



# ACAP NEWS

## Ecuador Ratifies

The Interim Secretariat warmly welcomes any news from Range States about their progress with signature or ratification. Further progress towards implementation of the Agreement was made recently when Ecuador ratified the Agreement.

The Ambassador of Ecuador, His Excellency, Dr Abelardo Posso-Serrano, signed the Agreement and submitted an Instrument of Ratification on behalf of his country at a ceremony in Canberra on 18 February 2003.



Dr Abelardo Posso-Serrano, Ambassador of Ecuador, after signing the Agreement and submitting an Instrument of Ratification.

Ecuador has exemplary management measures in place for the Galapagos Islands, recognising its importance as the sole breeding habitat for waved albatrosses and a range of other wildlife species.

This ratification brings the number of Parties to the Agreement to three. On the first day of the third month after the fifth ratification, the Agreement will enter into force and the first Meeting of the Parties will be arranged.

## Southern Seabird Solutions - update

*Conservation through Cooperation*

Southern Seabird Solutions (SSS) is a New Zealand-based alliance of government departments, fishing industry organisations and environmental



groups. It was formed a year ago to promote the adoption of fishing practices which avoid the mortality of southern hemisphere seabirds.

SSS has begun a range of cooperative projects aimed at reducing the number of seabirds accidentally caught on fishing hooks within the southern hemisphere.

It aims to build on initiatives already being taken to stop seabirds dying, and to accelerate that progress.

Projects for 2003 include:

- A Chilean fishing crew exchange to observe mitigation techniques used on a New Zealand fishing vessel, with a view to taking knowledge of these techniques back to fleets in Chile;
- Production of a video in English and Spanish about the threats to seabirds and the mitigation measures currently available;
- A review of the foraging ranges of New Zealand albatrosses and petrels, and their overlap with fisheries;
- Refinement and testing of an underwater setting capsule which, if successful, will join the suite of mitigation techniques available to reduce seabird deaths;

- A National Fishers Forum to be held in New Zealand, with objectives similar to the International Fishers Forum (held in Hawaii last year), encouraging fishers to exchange expertise and information about seabird mitigation; and
- Production of a raft of promotional material about seabirds and the role of Southern Seabird Solutions, including articles, media releases, short videos and brochures.

Southern Seabird Solutions is also actively seeking funding for a range of longer-term projects, such as the development of a website. We'll keep you posted!

For further information contact:

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### **National Plans of Action for Reducing the Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries**

The 23rd session of the United Nation Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Committee on Fisheries, held in Rome on February 1999, adopted the International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA - Seabirds). The IPOA is a voluntary instrument elaborated within the framework of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. This Code sets out principles and international standards of behaviour for responsible fishing practices to enable effective conservation and management of living aquatic organisms, whilst considering impacts on the ecosystem and biodiversity.

The IPOA-Seabirds is consistent with the objectives of the Convention on Migratory Species, under which seabirds are listed.

By endorsing the IPOA-Seabirds, countries undertook to prepare National Plans of Action (NPOAs) to address seabird by-catch nationally, thereby achieving a degree of global action.

To date, the United States of America has completed and published its final NPOA (February 2001). New Zealand has released a draft NPOA and is expected to be finalised shortly. The South African plan has been released for comments and is being revised.

A proposal for the development of a NPOA has been prepared for Brazil. Chile is also in the process of developing their NPOA, and Argentina is applying for funding to development theirs. The FAO are planning a workshop for South American countries to facilitate development of NPOAs in the countries in this region.

Preparation of Australia's NPOA is well underway with an assessment report completed and draft objectives and actions currently under consideration.

### **Albatross scientists to collaborate to identify most important foraging areas of Albatrosses and Petrels**

*Deon C. Nel<sup>1</sup>, John P. Croxall<sup>2</sup> & Frances E. Taylor<sup>1</sup>*

With the fifth ratification necessary for ACAP to come into force seemingly imminent, Albatross biologists are thinking seriously about how their work can contribute to the success of ACAP. A project recently initiated by BirdLife International's Seabird Conservation Programme, will have particular relevance to ACAP's attempts to identify and conserve the most important marine foraging areas of the 28 species of Albatrosses and Petrels currently covered in the Agreement.

Section 2.3 of the Action Plan of ACAP is dedicated to the conservation of marine habitats and (amongst other points) has the following to say on the subject:

- 2.3.2 Parties shall individually or collectively seek to develop management plans for the most important foraging and migratory

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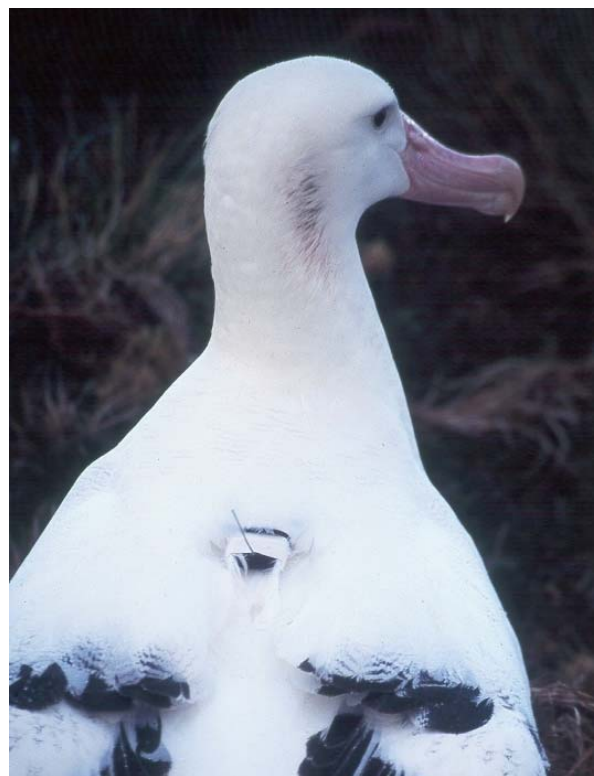
habitats of albatrosses and petrels. Such plans shall seek to minimise risks in accordance with paragraph 2.3.1.

- 2.3.3 Parties shall take special measures individually and collectively to conserve marine areas which they consider critical to the survival and/or restoration of species of albatrosses and petrels which have unfavourable conservation status.

Quite clearly, there is a need to first identify these areas as accurately as possible before it is possible to develop their management plans. This is covered under the duties of the Advisory Committee, which is called upon to report on:

- 5.1.c) reviews to characterise, on the basis of the best available evidence, the foraging range (and principal feeding areas within this) and migration routes and patterns, of populations of albatrosses and petrels;

It is gratifying to see that ACAP places such importance on the conservation of the most important marine areas utilised by these birds. After all, albatrosses and petrels spend more than 95% of their lives at sea. With this in mind, BirdLife is currently collaborating with albatross and petrel biologists around the world to create a central spatial database that will house all available tracking information for these species. Many readers will know that because of their relatively large body size, albatrosses were amongst the first birds to be tracked by means of satellite tracking devices. Over the past decade, the growing interest in this field (both from a conservation and ecological point of view) and the progressive miniaturization of these devices has led to a wealth of tracking studies on albatrosses and petrels. However, the publication of these data has mainly been colony- and species-specific. It is now hoped that the collation of all this information in a single spatial database will allow us to start to identify and objectively define the marine regions and habitats that are most important to the conservation of these species, at a global and regional scale.



Albatross with satellite tracking device.

The BirdLife initiative was started more than a year ago, when BirdLife first contacted several of the major dataholders. This was followed with a round table discussion at the 23<sup>rd</sup> International Ornithological Congress, in August 2002, in Beijing. The response to this scoping exercise was extremely positive. All tracking dataholders agreed on the conservation importance of this initiative and agreed to participate in one way or another. At the IOC, it was agreed that there was a need for a workshop at which all the dataholders could openly debate issues such as the conditions of data sharing, technical matters relating to the analysis of these complex datasets, and how the outputs can be used most effectively.

With this vote of confidence, BirdLife secured funding for taking the process forward, and will host a workshop (as described above) for all major Albatross and Petrel tracking dataholders, from 1-5 September in Cape Town. BirdLife's Seabird Programme has also increased its GIS capacity in order to deal with this project. At the time of writing, the Geo-database has been completed and several datasets incorporated. BirdLife is hoping to have as many datasets incorporated as possible, prior to the September workshop. This will enable

the workshop attendees to shape their ideas while viewing the “real thing”. It is important to note that we envisage a situation where BirdLife merely provides the framework and capacity for this collaboration to occur, and that the individual data contributors (and their institutions) will retain ownership of their data and be fully accredited as such.

While the details of the data sharing and the format of outputs will only be finalized at the September workshop, BirdLife is very optimistic that this resource will (with the permission of the data contributors) be a valuable tool for ACAP and, ultimately, for the better conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels.

### **Suggestions/Contributions to the Newsletter**

Your suggestions for our future newsletters are needed!! If you have an area of interest that is relevant to ACAP, or if you would like to provide a written contribution on issues/projects that you are involved with, please send them to: [barry.baker@ea.gov.au](mailto:barry.baker@ea.gov.au)