertaken the following activities to implement the Concerted Action for the Antipodean Albatross between May 2020 and April 2021. Progress reports were also sought from our range state partners in Chile but due to competing priorities from the rapidly evolving state of COVID19 in that region they were not able to contribute updates at this stage.

New Zealand:

New Zealand continued to implement a range of domestic fisheries bycatch management actions as part of the implementation of the New Zealand National Plan of Action (NPOA) – Seabirds 2020. This included the introduction of Mitigation Standards in fisheries that pose bycatch risk to Antipodean albatross, which set best practice mitigation use expectations. This is supported by an expanded outreach programme to assist fishers, and a programme to supply hook-shielding devices, a novel best practice mitigation measure, for the pelagic longline fishery (the highest risk domestic fishery for Antipodean albatross) was also established. A programme of improved digital monitoring of fisheries was also continued which will improve bycatch data collection.

New Zealand's research programme on Antipodean albatross was also impacted by COVID-19, with the suspension of government research at subantarctic islands in 2020-21. Fortunately, independent research was conducted at Antipodes Island, which continued planned monitoring at that site, and allowed for continued intensive satellite tracking to identify fisheries that may pose bycatch risk.

Australia:

Australia has in place a National Recovery Plan for albatrosses and petrels. This plan guides the activities of government, industry, research organisations and other stakeholders in the protection, conservation and management of listed threatened albatross and petrel species, including the Antipodean albatross. The plan highlights threats to the Antipodean albatross where these occur in Australian jurisdiction and identifies research and management actions to support the recovery of this, and other threatened albatross and petrel species.

Australia implemented a range of actions under its National Plan of Action for minimising the incidental catch of seabirds in Australian capture fisheries (NPOA–Seabirds). This plan coordinates national action to moderate the impact of longline fishing activities on seabirds in Australian waters. It applies to all fisheries under Australian Commonwealth jurisdiction and aims to minimise and, where practicable, eliminate the incidental catch of seabirds in capture fisheries.

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) has progressed some specific programs to reduce seabirds (albatross in particular) bycatch in the Southern Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF) and tuna fisheries. Such activities include:

- Ongoing implementation of AFMA e-monitoring and observer programme;
- Development of new offal management and exclusion zones for the South East Trawl Fishery (see summary of arrangement below); and
- enhanced reporting requirements for the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (see: [ETBF seabird mitigation and reporting requirements | Australian Fisheries Management Authority \(afma.gov.au\)](#)).

Biological material retention requirements for otter board trawl vessels

While bafflers have shown to reduce interactions with seabirds, there are still instances where vessels interact with seabirds in high-risk areas. To ensure interactions with seabirds are minimised, additional management arrangements were introduced in the 2019-20 SESSF season, that require zero discharge of biological material for otter board trawl vessels when fishing gear is deployed in high-risk areas. Biological material is defined as whole fish, or any fish based biological material not being retained, traditionally referred to as discards or offal, but does not include small hard parts such as scales, fins or fish oil. The definitions of biological material allows for the discarding of sensitive large animals such as sharks and rays as well as small items such as oil and scales that reflect the reality of wet boat operations. Sharks, rays and protected species which are alive and have a reasonable likelihood of post-capture survival should be returned to the water quickly and carefully. These new arrangements were phased in from 1 November 2019. From this date, biological material must be retained while fishing gear is in the water south of latitude 39° S and west of longitude 147° E, during daylight hours. Daylight hours are defined as the hours of light between the times of nautical dusk and nautical dawn. Following this, the requirement was extended to south of 38° S from 1 July 2020.

Australia's threat abatement plan to address the incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations identifies the research, management and other actions needed to reduce the impacts of the key threatening process to an acceptable level. It requires all government agencies to act in a manner consistent with the objectives of the plan – to achieve a zero bycatch of seabirds, especially threatened albatrosses and petrels in all longline fisheries. Education outreach initiatives with fishers and mitigation are key actions implemented by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority under this plan.

During 2020 outreach with Australian commercial fishers and access to research and monitoring sites was impacted as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant limited travel and communication opportunities.

- **Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs)** - Because of COVID-19, the RFMOs managing high seas fisheries that pose bycatch risk to Antipodean albatross had reduced meeting times, and in general little progress was made to improve seabird bycatch mitigation measures, compliance and data collection and reporting. However, The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) agreed to assess compliance with the obligations in the seabird bycatch management measure Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) 2018-03 in 2021.

A summary of progress against each of the actions is provided in Annex 1.

5. CHANGES TO THE ORIGINAL CONCERTED ACTION (IF ANY)

No changes are proposed at this time.

