BirdLife INTERNATIONAL

# SEA CHANGE

## The newsletter of the Global Seabird Programme

ISSUE 5 AUGUST 2009

Black-browed albatross (*Thalassarche melanophrys*) chick at West Point Island, Falklands

**Welcome to the fifth issue of *Sea Change*, the newsletter of the BirdLife Global Seabird Programme. Since our last issue in August 2008, the Albatross Task Force (ATF) has continued to expand in both its range of operation and focus. We now have 15 mitigation instructors in seven countries working towards reducing seabird mortality in fisheries worldwide. Oli Yates, the ATF Co-ordinator, talks about the recent successes and future plans for the ATF.**

The ATF has also been making headlines with a meeting between HRH The Prince of Wales and Meidad Goren, our ATF team leader in South Africa. Held on 23 February at Clarence House in London, this event drew international attention to the plight of albatrosses and other seabirds. HRH The Prince of Wales spoke up for the fate of thousands of seabirds, which continue to die on hooks in fisheries throughout the globe. However, there remained a mood of optimism at the event, sparked by recent ATF successes in South African fisheries.

Ben Sullivan, Co-ordinator of the Global Seabird Programme, gives his perspective on the importance of recent developments in international policy, with the publication of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation Best Practice Technical Guidelines. These guidelines should put some real teeth into national plans of actions to reduce seabird deaths.

**For more information, contact orea.anderson@rspb.org.uk**

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# ALBATROSS TASK FORCE

From left, Ben Sullivan (Global Seabird Programme Co-ordinator), Meidad Goren (Albatross Task Force team leader in South Africa) and Graham Wynne (Chief Executive, RSPB) meeting HRH The Prince of Wales at Clarence House

Grahame Madge (rspb-images.com)

## Prince Charles celebrates Albatross Task Force

**On 23 February 2009, HRH The Prince of Wales hosted a highly successful reception at Clarence House in London to hear at first hand the progress the Albatross Task Force (ATF) has been making, and to enable the work of the ATF to be showcased to potential new donors.**

The Prince has championed the Save the Albatross campaign ever since it started, and he was guest of honour at the RSPB's Gala Dinner that launched the ATF in April 2005. The February reception was held mainly in response to his request to meet a young team member from the ATF. The Global Seabird Programme responded by inviting Meidad Goren, South African ATF team leader and the programme's longest-serving instructor, to meet the Prince and share his experiences of working with the fishing industry.

Meidad first had a private audience with the Prince, accompanied by Ben Sullivan (Global Seabird Programme Co-ordinator) and Graham Wynne (Chief Executive, RSPB), before giving a PowerPoint presentation (Albatrosses flying free) to an invited audience of about 40 on the work of ATF South Africa and the global expansion of the programme. There are now 15 ATF instructors working in seven countries in southern Africa and South America, the latest being Ecuador. The audience included the High Commissioners in London to South Africa and Namibia, representatives of UK Overseas Territories and the Volvo Ocean Race. The reception was also almost the final public engagement attended by Mike Rands, outgoing Director of BirdLife International.

The Prince opened the reception with a call for urgent action to prevent albatrosses slipping towards extinction. Speaking of his time in the Royal Navy, he said, "I remember sailing long distances across the oceans and one of the most marvellous treats of those long passages was to come out on deck and see another albatross or two circling around or following the wake of the ship. There was something encouraging and heartening about the fact you were being escorted by these extraordinary birds." The Prince added, "It is our duty to find a way of ensuring that our grandchildren have the same thrill of seeing and knowing about the existence of these birds."

The key part of Meidad's following presentation highlighted the progress of the ATF in dramatically reducing bycatch in South African waters, a result that we have every expectation of replicating in other global bycatch hotspots.

An analysis by BirdLife South Africa of seabird mortality levels in the foreign tuna longline fleet showed that only 153 albatrosses and petrels were reported to have been killed in 2008 compared with 1,016 in 2007, representing an extremely encouraging decrease of 85%. The ATF message is also becoming hardwired into national regulation in South Africa and elsewhere: permit conditions that came to force in 2008 limited seabird bycatch to 25 birds per longline vessel fishing for tuna and swordfish in South African waters, creating a powerful incentive for fishermen to take responsibility for preventing their gear killing seabirds.

"BirdLife South Africa believes that fishermen can continue to make a living without harming these endangered birds", said Meidad. "Fishermen now understand that in order to continue fishing they must avoid killing seabirds, and are very co-operative."

Awareness-raising and royal endorsement apart, the primary function of the event was to attract new donors to the ATF. The success of the event ensured that several donations were made to the ATF from those attending.

**Contact euan.dunn@rspb.org.uk for more information.**

# Albatross Task Force workshop strengthens collaborative seabird conservation efforts

**A recent RSPB-sponsored workshop for the Albatross Task Force (ATF) strengthened collaborative seabird conservation work by committing to joint research that will refine practical measures to help reduce seabird mortality.**

In 2006, the RSPB and BirdLife International launched the ATF – the world's first international team of instructors aimed at preventing incidental seabird mortality in fisheries. Seabird interactions with fishing gear have created the urgent need for a team of professionals to demonstrate the correct use of simple and economic measures that rapidly reduce seabird bycatch. These devices, called mitigation measures, quickly curtail seabird deaths once adopted into daily fishing operations. By 2007, three teams were active in South Africa, Brazil and Chile. By 2008, the ATF had doubled in size, incorporating teams in Argentina, Namibia and Uruguay. More recently, Ecuador has become the seventh ATF team in southern Africa and South America.

