

# BYCATCH BYLINES

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## HEADLINE

### Liaison links

**Liaison officers are out and about in longline fisheries again, and this year, smaller trawl vessels are also in their sights. Who can you expect to contact you?**

Liaison officers have been active in several fisheries over the years. The Deepwater Group has a long-running liaison programme. DOC and MPI have also supported liaison work over time.

In the past few years, DOC's seabird liaison programme has focused on bottom longline vessels fishing in FMA 1, and surface longliners. These fisheries became the focus because of captures of at-risk seabirds, like black petrels and several types of albatrosses.

This year, liaison officers will continue to work with those fisheries. In addition, this year's programme will include smaller trawlers working around the southeast coast of the South Island. Over and above the scope of past years, liaison officers' work will now cover all protected species. For example, marine turtles and mammals are now included. The purpose of the liaison programme remains focused on working with fishers to reduce protected species bycatch.

So who will you be hearing from? Liaison officers include well-known and new faces. Dave Goad is continuing his liaison work with FMA 1 bottom liners, and John Cleal and Geordie Murman are active among surface lining vessels. Dunedinite Graham Parker is working with the smaller southern trawlers. Graham is new to the liaison team, and has a lot of experience working with fisheries and seabirds in his other lives, both in New Zealand and overseas.



The green turtle – one of the turtle species caught on longline fishing gear around northern New Zealand. Photo: Peter Liu, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

And what will liaison officers actually do? A key part of their role is working with vessel operators, skippers and crew to create Risk Management Plans. These plans describe how each vessel manages its own risk of catching protected species. Plans themselves are voluntary, and include both regulatory and voluntary bycatch reduction approaches. Plans also highlight when vessel operators should contact liaison officers after bycatch events occur.

Liaison officers also provide advice, answer questions, and give out materials like tori line gear that assist with bycatch reduction.

To contact your liaison officer, email or phone:

Dave Goad: [LO.Advice.BLL@gmail.com](mailto:LO.Advice.BLL@gmail.com), 027 364 3098

John Cleal, Geordie Murman: [LO.Advice.SLL@gmail.com](mailto:LO.Advice.SLL@gmail.com), 021 305 825

Graham Parker: [LO.Advice.Trawl@gmail.com](mailto:LO.Advice.Trawl@gmail.com), 022 0678 224.

## WHAT'S UP?

### Nelson ahoy!

The NZ Federation of Commercial Fishermen will gather in Nelson this year, a fantastic destination famous for so much more than fishing.

- Hot on the heels of the Bluff Oyster Festival, the Federation of Commercial Fishermen will meet mid-year. The Fed's Conference is on 31 May, and the Annual General Meeting is on 1 June.
- The Conference will be held at the Rutherford Hotel. Nelson is obviously an extremely important port, but there are also plenty of other things to do. Activities span urban delights from cafés and shopping through to vineyards, artists' studios, and the great outdoors.
- Watch the Fed's website for more information.

One of Nelson's most famous water views. Photo: [russellstreet](https://www.flickr.com/photos/russellstreet/), CC BY-SA 2.0

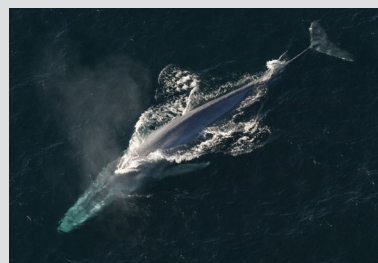


## WHAT THE FAQ?!

### The biggest animal in the world, ever

**Blue whales are the largest animal to live on earth, ever. Just how big are they, and what can sustain a 150 tonne whale?**

- Blue whales are bigger than all dinosaurs, and weigh as much as around 30 elephants. A single blue whale flipper can be twice the size of a tall human. Adult whales are 25–30 m long.
- They sustain their massive bodies by eating millions of tiny krill. Blue whales are found in New Zealand waters. In 2014, scientists discovered a blue whale feeding area off Taranaki for the first time.
- Blue whales sing underwater. Their vocalisations are louder and stronger than any other whale.
- Tell DOC where you see blue whales! Find out how in 'Want to know more?'



The blue whale. Photo: NOAA Photo Library - [anim1754](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17942391), <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17942391>

## Taking the bait

Seabirds have learned over decades that fishing vessels mean food. Minimising the amount of food around fishing gear helps keep seabirds safe. Even better, during longline hauling, this can be done simply and cheaply.

