



Tui de Roy (Froving Tortoise)

White-capped albatrosses

Welcome to the seventh annual edition of *Sea Change*, the newsletter of BirdLife International's Global Seabird Programme (GSP). Next year will mark our 15th anniversary. In this time BirdLife's flagship 'Save the Albatross' campaign highlights the GSP's main focus – to reverse the decline of this highly threatened group of seabirds, which continue to suffer substantial mortality from longline and other fisheries. Seabirds and the wider marine environment face numerous threats, and we are working hard on many fronts to stem the tide.

In this issue we report on a comprehensive review, recently published by the GSP, which identifies key longline fisheries threatening seabird populations and produces the first global estimate of numbers of birds being killed each year.

We also bring you the latest news from the Albatross Task Force, which recently held its biannual workshop in Uruguay, as well as news on Marine Important Bird Areas, fisheries certification and seabird tracking.

Writers' corner has a collection of impressive photographs from Tui de Roy, alongside her experiences travelling the globe discovering and reporting on the plight of albatrosses worldwide.

We'd love to hear your thoughts and comments on *Sea Change* and the endeavours of the GSP – together we can work towards saving threatened seabirds from extinction!

For more information contact orea.anderson@rspb.org.uk

ATF Instructors join forces again!

The second Albatross Task Force (ATF) Instructor's workshop was held in Piriápolis, Uruguay. It has been two years since the first meeting in Coquimbo and in the intervening time the ATF team has worked hard to achieve some great results.

Piriápolis lies close to one of the world's most active seabird foraging zones, where converging currents produce upwelling that attract large numbers of albatrosses and petrels. With large numbers comes the potential for high bycatch – including vulnerable wandering albatrosses from South Georgia – this focused our minds well on the tasks ahead of us.

In the past two years, the ATF has undertaken a series of research projects to improve seabird bycatch mitigation measures for longline and trawl fisheries. One of the major results has been to show near-zero seabird bycatch can be achieved through a combination of mitigation measures such as line weights and bird streamer lines. In 2010, zero or near-zero bycatch was recorded by vessels in Argentina, Brazil, Namibia and Uruguay, when ATF instructors were onboard.

Other key ATF research findings include:

- Bird streamer (tori) lines significantly reduce seabird bycatch in demersal trawl fisheries

- Bird streamer (tori) lines can be highly effective at reducing seabird attacks within their aerial extent when used in combination with line weighting placed close to the hook.

Strong, scientifically-rigorous results are vital to our work with fishermen, industry and governments. It allows us to apply valid pressure for the adoption of best practice seabird bycatch mitigation measures. The aim is to get regulations where none exist and strengthen those that are in place. The ATF also works to identify fleets where no, or very few, data exist – this allows us to set out priorities on where to achieve the most 'bang for our conservation buck'!

The ATF has achieved some really outstanding results in a number of countries. A big part of this has been the support we receive from industry, fishermen, BirdLife Partners, government and other institutions.

Thanks to this, we can feel proud of making a very real difference to the conservation of albatrosses and petrels.

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ATF Instructors Workshop held in Piriápolis, Uruguay.



EMERGING MITIGATION



'Hook pod' in action, showing plastic pod encasing hook barb, with bait threaded through the hook shank.

Ben Sullivan (RSPB)

Hook pod trials: an update

As reported in *Sea Change* last year, the GSP is working with Fishtek (www.fishtekmarine.com) to develop a 'hook pod' for pelagic longliners that prevents seabirds from getting caught on baited hooks. The pod is attached to the branchline and protects only the hook barb. When it reaches a pre-set depth it releases and the baited hook falls free and sinks to the desired fishing depth. The pod can be set beyond the diving depth of seabird species active in a given area.

In November 2010, Ben Sullivan (GSP Co-ordinator) and Oli Yates (ATF Co-ordinator) conducted at-sea trials in eastern Australia onboard FV Vanessa S (Klokan Fishing Ltd). The trials identified some problems with the new pressure release mechanism and capsule, but these issues have been resolved with further development and testing on-shore. In all trials the pod proved



Close up view of 'Hook pod' during at-sea trials onboard the Vanessa

Ben Sullivan (RSPB)

easy to deploy with different bait types and hooking positions, and the crew found it simple to set, retrieve and store.

Later this year we are working with Projeto Albatroz (ATF partner in Brazil) on further at-sea trials, which will allow

us to put the 'hook pod' head-to-head with high densities of albatrosses and petrels for the first time. The new prototype (weighing 60 g to maximize sink rate) will open at 10 m depth and has an LED light incorporated in the housing, at the request of several fishermen. The system has several advantages; it lessens setting times (no light sticks need to be attached), it reduces marine debris (spent light sticks are often discarded at sea), and is significantly cheaper (many thousands of dollars are spent replacing disposable light sticks each year).

Results will be tabled at the sixth Advisory Committee meeting of the Agreement on the Conservation of albatrosses and petrels (ACAP) in Ecuador in August 2011.

For further information contact ben.sullivan@rspb.org.uk

BYCATCH POLICY



BirdLife Europe's petition handover to the Fisheries Commissioner (Left to Right: Xenophon Kappas, Euan Dunn, Nathalie DeSnijder, Sacha Cleminson, Maria Damanaki, Ariel Brunner).

Filip de Smet

Will the EU finally deliver for seabirds?

In 2008 I reported that the European Commission was assessing the evidence needed to develop an EU Plan of Action for reducing incidental bycatch of seabirds, with a view to a plan by 2009. The initiative at that time applied only to fishing in EU waters, not to external waters where EU-flagged vessels, notably Spain, contribute to the bycatch of globally threatened albatrosses.