ATF instructors were united in January for the inaugural ATF instructors' workshop at the port town of Coquimbo, Chile. This small town, famously a refuge for English pirates in the 1800s, is now home to Chile's main pelagic longline fleet, which targets swordfish and tuna. The workshop carried the explicit aims of sharing practical experiences of conservation work at sea and in ports to enhance the ATF's impact, relating key successes over the initial years and developing targeted research plans and objectives for 2009. Workshop sessions and at-sea trips benefited enormously from expert guidance thanks to leading mitigation scientists Graham Robertson (Australian Antarctic Division), Ed Melvin (Washington Sea Grants) and Ben Sullivan (BirdLife Global Seabird Programme).

The agenda was ambitious – packing a huge amount of work into one week, including at-sea practical demonstrations of mitigation measures under commercial fishing conditions. To make this work, three commercial longline fishing vessels were hired thanks to enthusiastic collaboration from local fishery companies Pesquera Omega and Pesquera SunRise. Our instructors are accustomed to working alone at sea, often in harsh conditions. In these environs, it is challenging to feed knowledge and experiences back to other ATF staff. The workshop enabled our instructors to spend time together at sea accompanied by world experts in mitigation measures.

The at-sea trips concentrated on practical comparisons and demonstrations of state-of-the-art mitigation measures. These measures are being developed through international collaborations between fishers, conservation organisations and professional fishery engineers. During the workshop, the vessels performed normal commercial fishing operations, giving ATF staff the chance to concentrate on what functions best and why. It was clear through the debriefing sessions that the time spent on-board was the highlight of the week – in marine science often a day together at sea can save months of e-mails and phone calls.

The workshop also looked at the next steps to be tackled to ensure our conservation goals are on track. The workshop split into groups to discuss regional research priorities and form targeted mitigation research plans that would define the next year's activities. Each research plan tackled a specific question that would take us a step closer to achieving the most effective mitigation measures for different types of fisheries.

The groups worked with the support of expert mitigation researchers to develop work plans and initiate collaborations between ATF teams in neighbouring countries. In order to maintain the high level of scientific support enjoyed throughout the workshop, an ATF Mitigation Advisory Group was formed that will provide the best possible guidance on at-sea research to ATF staff.

The ATF came away with clear aims and expectations for the coming years, and closed the workshop on a high note by signing the Coquimbo Declaration, which marked the commitment to conducting experimental mitigation research in longline and trawl fisheries over the next 12 months. Our ATF instructors will take this experience back to their hometown ports and vessels, where they work side-by-side with the fishing industry. This is the front line of seabird conservation and progress is crucial if we are to save these extraordinary birds from an untimely extinction. It is imperative that our actions right now make a difference or we may find it is too late.

**For further details, please contact oli.yates@gmail.com**


Ed Melvin (Washington Sea Grant)

Caio Marques from Projeto Albatroz examining streamer lines in calm weather as part of the ATF workshop at-sea sessions

# Smooth seas and skilful sailors

**During the recent Albatross Task Force (ATF) workshop, each of the teams agreed to dedicate efforts towards achieving specific research goals by the end of 2009. A friend commented that this was surely no big news, "The ATF teams agree to help save the albatross…?" This is a fair comment to some extent, as the teams are already dedicated to working with the fishing industry to reduce seabird bycatch, so what is exciting and different about this news?**

The answer is a lot! Putting into practice an at-sea research plan is by no means easy. Getting hold of permits can be time-consuming and involve cutting through a lot of red tape. However, these issues are dealt with efficiently, thanks to the knowledge and experience of local ATF teams. It is at sea where things become increasingly difficult for the willing experimenter.

Each of the ATF teams is based in an area with high seabird abundance, which generally means that there is a predominance of favourable environmental conditions for the seabirds. This often translates into pretty awful weather for anyone on-board the vessels that fish these waters. While the old proverb correctly suggests that "smooth seas do not make skilful sailors", the benefit of high winds and swollen seas are somewhat lost on those who are trying to conduct meaningful research – indeed even the most simple of tasks (walking, sleeping, eating, etc.) can be extremely frustrating and sometimes quite painful!

Additionally, and often much less predictable than the weather, captains and fishing masters make decisions that leave even the saltiest sea-dog completely perplexed. These decisions can literally turn a vessel back to port halfway through a trip, thus ruining the chances of collecting comparable data.

So, what is new for the ATF? From its inception, the ATF has worked with the fishing industry to incorporate existing mitigation measures into on-board practice and improve the awareness of seabird conservation among fishers. This has not changed, and remains the ATF's key focus. This strategy has brought real results – opinions are changing and mitigation measures are being adopted. However, along the way questions naturally crop up about compatibility between different types of fishing gear and mitigation measures. These technical questions must be answered with innovative research if we are to provide the best possible suite of measures for each fishery.

Few captains wish to change fishing gear configurations, and if you ask why a certain method is used, a typical answer is that it has always been done like that. Why change it if it works? This position is understandable, given the potential dangers for crew when altering fishing operations – the unpredictable consequences of such actions are certainly not welcome during a storm. On top of this, small changes to gear configurations can quickly be blamed for low catches and it requires strong evidence to prove otherwise. We need to demonstrate not only the effectiveness of mitigation measures in reducing seabird deaths, but also that there is no impact on target catch.

To do this we need to trial various scientific experiments in an on-board setting. One such example is the placement of weights on hook lines. The position of weight closer to each hook may cause the hook to sink faster and therefore disappear more rapidly out of the reach of diving seabirds. But what are the consequences of such a gear change? Firstly, the fishers on deck may have to deploy gear differently; this may affect the speed at which they can set a line, which in turn may affect how many hooks they can set per night – potentially reducing the overall target catch. Operational changes can affect safety, as crew have to perform unfamiliar routines, that can be potentially hazardous on-board fishing vessels. Once in the water, the proximity of the weight to the hook may make the bait less attractive to target fish – could this reduce target catch also?

