

# **Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)**

## **Basic Instrument**

[Agreement](#) on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

## **Member**

Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, France, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay

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## **Description**

ACAP entered into force in 2004 and currently has 13 Parties. ACAP is one of several treaties under the Convention on Migratory Species, also known as the Bonn Convention. ACAP's objective is to achieve and maintain a favorable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels through improved conservation measures, research and information exchange, and increased public awareness of the threats facing these seabirds.

## **Budget**

ACAP's annual budget for 2014 is AU \$690,600 based upon ACAP's membership fee schedule, which assigns dues (up to a maximum of 22%), proportionally based upon countries GDPs. As the United States is currently not a member, it does not pay dues at this time. However, it is estimated that joining ACAP would require the United States to pay membership dues of approximately U.S. \$140,000 annually.

## **Organizational Structure**

Annex 1 of the Agreement contains a list of species identified by ACAP Parties as in need of conservation action. This list is composed of: 22 albatrosses and 8 petrel species with known fisheries interactions. Annex 2 of ACAP contains an "Action Plan" which outlines the major conservation elements of the Agreement. The Action Plan emphasizes several major conservation strategies that Parties must undertake to conserve seabirds. ACAP's conservation provisions are implemented by its Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee meets annually and oversees the activities of three working groups: 1) Population and Conservation Status Working Group (which was formed in August 2011 when the Advisory Committee merged the Breeding Sites Working Group and the Status and Trends Working Group), 2) the Seabird Bycatch Working Group, and 3) the Taxonomy Working Group.

## **U.S. Representation**

Countries and Regional Economic Integration Organizations may participate in ACAP as either Parties or Observers. The United States, via NOAA Fisheries, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has participated in ACAP meetings as an Observer due to its interest in seabird conservation and its status

as a Range State under ACAP. NOAA Fisheries participates on the established Seabird Bycatch Working Groups and has been attending since this group's first meeting in 2007. This participation has granted the United States influence over some ACAP proceedings, although only full Parties have voting rights and the ability to Chair any of ACAP's working groups or propose amendments to the Agreement. The United States is pursuing accession to the Agreement.

### **Programs**

ACAP's working groups have made significant progress in reviewing the population status and trends of threatened seabird species, addressing taxonomic issues, compiling information on breeding sites and assessing threats to species from factors associated with these sites, and engaging Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) to address seabird bycatch. In particular, the ACAP Secretariat, on behalf of its member nations, has participated as an observer at key RFMO meetings to offer expertise and assistance to help RFMOs address seabird bycatch. The Secretariat also works with non-governmental organizations, such as BirdLife International, to develop informational materials detailing seabird distribution and its overlap with specific fisheries for discussion at RFMO and other relevant meetings.

### **Recent Activities**

ACAP entered into force in 2004, and is the only multilateral agreement that coordinates international activity to mitigate known threats to albatross and petrel populations. ACAP held its first Meeting of the Parties in 2005. A major outcome of that meeting was the establishment of an Advisory Committee to guide the implementation of the Agreement. Since ACAP's inception, its Parties have sought to expand its membership and efforts. They have actively recruited new members from the Northern Hemisphere and South America, where many imperiled seabird species breed, forage, and interact with fisheries. For example, an ACAP meeting was held in Brazil to encourage representatives of Brazil and other South American nations to attend. ACAP is also active within the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, providing technical assistance and expert advice regarding minimization of bycatch of albatrosses and petrels in high seas longline and trawl fisheries.

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Parties in May 2009, ACAP added the three North Pacific albatross species to Annex 1 of the Agreement. These three species breed in the United States. During the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties in Lima, Peru (23 to 27 April 2012), the Balearic shearwater, a species that breeds in the Balearic Islands of Spain, was added to Annex 1 of the Agreement.

ACAP develops and updates advice for reducing the impact of fishing on seabirds, including technical specifications for some mitigation measures. In 2011, the Seabird Bycatch Working Group and the Advisory Committee undertook a major revision of ACAP's pelagic longline mitigation advice. Best practice measures in the updated advice include using a combination of branchline weighting, night setting, and streamer lines. The advice for streamer lines is split between vessels less than 35m and those greater than 35m to reflect operational differences. Prior to 2014, the mitigation advice included those recommended and those not recommended. During the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee, a new category was included for measures that have been effective in particular regions. This change allows for inclusion of side-setting (used in combination with weighted branchlines and bird curtain) in the advice for pelagic longline mitigation. Side-setting is a mitigation measure that has been shown to be effective in the Hawaii longline fishery and is currently used by some vessels in the Hawaii longline fisheries.

Work was undertaken before and during the 2014 meetings to identify seabird populations that are conservation priorities, including those that are vulnerable to bycatch in fisheries. A presentation on the Wandering Albatross (South Georgia population) showed the overlap of the population with fisheries in the southwest Atlantic of several Range States (Chinese Taipei fleets having the largest overlap), and modeling showed that even the loss of 95 birds per year can result in substantial declines in populations. The presentation resulted in calls for outreach to countries that have fleets in the overlap areas, increased observer coverage in key areas, possible time/area closures, and possible use of this population as a flagship on the issue of seabird bycatch.

Population and Conservation Status Working Group collates and maintains information on population size, trends, demography, at-sea distribution, threats and management of albatrosses, petrels, and shearwaters listed on Annex I

of the Agreement. The focus of the work in 2014 by this working group was refining land-based threat prioritization methods and identifying remaining gaps in the ever-improving ACAP database of species, breeding sites, and population trends. Five high priority populations were identified that require urgent action and the working group requested that the Advisory Committee write a letter to the relevant authorities regarding the urgent need to eradicate the introduced house mouse at Gough Island. New Zealand and the United States presented best practice guidelines for translocating Procellariiforms. The guidelines will be amended to better cover precautions and protocols that would prevent disease transmission during translocations.

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