



Meeting: Ministry of Primary Industries Aquatic Environment Working Group/
Conservation Services Programme Technical Working Group Meeting
Date: 18 March 2015
Time: 9:30 am – 4:30 pm
Place: Wardroom, Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club, 103 Oriental Parade, Wellington.
Chair: Ian Angus (ph: 04-471-3081; email: iangus@doc.govt.nz): CSP TWG

Attendance: Simon Childerhouse (BPM), Jim Roberts and Ian Doonan (NIWA), Ed Abraham & Christopher Knox (Dragonfly), Milena Palka (WWF), Richard Wells (DWG & FINZ), Jack Fenaughty (Silvifish & Sanford), Vicky Reeve, Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, and Nathan Walker (MPI), Ian Angus, Katie Clemens-Seely, Igor Debski, Laura Boren, Juliet O’Connell, and Paul Crozier (DOC), and Bruce Robertson (University of Otago) via Skype.

Apologies: Rob Mattlin (MWR)

CSP TWG Presentations:

POP2014-01 New Zealand sea lion population project (Auckland Islands) – Update on fieldwork.

Simon Childerhouse (Blue Planet Marine)

BR – Is there any information from other species related to a pulse of mortality later in the season?

SC – It is common in other species of sea lion, but for other diseases.

BR – Could it be an otarid specific thing?

SC – This pulse of *Klebsiella* related mortality also happens to coincide with the point at which the colony disperses into the grass, and could pick up the disease from elsewhere. Disease samples are being collected from other sources – for example sand, mud, stream water, etc.

There was discussion on the levels of milk fat in female NZSL milk and the relationship between disease and nutrition in other sea lion species.

NW – Was there a pattern in the cause of death?

SC – *Klebsiella* incidence increases as the season progresses, Sarah will have further detailed info in the final report once the season is over.

There was discussion on whether this pattern in NZSL mortality had been seen before and whether this could be simply a natural process that we’ve gotten better at detecting. And that the two early epidemic years when disease occurred early in the season lead us to believe that *Klebsiella* outbreaks could be viewed regularly during the mark–recapture work, yet what really was happening was that those two years were just big years and that disease outbreaks more commonly occurred later on in the season.

IDebski – Have you noticed any difference in mortality between tagged and non–tagged pups?

SC – Haven't had a chance to look at it yet, but Sarah might be able to provide an answer to that when she's back from the field.

IA – Once Sarah is back and rested, we will present her with a list of the issues that the group would like to ask her and have her report on (i.e. health/mortality differences in tagged vs. non-tagged pups).

There was discussion on the primary causes for why pups are dying of starvation.

There was substantial discussion on the issue of pups falling into holes and the building and placement of ramps in order for pups to self rescue. Discussion focused on:

- The frequency of rescues of pups from holes, there were 65 rescues in total, but no definitive count of how many individuals, although probably roughly 20-30 individuals were involved. This was quite similar to last year's observations, as the pups moved to the same location once dispersing from the beach.
- Whether the ramps will be left in place once the field team leaves
- Further options for eliminating the issue of pups falling into holes, such as roping off the areas, installing ramps earlier, and mapping the holes to make work next season easier.

MBL – What is the rationale behind keeping with the mark-recapture method for the pup count, when another method of the pup count might be slightly higher?

SC – Primarily, for consistency.

Non-CSP TWG Presentations:

**New Zealand sea lion field work on
Campbell Island.**

**Simon Childerhouse (Blue Planet
Marine)**

JR – Do you have *Klebsiella*/cause of death information for Campbell Island?

SC – No, as the vets are still currently working on cause of death, etc.

There was discussion on whether the current information we have on pup mortality rates at Campbell Island suggest that sea lion populations can exhibit this high pup mortality and still grow, and what implication does this have for the Auckland Island population given lower pup mortality and the population is still decreasing. It was also mentioned that quite a lot of pups were dying by drowning in holes, and that there was no presence of *Klebsiella*.

IDoonan – What was the condition of females and pups?

SC – Similar to the pups on Enderby (no condition of females recorded).

IDebski – Were the ratios of females to pups similar to those at Enderby?

SC – We haven't looked at that yet but we can.

There was discussion on the need to better integrate and look for better synergies with work in the subantarctics, and to develop a better way of integrating all this work together and making better use of all this information, as well as maintain a high level of health and safety, and a need to undertake a cost benefit analysis to investigate this.

There was further discussion on the health and safety issues that a team working down there would face.

There was discussion around planning for the upcoming field season and the need for a subantarctic field work coordinator.

The Campbell Island presentation will be posted on both the CSP and NZSL TMP webpage.

**Compiling a resight database for the Mainland
New Zealand sea lions.** Laura Boren (DOC)

There was discussion on information related to genetic samples that are attached to the individuals present in the resight database.

MP – Is there any data/photos/information available for Stewart Island?

LB – There aren't any photos that I know of from Stewart Island and this piece of work didn't involve any Stewart Island data, but the Stewart Island data and reports are now in the same place, and the aim is to eventually feed it into the Dragonfly database.

There was a discussion on future survey work at Stewart Island on pup counts.

RW – People on the Snares do resights when possible, and I assume that information gets to DOC.

LB – There has been issues in the past with where the emails with the data have been sent, but they should be coming to us now.

There was discussion about resighting data from the Snares; data up until 2011 are in the Dragonfly database, historical data will be added into the database when time allows.

**WPI Project – Public knowledge and
Perceptions of the New Zealand sea lion.** Laura Boren (DOC)

RW – Someone in Otago did a survey on public perceptions and sea lions. Jim Fyfe was aware of this work. The work done earlier in Otago was about sharing space, and was more targeted at fishermen, surfers and dog owners not wanting to walk their dogs.

***The NZSL TMP team will attempt to look into whether this was done and if we can find out more information about this.

There was discussion around whether the guidelines about behaviour around sea lions and fur seals require differing suggestions.

**Update on Literature review of the threats to
the New Zealand sea lion.** Jim Roberts (NIWA)

VR – Have you looked at how these other species are classified internationally vs. nationally?

JR – No, I've just looked at the IUCN listing, and haven't looked at population trend and trajectory and how that affects the classification.

There was discussion about whether the genetic diversity should be represented as low or medium and the accuracy of the representation.

There was discussion about how other sea lion populations fair in areas with a high incidence of great white sharks, and whether or not those populations are increasing, and whether a diet study of great white sharks would glean any information on sea lion predation.

Other CSP Business

The draft CSP Annual Plan 2015/16 will be going out this week and will be out for 4 week consultation period. Submissions close 17 April 2015 at 5pm.

Further written comments on any of the material presented, were welcomed, by email to msp@doc.govt.nz by 1 April 2015.