

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

48th Meeting of the Standing Committee

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REGIONAL REPORT OCEANIA

Regional Report to the 48th Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee – Oceania

Regional activities for the implementation of the Convention on Migratory Species and its related instruments

1. CMS and its relevant instruments

CMS

Australia

Australia provided a voluntary contribution of \$20,000 in June 2018 to the CMS Secretariat for implementation of key migratory species initiatives, including the implementation of a Single Species Action Plan for Eastern Curlew.

Australia also provided an additional voluntary contribution of \$20,000 in June 2017 to the CMS Secretariat specifically for a joint study with CITES on the legal and illegal international trade in marine turtles: to research its status, scope and trends, conservation impacts and management options, and to identify areas where immediate mitigation efforts may be needed. This project is ongoing.

Australia hosted the Oceania Regional preparatory meeting for the CMS COP12 from 28 – 31 August 2017 in Brisbane, to prepare participants attending the COP12 on the proceedings of the conference. Oceania Parties represented at the meeting were: Australia, Cook Islands, New Zealand, the Philippines and Samoa.

Samoa

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) is the national focal point whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) is the implementation focal point for CMS in Samoa.

Two delegates from MNRE represented Samoa at the COP12 in the Philippines, where Samoa proposed the successful inclusion of Blue Shark in Appendix II of the Convention.

Agreements for conservation of specific species

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

Australia

Australia and New Zealand are both Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). Australia hosts the ACAP Secretariat at Hobart, Tasmania. ACAP aims to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels by encouraging and coordinating conservation action at national, regional and global levels.

In ACAP's current triennial work program 2016-2018, particular emphasis is placed on actions to monitor levels and trends of breeding populations, and reduce threats on land (e.g. damage to and disturbance at breeding habitats) and at sea (e.g. mortality arising from interactions with fisheries). In line with these priorities, major Australian conservation actions presently include:

- undertaking population monitoring of Australia's main breeding sites for albatrosses and petrels (Tasmania and Macquarie Island)

- implementing an updated threat abatement plan for the incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations
- updating a recovery plan for threatened albatrosses and petrels breeding and/or foraging in Australian jurisdiction
- minimising through entry restrictions and biosecurity measures the risk of introduction of alien invasive pests at breeding sites for albatrosses and petrels in Australia that may have population-level effects on the species
- undertaking research projects concerning improving measures to avoid or minimise seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries (e.g. branch line weighting regimes, and underwater setting devices), trawl fisheries (e.g. devices to mitigate risk of warp strikes)
- assessing whether to uplist *Thalassarche cauta* (Shy Albatross) under domestic environmental legislation from Vulnerable to Endangered.

The results of these conservation actions are shared internationally with other ACAP Parties, as well as various regional and other forums.

Australia attended the 10th meeting of the Advisory Committee: Wellington, New Zealand, 11-15 September 2017, and Sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties: Skukuza, South Africa, 7-11 May 2018.

New Zealand

The Department of Conservation (DOC) is the lead agency in New Zealand for ACAP. New Zealand hosted the Tenth Meeting of the Advisory Committee and associated working groups in Wellington from 4-15 September 2017, as well as a workshop to consider international cooperation in the conservation of *Pterodroma* petrels. New Zealand attended the Sixth Meeting of Parties in South Africa from 7-11 May 2018.

Key actions taken by New Zealand to progress the objectives and workplan of ACAP include:

- developing plans for testing the feasibility of the future eradication of pests from Auckland Island, the highest terrestrial threat to ACAP species identified for New Zealand;
- undertaking a suite of research to address many of the priority research gaps identified by ACAP for New Zealand breeding albatross and petrel species;
- active management of domestic fisheries bycatch of albatross and petrels, through the development and implementation of mitigation measures, implementation of observer programmes, liaison and outreach with fishers;
- advocating for improved mitigation management and bycatch data collection in regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) to which New Zealand is a member; and
- supporting the operation of ACAP through active participation in tasks on the Advisory Committee work programme, providing personnel for convenor positions and representing ACAP at international fora.

