

BYCATCH BYLINES

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HEADLINE

Longline liaisons

If you're fishing for snapper or bluenose in FMA1, chances are you've met Dave and Jamie – liaison linkmen working with fishers to help resolve seabird bycatch issues. Developing Seabird Management Plans is the name of their game this summer. But how do these plans help show that skippers are seabird-smart?

Dave and Jamie are a practical part of MPI and DOC's approach to managing seabird bycatch in the snapper and bluenose fisheries. They have many hours of sea-time under their belts – as well as their current liaison roles, they are both experienced fisheries observers. Both have also worked on developing methods to reduce seabird bycatch in the past.

Dave and Jamie know that all fishing vessels and operations are different. They work with skippers to recognise each vessel's approach to reducing seabird bycatch. This is then documented in a Seabird Management Plan (SMP).

Seabird mitigation depends on awareness - of the issues as a whole, through to awareness of bird behaviour while fishing. The approach described in SMPs is a bit like a traffic light for seabird bycatch risk. The 'green light' level describes the methods used on each vessel to reduce the risk of seabird bycatch every set – that is, what could be called standard practice. Then, at an 'orange light' stage, SMPs include additional measures used if seabirds are likely to become an issue. Finally, it's the 'red light' – SMPs identify when seabird bycatch risks are so high that fishers will not set – for example, in the afternoon in very 'birdy' areas. Over the years, knowledge has grown and good ideas have

popped up in different parts of the country. All in all, SMPs show what skippers are doing to make their operations seabird-smart.

So far, there are 34 snapper longline vessels with SMPs completed or under development, and 13 draft SMPs developed in the bluenose fleet. Dave and Jamie's goal is to have SMPs in place on all longline vessels targeting snapper and bluenose by the end of the summer. That means visiting nine more vessels in the near future.

As well as making port-based visits to vessels, the guys are keeping it real and spending time at sea to develop and refine SMPs. Also, they are working with other fisheries observers to support knowledge-sharing amongst the bottom longline fleet.

So why the focus on snapper and bluenose longliners? Concerns about black petrel captures are a main reason. Also, the diversity of fishing operations amongst these vessels means that a one-size-fits-all approach to reducing seabird bycatch is unlikely to work.

All in all the SMP, or Seabird Management Plan, approach is a key part of the Smart Management of a Problem.



Bottom longline hook cards, and a passing black petrel. Photo: DOC/MPI.

WHAT'S UP?

Handle with care

Returning live sharks and rays to the water requires skill and care – it involves a lot of teeth and tails! Across the ditch, a new guide shows how to safely handle these tricky customers, and improve their survival after release.

Fishermen probably encounter sharks and rays more than just about anyone else. These fish seem pretty tough, but are actually easily injured. It's generally best to release them from gear still in the water. If they do come on deck, avoid handling their gills. Tails are another sensitive area. If sharks and rays must be gaffed, aim for around the lower jaw.

Larger animals are best handled by two people – it's common sense not to go it alone! Also, just like us, sharks and rays shouldn't be in the sun for long periods.

The new guide is free.

Check the link in *Want to know more?*



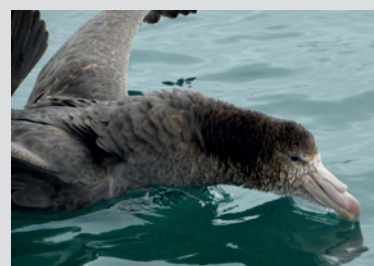
The oceanic whitetip shark: protected in New Zealand and a handful to release from fishing gear! Photo: T. Ehrensperger, CC-by-SA 3.0.

WHAT THE FAQ?!

Not so gentle giants

Giant petrels are well-known to anyone who has spent time at sea. They are the vultures of the seabird world, often seen around vessels eating offal. What are they less well-known for?

- Northern giant petrels eat fish, other seabirds, and any dead animal material they happen to find. That includes whales, seals, or penguins – nothing dead is too big or too small!
- Northern giant petrels first breed at about 10 years old.



A northern giant petrel: not the prettiest seabird but still legally protected.

Photo: J. Pierre.

- Females are 20% smaller than males.
- There may be as many as 2,750 breeding pairs in New Zealand.
- In New Zealand, these birds nest on the Chatham, Auckland and Antipodes Islands, and Campbell Island.

