ASOC Report

Third meeting of the Advisory Committee

on the

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June 19-22, 2007

1. GENERAL

The Third Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC3) to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) was held in Valdivia, Chile, from 19 - 22 June 2007 (Chair Mark Tasker; Vice-chair John Cooper).

Argentina, Australia, Chile, New Zealand, Peru, South Africa and the United Kingdom (all Parties to ACAP) were present. Brazil (signatory state, yet to ratify), Uruguay and USA (range states) were also officially represented. Ecuador, France, Norway and Spain, also Parties to ACAP, did not attend the meeting.

The Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC), Aves Argentinas, Humane Society International, Pro Delphinus, Aves y Conservacion and BirdLife International were represented as official observers.

The next formal reporting by Parties will be to the Fourth Meeting of the Advisory Committee in 2008, enabling a consolidated report to be prepared for the Third Meeting of Parties in 2009.

2. MAIN ISSUES

2.1 REPORTS FROM PARTIES, SIGNATORIES AND ORGANISATIONS

Brazil, the USA and BirdLife International provided the meeting with reports on their activities relevant to furthering the aims of the Agreement.

With respect to the Fisher’s Forum held in Brazil, and as result of Argentina’s position calling for the rejection of the invitation to Falklands Conservation (NGO based in the Falkland/Malvinas Islands), Brazil made clear that the meeting was organized by Projeto Albatroz (Brazilian NGO) and not the Brazilian Government.

2.2 REPORT FROM THE WAVED ALBATROSS WORKSHOP

Although there was some discussion on a draft Action Plan for the Waved Albatross, the revised text of the Action Plan (and recommendations resulting from a previous workshop that

1 Dr. Rodolfo Werner Kinkelin represented ASOC and the Humane Society International at this meeting.
was held in Lima, Peru from 5 to 6 June, 2007) was not available, limiting the discussion. It is still unclear how ACAP will endorse/comment on the revised Action Plan. Nevertheless, a further workshop in regards to this species was agreed, which will take place in Ecuador; initial budget for this workshop was secured.

2.3 Review of the Status and Trends of Albatrosses and Petrels

2.3.1 Report of the Status and Trends Working Group

Status and trend data still remain incomplete. It was agreed that supplementing and updating these data and incorporating them into a database is a top priority.

Four draft ACAP species assessments have been produced so far (Amsterdam Albatross \textit{Diomedea amstelamensis}, Indian Yellow-nosed, Chatham and Shy Albatrosses \textit{Thalassarche chlororhynchos}, \textit{T. eremita} and \textit{T. cauta}). The completion of the assessments for all ACAP species was an agreed priority. This task will be developed by a contracted coordinator with additional input from appropriate Parties. It is intended that all species assessments will be available in a web-based, printer-friendly format in all three ACAP languages (English, Spanish, and French).

2.3.2 Report of the Taxonomy Working Group - Taxonomy of Albatrosses and Petrels –

The Working Group had reviewed the status of 6 “taxon pairs” of albatrosses and petrels with respect to the current listing by ACAP. It was agreed that more data are needed on the status of the following species: Buller’s and Pacific Albatross; Northern and Southern Royal Albatrosses; and Atlantic and Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses.

The main current Working Group tasks are:

a) Reviewing the status of Tristan, Amsterdam and Wandering Albatross; Black-browed and Campbell Albatross; Black Petrel and Westland Petrel;

b) Assessing the utility of subspecies for ACAP purposes (and developing guidelines for their recognition if appropriate);

c) Developing a morphological and plumage database.

2.4 Report of the Breeding Sites Working Group

Important progress was made regarding the development of the inventory of breeding sites. Also, good information was obtained on threats, protection/management status, etc. related to breeding sites. However, data for many sites have not yet been submitted by some Parties. In addition, in some cases, in the data submitted there are inconsistencies in the categorisation of threats that preclude any analysis, including the development of indicators to assess the status of sites and species.

It was agreed that there is a need for further consideration of how to define threats and threat levels. BirdLife submitted papers describing the IUCN Conservation Measures Partnership recommendations for a united classification of threats and a standardised system for measuring threat magnitude. It was agreed that this working group will adopt these approaches and work towards ensuring the consistent application of them.
A request from the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) of the Antarctic Treaty was discussed, in which the CEP asked for advice from ACAP on current conservation management measures for southern giant-petrels and for assistance with the review of the population status and trends of this species. It was agreed that ACAP would nominate a person to participate in the proposed review and that the CEP Secretariat should be informed accordingly. Parties to ACAP were encouraged to contribute relevant information to the review via the Secretariat.