Fiji

The Department of Environment, Fiji under the Ministry of waterways and Environment plays the lead agency role in the conservation of species, marine and coastal ecosystems within the Fiji. The agency marshals the benefits for all Fijians. To better realise and improve the effective management of these values on the ground, Fiji is increasingly building institutional and personal capacities for Blue Planning. Fiji is conscious that, there is no need to reinvent the wheel – thus through learning and applying from centuries of experiences in traditional management within the Pacific. This when coupled with scientific approaches has

strengthened the effective management of the region's rich natural species capital. Of course, the level of success has depended upon the level of sharing from the lessons learnt.

A key exemplar is the MACBIO project collaborating with national stakeholder groups towards documenting effective approaches to sustainable marine resource management and species conservation. The project encourages and supports the various stakeholders to share tried and tested concepts and instruments more widely throughout partnerships nationwide. This report outlines the process undertaken to define and describe the special, unique marine areas of Fiji. These special, unique marine areas provide an important input into decisions about, for example, permits, licences, EIAs and where to place different types of marine protected areas, Locally-Managed Marine Area and tabu sites in Fiji.

The work has provided an initial identification of priority conservation sites for Fiji. The Sites of National Significance were also identified as Special, Unique Marine Areas (SUMAs). A set of Fiji's Special, Unique Marine Areas (**SUMAs**) and the rating each site was established.

Additionally, 125 taxonomic priority areas were also defined as important for:

- Particular groups of taxa
- Species of concern
- Species with particular management requirements (e.g. vulnerable due to life histories or over-harvesting)
- Feeding
- Breeding
- Nesting
- Seasonal migration
- Ecological processes

The Biophysically special unique marine areas of Fiji suggests that future scoring systems under development would, more explicitly, take into account levels of human use or impact, as this affects the intrinsic ecological value of a habitat, assemblage, population or ecosystem. This intrinsic ecological value is embedded within the ability of the system to function in a balanced and sustainable manner. This includes elements of assemblage structure and diversity, nutrient cycling, trophic linkages and the abundance of keystone species. Sometimes a single species can indicate that these processes are likely to be intact.

Memoranda of Understanding for the conservation of specific species

Marine Turtles IOSEA

Australia

Australia is one of 35 signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA turtle MoU). The IOSEA turtle MoU sets out a framework through which states can work together to conserve and replenish depleted marine turtle populations for which they share responsibility. This objective is achieved through the collective implementation of an associated Conservation and Management Plan (CMP).

The Australian Government undertakes a range of policy and on-the-ground activities that contribute to the implementation of actions contained in the CMP, including:

- The release of the *Recovery Plan for Marine Turtles in Australia 2017* which sets out the research and management actions necessary to stop the decline, and support the recovery of marine turtles in Australia. The overarching objective of the plan is to minimise anthropogenic threats to allow for the conservation status of marine turtles to improve so that they can be removed from Australia's national threatened species list. A copy of the plan can be accessed here: <http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/publications/recovery-plan-marine-turtles-australia-2017>

Dugong

Australia

The Australian Government is implementing conservation and management actions to address our national and regional priorities identified under the UNEP / CMS Dugong MoU and Conservation and Management Plan (CMP).

Key initiatives towards dugong conservation and management include:

- The Australian Government provides in-kind support to the value of approximately US\$85 million, to implement global initiatives under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project (2015 – 2018). This goal of this project is to improve the conservation effectiveness of seagrass ecosystems that support globally significant populations of dugong across the Indian and Pacific Ocean Basins.
- The Australian Government is supporting a range of research and management actions aimed at the conservation and management of dugongs including, large-scale aerial surveys to determine their distribution and relative abundance, genetic studies, seagrass surveys, dugong protection areas to minimise impacts of gill netting, go slow areas to minimise impacts of boat strike, and building the capacity of Indigenous people to undertake dugong monitoring and management.

Pacific Islands Cetaceans

Australia

The Australian Marine Mammal Centre (AMMC) of the Australian Antarctic Division provides scientific research and advice to inform and support Australia's marine mammal conservation priorities. The AMMC plays a leading role in the International Whaling Commission's Southern Ocean Research Partnership, which is an integrated, collaborative consortium for non-lethal whale research. The Partnership aims to maximise conservation outcomes for Southern Ocean whales through an understanding of the post-exploitation status, health, dynamics and environmental linkages of their populations, and the threats they face.