All of these practical questions are soon to be tackled by the various ATF teams in different countries. The new focus of the ATF on at-sea research is both exciting and vital to seabird conservation. The results may effect real changes in the way we fish and avoid killing vulnerable marine species, like seabirds.

**For further details, please contact oli.yates@gmail.com**

Oli Yates (ATF Co-ordinator)

**Pelagic longline setting station – a challenging experimental platform**

Ben Sullivan

The crew like the way safe leads handle in the hook bins, which is critical to a smooth setting operation

# Safe leads and bait pods

**As reported in *Sea Change* issue 4, the Global Seabird Programme (GSP) has been working closely with Fishtek Ltd. (UK) to develop Safe Leads to increase the uptake of line weighting in pelagic longline fisheries by improving crew safety. See the July 2009 issue of *Fishing News International* (www.intrafish.no/fni) for a detailed update of Safe Lead trials and developments.**

In addition to the Safe Leads, the GSP is working with Fishtek to develop a 'Bait Pod' (capsule) for pelagic longline fisheries. This prevents seabirds and possibly turtles from accessing baits before a pressure sensitive valve operates at a pre-determined depth to release baited hooks. The pod encapsulates the point and barb of baited hooks and is attached to the branchline. When it reaches a predetermined depth, the pod releases and the hook falls free of the pod and sinks a few metres to reach the desired fishing depth.

Over the last 12 months, Fishtek have worked to develop and test the pressure-release mechanism that forms the basis of the pod. Several prototypes have been developed and tested under laboratory conditions and the final prototype has a success rate of over 99.5% of opening at between 1 and 2 bar, which translates to an opening (pressure release) depth of between 10 and 20 metres. This depth is beyond the diving depth of most seabirds that are vulnerable to longline bycatch, with the exception of shearwaters. The pressure-release mechanism is adaptable to open at any target depth, which means that it could potentially be used in deep-set fisheries to open below the danger zone for turtles and some sharks.

In December 2008, under permits issued by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), Ben Sullivan and Pete Kibel (Fishtek) took part in a two-day charter on a commercial tuna longliner (FV Thylacine) based in Hobart, Tasmania. The objective was to conduct operational trials to test how well the pressure-release mechanism works under operational conditions and how compatible the pod is with normal deck practices during setting and hauling operations. Subsequent trials were also conducted with Albatross Task Force (ATF) instructors during the ATF Workshop in Coquimbo (January 2009). During both sets of trials, the pod opened and successfully released the hook in 100% of treatments (around 90). Talking to the fishermen during both sets of trials highlighted several aspects of the pod that could be improved to make it easier to use during preparation and setting of the lines. Once these modifications are made we plan to conduct another short set of operational trials before planning for full-scale tests on the effectiveness of the pod in reducing seabird bycatch.

**Contact Pete Kibel (pete@fishtek.co.uk) or check out Fishtek's new website at: www.fishtekmarine.com**

# Tristan albatrosses on Gough Island


A Tristan albatross with chick on Gough Island

Ross Wanless

**The Tristan albatross, *Diomedea dabbenena*, bred historically on Tristan da Cunha, Inaccessible and Gough islands. However, it became locally extinct on Tristan around the turn of the 20th century. Devastating predation by pigs and harvesting by humans caused the population on Inaccessible Island to collapse from more than 200 pairs to an average of less than one pair per year, and from a population demography point of view, this is effectively an extinct colony. The remainder of the population breeds on Gough Island, making it one of only two great albatross species (the other being the Amsterdam albatross, *D. amsterdamensis*) effectively endemic to a single island.**

In 2005, dramatic video evidence from Gough Island gave unequivocal proof that the house mouse *Mus musculus*, which was accidentally introduced to Gough Island some time in the early 1800s, was responsible for massive mortality amongst Tristan albatross chicks – in some areas fewer than 10% of nests successfully fledged chicks. The average breeding success (chicks per pair) for the island was ~30%, around half of what it should be. The details were reported in a paper to *Biology Letters*, published in 2007. This, incidentally, represented the first solid proof of widespread, devastating impacts of house mice on seabirds, raising concern for many other islands where mice and seabirds co-occur.

In the ensuing years, researchers from the RSPB and the Percy FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town, have tracked breeding success and counted the number of pairs returning to breed each year. Breeding success remains low; in fact, in 2008 it was lower by half than any previous year – a really shocking result. But of more urgent concern is the rate at which adults return to the island. An analysis of resightings of banded birds showed that Tristan albatross annual survival rates were appallingly low – each year about 9% of the adults were dying. Great albatrosses, more than just about any other species, rely on very high adult survival for their population to remain stable or to grow. A few scenarios in a demographic model showed that individually, mouse impacts or low adult survival were sufficiently poor to drive a population decrease. However, when these two are combined, the effects are catastrophic.


Albatross Plain on Gough Island, the rugged terrain and remote position of Gough Island make eradication attempts difficult

Ross Wanless

The Global Seabird Programme has identified the Atlantic Ocean, where most Tristan albatrosses forage, as a priority area for action. Work with the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas is geared towards ensuring that seabird bycatch is minimised, to reverse the steep decreases of the Tristan albatross. But what about the mice?

Work towards a full-scale mouse eradication on Gough took a big step forward in 2008 with the finalisation of a feasibility assessment from a New Zealand expert, John Parkes. He found that although a few areas of uncertainty exist, essentially there were no significant obstacles to undertaking an eradication. Work is now progressing to identify the best bait type, requisite baiting densities, etc. Once these details are sorted out, and assuming there are no adverse discoveries that could affect a successful outcome, fundraising for an eradication will begin. Hopefully, if all goes well, Gough Island will be rid of the mouse plague in the next three to five years.