Initial expert 'Shark Week' risk assessment results announced

Risk assessments are often a go-to tool for fisheries management. They can be very effective in highlighting current problems, as well as issues that might become problems in future. Dr Rich Ford from MPI updates us on recent risk assessment work on sharks living in New Zealand waters. So where do experts think New Zealand sharks are at?

MPI, in conjunction with DOC, is responsible for managing the New Zealand National Plan of Action – Sharks (NPOA-Sharks), last revised in 2013.

This plan aims to maintain the biodiversity and the long-term viability of all New Zealand shark populations by recognising their role in marine ecosystems, ensuring that any utilisation of sharks is sustainable, and that New Zealand receives positive recognition internationally for its efforts in shark conservation and management.

Actions from the plan will be prioritised by shark species, depending on the results of a risk assessment that took place in November last year. This involved compiling all available data on commercial shark catch, which is the main source of shark mortality, as well as the biology and ecology of the shark species.

A group of experts took part in their very own 'Shark Week' to examine data and assign risk scores. This involved scoring for intensity of impact – the temporal and spatial overlap of fisheries with the shark's spatial distribution, and consequence – and the resilience of the shark population to impacts by considering factors such as pup numbers and breeding frequency.



The basking shark (left) and the great white shark (right) – two of the protected species considered by experts during Shark Week.

Photos: G. Skomal, NOAA Fisheries Service and Sharkdiver68.

In total, risk scores were given to 85 species. Of these seven are already protected – the basking shark, spine-tailed devil ray, great white shark, deepwater nurse shark (also known as the smalltooth sandtiger shark), whale shark, oceanic whitetip shark, and manta ray.

A detailed report is now being produced, however some headline conclusions include:

- No protected sharks were included in the 28 most at-risk species.
- Basking shark, spine-tailed devil ray and great white sharks were the most at-risk protected species.
- The deepwater nurse shark had an intermediate risk.
- The lowest possible risk scores were assigned to whale sharks, oceanic whitetip sharks and manta rays.

It is expected that the full report will be published in the first half of 2015.

To find a copy of the NPOA – Sharks, check the link in *Want to know more?*

An update on the risk assessment work will feature in a future edition of *Bycatch* Bylines.

The world is watching!

Last year, a bold translocation programme moved 50 Chatham albatross chicks from their nests on The Pyramid to a new home on main Chatham Island. This was the first albatross translocation done in New Zealand, and the world was watching. Following the success of last year, the team is in action again for 2015.

Of the 50 albatross chicks moved last year, all grew well and left their cosy, if artificial, nest sites to head off to sea. All being well, they will return to the place they left from – the new colony on main Chatham Island – in around four to seven years.

But why the move? Chatham albatross are classified as globally vulnerable to extinction. They breed in only one place – The Pyramid, a small rock stack in the Chatham Island group. It's not flash, but it's densely packed with albatross. With nesting space at a premium, a new colony was needed to give the population space and opportunity to grow.

This year, the plan is to raise another group of chicks at the new colony site on main Chatham Island. Forty chicks have been translocated and will be hand-fed a fishy mixture daily by the project team – that's fine dining for an albatross chick! In around four months, the birds should take off on their own and head to sea.

In 2016, another translocation of chicks is planned. Then it will be time to watch and wait, to see if the birds come back to their adopted home to breed.

Methods used in the Chatham albatross translocations are based on those used on the short-tailed albatross, which breeds in Japan. When they're not in New Zealand waters, Chatham albatrosses roam the Pacific between New Zealand and the South American coast. They have also been seen off the coasts of South Africa and Australia. For albatross, the world is a global village.

To follow the progress of the Chatham albatross translocation and see some great footage of last year's effort, check the links in *Want to know more?*



The Chatham albatross – getting a helping hand from humans on the Chatham Islands. Photo: Danmantle, CC BY-SA 3.0.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- The Big Picture: Find out more about the NPOA – Sharks at: <http://tinyurl.com/oosma5L>.
- What's up?: The AFMA shark and ray handling guide is at: <http://tinyurl.com/n5t86fx>. For handling tips, go straight to page 10.
- World Watch: Follow the albatross translocation on Facebook: www.facebook.com/chathamtaikoitrust. Video highlights of last year's translocation are at: <http://vimeo.com/85167666>.

FEEDBACK

To submit feedback or questions, please email: jpecnz@gmail.com

Banner image: DOC/MPI