New Zealand

As a member of the Pacific Cetaceans MOU since 2006, New Zealand has been active in efforts to sustain the protection of whales and dolphins in the Pacific region.

Samoa

Samoa signed the MoU on the Conservation of Cetaceans (Whales and Dolphins) and their habitats in the Pacific Islands Region on the 15th September 2006. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) is the designated authority and focal point for this MoU.

Sharks MoU

Australia

In January 2018 Australia made a voluntary contribution of \$20,000 to the Sharks MoU to support priority actions from the Sharks MoU Conservation Plan.

Representatives from Australia attended the Sharks MoU Advisory Committee in Bonaire in November 2017 and are planning to attend the 3rd Meeting of Signatories to the Sharks MoU in Monaco 10 – 14 December 2018.

Australia remains the Oceania representative on the Advisory Committee and Dr Michelle Heupel from the Australian Institute of Marine Science is a member of the Sharks MoU Conservation Working Group. Two Australian non-government organisation are “Cooperating Partners” to the Sharks MoU, the Humane Society International and the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

Domestically, the Australian Government is actively involved in the conservation of threatened and migratory shark species in Australian waters, directing nearly \$5 million in research funding over recent years for shark conservation projects.

New Zealand

New Zealand became a Signatory to the Sharks MOU in July 2015 and participated in the 2nd Meeting of the Signatories in February 2016.

New Zealand’s conservation and management of sharks is guided by the National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks 2013 which sets six goals to achieve the broad purpose ‘to maintain the biodiversity and the long-term viability of all New Zealand shark populations by recognising their role in marine ecosystems, ensuring that any utilisation of sharks is sustainable, and that New Zealand receives positive recognition internationally for its efforts in shark conservation and management’. Leading up to a review and update of this NPOA-Sharks, New Zealand will be compiling all actions that have been undertaken towards achieving the goals and the purpose of the NPOA-Sharks. This review will be made publicly available.

Samoa

Samoa became a signatory in 2014. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) is the designated authority and focal point for the Sharks MoU and the main agency leading the implementation of activities under the MoU in close partnership and collaboration with other line ministries, the local communities, the private sector, institutions, NGOs and IGOs.

2. Activities related to:

Scientific Research and Monitoring

Australia

The Australian Government is investing \$1 billion in the second phase of the National Landcare Program. The majority of the investment will be delivered over a period of five years, from

July 2018 to June 2023, while some elements of the program began during the 2017-18 financial year. The investment will include a range of measures to support natural resource management and sustainable agriculture, and to protect Australia's biodiversity, including migratory species.

In 2017, a number of projects were funded through the Threatened Species Recovery Fund to support threatened migratory birds, including a project to restore key habitats, reduce human disturbance and promote best practice management at priority Eastern Curlew sites from Darwin to Wollongong (Investment: \$204,590).

The National Environmental Science Programme is a long-term commitment to environment and climate research with funding of \$25.5 million per year during the life of the program.

The programme is built on its predecessors — the National Environmental Research Program and the Australian Climate Change Science Programme — to support decision-makers to understand, manage and conserve Australia's environment with the best available information, based on world-class science.

Projects currently funded that include migratory species include:

- Research and management priorities for Christmas Island Frigatebirds (Investment: \$35,407)
- Saving Threatened Species on Australian Islands (Investment: \$1,391,773)
- Strategic Planning for the Far Eastern Curlew (Investment: \$372,456)
- Vulnerability of food supplies for migratory shorebirds to altered flow in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria (Investment: \$210,000)
- Contribution of rivers to the productivity of floodplains and coastal areas of the southern Gulf of Carpentaria (Investment: \$851,600)

Australia has recently undertaken or is undertaking a range of projects on CMS-listed shark species, including:

A project which provided the first national estimate of the adult White Shark population. Estimates put the eastern Australian population at between 470-1,030 adults and the southern-western population at between 750-2,250 adults.