BirdLife presented the Commission with a 'shadow plan' reflecting our priorities based on the new FAO Best Practice Technical Guidelines. The Commission then issued its own plan framework, which was subjected to cost-benefit analysis by the Marine Resources Assessment Group (MRAG), drawing on questionnaire interviews with fishermen

in various European ports, but also extensively on BirdLife data.

Concerned by the endless delays, BirdLife Europe collected 23,000 signatures (the majority gathered by the UK partner, RSPB) demanding an urgent and robust plan to address the unacceptable toll (estimated at 200,000 birds a year in EU waters alone) on birds by EU fishing gears. This includes around 100,000 birds drowned annually in Baltic Sea gill-nets, and 50,000 birds (including 40,000 great shearwaters) killed by the Galician demersal longline fishery for hake on the Gran Sol grounds off south-west Ireland.

In June 2010 a delegation from BirdLife presented EU Fisheries Commissioner Maria Damanaki with the petition in the

form of a photo-montage of a Cory's shearwater – a common victim of longlines in the Mediterranean. The image was a mosaic of 2,300 seabird photos and fishing vessels, each 'pixel' representing 10 signatures. Damanaki intended to put the picture on her office wall, saying "I'm going to do something about this".

We will be watching closely for a strong follow-through, given the Commission's latest timeline is to propose a plan that addressed both EU and external waters by the end of 2011 – ten years after they first mooted one. In parallel, we are looking to the Commission to present an ambitious proposal for reform of the EU Common Fisheries Policy in July 2011, which not only embraces an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, but which also mitigates against the needless impacts on seabirds.

For more information contact ewan.dunn@rspb.org.uk

A global review of longline seabird bycatch is published

After an exhaustive four year search, a new global estimate of the impact of longline fisheries on seabirds has recently been published in *Endangered Species Research*. The review identified that, despite efforts to reduce seabird mortality, upwards of 300,000 birds are still being killed every year.

Since the 1980s, scientists have linked global declines of albatrosses and other seabirds with incidental bycatch in longline fisheries. Adult birds become caught on hooks attached to the longlines, which can be over 100 kilometres long, and dragged underwater to a premature death. Dr. Orea Anderson said *"It is little wonder that so many of the affected seabird species are threatened with extinction – their slow rate of reproduction is simply incapable of compensating for losses on the scale this study has demonstrated"*.

Some fisheries have enforced strict regulations, resulting in substantial bycatch reductions in recent years. Seabird deaths around South Georgia in the CCAMLR zone of the Southern Ocean have declined by 99% since regulations were enforced. South Africa achieved a drop of 85% bycatch in its foreign-licensed fleet in 2008, when a cap was placed on the number of seabird deaths permitted. However, fleets with previously unaccounted for bycatch problems have also emerged, adding to the global tally.

The Spanish longline fleet on the Gran Sol grounds off south-west Ireland is one such fleet, with preliminary data suggesting it may be responsible for killing large numbers of seabirds, potentially upwards of 50,000 annually, mostly shearwaters and fulmars. The Japanese tuna fleet came second in scale – over 20,000 killed each year, but with the largest impact on albatrosses.

Substantial data gaps remain (e.g. Nordic demersal, Asian distant water, and Mediterranean fleets) and until these are filled it is impossible to gauge the true impact of global longline activities on seabirds. However, the continued declining trends in many seabirds remain a major cause for concern.

BirdLife International's Global Seabird Programme calls on regional fisheries management organisations and industry to protect seabirds through the use of simple, cost-effective mitigation measures that have been proven to reduce the threat of bycatch.

The full article can be found at:
http://www.int-res.com/articles/esr_oa/n014p091.pdf

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Marine Important Bird Areas Programme continues apace

BirdLife's Marine Important Bird Areas (IBA) Programme continues to advance, and will culminate in the first global inventory of marine IBAs to be launched in 2012. On land, 1,600 seabird breeding sites have now been identified as IBAs, though a few gaps remain in South America, Arctic Russia, South East Asia and West Africa.

BirdLife's Seabird Foraging Range Database, used to guide the identification of seaward extension IBAs around breeding colonies, now includes more species. Foraging factsheets have been made for ~40 species – giving guidance and justification on how seaward extensions might be identified.

You can view and edit these at: www.seabird.wikispaces.com

Pelagic IBAs are now being identified using data from the Global Procellariiform Tracking Database (www.seabirdtracking.org). Such complex analysis allows us to identify oceanic areas used most frequently by large numbers of seabirds and assess sites that may qualify as marine IBAs.

