

BYCATCH BYLINES



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HEADLINE

A bird in the hand

Summer is here and birds are feeding themselves and their chicks. This means they may be especially determined to get food around your vessel. No one wants to catch seabirds—those beaks and claws can be weapons of mass destruction! But, if you do catch a bird, there are simple ways to make releasing it easier and faster, while reducing injuries to crew. This month, we focus on longline captures.

Releasing captured seabirds is much easier when two crew are involved. Useful gear includes a landing net, pliers or bolt-cutters, a towel, and work gloves. Try to store your release gear handy to where birds may come aboard, e.g. the hauling station.

When you do catch a bird:

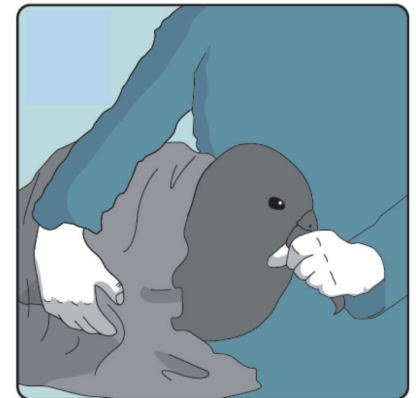
1. Grab your mate, your gloves and get the bird on-board. Ideally, use a net to scoop the bird out of the water.
2. Control the bird's movement. The towel may be useful for this. There are several methods that work. For large birds, you can use the towel, or gently kneel over their backs to control the wings and feet. For small birds, you can use the towel, or hold them in one or two hands to control the wings and feet. Having a hand or two fingers around the head controls the beak. The bird is then secure, and you are safe from its weaponry!
3. Isolate the tangled or hooked body part. Your mate should now carefully move the towel or your hands to expose the tangled or hooked body part.
4. If you've got a bird tangled in line, trim all the line away until the bird is free.

5. If you've got a bird that has swallowed a hook, cut off as much of the visible snood as you can. Unless you have a dehooker, leave the hook in place inside the bird.
6. If the bird is hooked externally, there are three good options:
 - Cut the hook in two and remove the pieces to free the bird
 - Flatten the barb against the hook and thread the hook backwards out of the bird's body part
 - Cut off the barb and thread the hook out backwards
7. Once you've freed the bird, it may need some time to dry out and recover. If it is waterlogged or dazed, put it in a safe place on deck in a box, fish bin, or other container.
8. When the bird looks better, release it away from the gear and as close to the water surface as you can. Don't throw birds into the air.

These techniques will help improve the chances that your bird in the hand remains a bird in the air as well.

How to hold seabirds while controlling their beak, wings, and feet. Make sure the nostrils are clear!

Image: http://southernseabirds.org/fileadmin/documents/Products/Safe_Seabird_Release_Poster_11th_jan.pdf



WHAT'S UP?

On the road again

This summer, Dave Goad and Jamie Williamson will be visiting bottom longliners with the support of MPI and DOC. Their mission: to work with operators in preparing Vessel Management Plans that describe seabird bycatch reduction measures used on bottom longline vessels. They will also be available to provide information and talk through seabird issues with skippers and crew. Visits are not a one-off—Dave and Jamie will check in again in March/April to review VMPs, update them as necessary, and share useful tips they've picked up over the summer. In addition, Dave and Jamie will be contacting recreational fishing charter operators. This is great news, as we know that recreational fishers also catch some of the seabirds we're most worried about, like the black petrel.



Where the action is: hooks laid out on cards on a bottom longline vessel. Photo: DOC

WHAT THE FAQ?!

Gentle giants

The endangered leatherback turtle is the world's largest and fastest swimming turtle. What else is special about them?

- How big? Leatherbacks grow to 2 m long and can weigh 900 kg!
- Where are they caught? Leatherbacks have been reported caught in surface longline fisheries in New Zealand, and longline and some net fisheries overseas.
- Where do they travel? These turtles occur in the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific oceans, and range from Norway and Alaska in the north, down to South America and New Zealand.
- How far? The average distance between the breeding and feeding areas of leatherbacks is 6,000 km.



Photo: Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs, Creative Commons License 2.0

