
**AMENDING RESOLUTION 08/03 ON REDUCING THE INCIDENTAL BYCATCH
OF SEABIRDS IN LONGLINE FISHERIES**

SUBMITTED BY FRANCE (OVERSEAS TERRITORIES)

Background

1/ Subantarctic seabirds : an ecological challenge

The seabirds populations which colonize Subantarctic islands are the richest and the most diverse in the world. To give one example: at breeding time, Crozet is home to more than 25 millions birds. Among those birds are 8 albatrosses species (of which one is endemic) and 23 petrels species.

But this heritage is fragile. Scientific work shows the critical conservation status of albatrosses populations, and the worsening of this status year after year: if 2 albatross species were classified as globally endangered in 1992, the number increased to 16 species in 2000.

In 2009, 18 out of 22 albatross species have been classified as globally endangered, and among them two as « critically endangered ».

Albatrosses populations are hence rapidly declining. The development of longline fisheries and illegal fishing play a major role in this decline.

France is strongly involved in the conservation of these birds. As a matter of fact, **seven albatrosses species** (*Albatros à sourcils noirs*, *Albatros Hurlleur*, *Albatros à tête grise*, *Albatros à bec jaune*, *Albatros Fuligineux à dos clair*, *Albatros Fuligineux à dos Sombre*, *Albatros d'Amsterdam*) **among the 8 species of French Austral territories** (Crozet, Kerguelen, Amsterdam and Saint Paul) are globally endangered. Most seabirds species impacted by accidental catches are listed in the Agreement on the conservation of albatrosses and petrels (ACAP), which France ratified in 2005. Parties to this Agreement have to implement stringent conservation measures.

In the Crozet and Kerguelen toothfish longline fishery, French overseas territories administration (Taaf) have put in place as early as 2002, in partnership with scientists and professionals, very strict conservation measures against accidental mortality of seabirds. These measures, which have been validated by CCAMLR, put an end to accidental catches of albatrosses in 2003 and considerably reduced petrels mortality. For petrels species, a national plan to reduce mortality was presented to CCAMLR, and validated.

A national plan of action is in preparation for the Amsterdam albatross (endemic to the island with the same name) classified as critically endangered. France alone bears the global responsibility for this species, as it breeds only on Amsterdam island.

Nonetheless, longline fisheries operated in the Southern part of the Indian Ocean impact a great number of these seabirds, whose distribution area extends far beyond French waters.

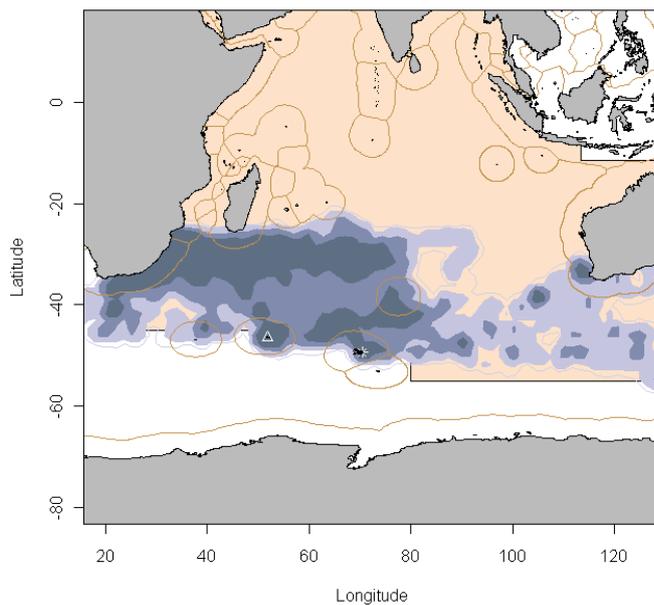
2/ Interaction with IOTC competence area

Up to now, it was accepted that the distribution area of albatrosses and petrels originating in the Austral Ocean islands did not extend North of 30°S, and this led IOTC to use this limit when adopting mitigation measures of seabirds bycatch in longline fisheries.

