

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p>Joint Twelfth Meeting of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group and Eighth Meeting of the Population and Conservation Status Working Group <i>Lima, Peru, 8 August 2024</i></p> <p>Update on CCSBT Seabird Project</p> <p><i>Secretariat of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna</i></p>
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Introduction

In early 2023, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) activated the second Common Oceans Program. This overarching program consists of four child projects, of which the Tuna Project is made up of over a dozen individual sub-projects. The Tuna Project broadly aims to improve tuna fisheries management and reduce their environmental impact. The Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna's (CCSBT) Members, together with the CCSBT Secretariat, ACAP and BirdLife International (BLI) developed and successfully applied for funding under the Tuna Project, "Enhancing education on and implementation of Ecologically Related Species seabird measures within CCSBT fisheries" (CCSBT Seabird Project). The CCSBT Seabird Project commenced in February 2023 with a focus on CCSBT Members, namely Australia, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, South Korea and the Fishing Entity of Taiwan. EU is a CCSBT Member, but their fisheries do not target SBT and EU is not a beneficiary of the project activities. For this reason alone, in this report EU and its member states are excluded from any reference, implied or inferred.

Taking this opportunity, the CCSBT Secretariat expresses its sincere gratitude to ACAP, particularly Dr Igor Debski, for ongoing engagements with the CCSBT Seabird Risk Assessment Process and various Seabird Project activities.

ACAP and CCSBT have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate inter-organisational cooperation (including exchanges of information), with a view to supporting efforts to minimise the incidental bycatch of albatrosses and petrels caused by fishing for SBT. Further, ACAP and BLI are supporting partners of this project. The Secretariat expresses its thanks to both institutions for the various inputs received to date. In this report, requests from the CCSBT Secretariat for action are in bold typeface.

Update

The CCSBT Secretariat expresses gratitude to all active fishing Members for their ongoing engagement with various project activities, and especially to individuals who volunteered their time and expertise in attending and actively contributing to Project events. Updates are provided first for cross-cutting matters and second under Elements 1-4 of the project, which are:

1. Skipper/Vessel Owner/Crew training and train-the-trainer workshops
2. Compliance Officer/Observer training and train-the-trainer workshops
3. Novel EM tools for monitoring seabird bycatch mitigation measure use
4. Global risk assessment (of seabirds to tuna longline bycatch)

Cross-cutting

General

A recognised challenge in mitigating seabird bycatch is to provide crew with information, or reminders on good practices, while they're onboard and using seabird bycatch mitigation measures. Experts from ACAP's SBWG and BLI provided inputs to a set of seabird bycatch mitigation infographics of relevance to CCSBT fisheries. Given the typical multilingual environment onboard high seas tuna longline vessels, an explicit design objective was to avoid the need for text to the extent possible. A second was to discriminate between mandatory features and practical advice. CCSBT thanks the ACAP experts who provided valuable advice and suggestions for the final product. FAO approved the final designs, use of logos, etc. in May 2024. The set of 9 pages, in PDF format, has been made available as a public good via CCSBT, ACAP and FAO Common Oceans websites. Laminated copies were distributed to Japan's SBT fleet via the Japan Fisheries Agency, more will be delivered to other Members when training takes place, or upon request.

Element 1 – Skipper training

General

Under this element, outreach is offered to Members' SBT fisher communities. Coursework was developed by BLI with inputs from CCSBT and the International Sustainable Seafood Foundation (ISSF). Two models for delivering relevant seabird content are available under this Element. One is a short-form presentation lasting ~2 hours dealing exclusively with information directly relevant to seabird bycatch, with an add-on module for safe handling techniques if crew are in attendance. A second is where the seabird content has been embedded in the ISSF skipper training course, run over one or two days.

Completed workshops

Japan hosted in-person, industry outreach workshops in two ports in February 2024. Respectively, these reached 59 vessel owners and 13 skippers in Kesennuma, and 16 vessel owners and 2 skippers in Shizuoka, as well as industry association and FAJ representatives. Several participants expressed their appreciation for the information exchange, and both workshops had good engagement from participants. Officials and tuna associations' representatives are thanked for their highly successful efforts to ensure remarkable turnout amongst key constituents, as well as through various forms of logistical support. Dr Dimas Gianuca is thanked for developing and delivering the presentation on behalf of CCSBT at both workshops, and BLI's Dr Yasuko Suzuki provided invaluable practical and behind-the-scenes support. The Project includes a 'train-the-trainer' legacy obligation. This was duly provided to two Japan Fisheries Agency officials and two experts from the industry association (Japan Tuna) in June, and CCSBT delivered laminated copies of the mitigation infographics to FAJ, for distribution to SBT vessel owners.

Planned future activities

Taiwan and South Africa have confirmed interest in Element 1 training, for the former in the week of 14-18 October, in association with the CC and EC meetings in Taipei. South African officials have confirmed dates on 9 July (longline sector) and 10 July (pole-and-line sector). The former will be a joint CCSBT-ISSF skipper training workshop, but the latter will be only from CCSBT, and focussed on

training relevant to pole-and-line operations. There are no other planned skipper training workshops, although efforts are ongoing to meet Indonesia's training requests.