Measures for Maui's

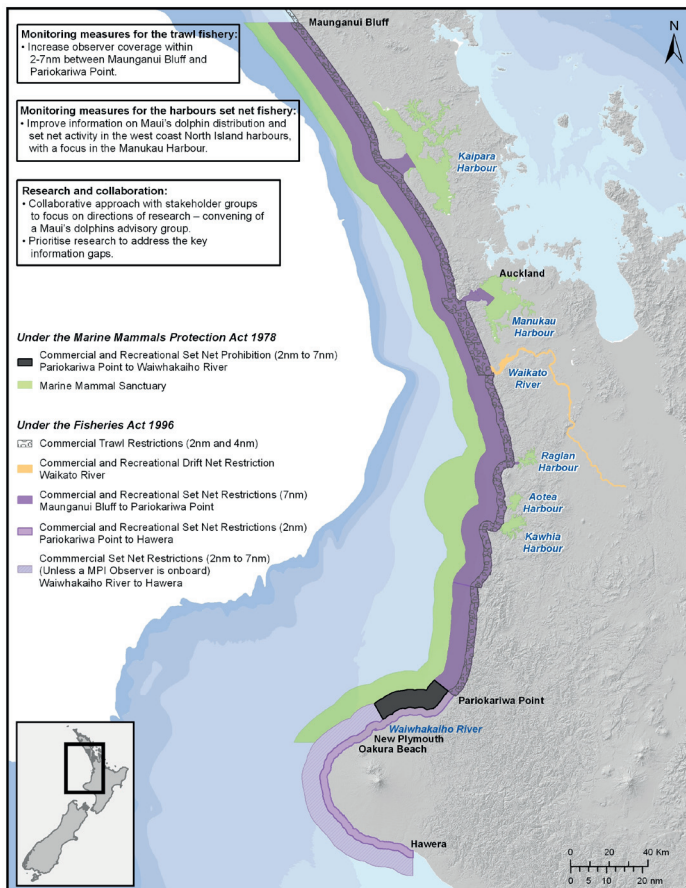
With a global adult population estimated at 55 adults, the future of Maui's dolphin is far from certain. However, after a prolonged and controversial process, the Ministers of Conservation and Primary Industries have made their decisions on measures to manage these dolphins along the west coast of the North Island.

The measures for Maui's were decided following an extensive review of the Government's Threat Management Plan. The review considered new information that had become available since the Plan was produced in 2007, as well as the assessment of 23 threats to the survival of these dolphins. Human threats considered included seismic surveys, fishing, mining, and vessel strikes. Non-human threats were disease, predation, and the effects of a small population size. Extensive consultation was also part of the review process.

Measures agreed by Ministers are outlined in the map below. These include fishing area closures, increased monitoring, and the formation of an advisory group to guide future research on the Maui's dolphin.

Based on the information available, more than 95% of human-induced deaths of the Maui's dolphin are considered to be fishing-related. But what about non-fishing threats? A code of conduct will be developed to manage the risks to dolphins from vessel strikes. For seismic surveys, the existing code of conduct will be reviewed, and then made mandatory.

Alongside the management measures for Maui's, Ministers highlighted new information that paints a much more optimistic picture for the closely-related Hector's dolphin. Previously, the Hector's population was thought to be around 1,800 off the east coast of the South Island. With the information now available, this population is estimated to be somewhere between 5,200 and 13,000 animals. That's got to be good news, especially for the dolphins.



Map showing management measures for Maui's dolphins on the west coast of the North Island. Image: www.fish.govt.nz/NR/rdonlyres/47903325-532F-4787-A267-17A79AB2C961/0/MauidolphinTMPreviewdecisions.jpg

Seabird safety in Taiwanese fisheries

Many seabirds are long-distance travellers. Their home ranges traverse fisheries operated by a number of countries, sometimes a long way away from the countries themselves. For seabirds to have a secure future, everyone needs to pull their weight by using effective bycatch reduction measures. A recent workshop held in Taiwan should help.

Taiwan is a small island about a third the size of the North Island, but it has a large longline fishing fleet with a global reach. This includes the Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans. In the Indian Ocean for example, the Taiwanese longline fleet reports setting an annual average of 35 million hooks. In the Atlantic, Taiwan operates the largest longline fleet present. Therefore, the potential for seabird captures is significant if bycatch reduction measures are not being used on Taiwanese vessels.

In November, a two-day workshop about reducing seabird captures on longline gear was held with Taiwanese fishing captains and masters, fisheries observers and fisheries management agencies. The workshop covered demonstrations and talks about bycatch reduction and the importance of good data on seabird captures for understanding fishing impacts on seabird populations. One day of the workshop was spent aboard a Taiwanese vessel to demonstrate how bycatch reduction measures fit in the real world of longline fishing operations.

The workshop was a combined effort of the Taiwanese Fisheries Agency, Chinese Wild Bird Federation and BirdLife International, and received financial support from the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation.



The wandering albatross—one of the seabirds reported caught by Taiwanese longline fisheries. Photo: J.J. Harrison, Creative Commons License 3.0

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- **Headline:** For a laminated card showing seabird handling and release methods, contact bycatch.bylines@yahoo.com or go online at: http://southernseabirds.org/fileadmin/documents/Products/Safe_Seabird_Release_Poster_11th_jan.pdf
- **What's up?:** Contact Dave on 0273643098 or goad.dave@gmail.com.
- **World watch:** To find out more about Taiwan's longline fleet go to: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1469-1795.2012.00588.x/pdf> or www.iotc.org/files/proceedings/2008/wpeb/IOTC-2008-WPEB-17.pdf
- **Word on the street:** For the recent announcements on Maui's dolphins, see: www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Consultations/Archive/2013/Review+Maui's+portion+of+Hectors+and+Maui's+dolphin+TMP.htm