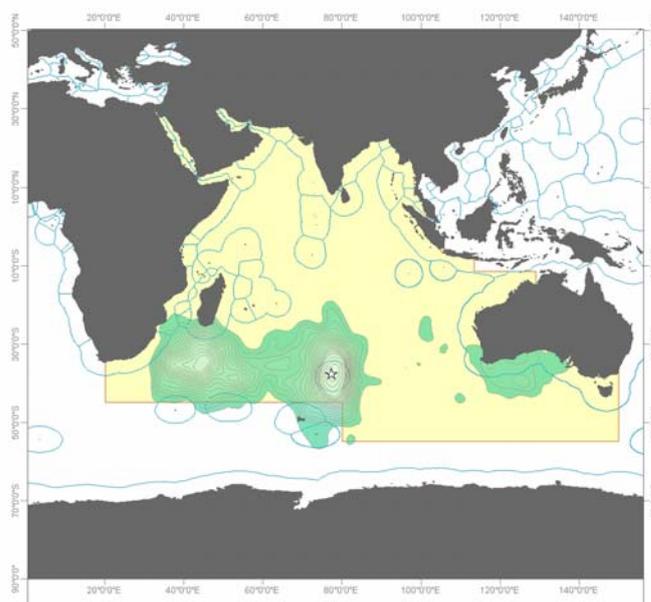
Recent studies, not published yet, based on the tracking of Amsterdam, Crozet and Kerguelen islands albatrosses and petrels show that several species regularly go up North of 30°S. On the basis of these conclusions presented to the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB) 2009 meeting in Mombasa, **the extension of the mitigation measures to 25°S (ultimate limit of the distribution areas) is recommended.**

The species originating in the Austral Ocean which would benefit from these measures are listed below :

- Amsterdam albatross, *Diomedea amsterdamensis*, critically endangered : global population 30 breeding pairs, increasing
- Sooty albatross, *Phoebetria fusca* : 2000 pairs in Crozet and 450 pairs in Amsterdam, sharply decreasing
- White-chinned petrel, *Procellaria aequinoctialis* : between 26470 and 49700 pairs in Crozet and between 186000 and 297000 pairs on Kerguelen, sharply decreasing
- Wandering albatross, *Diomedea exulans* 1800 pairs in Crozet and 1280 in Kerguelen, decreasing
- Northern giant petrel, *Macronectes halli* 850 pairs in Crozet and 910 in Kerguelen, stable/decreasing
- Southern giant petrel, *Macronectes giganteus* 950 pairs on Crozet, stable



Distribution map of the juveniles of the three species : southern giant petrel, Sooty albatross and White-chinned petrel



Distribution map of adults Amsterdam albatross

The Indian Ocean Tuna commission (IOTC)

RECALLING Resolution 08/03, and in particular its paragraph 3

RECALLING the 2009 Arrangement between IOTC and ACAP, adopted in view to supporting the efforts of bycatch limitation of albatrosses and petrels in the IOTC area

NOTING that new studies presented to the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (IOTC-2009-WPEB-13) at its 2009 meeting show that the distribution areas of southern seabirds overlap the IOTC area up to 25°S and that, during essential parts of their life cycle (juveniles), several species of albatrosses and petrels threatened with extinction rely entirely on the IOTC area where they are particularly vulnerable to longline fishing activities

FURTHER NOTING that some studies conducted in 2007 in other tunas longline fisheries demonstrate the economic benefit of mitigation measures of seabirds bycatch, by significantly increasing the catches of targeted fisheries such as swordfish

RECALLING that measures taken in the CCAMLR area in view to mitigate the impact of longline fisheries conducted around their reproduction areas have already allowed a significant reduction of the mortality of adult seabirds belonging to threatened species of albatrosses and petrels, and that these measures should urgently be completed with mitigation measures of bycatch of juvenile birds belonging to the same species during the part of their lifetime they spend in the IOTC area of competence, based on the best scientific information available

AWARE that the results of several ongoing studies aiming to assess the efficiency of mitigation measures for the species present in the IOTC area will be available at the 2010 WPEB meeting and will provide a rigorous scientific basis for new recommendations

ADOPTS as follows :

Paragraph 3 of Resolution 08/03 is amended :

“Contracting Parties shall ensure that all longline vessels fishing south of **25°S** use at least two of the mitigation measures in Table 1 below, including at least one from Column A. Vessels shall not use the same measure from Column A and Column B.”