

BYCATCH BYLINES

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HEADLINE

What's your tori story?

Love them or hate them, tori lines are one of the best ways to reduce seabird bycatch. Usually, trial and error, and a dose of patience, are needed to get the design and construction of tori lines spot on for each vessel. To help fast-track that process, a new project is underway to find a design 'recipe' that works well for smaller bottom longline vessels. What's in it for fishers?

Tori lines are a proven way to reduce seabird bycatch on longline and trawl fishing gear. However, for bottom and surface longline fisheries, 'best practice' tori lines were designed on large vessels. Size does matter in this context – design specifications for large-vessel tori lines can be a headache or just not feasible for smaller vessels. A new project is underway that will develop a recommended tori line design for small longline vessels. Bottom longline vessels < 28 m are the initial focus, with surface longline vessels as the next stage of work.

The project has started with the team pulling together existing knowledge about tori line designs and construction materials in use in smaller-vessel longline fisheries. There is a fair bit of information and innovation around, and making the most of what we already know is vital. Also, the team is looking for skippers to work with to refine tori line designs. These reality-checks will help perfect design and construction methods. Ensuring the safety of tori line designs is also critical.

So what's in it for you? At this stage, there are three things. First, this is the perfect chance to help develop – and then get to keep – a good quality custom-built tori line for your vessel, made specifically with your operational needs in mind.

Skipper and crew expertise is vital to perfect the tori lines developed. If it doesn't work for the real world, there is no point!

Second, as well as keeping the tori line, you'll be left with a bunch of spare parts to help maintain it over time. While tori lines aren't massively expensive, who doesn't like getting something decent for free? Third, the best solutions to the top three tori line problems will be recognised with liquid donations – that's free beer-verages of choice for the best tori problem-solvers.

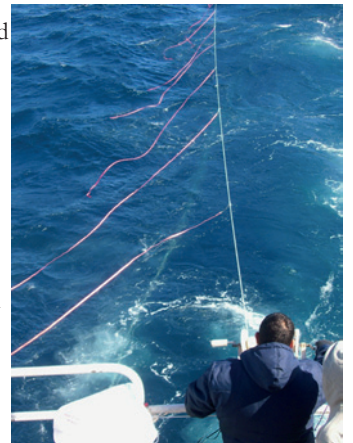
How does this project fit with other seabird work going on? In a totally practical way, it helps address the findings of the Government's seabird risk assessment and the goals of the National Plan of Action - Seabirds.

It also utilises the knowledge on mitigation approaches collected by the seabird liaison officers working with small bottom longline vessel skippers and crews, and the ongoing work of Deepwater Group Ltd (on ling and surface longline vessels) and Fisheries Inshore New Zealand.

The project is solution-focused and aims to leave fishers with something they will actually be happy to use.

To get involved, see the link in 'Want to know more?.'

A tori line in use on an Argentinean longliner (note the hose reel behind the crewman's head).
Photo: <http://imgkid.com/longlining-albatross.shtml>



WHAT'S UP?

Napier fishermen to host Federation in May

The Napier Fishermen's Association will host the New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen in May this year. The occasion is the 57th annual conference of the Federation – a notable fixture in the fishing calendar.

Details on the conference programme are emerging on the Federation's website. Past years have included government and industry speakers, and international guests.

The one-day conference costs \$150 and per-event pricing is also available. A must-do is the Shipwreck Auction, the undoing of many savvy wallets in previous years! For the very keen, the Annual General Meeting of the Federation is the day after the conference. Check the Fed's website for more information at www.nzfishfed.co.nz.



Fishing vessels in Napier's Inner Harbour.
Photo: <http://www.napier.govt.nz/services/napier-harbour/about-the-inner-harbour/>

WHAT THE FAQ?!

Mega-migrants: the humpback whale

Humpback whales were almost hunted to extinction last century in the southern hemisphere. Now, they are often seen in New Zealand's coastal waters while on migration. What's special about these mega-migrants?

- Humpbacks travel more than 700,000 km each year, between their winter feeding areas and summer breeding grounds.
- They eat krill and small fish, and have been observed to 'stun' fish prey with their very long flippers.
- A newborn humpback is 4–5 m long and adults can reach a whopping 15 m.



A tail-slapping humpback whale sends up a shower of sea spray. Photo: www.doc.govt.nz

- Humpbacks sometimes become entangled in cray pot lines.
- If you see a humpback, make it count! Report your sighting on the phone or online. Check the link in 'Want to know more?.'

