
**DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE 3RD SESSION OF THE
WORKING PARTY ON ECOSYSTEMS & BYCATCH, 11-13 JULY 2007
(FORMERLY THE WORKING PARTY ON BYCATCH)**

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE IOTC WORKING PARTY ON ECOSYSTEMS AND BYCATCH (WPEB) – see below

2. REVIEW OF THE DATA ON BYCATCH

- Review of the data available in the IOTC database (Secretariat)
- Review of the information available on incidental catch of non-target species in the Indian Ocean – A study undertaken by Pauline Gauffier in collaboration with the Secretariat (Secretariat)
- Review availability of observer information (Request from SC in 2006)
- Data from other sources

3. SHARKS

- Papers as provided by participants
- Review of any National Plans of Action for the reduction of shark bycatch in tuna fisheries
- Review of any data on the ratio of fin-to-body weight of sharks (as per Resolution 05/05, para 4) –
Last year the United Kingdom indicated to the SC that they would provide information to the Secretariat on the fin-body weight ratio of sharks caught in the British Indian Ocean Territories.
- Advice on interactions between sharks and tuna fisheries in the Indian Ocean

4. SEABIRDS

- Papers provided by participants
- Review of any National Plans of Action for Reducing Incidental Catches of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries
- Advice on interactions between seabirds and tuna fisheries in the Indian Ocean
At the SC in 2006 Birdlife International indicated they would provide data on the distribution of albatrosses and petrels in the Southern Indian Ocean to facilitate an examination of the spatio-temporal overlap with IOTC long line fisheries.
- Para 34 in the S9 Report stated: The Commission instructed the Scientific Committee to examine the interaction between seabird populations and tuna long line fishing in the southern part of the IOTC Area, and to identify sensitive areas and appropriate measures as regards to fishing gears which could address this issue effectively.
- Similarly, Recommendation 05/09 *On incidental mortality of seabirds* stated: When feasible and appropriate, Scientific Committee should present to the Commission an assessment of the impact of incidental catch of seabirds resulting from the activities of all the vessels fishing for tunas and tuna-like species, in the IOTC Area.

5. TURTLES

- Papers provided by participants
- Review of any National Plans of Action for the reduction of turtle bycatch in tuna fisheries
- Advice on interactions between turtles and tuna fisheries in the Indian Ocean

6. ECOSYSTEM APPROACHES

7. RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

8. OTHER BUSINESS

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE IOTC WORKING PARTY ON ECOSYSTEMS AND BYCATCH (WPEB)

1. Monitoring

- Create and maintain an inventory of non-target, associated and dependent species caught by fleets targeting tuna and tuna-like species in the Indian Ocean.
- Improve conventional statistics (catch, effort, size) of species under the IOTC mandate that are caught incidentally in non-targeted fisheries.
- Monitor and improve information on interactions with species that are not under the IOTC mandate, with emphasis on those species of interest to the Commission and for which no Species Group has been established (e.g., sharks, sea turtles and sea birds).
- Facilitate access by scientists to oceanographic and environmental data.

2. Research

- Evaluate the relative impact of the different abiotic and biotic factors (including oceanographic and climate phenomena, directed and incidental fishing, predation, competition, pollutions and other human impacts) that affect the abundance, distribution and migration of IOTC species.
- Characterize main feeding and reproductive habitats of IOTC species.
- Characterize the volume, composition and disposition of non-target species that are caught incidentally in tuna and tuna-like fisheries within the IOTC Convention area.
- Investigate trophic interactions of IOTC species.
- Investigate the impact that changes in fishing gears or fishing technology have on the catch of target and non-target species.

3. Modelling

- Develop and monitor reference points and indicators that explicitly incorporate ecosystem considerations.
- Participate in the development of simulation, dynamic and statistical models focusing on mixed-fisheries, multi-species, by-catch and ecosystem issues.

4. Advice

- Develop mechanisms which can be used to better integrate ecosystem considerations into the scientific advice provided by Scientific Committee to the Commission.
- Investigate through operational models, potential benefits at an ecosystem level of alternative management strategies, such as time-area closures.
- Advise on the impacts of tuna and tuna-like fisheries on the populations of non-target species of interest to the Commission.

Notes from the Scientific Committee in 2006

Bycatch

(from IOTC-2006-WPBy-R)

Work plan

The following work plan was agreed to by the WPBy for 2006-2007:

- Identify which species should be a priority for the WPBy, then make a concerted effort to ascertain the availability of data on these species with a view to obtaining access to the data and storing it on IOTC database (to be undertaken intersessionally by the WPBy).
- Members to source information on non-tuna data holdings, including socio-economic data (ongoing).
- Comment on the potential of the available bycatch data to develop estimates of bycatch catch rates for the wider Indian Ocean and/or specific regions (to be undertaken by the Secretariat for the next meeting).

Recalling Resolution 06-04 Paragraph (1) in which the Commission resolves to develop within a year, effective mechanisms to enable CPC's to record and exchange data on seabird interactions, begin to formulate options; and Paragraph (7) in which the Commission resolves to consider adopting additional measures for the mitigation of any incidental catch of seabirds (including those applied and tested by the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources) at its annual meeting in 2007; and in anticipation of advice being required by the Commission or individual members:

- Develop options to enable CPC's to record and exchange data on seabird interactions.
- Examine the efficacy of alternative measures for the mitigation of any incidental catch of seabirds.

Recommendations

1. Members are encouraged to submit all relevant data on bycatch to IOTC Secretariat
2. Information on the efficacy of the American longline system to mitigate the incidental bycatch of seabirds in longline fisheries be put forward for consideration by the Scientific Committee.
3. Recognising that the best opportunities for obtaining accurate data on bycatch are likely to come from observer programmes, the WPBy strongly encourages further collaboration between observer programmes and expansion and implementation of new observer programmes for the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the following attributes in any such programme are desirable:
 - All the major fleets should be covered and the levels of coverage should be such that estimates of total catch have an acceptable precision, including those for rare species.
 - Observers should focus on areas such as the nature and extent of discards as the opportunities for obtaining such information are short-lived compared to information on target species (some of which can be collected at the dock).
4. Bycatch species specialists should be encouraged to participate in the WPBy.
5. Bycatch mitigation experts should be encouraged to participate in the WPBy.

Notes from the Commission in 2007

The Commission endorsed the Scientific Committees recommendation to expand the terms of reference of the Working Party and change its name to the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB).