

Announcement of Seabird Bycatch Data Preparation and Assessment Workshops

**BirdLife South Africa, Seabird Bycatch Component
Common Oceans Tuna Project
June 2017**

Introduction

As part of the Common Oceans Tuna Project, BirdLife International (through its partner BirdLife South Africa) is implementing a global assessment of seabird bycatch from tuna longline fishing across the Southern Ocean.

To date, a rigorous, data-driven assessment of seabird bycatch in tuna longline fisheries has never been undertaken. Some obstacles to this include that the provision of data from fishing vessel logbooks and observer programmes has been patchy and largely inadequate. Additionally, data confidentiality concerns have precluded external assessments for most tuna RFMO impacts on seabirds.

Main activities

This component of the Common Oceans Project has held two workshops in early 2017 in preparation for the global assessment. These workshops brought together scientists and government representatives from countries working with seabird bycatch data from vessels operating south of 25° South.

During these workshops a need was identified to bring together National Scientists/people who manage data analyses for RFMO national reporting, to clean, prepare and correctly set-up individual country dataset for analysis, and to then consider what sorts of statistical approaches can be used to estimate bycatch rates and raise those rates to total effort.

The workshop will take an approach similar to that used for stock assessments. National scientists will undertake their own analysis on their data sets, and we do not require sharing or pooling of data at this time. Invited experts (with data management and statistical skills) will facilitate the process.

Workshops are planned as follows:

- A 5-day workshop comprised of 2 days of data preparation and grooming (for those countries that require assistance), followed by 3 days of discussion on data analysis. This workshop is planned for 20-24 February 2018 in Mexico. Details to follow shortly.
- A Global Bycatch Assessment Follow-up Workshop in Cape Town, South Africa (TBC) for at least 35 participants, including BirdLife and other invited experts

Intersessional discussions and meetings are being planned between each country representative, invited experts and BirdLife South Africa/Common Oceans representatives in advance of the February 2018 data grooming workshop. Following on from the data workshop, additional intersessional work and support will be given to CPCs, as appropriate, to facilitate the collaborative, joint t-RFMO assessment of seabird bycatch

and the effectiveness of the relevant Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) in tuna longline fisheries, expected in late 2018 or early 2019.

Expected outcomes

The main outcomes for this element of the Common Oceans Tuna Project are:

1. Strengthened the capacity of national scientists to manage and conduct analyses of their fisheries data (particularly for assessing and reporting on seabird bycatch) and the effectiveness of bycatch mitigation measures.
2. Harmonised assessment methods to facilitate annual seabird bycatch assessments by RFMOs and/or CPCs, and for global assessment of current bycatch mitigation measures.
3. Statistical tools (e.g. R scripts and Excel sheet macro or similar) for managing and analysing fishing, CMM use and seabird bycatch data, to be developed and provided freely

Participation

CPCs are requested to nominate a participant and diarise the planned dates of the workshops. We prefer a data analyst for the first data preparation workshop. We urge CPCs to send a database manager/data analyst who prepares RFMO reports (i.e. people who understand their national fishing effort and observer programme datasets, rather than seabird experts). BirdLife will support one representative from each CPC, and we prefer to have one, but no more than two, representatives attending this workshop. Please submit a nomination to attend the workshop to Bronwyn Maree (Bronwyn.maree@birdlife.org.za) by 30 June 2017.

About the project

The project “Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)”, (also known as the “Common Oceans Tuna Project”) aims to achieve responsibility, efficiency and sustainability in tuna production and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ, through the systematic application of an ecosystem approach in tuna fisheries through:

- (i) supporting the use of sustainable and efficient fisheries management and fishing practices by the stakeholders of the tuna resources;
- (ii) reducing illegal, unreported and unregulated [IUU] fishing; and
- (iii) mitigating adverse impacts of bycatch on biodiversity.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is the implementing agency of the project. BirdLife International, through its local partner, BirdLife South Africa (BLSA), is implementing the seabird bycatch component of the Common Oceans Tuna Project.