

Report #2o: PSG ACAP Delegate Annual Report

Report from Delegate to ACAP prepared for Pacific Seabird Group 2023 Executive Council meeting

Submitted by: Beth Flint, 6 February 2023

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) through its 13 Parties strives to conserve albatrosses and petrels by coordinating international activities to mitigate threats to their populations. In 2019 ACAP's Advisory Committee declared that a conservation crisis continues to be faced by its 31 listed species, with thousands of albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters dying every year as a result of fisheries operations. To increase awareness of this crisis ACAP inaugurated a World Albatross Day to be held annually on 19 June from 2020, the date the Agreement was signed in 2001.

ACAP's 7th Meeting of the Parties was virtual, from May 9-13, 2022 conducted in the time zone of Hobart Tasmania. In attendance as a part of the U.S. Delegation were Head of Delegation, Mi Ae KIM of NOAA, Elizabeth Flint, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Annette Henry, NOAA, and Jared Milton, Department of State. Members reported on the implementation of the agreement which can be viewed in detail in the report at:

<https://www.acap.aq/meeting-of-the-parties/mop7/mop7-meeting-documents/4011-mop7-doc-10-implementation-report-2018-2021/file>

The challenges ahead remain unchanged since MoP6: improving the collection of data on seabird bycatch in relevant fisheries, implementation of best practice seabird bycatch mitigation measures in domestic and high seas fisheries, and filling significant data gaps relating to population status and trends

Also summarized were priority conservation actions. Land-based priorities continue to be largely the eradication of alien species, which prey upon on albatrosses and petrels or cause habitat destruction. Despite many eradications over the last decade challenges remain in this area. The review of at-sea threats identified a number of fisheries and seabird populations as priority targets for action by the Agreement. RFMO-managed fisheries impact many populations of ACAP-listed species and this highlights the importance of ACAP's RFMO Engagement Strategy.

All PSG members should be aware of the tremendous resource that is the ACAP website (<https://www.acap.aq>). It contains records of all the previous Advisory Committee, Working Groups, and meetings of the Parties. It also is a repository for many enormously useful documents and databases with species information, best practice and conservation guidelines and current news about albatrosses and petrels.

The United States regularly attends and contributes to ACAP meetings and the executive branch of several administrations has expressed our intention to become a signatory to the agreement but despite repeated efforts over the years to introduce enabling legislation to the House of Representatives, the U.S. is not yet a Party. Rep. Lowenthal introduced HR 4057, the Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act, during a hearing in the House Natural Resources Committee in June 2021. The bill was referred to the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife on July 15, 2021. In January 2022, a bill was again introduced in the House to create legislation for ACAP. Deputy Director Steve Guertin provided testimony during a hearing of the House Natural Resources Committee, and NMFS provided written testimony. In May 2022 USFWS staff responded to requests for information from Senate Committee on Foreign Relations minority staff about our role in the treaty, potential impacts on fisheries, and the benefits of ratification by the U.S. No further communications have occurred since then.

The Thirteenth Meeting of ACAP's Advisory Committee (AC13) will be held from Monday 22 to Friday 26 May 2023, in Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom. Meetings of the Seabird Bycatch Working Group and the Population and Conservation Status Working Group will precede AC13. As decided by AC11, a joint SBWG11/PaCSWG7 meeting will be held during the first three sessions of Thursday 18 May, to discuss cross-cutting issues. A one-day Workshop on Bycatch Data will be held on Sunday 14 May.