A project to identify Northern Australian hotspots for the recovery threatened euryhaline species (sawfish species).

A project to define the connectivity of Australia's hammerhead sharks with Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and islands of the Pacific.

New Zealand

New Zealand has undertaken the following scientific research and monitoring:

- A programme of population demographic monitoring and tracking studies across migratory seabird species identified as at most risk from threats including fisheries bycatch (2017 and planned);
- Development of fit for purpose fisheries seabird bycatch mitigation options;
- Researchers in New Zealand have made significant progress in understanding migratory patterns of Pygmy Blue Whale and Humpback Whales in our region. We are also carried out monitoring of Southern Right Whales in the Sub-Antarctic area on New Zealand.
- Under New Zealand's fisheries management system, commercial fishers are required to report all catch, and scientific observers are deployed on a proportion of all commercial

fishing trips to collect additional biological information on target and non-target species, including sharks.

- In addition to regular data collection, New Zealand monitors a number of shark species through indicator analyses and will consider additional management action if indicator analyses suggest a sustainability risk.

Samoa

- As part of the ongoing efforts to protect sharks in Samoa, research into the population status of sharks need to be understood. As part of this the first ever research on sharks in Samoa was undertaken for 2 weeks at 2 identify sites on the southern side of Upolu Island. The baseline surveys collected data using the Baited Remote Underwater Video System (BRUVS) method for analysis of their abundance and distribution. It ended with a presentation of the preliminary results of the research to interested partners and stakeholders, at MNRE. The research was in collaboration with SPREP, Australia Institute of Marine Science and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and funder by the Paul G. Allen Foundation and Vulcan Inc, under the Global FinPrint Project.
- Regular monitoring and response have been undertaken for reported whale stranding. Only one incident was reported in April 2018 of a sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) carcass found stranded on the reef west of Manono Island.

Education and Public Awareness

Education materials

Australia

As part of Australia's National Science Week celebrations, the Department of the Environment and Energy has released a new publication showcasing research which will help us to better understand and manage wetlands and waterbirds, both in Australia and internationally. It highlights work done by Australian scientists under the National Environmental Science Program, as well as important projects by other leading Australian researchers.

It is available online at: [Celebrating Australia's Wetland Science](#) . It is in the same format as [Celebrating Australia's Ramsar Wetlands](#), and [Celebrating Australia's Migratory Birds](#).

New Zealand

New Zealand has undertaken the following education and public awareness:

- Education resources and workshops for fishermen in relation to bycatch of migratory seabirds (2017 and planned);
- Publicity, through social media, of World Migratory Bird Day;
- Expert disentanglement teams have been established to respond to entangled whales on the North and South Islands of New Zealand.
- Protected Species Liaison Project: i) To provide liaison officers to the relevant inshore and surface longline fishing fleets, to assist those fleets reduce their protected species bycatch (including protected sharks); ii) To coordinate the liaison officer roles with wider efforts targeted at protected species bycatch reduction in relevant fisheries to achieve the greatest reduction in bycatch possible.
- New Zealand's National Plan of Action – Sharks includes a goal that 'all commercial, recreational and customary fishers, non-extractive users, Maori, and interested members of the New Zealand public know about the need to conserve and sustainably manage shark populations and what New Zealand is doing to achieve this'. Key actions to date

contributing to this goal include the publication of a factsheet about the management of sharks in New Zealand, publication of two qualitative risk assessments, and the update and publication of the New Zealand Threat Classification of shark species.

Samoa

- Shark awareness campaign – Two side events at 2 different sites in Upolu to raise the importance of sharks was hosted during the national Alo Paopao festival in August 2017. There were interactive activities for both adults and children, to learn more about sharks and why they've become threatened. People were also asked to pledge for the protection of sharks. The campaign was in collaboration with SPREP, Conservation International (CI) and Samoa Conservation Society (SCS).
- Regular educational presentations were undertaken for science students of the National University of Samoa (NUS) in August 2017 and July 2018 to understand more about one of the most misunderstood species, the sharks. This is a continuous partnership with the institution to raise the educational capacity and awareness of the students and potentially encourage them towards an environmentalist and conservationist based career path.
- The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment conducted a total of 11 nationwide district level community awareness on the *Marine Wildlife Protection Amendment Regulations 2018* on 30 April to 17 May 2018. The awareness aims to address new and emerging issues and to strengthen conservation and management measures for the protection of whales, dolphins, turtles and sharks. Thus the community awareness was the opportunity to raise the awareness of the people on the amended regulations now in place and remind them of the importance of these species to our ecosystem, economy and our culture. This was made possible with the financial support of the UNDP and co-financing from SPREP.
- Awareness and educational videos clips produced and aired on national television stations on and publications on the:
 - i) Importance of Sharks on the marine ecosystem and
 - ii) The importance of Sharks on the economy and Samoa's culture as well as the threats they face.
- A Children's story book called "*O le tafaoga a le malie o Sitū ma ana Uō*" was launched during the national commemoration of the Biological Diversity Day on 27 June 2018 in partnership with SPREP. The story is about the journey of sharks and the threats they encounter on the way such as plastics, overfishing and how we can help protect sharks from these threats.

Capacity Building

New Zealand

New Zealand has a fisheries capacity development programme focused on building capacity for fisheries management and compliance in a range of Pacific Island states. Work in this area has included assistance in developing National Plans of Action for Sharks and general support for fisheries management initiatives.

International Cooperation

Australia

Australia will be attending the 2018 bilateral migratory bird agreement consultative meetings between the Governments of Japan, China and the Republic of Korea. The meetings between

all four countries will be hosted by Japan from 27 - 30 November 2018. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss the implementation of the agreements and plan future collaborative activities to enhance the conservation of migratory birds.

Australia chairs the International Whaling Commission's Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (CMPs). CMPs are an important conservation initiative of the Commission, providing a coordinated and collaborative framework for addressing transboundary gaps in national conservation measures for the most at risk cetacean populations.

In October 2017, the CMS CoP agreed a Concerted Action for the Arabian Sea population of humpback whales, which included the development of a CMP for the population. The Arabian Sea humpback is listed as endangered by the IUCN and is believed to comprise less than 100 individuals. Observations of severe entanglement scarring, coastal infrastructure developments, offshore hydrocarbon exploration, the potential for unregulated whale watching and increased shipping traffic through known habitats are a real cause for concern, and make the population an ideal candidate for a CMP.

Following the developments at the CMS CoP, Australia and the Commission's Secretariat reached out to Oman and India asking them to consider leading the development of a CMP for the population, in collaboration with other range states, the Commission and the CMS. India has expressed support for developing the CMP, and Australia continues to have productive discussion with Oman.

New Zealand

New Zealand is engaged in many regional and multilateral fora that address issues associated with conservation of migratory species. New Zealand also engages bilaterally on migratory species related issues where relevant.

Other international cooperation includes:

- We are active members of the East Asian Australian Flyway Partnership and will attend the Tenth Meeting of Partners in December 2018. New Zealand is collaborating on seabird bycatch and shark conservation issues within regional fisheries management organisations.
- We undertook collaborative seabird bycatch mitigation trials in French Polynesia. Expanded collaboration planned for the next year.
- We hosted Japanese scientists to workshop seabird mitigation options, in particular bird-scaring lines.
- New Zealand is an active participant in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations which have a mandate to manage impacts of fisheries on migratory shark species on the high seas. These include the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna.
- New Zealand scientists also participate in assessment and research activities in collaboration with research from Australia and other countries, and participate in the IUCN Shark Specialist Group and in global and regional Red List Assessments for shark species.