6. REFERENCES (if any)

- New Zealand's National Plan of Action – Seabirds 2020, and associated implementation documents are available at: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/fishing-aquaculture/sustainable-fisheries/protecting-marine-life/reducing-deaths-of-seabirds/>
- New Zealand's latest research reports on Antipodean albatross are available at: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/conservation-services-programme/csp-reports/search-csp-reports-by-species/antipodean-wandering-albatross/>
- The latest results from New Zealand's intensive satellite tracking programme of Antipodean albatross can be viewed at: <https://docnewzealand.shinyapps.io/albatrosstracker/>

7. ACTION

This document provides initial progress in the first year of the Concerted Action. The Concerted Action should be continued as planned. Because some activities have not been progressed due to COVID-19, enhanced focus should be made on those areas going forwards, to the extent possible in these uncertain times. The Concerted Action may need revision in future years in response to ability to progress the full range of activities outlined in the Concerted Action and will be considered as part of the next report on the implementation of this Concerted Action.

Annex 1. Progress on implementation of the Concerted Action for the Conservation of Antipodean Albatross (*Diomedea antipodensis*) under the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS); May 2020-April 2021.

Activity	Output/outcome	Timeframe	Responsibility	Progress by	Progress reported
1. Fisheries bycatch in Range State jurisdictions					
1.1 Continue implementation of effective bycatch mitigation measures in pelagic longline fisheries, trawl and any other relevant fisheries, including outreach to fishers regarding seabird bycatch	Fisheries bycatch risk minimised within Range State jurisdictions	Ongoing	CMS Party Range States	New Zealand	Implementation of New Zealand's NPOA-Seabirds 2020 commenced, including setting new Mitigation Standards, and expanded outreach programmes. This is supported by an expanded outreach programme to assist fishers.
1.2 Ensure there is adequate observation coverage to monitor mitigation use and identify any seabird bycatch to species level	Fisheries bycatch levels and risk, at species level, are known and can be reported	Ongoing	CMS Party Range States	New Zealand	Continued implementation of New Zealand's fishery observer programme and rollout of digital monitoring.
1.3 Develop and maintain bilateral/multilateral collaboration on mitigation development, data collection, data sharing and risk assessment. A cooperation arrangement between New Zealand and Chile on seabird conservation has already been agreed and provides a framework for this activity between these two Range States	Collaboration facilities achieving Activities 1.1 and 1.2	Ongoing	CMS Party Range States	New Zealand	Continued collaboration with Chile on seabird bycatch risk and management. Investigation of opportunities for collaboration with Australia on better understanding bycatch risks in the Tasman Sea.

Activity	Output/outcome	Timeframe	Responsibility	Progress by	Progress reported
2. Fisheries bycatch on the high seas					
2.1 Support regular review, and improvement where necessary, of seabird bycatch conservation and management measures to ensure use of effective bycatch mitigation measures is required, in the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and in relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs): Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin (CCSBT) and the South Pacific Regional Fisheries management Organisation (SPRFMO)	Fisheries bycatch risk minimised in relevant RFMOs through use of effective bycatch mitigation measures	2020-2022 for initial review; further regular reviews - ongoing	CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs	New Zealand and Australia	Progress at many RFMOs was limited because of reduced meeting times due to COVID-19. New Zealand and Australia supported the WCPFC decision to assess compliance with obligations in the seabird bycatch measure CMM2018-03 in 2021.
2.2 Support development and distribution of outreach materials to fishers regarding seabird bycatch, including seabird identification guides	Fisheries bycatch risk minimised in relevant RFMOs through increased awareness, improved use of mitigation by fishers, and more accurate reporting to species level	Ongoing	CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs	New Zealand	New Zealand continued the development and update of a range of resources for commercial fishers on seabird bycatch reduction: https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/conservation-services-programme/csp-resources-for-fishers/

Activity	Output/outcome	Timeframe	Responsibility	Progress by	Progress reported
2.3 Support compliance monitoring of seabird bycatch conservation and management measures in relevant RFMOs	The compliance monitoring and reporting against each RFMO seabird bycatch conservation and management measure is demonstrated in RFMO reports	2020-2022 (and maintained ongoing)	CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs	New Zealand	New Zealand's high seas monitoring in the WCPFC area was affected by COVID-19 and whilst no ship boardings were made for this reason, surveillance over-flights continued.
				Australia	Despite the impact of COVID-19 on monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) activities (largely due to the need to ensure the health and safety of crew and inspectors), Australia still led and participated in high seas MCS operations during the reporting period, that included focus on monitoring compliance with seabird bycatch CMMs. Australia also continues to prioritise effective development and implementation of compliance schemes in the RFMOs we are a party to, including supporting efforts to include seabird bycatch reporting to inform both compliance processes and management actions.
2.4 Support robust bycatch related data collection and sharing in relevant RFMOs	Fisheries bycatch risk is documented and measurable through data reporting	Ongoing	CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs	New Zealand	There was little progress on this matter at RFMOs because of reduced meeting times due to COVID-19
2.5 Support robust bycatch data reporting and periodic bycatch assessments in relevant RFMOs	Estimation of fisheries seabird bycatch risk at RFMO scale	Ongoing	CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs	New Zealand and Australia	Progress at many RFMOs was limited because of reduced meeting times due to COVID-19. New Zealand and Australia supported the WCPFC decision to assess compliance with the obligations in the seabird bycatch measure CMM2018-03 in 2021.