We all know that tori lines, line-weighting and night-setting are mitigation measures that reduce seabird captures at longline setting. We also know that seabirds can be caught during line-hauling (as well as on the soak for shallow-set gear). Compared to setting however, there are fewer tested and proven measures that reduce seabird captures during longline hauling. What's going to work comes down to common sense.

Birds are around fishing vessels because they've learned vessels can mean food. At hauling, food might be old baits, offal, discards, or fish caught on the line. Minimising the amount of food around fishing gear that is accessible to seabirds reduces bycatch risk.



Simple, cheap, and it works: a bucket for holding used baits returned during longline hauling. Photo: DOC/MPI

Retaining used baits and offal onboard vessels until after hauling is one obvious way to achieve this. Discards should be retained too, within legal requirements. And if baits, offal and discards are discharged during hauling, it's essential that this occurs away from gear in the water.

Many operators have their own systems for fish waste storage and discharge down pat. Used baits may be kept in a bucket or fish bin. Offal can be stored the same way, or processing happens after line-hauling anyway. Buckets or bins are emptied after hauling is completed, or, away from the hauling area during a break in hauling when hooks are well below the surface.

While this is all simple stuff that's been around for decades, observer information shows that even now, not everyone is doing it consistently. Good fish waste management needs to be standard practice on every haul. Flicking used baits back into the hauling bay is asking for trouble – it brings birds, snoods, hooks, and food all together in a very small space! For folks who want to feed the birds, that can work – just do it away from the gear and hauling bay. For bottom liners, this fits with legal requirements, but it is also plain old sensible.

When birds are persistent in getting into the hauling area, a physical barrier is another option. Bird curtains or bird exclusion devices have been used on some larger vessels both here and abroad. On smaller longliners, a towed buoy, short rope with a polystyrene buoy at the end of it, or dangling buoy that swings out over the hauling area have all been used to keep birds out of harm's way during hauling.

Simple is best with many things in life, and it's hard to have it much simpler than putting old bait in a bucket.

## Weapons of mouse destruction

There has been good news for seabirds and bad news for mice in the year to date. Here is a global update on rodent eradications (or is that eratications?), past, present and future.

### Antipodes Island, New Zealand

It's a nail-biting time for all involved in the Million Dollar Mouse campaign. The great Antipodes mouse hunt is now underway on Antipodes Island. Antipodes is one of New Zealand's most isolated subantarctic islands, located 860 km southeast of Stewart Island/Rakiura. It's an important breeding site for many seabirds including Antipodean albatross, and grey and white-chinned petrels.

Five years ago, work started to rid Antipodes Island of its estimated 200,000 resident mice. This month, a team is investigating whether the eradication has been successful. The team includes human and canine mouse-hunters, with nine people and three dogs on the case. The mouse hunters will spend three weeks combing the island to find any mousey hide-outs, supported by tracking tunnels baited with peanut butter and ink traps to capture the footprints of visitors.

Check out the mousers in action. Follow the link in *'Want to know more?'*



What a tiny set of teeth can do. A young light-mantled sooty albatross scalped by mice on Marion Island. Photo: Peter Ryan, <https://tinyurl.com/Marion-mousing>

### Marion Island, South Africa

Mice have been creating mayhem among Marion Island's seabirds for years. Like the Antipodes, Marion is a subantarctic seabird paradise. Mice on Marion Island eat seabirds while they are still alive. After years of research, including a feasibility study, South Africa is considering an eradication project to remove mice from the island. Next steps include determining how many mice there are on Marion, and how much poison bait it takes to kill them. If all goes to plan, an eradication will proceed in 2020.

### Gough Island, Tristan de Cunha archipelago

Mice are also on the skids on Gough Island, where they've been dining on seabirds for 150 years. Life for Gough's mice is so good that they grow twice as fast and become twice as big as normal mice. In the process, it's been estimated that mice kill hundreds of thousands of seabird chicks per year. The Gough mice will have a different kind of diet from June 2019, with 200 tonnes of poison baits coming their way. By 2021, all going well, Gough's seabirds will be living in a rodent-free paradise.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- *Worldwatch*: Watch the great Antipodes mouse hunt online at <https://tinyurl.com/million-dollar-mouse-bunt>.
- *What the EAQ?*: Seen a blue whale? Call 0800 DOC HOT, or go to <https://tinyurl.com/MM-sighting>.

## FEEDBACK

To submit feedback or questions, please email: [johanna@jpec.co.nz](mailto:johanna@jpec.co.nz)

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