Element 2 – Compliance officer training

General

The intention under Element 2 is to strengthen national MCS systems for monitoring seabird bycatch mitigation measure use. The course is designed for Members' administrations (including port inspectors) to collect robust, informative data on the use of seabird bycatch mitigation measures. This Element has deep relevance to national MCS activities, including electronic monitoring systems.

Completed workshops

A one-day training workshop was delivered by CCSBT, in Tokyo on 3 June, to Japanese compliance officers and managers.

Planned future activities

Taiwan has requested Element 2 training in October and plans are well underway to deliver this. The Secretariat strongly encourages other Members to identify appropriate arrangements for Element 2 training. South Africa is an ACAP Party and is named in the Seabird Project agreement between CCSBT and FAO as a beneficiary of Element 2 training, but has yet to respond to offers for training. **CCSBT requests ACAP bodies to encourage South Africa to take advantage of this free training.** Australian and New Zealand officials have indicated informally that they perceive little need for their inspectors to receive training. Efforts to engage Indonesia are ongoing, but no timeframes are available currently.

Element 3 – Electronic Monitoring

General

Activities are intended to focus on innovation in Electronic Monitoring (EM) systems, for vessel-level monitoring use of seabird bycatch mitigation measures. An inception meeting was convened with the following explicit objectives:

1. establish baselines for each Member's EM systems
2. consider the range of existing EM solutions of relevance to monitoring and evaluating seabird bycatch

Information about Members' respective EM programs is broadly available, including that two Members have a national EM system in place. Australia completed its EM program for tuna longliners in 2016. New Zealand expects its EM system to be fully implemented in 2024. Other Members do not have fleet-wide EM programs in place for their tuna longliners, but are in various stages of considering or trialling EM.

Completed workshops

The EM Inception Workshop was held in Canberra, Australia, from 6-7 March 2024. Officials from Australia, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand and Taiwan participated. In addition to experts from BLI and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), ACAP was represented by the SBWG Convenor Dr Igor Debski. Multiple invited experts presented novel EM solutions/tools. The workshop concluded with the following outcomes.

1. Both Australia and New Zealand defined cost and human safety as drivers of their decisions to develop full EM in replacement of human observers.

2. A key lesson that Australia shared (and which has been reported to various RFMOs and in the scientific literature) was the transformative impact of having an EM system integrated with electronic reporting. This has resulted in notable and sustained improvements to the accuracy of logbook reporting and the associated high levels of compliance with seabird bycatch mitigation measure use. This led to a general appreciation amongst participants that an important objective of a national EM program is to facilitate behavioural changes among fishers.
3. New Zealand provided insight into several aspects of its multi-year EMS development. In concurrence with the findings from Australia, and despite the roll-out of EM continuing during the workshop, New Zealand reported that it had already detected changes in e-logbook reporting from vessels fitted with cameras. New Zealand also emphasised the widespread institutional, regulatory and financial changes that also had to be executed in support of the switch from human observers to EM.
4. There was general agreement that a second result from the changes that Australia and New Zealand described was that soon after implementing EM, it stopped being used directly as a surveillance system, and EM's greatest value became as an audit tool for logbook reporting.
5. Representatives from Japan, Taiwan and Indonesia expressed interest in information exchanges with Australian and New Zealand officials.
6. TNC shared experiences with large-scale, private EM initiatives. This provided helpful information for Members that are currently exploring EM. Participants were encouraged to take advantage of those lessons already learned.

Planned future activities

The inception workshop was the only multi-Member workshop planned under this Element. The Project is now in the phase of providing national-level inputs to Members. The first such workshop took place in New Zealand, on Friday 1 March in Wellington. Despite not being able to attend the EM inception workshop, both South Africa and South Korea have requested CCSBT to facilitate bilateral engagements with either Australia or New Zealand, and those workshops are under development. Indonesia has also requested bilateral exchanges, and a more substantive engagement that includes piloting EM amongst a subset of their SBT-catching longline fleet. A pilot installation will require more funding than the Project can provide, and efforts are underway to secure that support. Both New Zealand and Australia are thanked for their willingness to support other Members' EM developments.

Element 4 – seabird risk assessment

General

This element has not commenced in practical terms, since a pre-existing risk assessment initiative (SEFRA) is active, driven by CCSBT Members and undertaken collaboratively within CCSBT structures. The Seabird Project will commence outward-facing risk assessment activities in 2025, including facilitating the inclusion of global tuna longline fishing effort and conclusion of the risk assessment. CCSBT has agreed to use its existing infrastructure, personnel and confidentiality rules to facilitate the collation of a multi-party observer dataset, to allow the most statistically powerful analyses possible. Simultaneously, interested parties are encouraged to analyse their own data. **ACAP Parties are advised that, upon request, the Seabird Project can provide technical assistance to facilitate data contributions or enhance understanding and operations of the model.**

Two primary challenges are 1) agreeing to an appropriate risk assessment approach, data inputs and data sharing arrangements, and 2) securing observer data contributions from the widest possible set of tuna longline fleets. To this end, the **CCSBT Secretariat requests all ACAP Parties with observer**

datasets from national tuna longline fishing, from 2016 to the most recent dataset available to contribute their data and actively participate in the risk assessment process. Interested parties can contact the CCSBT Seabird Project Manager directly: rwanless@ccsbt.org