

Developing an IOTC Seabird Strategy

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)

Introduction

At WPEB-18 the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses (ACAP) and BirdLife International (BLI) proposed the development of a seabird strategy and action plan for longline fisheries under IOTC's competence ([IOTC-2022-WPEB18-26](#)). While WPEB18 supported the proposal, development of an IOTC Seabird Strategy was deferred until after development by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) of a related [Multi-year Seabird Strategy](#), which could be useful to guide and harmonise the efforts among tuna RFMOs to mitigate seabird bycatch, especially considering the strong overlap between CCSBT and IOTC areas ([IOTC-2022-WPEB18-R rev1](#)).

The development of an IOTC Seabird Strategy was included in the WPEB workplan for 2025, to maintain progress on advancing seabird bycatch mitigation in IOTC fisheries.

This document has been prepared to support the development of the IOTC Seabird Strategy. It outlines options to improve bycatch mitigation, strengthen compliance with seabird conservation measures, and enhance data collection and analysis. This document sets out the elements of the IOTC Seabird Strategy for consideration at WPEB22, and as a stimulus for contributions from all CPCs.

Recommendation on developing an IOTC Seabird Strategy

It is recommended that WPEB21 commits to the following:

Action: Develop a draft IOTC Seabird Strategy that identifies options for better bycatch mitigation, stronger compliance with seabird conservation measures and improved seabird bycatch data collection and analysis.

Timing: WPEB22

Action by: All CPCs

Background

Context

An IOTC Seabird Strategy should:

- Be based on the Best Practice Technical Guidelines –FAO 2009, and International Plan of Action for reducing incidental catch of Seabirds - FAO 1999.
- Take into account the General Principles of the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea Convention of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and Straddling Fish Stocks – UN Fish Stocks Agreement 1995.
- Take into consideration the threats posed to seabirds, in particular species identified as at risk of extinction on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN 2025).
- Be forward looking to take account best practices and guidelines, innovation in technologies and techniques for monitoring fishing operations, and best available science.

Elements

The following sets out a provisional list of elements for an IOTC Seabird Strategy, recognising that full details will be a matter for all CCPs to consider:

- **Title:** IOTC Seabird Strategy
- **Introduction:** Setting out the context for and process involved in developing the IOTC Seabird Strategy.
- **Overall Objective:** *[example]* To reduce or eliminate seabird bycatch in IOTC fisheries.
- **Specific Objectives:** *[examples]*
 1. To reduce the level of seabird bycatch by IOTC fishing operations.
 2. To develop and refine, in collaboration with industry and ACAP, practical and effective seabird bycatch mitigation technologies and techniques for fishing gears used in the IOTC Convention Area.
 3. To develop and refine compliance approaches to ensure fleet-wide compliance with seabird bycatch mitigation measures required while conducting fishing operations.
 4. To ensure the collection of timely, reliable, representative data to support accurate regular estimations of total seabird mortality in IOTC fisheries, and which enables an assessment of the impact of IOTC fisheries on seabird populations.
 5. To enhance education and outreach programs highlighting the importance of mitigating seabird interactions while fishing and advocating effective implementation of mitigation measures.

- **Actions:** Setting out the actions that will be undertaken against each of the specific objectives, including CPCs/Secretariat (and others) that will be responsible for progressing each action, and the timeframe for completion of each action.
- **Implementation:** Implementation will be monitored through direct observer programmes, audited electronic monitoring systems, and other monitoring and compliance approaches at-sea and in port.
- **Reporting:** Each CPC will report regularly on its progress with implementing actions in accordance with the IOTC Seabird Strategy.
- **Review:** Regular reviews of the IOTC Seabird Strategy should occur at intervals no longer than five (5) years.

Referral within IOTC:

- The draft IOTC Seabird Strategy should be referred to other entities of IOTC to seek their input, before the proposal is considered by the Scientific Committee and Commission.
- Other entities include but are not limited to the Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS), Compliance Committee (CoC), Working Party on the Implementation of Conservation and Management Measures (WPICMM), and Working Group on Electronic Monitoring Standards (WGEMS).
- Regular consultation with and feedback from other IOTC entities should occur during the implementation of the IOTC Seabird Strategy.

References

CCSBT (2024) [Multi-year Seabird Strategy](#) (*updated October 2024*).

FAO (1999) International Plan of Action for reducing incidental catch of seabirds in longline fisheries. Rome, Italy.

FAO (2009) Fishing Operations. 2. Best practices to reduce incidental catch of seabirds in capture fisheries. Rome, Italy.

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) (2025) The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2025-1. Available at: <http://www.iucnredlist.org>.

Wolfaardt A, Prince S, Yates O, Jiménez S, & Gianuca D (2022) Proposal to develop an IOTC Seabird Work Plan. [IOTC-2022-WPEB18-26](#).

IOTC (2022) Report of the 18th Session of the IOTC Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch. ([IOTC-2022-WPEB18-R_rev1](#)).