Making Seabird Bycatch Data Publicly Accessible

SOUTHERN SEABIRDS

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Te Papa Atawhai

Why this project?

- Seabird bycatch data in the media
- Bycatch data at times not correct, misinterpreted

Benefits:

- Public receive correct info
- Reduce OIAs
- More efficient for media and comms folk
- Less frustration between stakeholders

Steering Group – Trust Representatives

DOC

Fisheries NZ

Deepwater Group

Fisheries Inshore New Zealand

WWF-NZ

How did we go about this project?

- Focus on ‘communicators’ (journalists, communication roles within: local and central Government, industry, NGOs)
- What they want to know
- How they want it presented
- Where they look to find it
- Protected Species Capture Database (”Dragonfly database”)

Uses of bycatch data

Media releases

Responses to media releases

Magazine articles

feature stories

Blogs

Responses to OIAs

Annual reports

Social media

Websites

Fund-raising

TV series

Schools

Letters to Ministers

Internal newsletters

Papers (RFMOs, science publications).

Finding bycatch data

1. OIA requests
2. Searching online (*“Mr Google”*)
3. In-house science expert

Half interviewees aware of the Protected Species Capture Database.

Only a few said they use it.

Frequency and Turnaround Timeframes

- Seek info - monthly to annually
- Journalists need information same day or the next day

“For media enquiries they approach us in the morning and need the information that afternoon.”

Fisheries, species, what years

- Set net, trawl, longline fisheries (inshore and tuna)
- All types of seabirds (threatened species)
- Data for the previous year (e.g. for annual reporting)
- Industry - current year to contextualize significant capture events with the rest of the fleet.

“Any major issues pertain to a single vessel (a poor performer), we want to refute comments made about it being fleet wide as soon as possible, but we can’t.”

Types of Bycatch Data

Bycatch data collected by observers (highly rated)

“it is collected by someone with high trust, there is nothing better”

“raw data”

“it doesn’t tell you what is caught on non-observed trips”

Seabird Bycatch estimates (mixed views)

“the calculations are controversial because of things like cryptic mortality”

“people treat the estimate as fact and the range is lost, as has happened with Maui dolphins”

Types of Bycatch Data (cont.)

Trends in bycatch numbers (highly rated)

“people love a change story”,

“we want to show that albatross deaths have declined as a result of our efforts.”

“don’t take account of the population or effort.”

Trends in bycatch rates (highly rated)

“it benchmarks against hooks”,

“can see how the industry is performing”

“good for transparency work – can see whether mitigation works”.

Types of Bycatch Data (cont.)

Self-reported fisher data (low rating)

“Feedback through facebook suggests the public don’t trust fisher self-reports”

“MPI are trusted more, and we care about what the public believe.”

“Cameras will take away the doubt in people’s minds.”

Types of Bycatch Data (cont.)

Timeframes of interest - trends

- Five years
- Anything longer is *"not relevant."*
- Operational and area changes over longer periods cloud the picture.

Types of Bycatch Data (cont.)

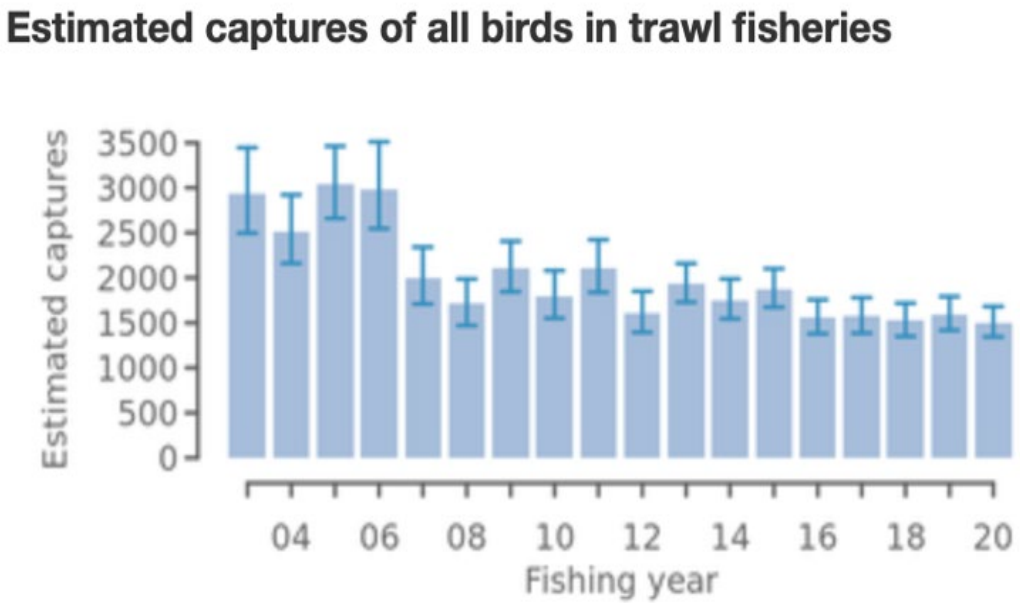
Impact on Populations (generally highly rated)

"Understanding the impact of fishing is key."