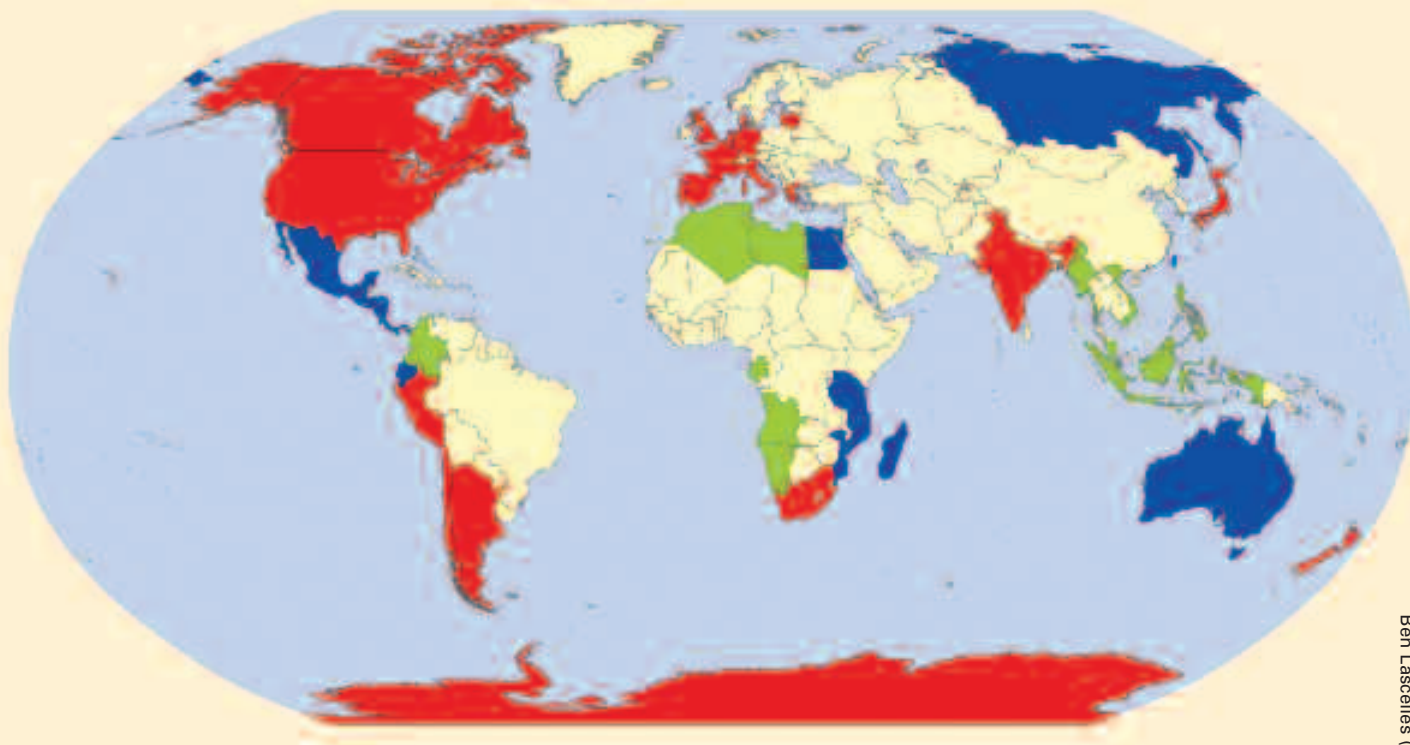
Once we have identified all sites it is crucial to ensure management and protection of these sites is improved. BirdLife is working to ensure marine IBAs are recognised and considered priority sites for conservation among relevant global and regional policies.

Advances have been made through the Convention on Biological Diversity (Bonn Convention) process to identify Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) via our work with the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (www.gobi.org).

By working closely with GSP Regional Co-ordinators and BirdLife Partners we hope to identify more sites this year and to engage further with relevant policy mechanisms to enhance the protection and appropriate management of the most important sites for seabirds around the globe.

For further information contact ben.lascelles@birdlife.org

Marine IBA work around the Birdlife Partnership in 2011.