**Please contact Ross Wanless (gsp@birdlife.org.za) for further details.**

# Best Practice Technical Guidelines for reducing seabird bycatch

**The Global Seabird Programme (GSP) has been involved in working to strengthen the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) International Plan of Action-Seabirds (IPOA-Seabirds) since its adoption in 1999. The IPOA-Seabirds calls for States involved in longline fishing to develop a National Plan of Action-Seabirds (NPOA-Seabirds) to reduce seabird bycatch. The GSP has long argued that to meet its overall conservation objectives the IPOA-Seabirds needs to address non-longline fisheries (eg. trawl and gillnet) that are also known to cause high levels of seabird bycatch.**

NPOA-Seabirds provides a vehicle for reducing the incidental catch of seabirds through the provision of a cyclical framework of data collection, research and monitoring to quantify and reduce (mitigate) the incidental mortality of seabirds, while continually refining mitigation measures and their implementation. BirdLife and our collaborators have worked with the FAO and Member States for several years to develop guidelines to strengthen the implementation of IPOA-Seabirds by; (1) assisting countries in preparing and implementing more effective NPOA-S; (2) providing Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) with guidance on implementing IPOA-Seabirds within a regional framework; and (3) addressing the incidental catch of seabirds in other relevant gears (eg. trawl and gillnet).

At the 26th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2005, the GSP tabled a document entitled *Essential elements for NPOA-Seabirds: Best Practice Guidelines*. This was followed in 2007 at the 27th Session of COFI by the Committee supporting the need for the elaboration of Best Practice Technical Guidelines (BPTG) to support NPOA-Seabirds. It was agreed that FAO should, in co-operation with relevant bodies, develop BPTG to assist countries and RFMOs in implementation of the IPOA-Seabirds and that the guidelines should be extended to other relevant fishing gears.

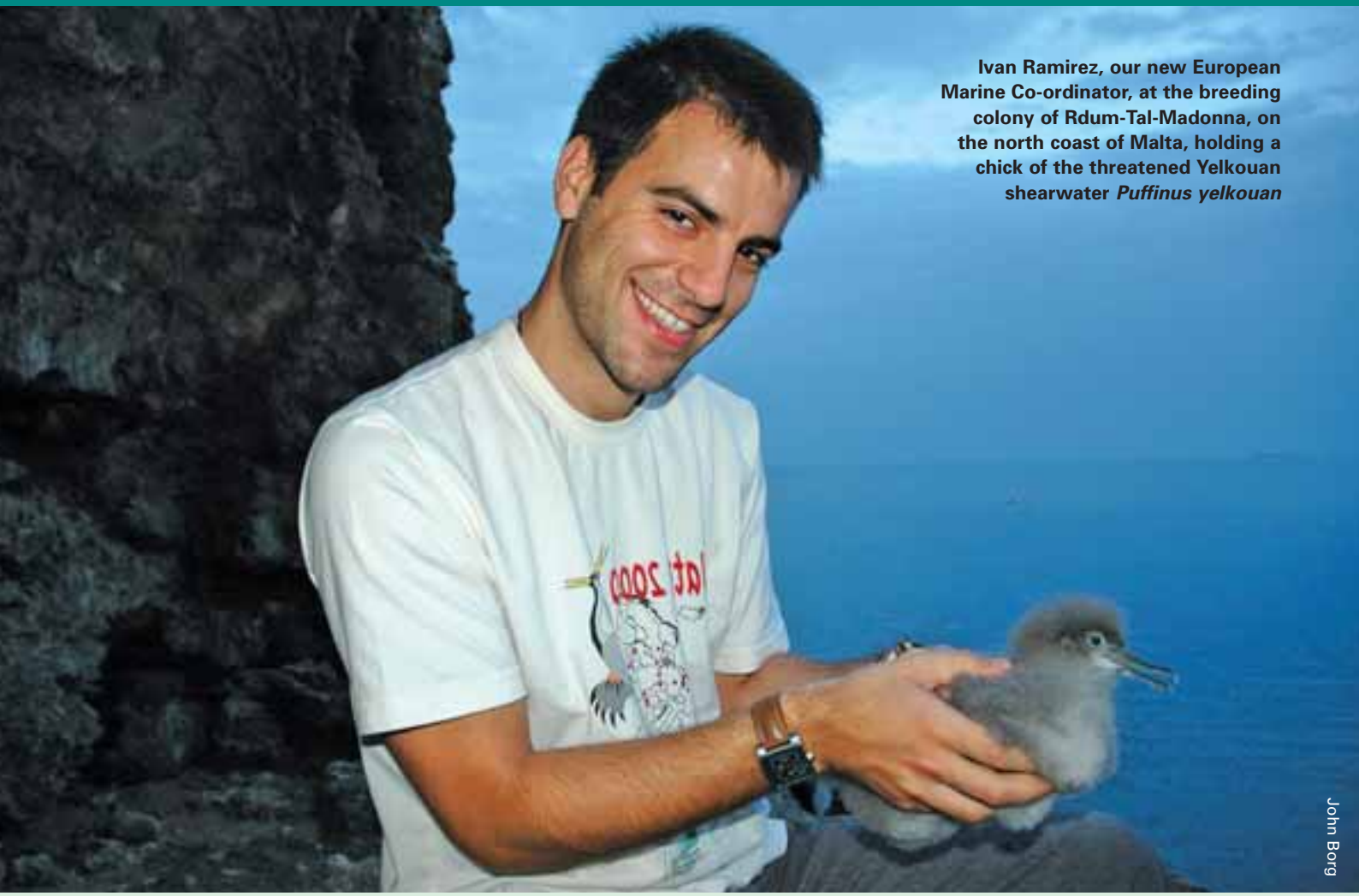
In response to the directions and recommendations from COFI, FAO planned and organised an Expert Consultation to develop *Best Practice Technical Guidelines supporting the implementation of IPOA-Seabirds and elaboration of NPOA-Seabirds*. The Expert Consultation was held in Bergen, Norway from 2 to 5 September 2008, where the FAO assembled a group of experts and resource persons on NPOA-Seabirds, the mitigation of the incidental catch of seabirds and RFMOs. The invited experts, from Member States of the FAO, included Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, EU, Japan, Norway, South Africa and the USA. Experts were also invited from the GSP, Agreement for the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