"We want to know if there were 300 caught but a population of 3 million, compared to a population of 3,000. So a graph showing the numbers caught as a proportion of the population would be good."

The public are less trusting of modelling.

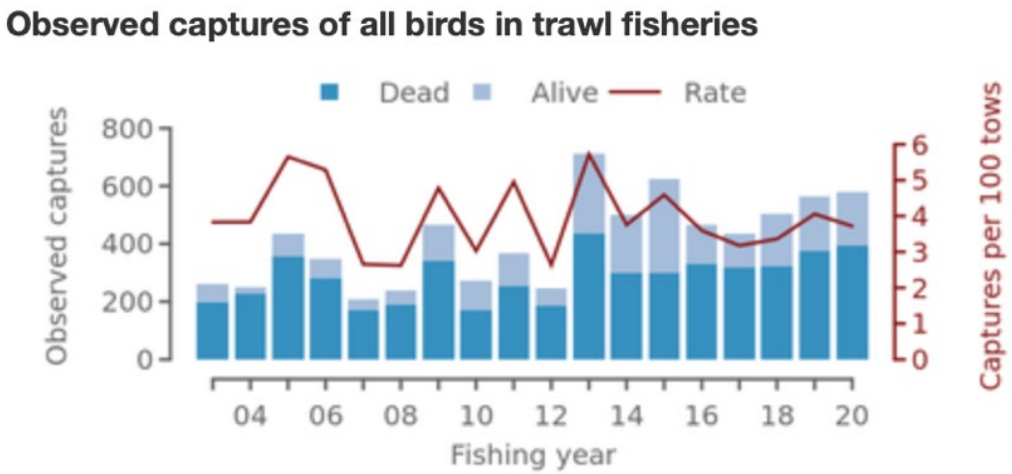
Protected Species Capture (PSC) Database



"Nothing much has changed in the last 10 years. Something happened in 2006. High numbers."

*"Trending down and then holding steady over the last 6 years. **I'm not sure what the lines are.**"*

"This shows captures have declined by 30% over the last 15 years."



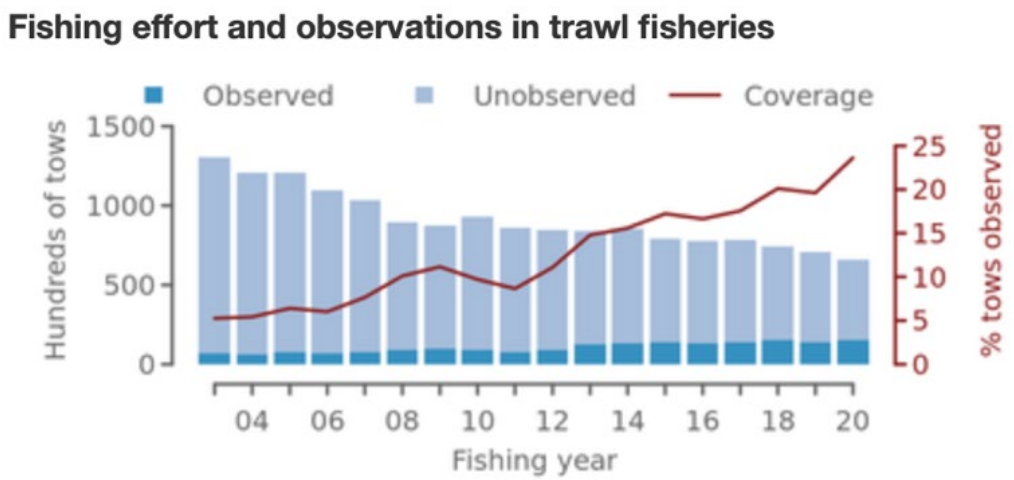
"The rate is flat, and numbers of dead is going up"

*"**Data improved in 2010**, capture rate stayed the same, if not increased"*

"Benchmarked against effort, not just a number….trying to decipher….since 2015 trending down"

"This and the first graph seem at odds as the rate seems the same over time"

"Spike in 2013, confusing because it says observed captures, too much going on"



"This tells me they are catching more birds over time because effort has decreased."

"Says they are reporting. With more observers, reporting has dropped. Too much going on."

"Increase in observed rate, number of tows has decreased. Looking at the first graph and this bottom one together, can be more confident the number of seabird captures has decreased because of observer coverage."

Learnings from Interviews

Non-statistical language

Non-technical language

Explanations of what graphs are showing

Caveats around the data, in laypersons language

Explain how data is collected and analysed

Present bycatch in a layered way

PSC database not suitable for non-science audience

Include links to information on seabirds and their threat status, such as NZ birds online and the DOC threatened species list