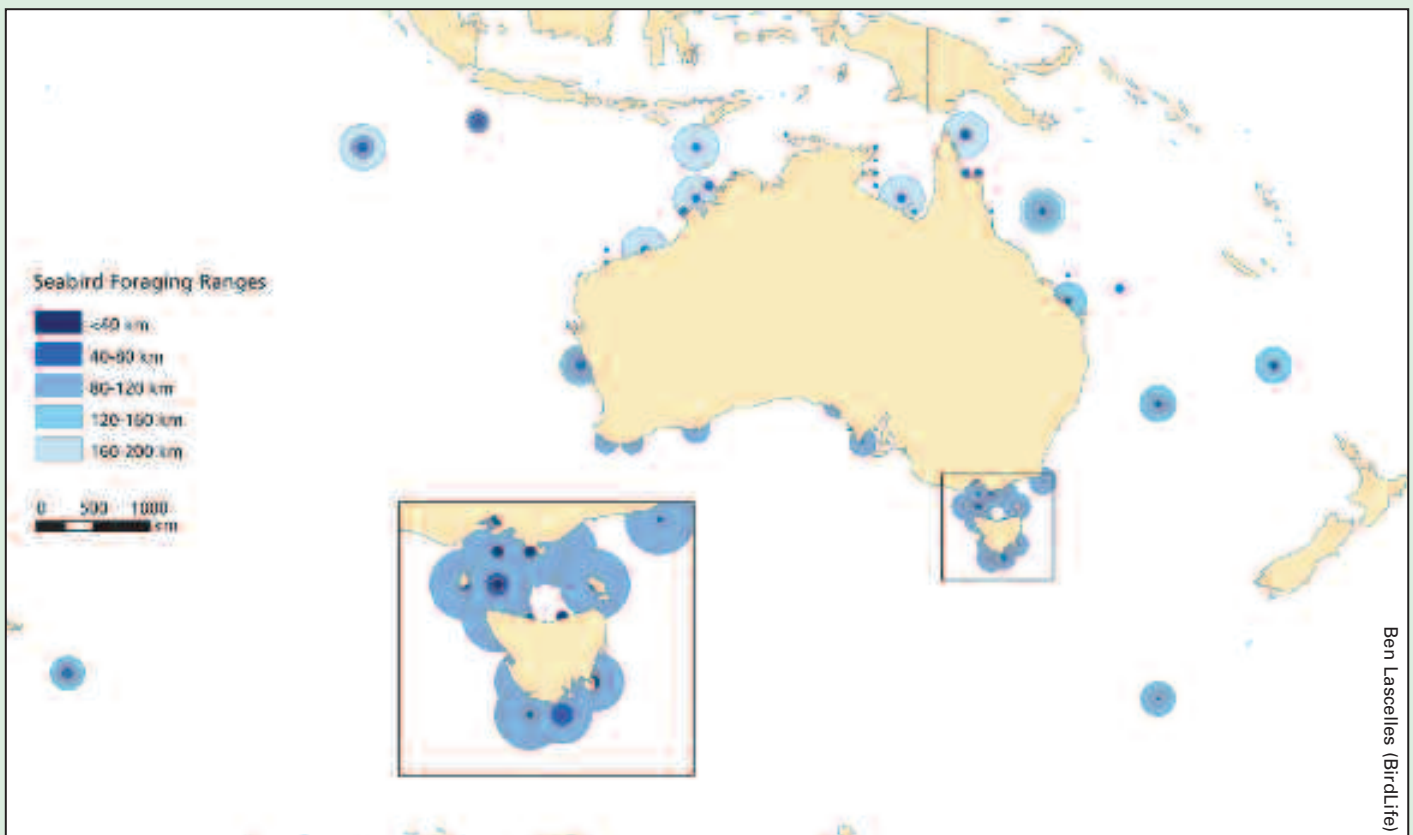
KEY

■ Areas where marine IBA work is complete or ongoing.

■ Areas where work is planned for 2011.

■ Areas wishing to engage in marine IBAs and with the possibility of linking to a relevant policy mechanism.

Foraging ranges of seabirds or groups of seabirds plotted as radii around island IBAs designated for breeding seabirds. 'Seabirds' include petrels and albatrosses, storm petrels, gannets and boobies, penguins, tropicbirds and frigatebirds.



Important Bird Areas and Australian Islands

Many of Australia's nearshore islands support large concentrations of nesting seabirds, especially in the Great Barrier Reef, Western Australia and around Tasmania. Offshore islands, like Christmas, Heard and McDonald, Macquarie, Lord Howe, Norfolk and Philip Islands are also extremely important as they support very large numbers of threatened and widespread species.

Birds Australia, BirdLife's Australian partner, has worked to designate IBAs across all Australian jurisdictions, though most are in fragmented landscapes, coasts and islands. Of the 314 Australian IBAs almost one third (95) are wholly or partly islands and, of these, 91 have seabirds as a trigger species. Island IBAs range in size from less than one hectare to 783,781 hectares, although only three IBAs are greater than 100,000 hectares in size.

Such Island IBAs can focus conservation efforts and lead to the protection of globally significant populations of threatened birds. In Australia, the IBA project offers opportunities to engage volunteers in monitoring and conservation, as well as promoting local stewardship and advocacy. By working with a range of stakeholders and collecting and analysing data on the status of island IBAs,

Birds Australia and BirdLife International can aid decision-making on the protection and management of these sites at both a national and international level.

For further information contact ben.lascelles@birdlife.org

Map taken from Dutson, G., Garnett, S. & Gole, C. (2009). Australia's Important Bird Areas: Key sites for bird conservation. Birds Australia (RAOU) Conservation Statement No. 15, Oct. 2009.

Providence petrel (*Pterodroma solandri*) is an endemic breeder to Australian Islands. It is listed as vulnerable to extinction as it is only known to breed at two sites, both of which qualify as IBAs.



MARINE IBAS

Yoshiharu Suzuki (Deep In)



Japanese murrelet
(*Synthliboramphus wumizusume*).

Asian IBAs workshop outcomes

BirdLife International began identifying marine IBAs in Asia in 2010, with support from the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF). After the first Asian Marine IBA workshop in April 2010, Wild Bird Society of Japan (WBSJ) and BirdLife launched a marine IBA identification tool kit for Japan – paving the way for other countries in Asia.

Preliminary results from the Japanese marine IBA identification were presented at a KNCF side event to the CBD CoP10 in Nagoya. Yutaka Yamamoto (WBSJ), Mayumi Sato (GSP Regional Co-ordinator) and Ben Lascelles (GSP Marine IBAs Co-ordinator) gave talks on four species of seabirds – Roseate tern, black-naped tern, rhinoceros auklet and Japanese murrelet.

After the talks, various strategies on the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity were discussed. CBD CoP10 reaffirmed the need to establish 10% of the marine environment as Marine

Protection Areas and set a target of 2020, as this had previously been a goal for 2012. Marine IBAs are now considered one of the most powerful tools to designate Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs). WBSJ and BirdLife will continue to

identify Japanese marine IBAs, in the hope that these will act as a key reference for the designation of EBSAs and MPAs in the region.

For further information contact sato@birdlife-asia.org



Mayumi Sato (BirdLife Asia)

OUTREACH AND EVENTS



Volvo Ocean Race participants with a very large albatross!

Oskar Kihlberg (Volvo Ocean Race)

Renewed collaboration with Volvo Ocean Race

The 'Save the Albatross' campaign has received confirmation of renewed support from the Volvo Ocean Race (VOR) throughout their worldwide events this year. We will be working closely with VOR to raise awareness of the plight of albatrosses over the course of the race, which starts in Alicante, Spain in September 2011 and finishes in Galway, Ireland in July 2012. The race will pass through two home ports of the Albatross Task

Force (ATF) – Cape Town, South Africa and Itajaí, Brazil.