At the 28th Session of the UN FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) on 2–6 March 2009, attended by Ben Sullivan and Euan Dunn, there was strong support from several key FAO Member States for the BPTG, and the Committee encouraged the FAO Secretariat to proceed with the publication of the BPTG. This is a significant step for seabird conservation and while there is considerable work to be done working with countries and RFMOs to implement the BPTG for the first time, we have a baseline that all NPOA-Seabirds should strive to meet for longline, trawl and potentially gillnet fisheries.

**For a copy of the BPTG see FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report 880 (www.fao.org/fishery/ipoa-seabirds/npoa/en). For further details, contact Ben Sullivan, ben.sullivan@rspb.org.uk**

**A key outcome of the adoption of new guidelines is that they promote best practice for trawl and other gears that impact on seabirds, not just longlines as in the original FAO International Plan of Action**

Guy Shorrock (rspb-images.com)



Ivan Ramirez, our new European Marine Co-ordinator, at the breeding colony of Rdum-Tal-Madonna, on the north coast of Malta, holding a chick of the threatened Yelkouan shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*

John Borg

# Welcoming our new Regional Co-ordinators

**Since the Global Seabird Programme (GSP) HQ relocated to the UK in 2004, we have been working towards developing a model of Regional Co-ordinators placed across the BirdLife regions. These Co-ordinators will be responsible for the strategic development of the GSP programme within their region and act as a conduit for communications between the Partnership and the GSP. This model was endorsed by the BirdLife Council in May 2008 and further discussed at the BirdLife World Conference in Buenos Aires in September 2009. Currently, the governance and strategic planning for the GSP is conducted by a Steering Committee with representatives from the key BirdLife Partners/regions engaged in the programme.**

The first Regional Co-ordinator (Esteban Frere) was appointed in South America in 2006. Esteban is based with Aves Argentinas and has played a critical role in supporting BirdLife Partners and the strategic growth of the GSP in the Latin American region. This included driving the initial establishment of the Albatross Task Force (ATF) in the region and subsequently working closely with Oli Yates (ATF Co-ordinator, Chile), co-ordinating GSP regional input for the Agreement for the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs). **For more information, contact Esteban Frere at avesmarinas.sudamerica@avesargentinas.org.ar**

Since the World Conference 2008, we have appointed two new Co-ordinators; Ross Wanless (Africa, based with BirdLife South Africa) and Ivan Ramirez (Europe, based with Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves [SPEA]).

Ross's work involves overseeing the work of the ATF in South Africa and Namibia and working with the GSP team to strengthen the steps taken by RFMOs to reduce seabird bycatch and improve fisheries sustainability. A third major focus in Africa is to commence a marine IBA programme by working through the BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat in Nairobi. Nature Seychelles has already taken up the challenge and the hope is that others will soon follow suite. **Please contact Ross Wanless at gsp@birdlife.org.za for more information.**

In January 2009, Ivan commenced in his new role as European Marine Co-ordinator. This position is partly funded by SPEA, HOS (BirdLife Partner in Greece) and the Global Seabird Programme, and within its main responsibilities he will try to expand the current network of marine IBAs into the Mediterranean, Black, North and Baltic seas. Other duties involve strengthening links with the North African countries and working at the EU Institutions to lobby for better European policy towards marine protection. **For further details, contact Ivan Ramirez at ivan.ramirez@birdlife.org**

# Marine IBAs become real for European Union's largest EEZ

**Of the 334 species of seabird recorded around the world, 20 breed in Portugal and many more use its Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ). The Portuguese EEZ is the largest in the EU and 11th in the world. It is comprised of the areas of continental Portugal and the archipelagos of Azores and Madeira (Macaronesia). This vast oceanic area represented a huge challenge both logistically and financially for Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA, Portuguese BirdLife partner), when attempting to map a network of Marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs).**

The high specificity, size and inaccessibility of the Portuguese EEZ required an integrated approach that combined various data collection techniques, eg. boat and plane surveys, satellite imagery, tracking data from individual birds and statistical modelling of the data obtained over different seasons and years. The final step, which was the application of IBA criteria, was then carried out following recent modifications proposed by BirdLife.