Activity	Output/outcome	Timeframe	Responsibility	Progress by	Progress reported
2.6 Support data gathering in high seas fisheries where other types of seabird interactions, including possible utilization of seabirds as wild meat, remains poorly known.	Risks posed by all relevant fishing methods are understood	2020-2025	CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs	New Zealand and Australia	New Zealand and Australia supported improved data collection in South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation-(SPRFMO) fisheries, including observer collected data on any seabird interaction with squid jig fisheries.
2.7 Develop collaborations on seabird bycatch mitigation measures with non-CMS Parties fishing in the range of Antipodean albatross	Fisheries bycatch risk minimised through use of effective bycatch mitigation measures	Ongoing	CMS Party Range States	New Zealand	New Zealand has established communication with non-CMS Parties whose fisheries have been identified as overlapping with Antipodean albatross. Despite COVID-19 limiting travel, notable progress was made with China, with a New Zealand-China Seabird Bycatch Workshop held online in November 2020.
3. Research					
3.1 Continue a multi-year population project to provide a platform for key research questions (e.g. foraging range, diet) and monitor progress over time	Ongoing assessment of the current status of the population and a better understanding of biological drivers of change	Population monitoring: annual for 2019-2024, then reassess	New Zealand with collaboration from other interested CMS Parties	New Zealand	Whilst funds were committed for continued field research at Antipodes and Adams Islands, the New Zealand government suspended subantarctic island research in 2020-21 due to COVID-19. Fortunately, independent research was conducted at Antipodes Island to continue planned monitoring at that site.
3.2 Continue the deployment of tracking devices to better describe areas of fisheries overlap	Detailed knowledge of foraging range, suitable to inform detailed overlap	2019-21	New Zealand with collaboration from other	New Zealand	Intensive satellite tracking was continued at Antipodes Island. See: https://docnewzealand.shinyapps.io/albatrosstracker/

Activity	Output/outcome	Timeframe	Responsibility	Progress by	Progress reported
	analysis with fishing effort and spatially explicit fisheries risk assessment		interested CMS Parties		
3.3 Continue diet-related sample collection, and undertake analysis, to describe diet and any changes in diet over time	Better understanding of any changes in diet and how this affects population parameters	2019-2024	New Zealand with collaboration from other interested CMS Parties	New Zealand	No progress, because of reduced field research in 2020-21 due to COVID-19.
3.4 Assess levels of plastic ingestion	Better understanding of the potential risk posed by plastic pollution	2021-2024	New Zealand with collaboration from other interested CMS Parties	New Zealand	No progress, because of reduced field research in 2020-21 due to COVID-19.
3.5 Investigate the nature, extent and drivers of land slips at Antipodes Island	Better understanding of potential risks posed by land slips	2021-2024	New Zealand with collaboration from other interested CMS Parties.	New Zealand	No progress, because of reduced field research in 2020-21 due to COVID-19.
3.6 Develop opportunities into mātauranga Māori (New Zealand's indigenous knowledge) to inform the management of the species and help facilitate opportunities for Ngāi Tahu (the principal indigenous tribe of the southern region of New Zealand) to develop a stronger connection between Ngāi Tahu and <i>D. antipodensis</i>	Mātauranga Māori available to inform future management and conservation actions	Ongoing	New Zealand	New Zealand	No progress, because of reduced opportunities for breeding site visits in 2020-21 due to COVID-19.

Activity	Output/outcome	Timeframe	Responsibility	Progress by	Progress reported
4. Breeding site management					
4.1 Eradication of mammalian pests at Auckland Island	Safe and protected breeding sites with no human-induced threats	Programme under development, with 10-year indicative timeline	New Zealand	New Zealand	Preparatory planning was continued, however number of challenges and uncertainties remain to be overcome, including securing funding and support for the duration of an eradication programme. Further details on the project are available at: https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/maukahuka-pest-free-auckland-island/
4.2 Continued protection and biosecurity control to main breeding site islands	Safe and protected breeding sites with no human-induced threats	Ongoing	New Zealand	New Zealand	Implementation of all protection measures was continued.