Samoa

- Pacific Ministerial Shark Symposium, 1 – 2 March 2018
 - The Government of Samoa, with support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, Paul G. Allen Philanthropies, Global FinPrint Project and SPREP, hosted a Pacific

Ministerial Shark Symposium on 1 and 2 March 2018. The meeting was attended by 10 Pacific countries in support of the Blue Pacific concept adopted at the Pacific Islands Forum in 2017. The Ministerial Declaration from the meeting included: a call prohibiting the import and export of shark products, increased collaboration and information sharing to ensure strict compliance with conservation measures, encouragement for the creation of further shark sanctuaries, development of measures to reduce lethal by-catch, development of best practice standards for ecotourism, and encouragement to be more active in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

Protection of migratory species, conservation measures

Australia

Australia revised its *National Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching* in 2017 to ensure they represent best practice management in this area. These Guidelines were developed in consultation with the state and territory governments, scientists, industry representatives and non-government organisations. They provide a consistent national policy for the management of whale and dolphin watching. The Guidelines can be accessed here: <http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/publications/australian-national-guidelines-whale-and-dolphin-watching-2017>

Vessel strike is a potential or known threat to many of Australia's marine migratory species including whales, dolphins, dugongs and marine turtles. Interactions with marine fauna can occur with vessels of all sizes from smaller recreational vessels through to large commercial ships. The species and number of animals involved in collisions is not always clear as the interactions are often not reported or people operating the vessel are not actually aware that a collision has taken place.

Australia released a *National Strategy for Reducing Vessel Strike on Cetaceans and other Marine Megafauna 2017* that provides guidance on understanding and reducing the risk of vessel collisions and the impacts they may have on marine megafauna. The Strategy can be accessed here: <http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/publications/national-strategy-reducing-vessel-strike-cetaceans-marine-megafauna>

Australia revised its *Threat Abatement Plan for the Impacts of Marine Debris on the Vertebrate Wildlife of Australia's Coasts and Oceans* in 2018. The Plan incorporates actions needed to abate the threat of marine debris, particularly actions to develop understanding about microplastic impacts and the potential role of new technologies in waste management. The Plan can be accessed here: <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/tap/marine-debris-2018>

One new Ramsar site was recently added to the Australian reserve system. Glenelg Estuary and Discovery Bay was approved for listing by the Australian Government as a wetland of international significance under the Ramsar Convention. The site covers more than 22,000 ha and has diverse aquatic habitats, including intertidal sandy beaches, estuarine habitat, freshwater swamps and permanent lakes. The site supports nationally threatened coastal saltmarsh, and eight nationally or internationally listed species of conservation significance, such as the Eastern Curlew and Australasian Bittern, which are both critically endangered. The site also includes part of the Discovery Bay Shorebird Site, which is an internationally

important non-breeding area for Sanderling and regularly supports 1 per cent of the flyway population.

New Zealand

- The successful eradication of mice from Antipodes Island was officially confirmed in March 2018, 2 years after the poison drop. This will reduce the threat of mice predation that has been observed on other remote islands such as Marion and Gough. Migratory species that breed on this island include Antipodean albatross, white-chinned petrel, grey petrel, white-headed petrel and black-bellied storm petrel.
- Nine shark species are protected under New Zealand legislation meaning they cannot be caught, and if incidentally taken, they must be reported and no part may be retained. This protection includes a number of migratory species, e.g. whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*), oceanic whitetip shark (*Charcharhinus longimanus*), great white shark (*Carcharhinus carcharias*), manta ray (*Manta birostris*), and spinetail devil ray (*Mobula japonica*).
- New Zealand has actively participated in the intersessional working group to develop a comprehensive shark conservation and management measure for the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.
- Review of New Zealand's National Plan of Action to reduce the incidental catch of seabirds in New Zealand fisheries. The scope of this plan includes all types of fishing in New Zealand that pose risk to seabirds, as well as New Zealand's actions to reduce bycatch of New Zealand breeding seabirds in waters beyond national jurisdiction. (started, and planned for coming year)
- Develop and implement a recovery plan for Antipodean albatross. This taxon is recognised at Nationally Critical and has recently been up-listed to Endangered on the IUCN Redlist. Fisheries bycatch, particularly in waters beyond New Zealand's jurisdiction, is the major known threat. (started, and planned for coming year)

