

## **CSP TWG Forest & Bird Comments Meeting 10 February 2014**

Identification of seabirds captured in NZ fisheries: 1 July 2012-30 June 2013 by Elizabeth Bell.

As always, this is a comprehensive report and extremely useful. I have no problems with the content or methods that Biz has used but have some comments on some of the issues that this report raises.

1. Although this report is not a risk assessment it is not really surprising that the three of the five numerically dominant species have also been identified as very high risk by Richard and Abrahams 2013 Risk Assessment and one as high. Salvin's albatross is the second most at risk species and was the 5<sup>th</sup> most numerically dominant. This information suggests that the factors contributing to their bycatch are not being effectively dealt with and more work need to be done to manage these.....

2. If you then turn to the section of the report that deals with stomach and gizzard contents then it becomes immediately clear that there is an ongoing direct link between the birds with offal and discards in their stomachs and capture... NZ white-capped, Buller's and Salvin's albatrosses, white-chinned petrel and sooty shearwater. There are also high numbers of birds of these species with nothing in their stomachs suggesting that hungry birds have learned to follow fishing vessels for food. This is a priority issue to be tackled and is supported by the observer reports.

3. There are a wide variety of species that are caught in NZ fisheries – 17 taxa.... which raises the question about the ability of observers to correctly identify birds, particularly important as the system for return of birds for confirmation of ID and necropsy is changing. Only 40.9% of photographed birds were correctly identified by the observers (including species that are simple to identify), suggesting that until this number increases significantly all dead specimens should be returned for necropsy. In addition, information on the stomach contents of birds is very important in assisting with determining causes of mortality – if these birds are not returned then changes in amount of natural food and discards cannot be monitored. Furthermore the information about the sex of the birds is also valuable adding another risk factor when determining risk.

4. Warp injuries continue to be an issue and suggest also that cryptic mortality is likely to be an ongoing issue with birds hitting wires and not being brought on board, while sustaining injuries likely to cause death. Longline captures on hooks continue to suggest that baited lines are either remaining available on setting or floating to the surface on retrieval and line weighting is urgently needed to manage this issue across the tuna fleet.

5. Storm petrels. Please ask observers to take photos of all storm petrels which land. We are particularly interested in sightings of NZ storm petrels...