

Forest & Bird calls for submissions on seabird by-catch

Title

Forest & Bird (BirdLife in New Zealand) urges people to have a say on a government plan to reduce the numbers of seabirds killed every year by the fishing industry. The Ministry for Primary Industries and the Department of Conservation are seeking comments on the draft National Plan of Action for Seabirds. Submissions close at 5pm on November 21.

Recent estimates suggest that up to 40,000 seabirds die each year in New Zealand waters after getting caught in fishing nets or on fishing hooks. “New Zealand seabirds really need people to make a submission on this document,” says Forest & Bird Seabird Advocate Karen Baird. “Otherwise, there is a real chance that the final version of the plan won’t adequately safeguard our threatened albatrosses and petrels. “The species most at risk from commercial fishing in New Zealand is the endemic black petrel, which often gets caught by fishers pursuing snapper and bluenose in the Hauraki Gulf. “The National Plan of Action for Seabirds will shape government and fishing industry efforts to reduce New Zealand’s very high seabird by-catch problem over the next five years, so it’s imperative that we get this right,” says Karen Baird. “Seabirds also die in recreational fishing, which is also a focus of this document,” she says. “Fishers can take relatively simple precautions to prevent catching seabirds. “BirdLife International and the parties behind the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels have worked with fishers to develop best-practice mitigation techniques. When used conscientiously, they are effective in reducing the by-catch of seabirds in fishing,” she says. “Forest & Bird would like to see the use of these techniques become mandatory in New Zealand waters,” Karen Baird says.

- Submissions can be made here: www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Consultations/npoa+seabirds/default
- Fact sheets about seabird by-catch mitigation techniques can be found here: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/policy/marine/international/advocacy/mitigationfactsheets.aspx>