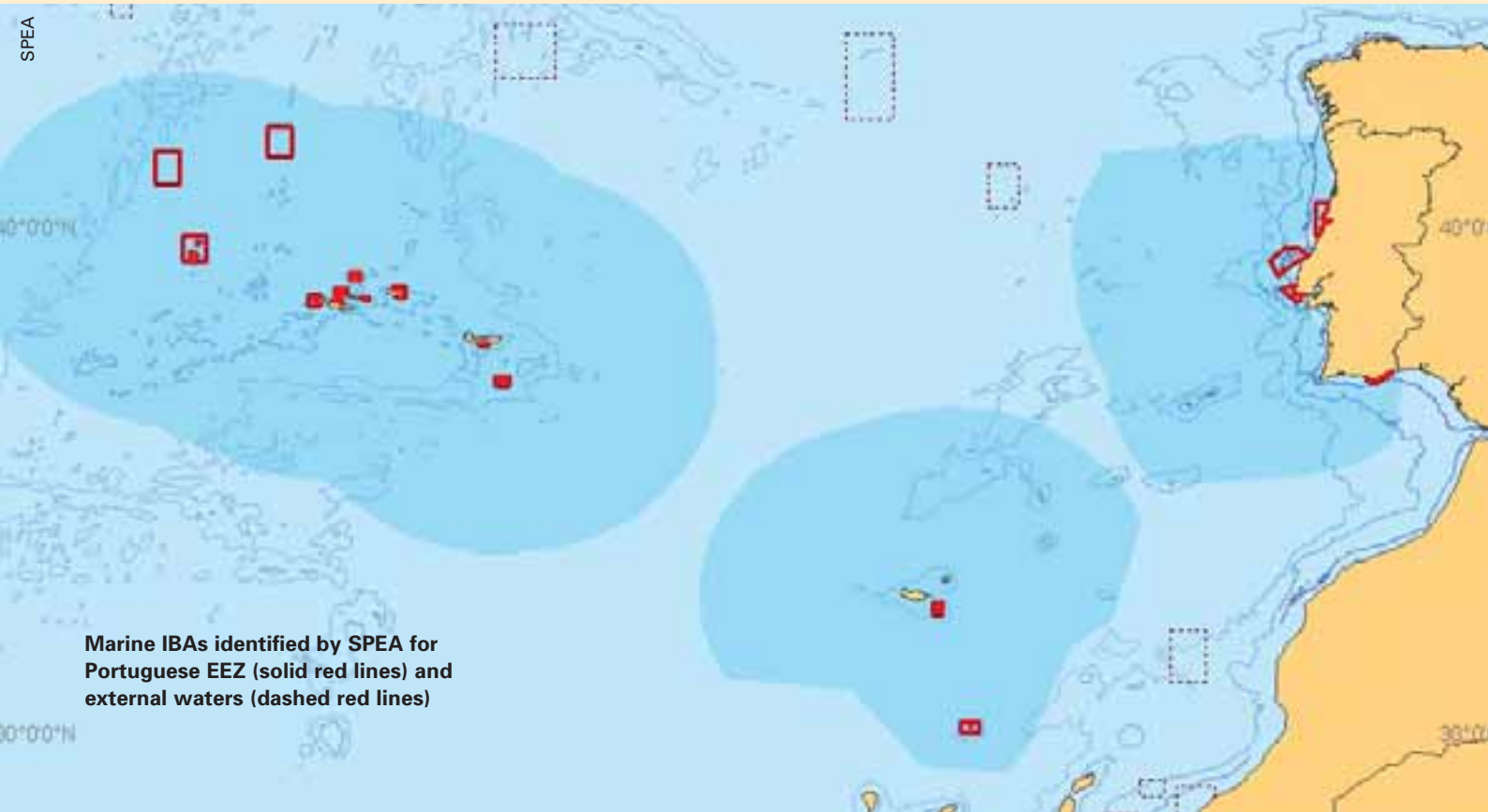
Finally, after four years of intense data collection and analyses, the Marine IBA network of Portugal has been defined and is now currently being promoted. Our next step – to lobby for the legal protection of these areas under national and European legislation – has already started in close collaboration with our partners in Spain (where a sister project has taken place simultaneously) and the European BirdLife office.

All in all, 17 Marine IBAs have been identified for Portugal. Four in the continental Portuguese EEZ, 11 around Azores, two around Madeira and a further 10 identified outside of or within other countries' national waters. The boundaries of each IBA were fine-tuned where possible and a polygon defined for each. It was decided that the final boundaries of IBAs should use horizontal and vertical lines, since this format is more practical for the application of management measures in the future.

The Portuguese Marine IBAs book was published in March 2009 and has received very positive responses, not only from the Portuguese stakeholders, but also from other countries looking to follow the methods developed by SPEA and SEO/BirdLife for their own Marine IBA identification projects. There are currently a large number of such projects ongoing in Greece, Malta and Italy in Europe, as well as further afield. Given the likely international profile of the publication, SPEA decided to make it bilingual and to create an e-book – a digital version that can be found at http://lifeibasmarinhas.spea.pt/y-book/STANDALONE/

This page allows visitors to electronically navigate through the book at high resolution and to e-mail or download a pdf version. Through this online resource, BirdLife partners can critique and utilise the 'Marine IBA toolkit'. This toolkit, co-ordinated by BirdLife International, contains basic guidelines for countries that wish to follow a standardised approach to defining in-country Marine IBAs.

**Contact ivan.ramirez@birdlife.org for further information.**




**Marine IBAs identified by SPEA for Portuguese EEZ (solid red lines) and external waters (dashed red lines)**

# Marine Important Bird Areas going global

**The Marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs) programme has received a relatively high profile within the BirdLife Partnership since October 2008, and as a result there has been a great deal of interest around the globe. Increasingly, BirdLife Partners want to work on issues relating to maritime planning and Marine Protected Areas, and ensure that seabirds are adequately included in these processes.**

The methods for identifying and delimiting marine IBA are now more clearly defined thanks to the pioneering work conducted in Europe by BirdLife Partners in Portugal, Spain and the eastern Baltic. New projects following similar methods are now beginning in Greece, Malta and Italy.

A number of recent workshops have meant that the methods developed in Europe have been standardised so that they can now be applied worldwide. We now have a clear understanding of what steps are required to compile a marine IBA inventory from scratch and can provide guidance along the way to Partners to ensure we have a global network of truly comparable sites.