Risky business: managing threats to NZ sea lions

The New Zealand sea lion is considered a Nationally Critical species. To support the recovery of this sea lion, in 2014 the Ministers of Conservation and Primary Industries decided to develop a Threat Management Plan. What has been done so far and how can you have your say?

The Threat Management Plan (TMP) process kicked off with DOC and MPI staff getting together to develop their joint plan of attack for producing the TMP. The plan will include three main areas of work: risk assessment, adaptive management, and policy. You might be thinking “What, *another* government risk assessment?!” However, while risk assessments are never perfect, they are very useful tools to help organise complex sets of ideas and prioritise management actions. Risk assessments can also help show more clearly how and why particular management decisions have been made.

In April, New Zealand and international experts met in Wellington to tackle several tricky questions relating to risks affecting the sea lion’s future. Key questions were:

- Can a risk assessment for New Zealand sea lions be built around an existing mathematical model of the sea lion population? (This model was developed by NIWA. It is intended to help make sense of sea lion population trends over time).
- What are the threats to sea lion survival at each sea lion breeding site and across their range? How important are these threats and at what stage of life do they affect sea lions?
- Could the sea lion population be expected to grow or decrease in future, under different scenarios (for example, different combinations of threats and/or factors limiting the sea lion population)?

The answers to these questions will guide DOC and MPI’s efforts to help the sea lion population to increase.



The New Zealand sea lion – effectively managing risks is important for the survival of this marine mammal. Photo: Austronesian Expeditions. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

So, what now? The findings of the April risk workshop will be reported later this year. Stakeholders will be able to contribute to reviewing these findings, including adding their views on possible threats to sea lions in New Zealand. Further, around November this year, DOC and MPI expect to have developed options for sea lion management. Once a draft TMP is written that describes these options, it will be available for public consultation.

As well as working on developing the TMP, DOC and MPI continue to support research on New Zealand sea lions. Examples include the pup counts on Campbell and Auckland Islands (see the April edition of *Bycatch Bylines*). The outputs of this work are made available for stakeholder comment through DOC and MPI’s normal working group processes. To stay up to date with what’s happening in the sea lion world, check the links in ‘Want to know more?’.

A feather in ACAP?

New Zealand’s participation in international agreements with other governments might be seen as a mixed bag in terms of benefits and costs. With respect to the interactions between seabirds and New Zealand fisheries, the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) is a key international forum. This year, ACAP celebrates its 10th birthday. So far, what’s been in it for us?

The objective of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels is to ‘achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels’. Thirteen countries come together at ACAP to focus their attention on conserving more than 30 albatross and petrel species. This mission requires focusing on at-sea and land-based issues, including for example, fisheries bycatch and the degradation of breeding habitat.

In terms of direct benefit, ACAP has supported New Zealand’s work on trawl offal management measures with project funding. However, beyond funding, indirect benefits include the uptake of the findings of New Zealand’s work as part of globally-recognised best practice on offal management. This should promote the survival of our birds when they travel outside New Zealand waters, as well as the survival of other seabird species.

In addition to offal management measures, ACAP’s sharing of new and innovative knowledge on bycatch reduction methods has included line-weighting and hook protection methods for longline fisheries, and tori line designs for longline and trawl fisheries. New Zealand has picked up some of these methods for testing in our own fisheries.

And in future? Important areas of ACAP’s work relevant to fisheries include continuing to share information on new mitigation methods, coordinating approaches to bycatch reduction amongst regional fisheries management organisations, and helping fund research leading to the reduction of albatross and petrel bycatch.

With the dedicated efforts of everyone involved, ACAP’s second 10 years should bring even better outcomes for seabirds than the first.



The Salvin’s albatross: one of our seabirds of interest to ACAP. Photo: J. Pierre.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- *Headline*: Tell us your tori story – what works or what doesn’t, and if you’d like to work with us to get the best tori line for your longline vessel. Contact johanna@jpec.co.nz.
- *What the FAQ?:* To report your sighting of a humpback whale, go to <http://tinyurl.com/qxprv5dz> or call 0800 362 468
- *The Big Picture*: Keep track of the developing Threat Management Plan for New Zealand sea lions at <http://tinyurl.com/kg5bo8k>. You can sign up for DOC and MPI’s working groups by emailing csp@doc.govt.nz and going online to <http://tinyurl.com/ke85wal>.

FEEDBACK

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

Banner image: DOC/MPI