

Albatross Task Force Diaries ? Juliano Cesar in Brazil

Title

I've finally arrived back in the port of Itajaí following my first trip on a fishing vessel as part of the Albatross Task Force team in Brazil. The vessel was a wooden 23 m longliner with 10 crew members, including myself. The target species during the trip included blue shark, tuna and swordfish. The captain, Belo, who has worked previously with *Projeto Albatroz*, was familiar with the testing and use of mitigation measures such as tori lines, line weighting and night setting.

It took us two days to reach the fishing grounds, situated near the oceanic boundary with Uruguay. By the time we arrived I was better acquainted with each of the crew members and their life histories (learning all about their family, their home town and how they became fishermen etc...). I was pleased to find that Belo already knew a lot about the need for seabird conservation efforts, and we discussed the best methods available to protect them during fishing trips: a combination of a tori line, adequate line weighting and night setting.

He was familiar with the long journeys of albatrosses from breeding sites on sub-Antarctic islands to foraging areas in Brazilian waters. He explained how he understood that when an albatross is caught, its chick will die from starvation in the nest – I felt so happy to see the grasp he had on the situation, and hear his concern about the decline of seabird populations due to incidental bycatch in fisheries. However, despite captain Belo's knowledge and concern about incidental seabird bycatch, he did not want to use a tori line during fishing operations. He limited the vessel to night setting to avoid seabird bycatch, stating that the amount of seabirds around the vessel was not high enough to warrant using a tori line. Without the added protection of a tori line we caught an adult Atlantic Yellow-nosed albatross.

Even during low seabird abundances there is a high possibility of killing one of these amazing birds. Only a combination of mitigation measures really reduces seabird bycatch to negligible levels, and we have a tough time convincing captains that this is necessary. Until strict regulations are put in place, fishing captains will continue to follow their own strategies and albatrosses will continue to be killed in unsustainable numbers.