Exporting these methods around the globe has begun and a number of new initiatives are now under way. We hope that further projects will follow so that there may be a model marine IBA project in each BirdLife Region:

- On the western seaboard of North America, the Barrow to Baja project has brought together BirdLife Partners from USA, Canada and Mexico to identify a network of marine IBAs covering the whole of the NE Pacific coast;
- In New Zealand, analysis of albatross and petrel tracking data is identifying a number of high diversity hotspots that are most in danger of being adversely affected by fisheries activities;
- In Argentina, all coastal breeding sites have been reviewed and a proposal for identification of offshore sites developed in the Western Indian Ocean project proposals have been developed covering 10 countries, five of which are within the BirdLife Partnership.

According to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)'s 2006 summary report of the current status of the global marine protected area network, just 0.65% of the global ocean is within protected area systems, and most of that lies within the first few miles of territorial seas. The CBD and the World Summit on Sustainable Development have adopted a target of establishing a representative network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) globally by 2012. However, the International Union for Conservation of Nature estimates that unless progress is accelerated, this goal will not be met until 2060, half a century late.

BirdLife's IBAs programme has a substantial record of assisting in the identification, planning and sustainable management of networks of land-based protected areas, such as Special Protection Areas in Europe. The same approach can be applied to the identification of MPAs.

BirdLife is already inputting into the CBD process for producing guidelines for the establishment of MPAs within territorial waters and on the high seas. An analysis of the Tracking Ocean Wanderers dataset is planned to help identify high seas hotspots for seabirds in greatest need of protection. A number of meetings relating to the CBD in 2009 and 2010 will offer BirdLife further opportunity to showcase its marine IBAs work on a world scale and lead to greater protection for the world's seabirds.

**Contact ben.lascelles@birdlife.org for more details.**

Ben Lascelles

**Wandering albatross, *Diomedea exulans* – analyses of albatross tracking data will identify a number of high seas Important Bird Areas that can be promoted at Convention on Biological Diversity meetings in 2010**

Barry Watkins

Keeping seabirds out of the danger zone – streamer lines in use behind a trawler

# BirdLife Global Seabird Programme launches Seabird Bycatch Mitigation Fact-sheets

**In recent years, there has been significant progress made with the development of technical measures (mitigation measures) to reduce seabird bycatch in longline and trawl fisheries. But there has been no 'one-stop shop' to review descriptions, technical details and best practice operational guidelines for these measures.**

Over the last 12 months, the BirdLife Global Seabird Programme has been working closely with world leaders in seabird bycatch mitigation to develop a series of 14 Seabird Bycatch Mitigation Fact-sheets. The series provides the latest best practice advice to fishermen and policy makers about how they can most effectively reduce seabird mortality in pelagic and demersal longline and trawl fisheries. Each mitigation measure is assessed based on current scientific knowledge, including findings of the latest at-sea experimental research. Each Fact-sheet addresses a specific mitigation measure and makes recommendations about the most effective combination of measures. The table below gives a list of the Fact-sheets that are currently available.

The series of Fact-sheets has been designed to influence the uptake of best practice mitigation in coastal state and high seas fisheries. We have worked closely with the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP) to assist us in maintaining a dynamic and up-to-date resource that captures new findings derived from mitigation research and operational implementation. One of the first applications of the Fact-sheets will be their submission to upcoming regional fisheries management organisation meetings. Electronic copies can be found at: www.rspb.org.uk/albatross/publications

**For more information regarding the content of the Fact-sheets, please contact ben.sullivan@rspb.org.uk**

| Fact-sheet | Target fisheries | Mitigation measures |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Demersal longline | Streamer lines |
| 2 | Demersal longline | Line weighting – external weights |
| 3 | Demersal longline | Integrated weight longlines |
| 4 | Demersal longline | Line weighting – Chilean system |
| 5 | Demersal and pelagic longline | Night-setting |
| 6 | Demersal longline | Underwater setting chute |
| 7 | Pelagic longline | Streamer lines |
| 8 | Pelagic longline | Line weighting |
| 9 | Pelagic longline | Side-setting |
| 10 | Pelagic longline | Blue-dyed bait (squid) |
| 11 | Pelagic longline | Bait caster and line shooter |
| 12 | Demersal and pelagic longline | Haul mitigation |
| 13 | Trawl | Warp strike |
| 14 | Trawl | Net entanglement |

**Example of the Seabird Bycatch Mitigation Fact-sheets**

Steve Cranwell

Spreading bait amongst dense prickly pear, New Caledonia

# Restoration of globally important seabird colonies in the Pacific – the story continues

**In *Sea Change* issue 4 (August 2008), we reported on a project being implemented by the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership to restore priority seabird islands in the Pacific, through the eradication of invasive alien species – mainly rats. The project, funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, has now been successfully completed.**

The Pacific islands and territories occupy 2% of an area greater than 38 million km$^2$, which typically host high levels of endemism but relatively low species diversity. Habitat loss and the introduction of invasive species are the main drivers for species extinctions in the region. As many seabirds have no natural defences to predation by cats, rats and mongooses, seabird numbers have declined dramatically and breeding colonies contracted in range over the last decade.

Recognising this threat and the need for urgent action, the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership (supported by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation) removed rodents from 16 high-priority islands in French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Palau and Fiji between 2007 and 2009.

In French Polynesia, the project focused on the islet of Teuaua, located in the Marquesas archipelago, and the Rangiroa Atoll in the Tuamotu group. Teuaua hosts one of the most important sooty tern colonies in French Polynesia with a population of 75,000 breeding pairs. Rangiroa Atoll supports 12 breeding species of tropical seabird as well as globally important populations of the Polynesian ground-dove (CR), bristle-thighed curlew (VU) and blue lorikeet (VU). The Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie 'Manu' spread poisoned rat bait by hand on both Teuaua and Rangiroa. In the case of Teuaua, this required hoisting 150 kg bait-bags up 10 metre cliffs!

