

BirdLife's Albatross Task Force trains Korean fisheries observers

Title

Trawl fisheries cause significant conservation problems for seabirds in many places, including in the South Atlantic. However, observing the seabird deaths requires specialist training, as it is difficult to see. This is because, unlike in longline fisheries where hooked carcasses are retrieved and can be counted, when birds get entangled with the trawl cables and drown, they usually come free and float away, out of sight.

Since BirdLife's Global Seabird Programme began, the Asian distant water fishing nations have been rather inscrutable. However, in recent years there have been significant advances, as the Asian nations increasingly accept the positive role that BirdLife plays in international fisheries management.

Another significant milestone in the blossoming relationships between BirdLife and the east was in January, when the Korean National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) invited the Albatross Task Force to provide training to their national fisheries observers.

The invitation came about during discussions at the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO) Scientific Committee meeting in November 2012. A Korean trawl fishery began operating in SEAFO in 2011, and has 100% observer coverage. BirdLife South Africa's Albatross Task Force leader, Bronwyn Maree, travelled to South Korea to bridge the gap between what Korean observers do onboard and what is needed to assess levels of seabird interaction.

Dr Ross Wanless, Africa Coordinator for BirdLife's Global Seabird Programme and the SEAFO contact point, commented, "Both SEAFO and Korea are to be commended for their approach. Training observers in what to look for, and how to collect the data, is a very efficient way to get an understanding of possible interaction rates between this fishery and the endangered seabirds of the South Atlantic".

Bronwyn provided training to 25 scientists and fisheries observers, covering how to assess the risks to seabirds in trawl fisheries, the best practice solutions available to mitigate mortality, safe handling of seabirds, seabird identification and the collection of important data while out at sea. "The workshop was a success – the first of its kind where an NGO worked

with the Asian distant water fleets – which promises to be the start of a long-lasting relationship between BirdLife and Korean fisheries.”

Find out more about [BirdLife's Global seabird programme](#)