VOR is currently making a human-sized mascot for the race. 'Wisdom' the albatross, is based on the oldest known wild bird in US history. She is a 60 year old Laysan albatross, who lives on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, Hawaii. First tagged in the 1950s, she has raised 35 chicks in her lifetime! BirdLife Partners will use

'Wisdom' in port to raise children's understanding of the threats to seabirds.

VOR offers a great opportunity to raise the profile of the 'Save the Albatross' campaign as it has historically achieved widespread media coverage, reaching millions of people throughout the world. We are grateful to VOR for this opportunity and look forward to reporting on the success of the partnership in raising awareness and funds for seabird conservation.

For further information contact ben.sullivan@rspb.org.uk

BirdLife Success at the World Seabird Conference

The last publication of *Sea Change* coincided with the first World Seabird Conference (WSC), held in September 2010 in Victoria, Canada. This was the largest event ever held on marine birds. Over 800 participants from 40 countries gave 700 oral and poster presentations covering all aspects of seabird science and conservation.

BirdLife was integral to the programme, with 25 representatives from 11 BirdLife Partners contributing 30 presentations. BirdLife played a lead role in two of the four main symposia, and co-organised three



The judging panel for student presentation awards. (Left to Right: Flavio Quintana, Lisa O'Neill, Nicholas Carlile, Gail Davoren, Mark Tasker, Sophy Allen, Tom Van Pelt, Pablo Yorio and Pep Arcos (missing were Julia Parrish, Matt Rayner and Ross Wanless).)

Mark Tasker (IUNCC)

workshops, on 'Spatial Ecology', 'World Seabird Colony Registers' and 'Seabird Remote Tracking and Databases'.

The conference was an outstanding success, providing an unrivalled review of all current and prospective research on seabirds, with a particular focus on management and conservation. One of the most immediate outputs from the

conference was the establishment of the World Seabird Union; a body to plan future conferences, develop www.seabirds.net (a tool to aid collaboration among seabird researchers), and facilitate global and regional seabird database development.

For further information contact john.croxall@birdlife.org

OUTREACH AND EVENTS

Phil Taylor (BirdLife)

Latest information on seabird tracking data taken from BirdLife's Global Procellariiform Tracking Database. Maps of individual tracks are available from www.seabirdtracking.org

Co-ordination of tracking data steps up a gear after WSC

Advances in technology mean we are now able to track ever smaller species of seabirds. WSC brought scientists, data owners and users together to understand how different databases could facilitate their needs.

The workshop was co-ordinated by representatives from BirdLife's Global

Procellariiform Tracking Database (GPTD), Tracking of Pacific Predators (TOPP) database, OBIS-SEAMAP and Movebank. Existing database functionality and the future needs of the tracking community were discussed and it was concluded that a single, central database was not the best solution to tracking data storage. Instead the

decision was made to focus on developing interoperability between existing databases so that tools, functionality, and ultimately data can be shared with ease between them all – perhaps not as easy as it sounds!

OBIS-SEAMAP, Movebank and BirdLife are currently developing systems to share meta-data on the seabird tracking data they host, so that users can search each website and be directed to the data, regardless of where it is hosted. Following this, the group aim to integrate the analysis of Movebank, the visualisation of OBIS-SEAMAP and the ownership structure of BirdLife's databases. However, significant system integration issues must be overcome before this can become a reality.

BirdLife's Global Procellariiform Tracking Database can be found at: www.seabirdtracking.org

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Light-mantled sooty albatross with a satellite tracking device visible on its back.

Ross Wanless (BirdLife South Africa)

The Albatross Task Force in Ecuador

The Albatross Task Force began work in Ecuador in November 2008. Ecuador is an important site for albatrosses such as the critically endangered waved albatross, which nests on the Galapagos Archipelago, as well as for a variety of New Zealand species that use Ecuadorian shelf waters for foraging. The main objectives of the ATF in Ecuador, as elsewhere, are to identify fisheries where albatrosses and petrels bycatch occurs, record levels of bycatch, and identify and implement effective mitigation measures.

Workshops for fisheries observers began in 2009–10. The ATF supports four seabird-trained fisheries observers, who monitor the fisheries, and implement mitigation research experiments. Since August 2010, the team has worked directly with the hake demersal longline fishery in Santa Rosa. High levels of seabird interaction were observed in the 49 trips conducted. On receiving this



Freddy Salinas (ATF Ecuador)

Waved albatrosses and Lesser frigatebirds congregating around an artisanal longline vessel off Ecuador.

information, the Ministry of Environment has pledged to support the objectives of the ATF in reducing seabird mortality.

Since January 2011, with the support of ACAP, the ATF has begun experiments to determine an effective line weighting

set up for the Ecuadorian fishery – the faster the line sinks the harder it is for birds to access baited hooks.

Information provided to the Ecuadorian government by the ATF is currently being assessed and we are hopeful they will come out strongly in support of the ATF's findings, and take steps to introduce seabird bycatch mitigation requirements for the artisanal and industrial fleets.

The ATF made real progress in 2010, with the training of all fisheries observers in seabird bycatch mitigation and building support and participation of the artisanal fleet in Santa Rosa.

Work is now underway to quantify albatross bycatch in the rainy and hot seasons (Dec–May); to analyse the impact of other longline fisheries in Ecuador; and to set limits for bycatch (with particular emphasis on the waved albatross populations in the Galapagos). Finally, the ATF intends to support the effective implementation of the ACAP Plan of Action Peru-Ecuador that was recently adopted.