In New Caledonia, the Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie (SCO) focused on three islands in the great reef of Koumac. These three sites support 23,000 pairs of wedge-tailed shearwaters, breeding areas for the nationally critically endangered fairy terns, the bulk of New Caledonia's roseate tern colonies as well as the last known breeding location of the white-throated storm-petrel. SCO hand-broadcasted 'green pills' (Brodifacoum) across a network of tracks designed to achieve maximum exposure to rats.

The island of Fana in Palau hosts tens of thousands of red-footed and brown boobies, black noddies, frigatebirds and terns. However, a recent introduction of rats threatened the survival of these seabird colonies and the Palau Conservation Society (PCS) decided to take action. The logistics of the Fana operation were complicated thanks to an unreliable boat service to the island and the need to establish a network of tracks some 35 km long! ▶

# PARTNER NEWS

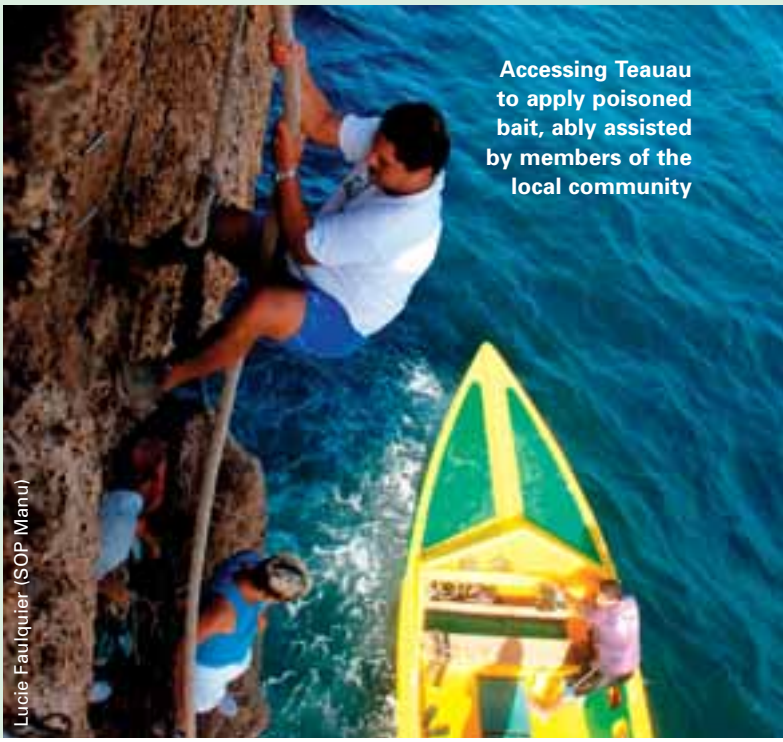
◀ Nevertheless, after a mammoth effort, led by PCS and supported by people from the neighbouring island, the bait was applied comprehensively to the entire island and the team returned home tired, but satisfied at a job well done.

In Fiji, the BirdLife Fiji Programme removed rats from seven islands in the Ringgold group in the extreme north-east of Fiji, and from the island of Mabualau, near Fiji's main island Viti Levu. All sites host internationally significant seabird populations including tens of thousands of noddies, boobies, lesser frigatebirds, and multiple tern species. For the remote Ringgold islands, an aerial operation was the only feasible option, which was a first for Fiji and the tropical Pacific. The successful completion of this operation was greatly celebrated by the island residents, as rats have been a significant pest problem for many years. In Mabualau, community involvement was critical throughout both planning and eradication stages, and has led to a strong sense of ownership for the conservation work undertaken. The success of the project has also led to requests from landowners to have the island formally protected.

While the ultimate success of these eradication campaigns will not be known for 12 to 18 months, early indications on each of the 16 islands are extremely positive. Meanwhile, the campaign to keep these islands rat-free has already started, and the next phase of the BirdLife Pacific Island Restoration Programme is about to commence.

**Please contact steve@birdlifepacific.org.fj for further details.**

***This project has been supported by a large number of individuals, local communities, Government Departments and NGOs, including the Pacific Invasives Initiative, the Pacific Invasives Learning Network and the New Zealand Department of Conservation.***



Lucie Faulquier (SOP Manu)

**Accessing Teauau to apply poisoned bait, ably assisted by members of the local community**

## Upcoming events

**The 1st World Seabird Conference** will be held on 7 to 11 September 2010 in Victoria, Canada. Workshops will be taking place throughout the week and, although the agenda is yet to be finalised, we hope to feature the work of the Global Seabird Programme in many of these sessions. The Pacific Seabird Group is hosting the conference. More information can be found at **www.pacificseabirdgroup.org**

**The Convention on Biological Diversity** will meet from 29 September to 2 October 2009 in Ottawa, Canada. An expert workshop will convene to provide scientific and technical guidance on the use of biogeographic classification systems and identification of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction in need of protection. The work of the Global Seabird Programme will contribute to this meeting through detailed analyses of the Tracking Ocean Wanderers database.

## End notes

**The Global Seabird Programme is co-ordinated, on behalf of the BirdLife International Partnership, by the RSPB (BirdLife Partner in the UK).**

Programme staff at the RSPB include Euan Dunn (Head of Marine Policy), Cleo Small (Global Seabird Programme Senior Policy Officer), Ben Sullivan (Global Seabird Programme Co-ordinator) and Orea Anderson (Global Seabird Programme Policy Officer). Please feel free to contact Orea by e-mail at: **orea.anderson@rspb.org.uk** with comments and potential articles.

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