Regarding eradication of introduced species of mammals, Australia reported on the recent allocation of funds to undertake the eradication of rabbits and rodents (black rats and house mice) from the Macquarie Island Nature Reserve and World Heritage Area. Seven ACAP-listed species breed on the island and rabbits and rodents are negatively impacting on these species. Furthermore, the Working Group on Breeding Sites will review inter sessionally the existing programmes of eradication of introduced mammals in order to come up with recommendation on best practices and to identify gaps.

In respect of the requirement for ACAP to apply criteria to identify internationally important breeding sites, the Secretariat submitted a document including proposed criteria that could be used. Also, Birdlife submitted three information papers and advised that it should be able to provide a comprehensive list of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) for ACAP species in time for consideration at the next meeting.

### 2.5 Report of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group

This working group undertook a review of recent developments in mitigation measures. Special efforts were conducted in updating the report relating to longline fisheries that was developed at the workshop in Hobart in October 2006. The review included the consideration of: a new fishing technique called the mixed, or Chilean system; streamer lines for pelagic systems; underwater bait setting capsules; bait pods; safe lead weights; use of natural oils; blue-dyed bait; and smart hooks, as well as reviewing mitigation developments in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay.

Also research priorities at two different levels were reviewed:

a) Domestic fisheries of Parties and range States;

b) RFMO fisheries

A framework for a 5-year research plan into mitigation measures in pelagic longline fisheries was developed, with highest priority given to streamer lines, bait-setting capsule and side-setting.

At the RFMO level, new initiatives by two RFMOs (WCPFC and IATTC) to improve the implementation of mitigation measures for seabirds were welcomed. These initiatives require fishers to select two mitigation measures, to be used in combination, from a menu of such measures. Furthermore, the working group ranked mitigation measures on specific criteria, including effectiveness alone and in combination in an attempt to assist in the further development of this approach in these two RFMOs and in extending it to others. It was further agreed that the advice of this working group on current best practice mitigation should be provided to all relevant RFMOs.

BirdLife International provided an update on the development of FAO best-practice guidelines to strengthen the delivery of the International Plan of Action (IPOA)–Seabirds, directed to improve best practice guidelines for longline fisheries and to provide these for trawl fisheries.
An expert consultation workshop to develop best practice guidelines was proposed by FAO (at the 27th meeting of the Committee on Fisheries). The US indicated its commitment to partially fund the workshop, encouraging other Parties to contribute. The Advisory Committee agreed to allocate A$13,000 to support the consultation. BirdLife will be the lead organisation along with FAO.

Several ACAP Parties are involved in continuing negotiations for the development of a new international agreement and RFMO for the South Pacific. Noting the potential spatial overlap between ACAP listed species and the likely area of application of the new agreement, many Parties expressed a strong desire that the new agreement includes strong provisions to take into account Bycatch issues and the protection of seabird species, particularly ACAP taxa.

2.6 Capacity Building

The identification of needs and priorities are still at an early stage. Nevertheless, several Parties expressed their interest in identifying further examples of capacity-building projects, such as the BirdLife International Albatross Task Force (which provides skilled capacity to work with fishermen on the uptake of mitigation measures in several South American and southern African countries) and Southern Seabird Solutions. Also, interest was expressed in finding external funding to support capacity building and other activities. Finally, it was agreed that Parties submit to each Advisory Committee meeting a summary of past and future work in order to improve the exchange of technical information.

2.7 Listing of New Species

The Vice-Chair introduced paper in which he proposed a procedure for the selection of candidate species for inclusion in the Annex 1 of the Agreement. Using this methodology two groups of birds appeared as strong candidates for inclusion; the three North Pacific albatrosses *Phoebastria spp.* and three Mediterranean shearwaters of the genera *Calonectris* and *Puffinus*.

In addition, four southern hemisphere-breeding shearwaters *Puffinus spp.* scored relatively highly, and thus they might also be considered as candidate species for listing in the future. Important to note is that all ACAP species scored highly, which gives credence to the proposed scoring system.

Given its current capacity and focus, the Committee recommended prioritising the listing of the three North Pacific albatrosses at this stage. It was also agreed that a document proposing the addition of the three North Pacific albatrosses should be prepared by the Secretariat, with the assistance of interested Parties and submitted to the next meeting of the Advisory Committee (2008) with a view to submitting a formal Resolution to the Third Meeting of Parties in 2009. In addition, range states (and especially the breeding range states, i.e. China, Japan, Mexico, Taiwan, USA) for these albatross species will be informed of these developments.

3. Next Meeting of the Advisory Committee

The Fourth Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC4) to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels will be held 18-26 August in Cape Town, South Africa. It will be chaired by Dr. Marco Favero, a member of ASOC’s Board of Directors.