For further information contact estebanfrere@yahoo.com.ar



Richard Murtile (ATF Ecuador)

Hooked waved albatross in Ecuadorian artisanal longline fishery. This bird was released alive.

Seabirds congregating around the back of a hake trawler off South Africa.

Ross Wanless (BirdLife South Africa)

MSC recognise sustainability effort in South African hake fishery

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is a global organisation that aims to reward sustainable fishing practices through fisheries certification. There are currently 106 MSC certified fisheries worldwide.

In April 2004 the South African hake trawl fishery became the first African fishery to meet MSC standards. Hake is the most valuable fish resource in South Africa, with exports going mainly to Europe.

Seabird bycatch was identified as a potential problem and the first certification period (2004–09) required

a dedicated seabird observer to assess seabird bycatch and come up with practical solutions over a two-year period. From 2006 onwards, ongoing assessment, monitoring and improvements have been conducted and funded exclusively by the Albatross Task Force (ATF).

The certification of this fishery created incentives for more open dialogue between conservation organisations and the fishing industry. The ATF in South Africa is consequently involved at all levels of the fishery, from the fishermen to industry managers and government departments. Fishing

companies provide open access to vessels so the ATF can assess seabird bycatch annually. Companies are also generally willing to accommodate experimental research to improve bycatch mitigation measures. When the ATF are onboard we educate fishermen about the benefits of saving albatrosses. We have also been invited to participate in scientific working groups to discuss and implement best practice mitigation that can be effectively applied through inclusion in permit conditions. This has been an integral part of the process, allowing us to move from the more investigative aspects of seabird bycatch mitigation into tangible results – reducing the number of birds being caught in South Africa! The fishery has now been recertified for 2010–15.

Although the process has not been without its hiccups, putting in the hard work has won the ATF respect across the board. Soon we will announce results in the form of major improvements in albatross bycatch rates, and are working with a very co-operative industry to shut down the few remaining issues.

Juvenile wandering albatross, with South African hake trawler in the background.

For more information contact gsp@birdlife.org.za or visit www.msc.org

Note: BirdLife International has been a registered supporter of the MSC since 1998.

Indonesian seabird survey of West Java

In September 2009, the Indonesian Seabird Survey (ISSUE) monitored seabirds in the Tanjung Lesung, Panaitan, and Krakatau regions of West Java. To date, few seabird studies have been conducted in these regions. A two-day boat survey observed 50 common terns, 34 Christmas Island frigatebirds, nine Swinhoe's storm-petrels, a streaked shearwater, a lesser frigatebird, 20 bridled terns, and four lesser crested terns.

In August 2010, a second two-day survey went from Tanjung Lesung to Ujung Kulon, Panaitan and Tanjung China, and included a brief sojourn into the Indian Ocean. The survey reported 35 Christmas Island frigatebirds, two Bulwer's petrels, a lesser frigatebird, three Wilson's storm-petrels, six wedge-tailed shearwaters, 120 bridled terns, 50



Francisca Noni

Members of the ISSUE team undertaking a seabird survey off the coast around the Sunda Straits and Java Sea, Indonesia.

streaked shearwaters, ca. two common terns, and 20 lesser crested terns.

An important outcome from this study is the recording of relatively large numbers of the critically endangered Christmas Island frigatebird, which are threatened on their breeding grounds by the introduced yellow crazy ant. It is estimated that the population will decline by 80% in the next 30 years because of predation of young.

This type of survey data can be used to raise the profile of seabird conservation in Indonesia. To do this, and achieve effective seabird conservation in the region, it is important to work with local stakeholders, to ultimately identify and conserve important areas for seabirds in Indonesian waters.

For more information contact francisca_noni@yahoo.com



Ellie Owens (RSPB)

Two kittiwakes wearing GPS tags. These tags use the same technology as that found in car sat-nav systems. Every 100 seconds the bird's location is recorded to an accuracy of between 5–15 m, which makes the information particularly suitable for identifying foraging areas.

Future of the Atlantic Marine Environment

An exciting project is underway with ambitious aims to monitor and track seabirds across the western seaboard of Europe. FAME (Future of the Atlantic Marine Environment) is a project which is funded by the European Union Regional Development Fund through its Atlantic Area programme and takes in seven partners across five countries – RSPB in the UK, Birdwatch Ireland, the BirdLife Partners in France (LPO), Spain (SEO) and Portugal (SPEA) and the University of Minho and WavEC (an offshore renewable energy developer) in Portugal. By working together we share skills and ensure best use of the data. Data are collected through various means, from standard colony monitoring, beached bird surveys and boat or plane surveys, to high resolution tracking using the latest technology. Piece by piece we are gaining a better understanding of key seabird foraging areas and what habitat characteristics make them so special. This information will be vital to current discussions on how our marine areas should be managed. This includes planning for nature conservation areas at sea and large-scale offshore developments such as wind and wave energy generation. It is a mammoth effort but the data we are getting makes it all worthwhile. Already the perceived wisdom of where our seabirds travel to feed is being challenged, and with each insight opportunities arise to better protect our most environmentally salient areas.

For more information contact ellie.owen@rspb.org.uk

A personal quest by Tui de Roy



I will never forget my first meeting with an albatross. I was 15, a bit late in life considering that I spent my childhood living only 50 nautical miles from Española Island in the Galapagos, where virtually the entire world population of waved albatross come to nest. I remember looking into those deep, limpid eyes elegantly shaded by snow-white parasol eyebrows – appropriate light-shields under the equatorial sun – and being profoundly moved. There was a powerful presence in those eyes – looking at me calmly and with interest.