Samoa

- National Enforcement Workshop
 - The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment facilitated a national enforcement workshop for key stakeholders and reps of communities on the 27 and 28 February, 2018 which highlighted the *Marine Wildlife Protection Amendment Regulations 2018*. The workshop focused mainly on raising the awareness on strengthening shark and ray protection measures in the Regulation as well as emphasizing their importance in our marine ecosystems, to our economy and also our culture. A call for joined effort of each key stakeholder from various government agencies, non-government organizations and communities in strengthening the implementation, enforcement and compliance of the shark sanctuary provisions at the national level.
- National Shark Sanctuary
 - The Government of Samoa hosted a special event on 1 March 2018 during the Pacific Ministerial Shark Symposium in which the Prime Minister of Samoa officially announced Samoa's national shark sanctuary throughout its EEZ.
- National Marine Sanctuary
 - In March 2018, Samoa joined 16 other countries in establishing a National Marine Sanctuary to protect, conserve and sustainably managed turtles, sharks, whales and dolphins throughout the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Administrative, Institutional and Legislative/Policy measures

New Zealand

- New Zealand Predator Free 2050 is an ambitious goal to rid New Zealand of the most damaging introduced predators – possums, rats and stoats – by 2050. (<http://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050/>).
- New Zealand has begun a review of the National Biodiversity Strategy 2000-20 and is assessing progress against the Aichi targets.

Samoa

The *Marine Wildlife Protection Regulation 2009* underwent review and amendment to ensure that it addresses new and emerging issues and to strengthen conservation and management measures for the protection of whales, dolphins, turtles and sharks:

- After much nationwide awareness and consultation with the communities and key stakeholders, the national *Marine Wildlife Protection Amendment Regulations 2018* was officially endorsed by the Head of State on 1 March 2018.

3. Activities planned for next year

Australia

Australia is currently developing light pollution guidelines for marine turtles, seabirds and migratory shorebirds. The guidelines will identify problematic light for these animals and provide a suite of mitigation options to minimise the impacts of light. The guidelines are expected to be available by mid-2019.

New Zealand

Over the next year, New Zealand is planning:

- A review of migratory seabirds in the Central Pacific with a particular focus on those species not currently covered under the provisions of existing agreements;
- Further research on Pygmy Blue Whales to inform a proposed Blue Whale sanctuary;
- Seabird conservation collaboration with Chile planned for next year;
- A new national Biodiversity Strategy is to be prepared during 2018-19 in advance of the CBD COP in 2020 so New Zealand is ready to adopt new targets set at the COP.
- Planning has started for a project to eradicate feral cats, pigs and mice from subantarctic Auckland Island. The pre-eradication monitoring and site preparation will commence in summer of 2018/19.
- In 2019, New Zealand will be reviewing and updating its National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks. This will be undertaken through a collaborative working group involving government officials, tangata whenua, and external stakeholders.
- Improving the collection of data and samples from bycaught basking sharks
- Updated analysis of spine-tailed devil ray post release survival
- Protected Species Liaison Project: To provide liaison officers to the relevant inshore and surface longline fishing fleets, to assist those fleets reduce their protected species bycatch (including protected sharks); and ii) To coordinate the liaison officer roles with wider efforts targeted at protected species bycatch reduction in relevant fisheries to achieve the greatest reduction in bycatch possible.

Samoa

Over the next year, Samoa is planning:

- Humpback Whale Project

This is a project since 2012 - 2014 known as *Improving the understanding on the distribution and monitoring trends of humpback whales migrating through Samoa* kindly funded by Commonwealth Australia. Upon completion of the project, extension of the funding was approved until to:

- Conduct monitoring survey to document and update the status of cetaceans migrating during the breeding months from August – November. Survey is proposed for early November 2018.
 - Conduct capacity building and educational awareness workshop/training for local staff and key partners on response to stranding incidents and performing necropsy to obtain data and information.
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- Continue to raise the awareness of the general public via media outlets such as television ads and notices as well as radio talk back shows. In addition, an awareness signboard is proposed for the arrival area at the airport to inform various travellers that the waters of Samoa is a sanctuary for sharks.
 - Continue to work in collaboration with key partners to strengthen the enforcement and compliance of the national Regulation on the protection and conservation of whales, dolphins, turtles and sharks.