The waved albatross is the only tropical albatross, and probably the most range-restricted of all 22 species, never straying far from the cool upwellings of the far eastern Pacific. As I began to travel to the frozen south in pursuit of my budding career as a wildlife

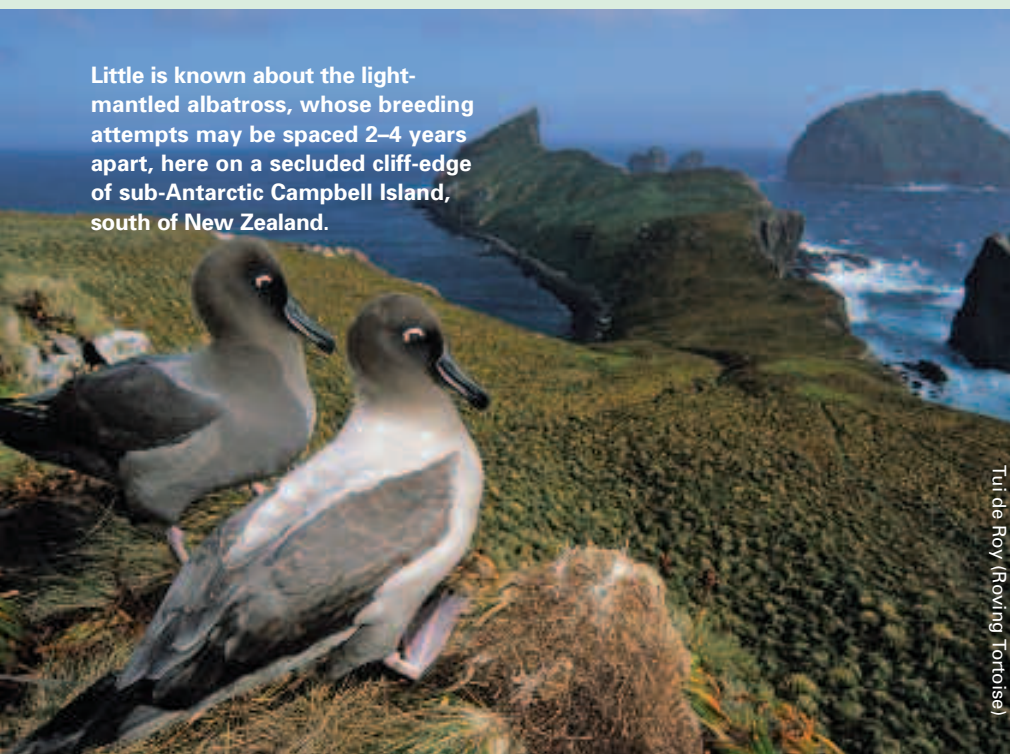


Tui de Roy (Roving Tortoise)

After a long sub-Antarctic sailing expedition, Tui de Roy enjoys returning to the milder climate of New Zealand, riding the bowsprit of Mahalia, a 43 ft cutter she and co-author Mark Jones outfitted for Southern Ocean sailing.

photographer, I met other species in far more remote locations. On Diego Ramirez, south of Cape Horn, I met my first grey-headed albatross – a stunningly beautiful bird. On Beauchène, a lone southern outpost of the Falklands/Malvinas, I camped at the edge of an enormous black-browed albatross colony spreading 140,000-nests strong. Spellbound, I watched the aerial ballet of courting light-mantled albatross pairs tracing graceful pirouettes against the stormy skies of South Georgia, and was drawn by their eerie calls to another intimate encounter on a high crag. My first view of the mythical wandering albatross came to me like a divine apparition between the giant swells of the Drake Passage while heading for Antarctica: a symphony of motion, white on grey, gliding past in defiance of gravity.

Little is known about the light-mantled albatross, whose breeding attempts may be spaced 2–4 years apart, here on a secluded cliff-edge of sub-Antarctic Campbell Island, south of New Zealand.



Tui de Roy (Roving Tortoise)

When the dire plight of albatrosses emerged in the 1980–90s, my passion for these – the most endangered group of birds in the world – turned into an obsession: I would apply my professional skills as a photographer and writer to help make the world a little safer for them. I would enlist friends, researchers and conservationists to contribute their knowledge to produce an in-depth, lavishly-illustrated book to highlight their plight and save them from extinction. Thus was born *Albatrosses – their world, their way*. My hope is that this book can become a powerful tool for spreading the word of BirdLife's 'Save the Albatross' campaign.

But without financial backing, the most formidable challenge initially was how to spend sufficient time in prime albatross locations to get the photos!

WRITERS' CORNER

Together, my co-author Mark Jones and I invested all we had in a sturdy 43 ft sailboat, which we outfitted for the rigours of the Southern Ocean. Over five years we took Mahalia on seven long trips, totalling nine months at sea, visiting all major albatross islands in the New Zealand sub-Antarctic region, where over half the world's species nest. Some of these islands have seen less pairs of human feet than the summit of Mount Everest!

I was also able to spend time on Midway Atoll in the far north-eastern Hawaiian Chain, where I photographed all three northern hemisphere albatrosses, and on Tristan da Cunha and Gough Islands in the middle of

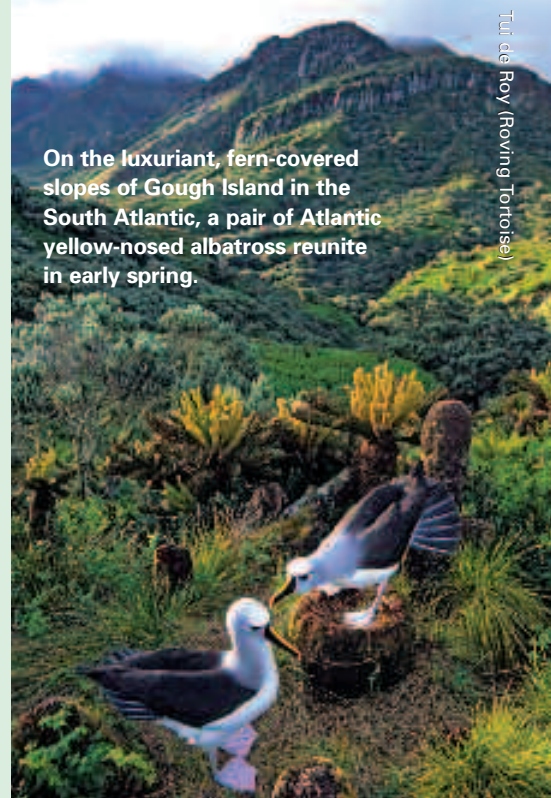
the South Atlantic. Here I met the critically endangered Tristan albatross, whose survival is threatened by introduced mice, along with the elegant Atlantic yellow-nosed and enigmatic sooty albatrosses.

My dream came true. In recent years there are encouraging signs that increased public awareness, and especially the hard work of the Albatross Task Force is beginning to turn the tide of destruction, with several albatross populations reversing their declines toward a healthier future. I'd like to think I added my little grain of sand to the pyramid of knowledge and conscience needed to curb our ways, and respect their ways.

Reviews of *Albatrosses – their world, their way* can be found at:
http://www.marineornithology.org/PDF/38_2/38_2_137-139.pdf

Dedicated and autographed author's copies may be mail-ordered from
books@rovingtortoise.co.nz or by visiting the website at <http://www.tuideroy.com>

On the luxuriant, fern-covered slopes of Gough Island in the South Atlantic, a pair of Atlantic yellow-nosed albatross reunite in early spring.



Tui de Roy (Roving Tortoise)

Returning from its ocean wanderings, a Campbell albatross announces its landing with a loud scream on Campbell Island in the New Zealand Subantarctic, the only island where this species nests.



Tui de Roy (Roving Tortoise)



Marc Figueiredo

Upcoming events

The fifth International Albatross and Petrel Conference is scheduled to take place on 13–17 August 2012 at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington, New Zealand. The organisation of IAPC5 will be led by New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research.

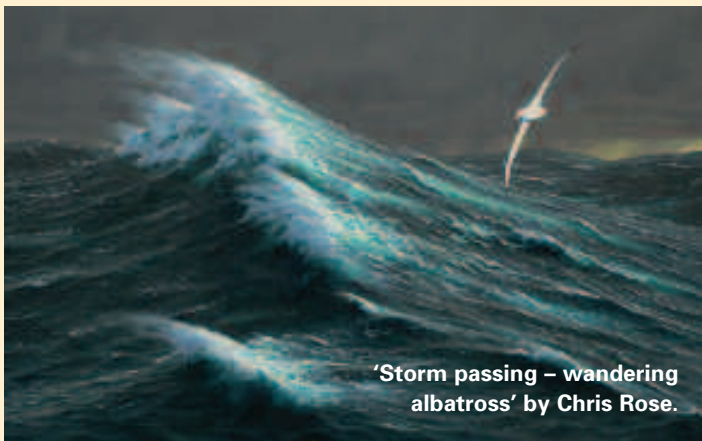
The conference will cover all aspects of albatross and petrel biology, ecology, distributions and tracking, taxonomy and human interactions.

The current contact for the conference is Dr David Thompson at d.thompson@niwa.co.nz



The critically endangered waved albatross is the only tropical species, nesting exclusively on Española Island in the Galapagos.

Tui de Roy (Roving Tortoise)



'Storm passing – wandering albatross' by Chris Rose.

Artists aid the ATF

Renowned wildlife artists, John Gale and Chris Rose spent five weeks on South Georgia sketching and painting albatrosses, other seabirds and wildlife. Their work will be displayed in an exhibition at the Air gallery, Dover Street, London, for two weeks commencing 3 October and they are donating 25% of all sales to the Albatross Task Force. In addition to this, exclusive prints are available of John Gale's 'Wandering albatross' and Chris Rose's 'Storm passing – wandering albatross'. Print sizes are 320mm x 500mm and the price is £145. Details and sales from Evelyn Johnson; evelyn.johnson@rspb.org.uk, tel. 01767 693332 or write to her at RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK, enclosing your details and a cheque for £145.

You can see all of the paintings at www.galleryofbirds.co.uk

End notes

The Global Seabird Programme is co-ordinated, on behalf of the BirdLife International Partnership, by the RSPB (BirdLife Partner in the UK).

Programme staff at the RSPB include Euan Dunn (Head of Marine Policy), Cleo Small (Global Seabird Programme Senior Policy Officer), Orea Anderson (Global Seabird Programme Policy Officer) and Ben Sullivan (Global Seabird Programme Co-ordinator). For comments and potential articles feel free to contact Orea Anderson at orea.anderson@rspb.org.uk

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www.birdlife.org