



**1st South American Fishers Forum
to Reduce the Incidental Capture of Seabirds**

Report of the South American Fishers Forum

12 – 14th December 2006

Guaruja, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Sponsor



Host



Supporters



Ministry of
Fisheries
Te Tautiaki i nga tini a Tangaroa



**Southern Seabird
Solutions**



Table of Contents

1 Introduction..... 1

2 Purpose of the Forum..... 1

3 Participation..... 2

4 Programme Outline 2

5 Comments on the Forum 5

6 Conclusion 6

1 Introduction

In 2000, the New Zealand Department of Conservation, in conjunction with the Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the New Zealand fishing industry held the first International Fishers Forum in Auckland. The purpose of the forum was to bring fishermen and fishing industry representatives from different countries together to exchange information on fishing practices that reduce or avoid the incidental mortality of seabirds. This was seen as a way to encourage the rapid spread of seabird safe fishing practices around the globe. Two further forums have since been held; one in Hawaii and another in Japan. The scope of the forums has been expanded to include turtles, marine mammals and responsible fishing.

The next logical step to ensure ongoing communication of information between fleets was more focused workshops within regions, addressing the fisheries and fishing methods that were typical of the region.

The Southern Seabird Solutions Trust proposed the idea of a South American forum to key contacts working on the issue within South America, and they all responded favorably. Sponsorship for the forum was then secured from Care for the Wild in the UK, and Projeto Albatroz agreed to organize and host the forum. Funding support was also received from the US Embassy, and the New Zealand Ministry of Fisheries. Organisational support was received from IBAMA (Brazilian Institute of the Environment) and Southern Seabird Solutions.

A steering group was created including Tatiana Neves and Heloisa Azevedo (the key individuals within Projeto Albatroz), Jose Kowalski (ship owner, Brazil), Joanna Alfaro (Pro Delphinus, Peru), Carlos Moreno (Universidad de Austral de Chile), Esteban Frere (Birdlife International, Argentina) and Janice Molloy (Southern Seabird Solutions, NZ). A team of Projeto Albatroz volunteers assisted during the forum.

The forum was held at the Hotel Delphin, Guarujá, Sao Paulo, Brazil between the 12-14th December 2006. Simultaneous interpretation was provided in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

2 Purpose of the Forum

The purpose of the forum was to:

- Provide fishermen with the latest information about efficient mitigation measures and information about new measures under development
- Identify regional priorities for the development of fishing techniques and other research needs
- Discuss the creation of incentive measures for the adoption of mitigation measures in South American countries
- Identify opportunities for fishing fleets to cooperate in testing new or improved mitigation measures
- Establish an information network between fishers and ship owners in South America for the continuation of the discussions held at the forum

This and other information about the forum can be found at www.forumdepescadores.com.br

3 Participation

Individuals from seven South American countries (Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Falklands/Malvinas, Uruguay and Brazil) and three overseas countries (US, NZ and Australia) attended the forum. Around a half of the 65 participants were fishermen or fishing industry representatives and the rest were a mix of researchers, government representatives and environmental NGOs.

The Brazilian Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries attended the opening ceremony of the Forum. Brazilian television, print and radio media attended the opening.

4 Programme Outline

The forum was opened with brief scene setting presentations from the following people:

Mr. Rômulo Mello – Director de Fauna e Recursos Pesqueiros do IBAMA

Mr. Altemir Gregolin, Secretario Especial de Aquicultura e Pesca do Brasil

Mrs. Janice Molloy - Southern Seabird Solutions - New Zealand

Mrs. Patricia Palumbo, Diretora Geral do Instituto Albatroz

The opening was followed by a group photo.

The purpose of the remainder of the first day was to build a picture of the nature and extent of seabird bycatch in South America, and a review of progress in addressing this country by country. A researcher and a fisherman from each country made a joint presentation and time was allowed for questions and discussion.

At the start of day 2, Carlos Moreno, Chile recapped on the key themes that emerged from the first day. These included:

1. Each country is at a different stage of addressing seabird bycatch, but all have made progress since the First International Fishers Forum in 2000. Of note, several countries (Chile, Argentina and Falkland/Malvinas) have had sufficient observer coverage to prove that the number of seabirds being caught has declined in some of their fisheries.
2. The level of bycatch in Peru and Ecuador has yet to be determined, but both countries have large artisanal fleets.
3. The South American countries represented have constructive working relationships between individuals in the fishing industry, environmental NGOs and the government. Those countries that had made the most progress had the strongest relationships.

4. Most speakers emphasized the importance of involving fishermen in finding or refining mitigation measures to increase their commitment to using the measures.
5. The fishermen at the conference spoke confidently and eloquently about the seabird issue. It was obvious these individuals have the leadership skills to become advocates for the issue in their country.
6. Almost all countries have either commenced or completed their National Plan of Actions for seabirds
7. There are opportunities for countries facing the same problems to collaborate. Examples include the pelagic longline fisheries in Uruguay and Brazil, and the demersal Spanish double longline systems used in Chile, and the Falklands/Malvinas.

The next session was entitled “Learning from Each other – Experiences of Overseas Fishermen”. Presentations were made by Richard Wells (NZ) on progress in the NZ trawl fleet, Dave Kreutz (Australia) on the East Coast pelagic longline fleet, Mark Lundsten (USA) on the Alaskan longline fishery and Jose Tenorio (Spain) on longline fishing in CCAMLR.

This session was followed by small group discussions on the factors at play in South America that will aid rapid progress (i.e. strengths), and conversely the factors holding back progress.

The strengths that were identified included:

- All countries now have observers programs in place
- Individuals with technical expertise are present in all countries
- There is the potential for strong collaboration using the existing (and expanding) network of people working on seabird bycatch,
- Most countries have initiated or finalized National Plans of Action for seabirds. Several without a Plan are about to initiate one
- There is strong cooperation between researchers and the fishing industry in all countries
- Most countries present belong to ACAP (Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels)

The areas holding back progress included:

- Economic issues that limit the ability to expand observer programs, undertake education and awareness raising, enforcement and research
- Lack of political will in some countries
- Lack of data on some fisheries, particularly trawling and gill netting and fisheries operating outside and adjacent to EEZs.
- Lack of standardisation of data collection methods
- Lack of good observer training

After lunch a series of presentations were made on topics that are relevant to making progress on seabird bycatch. These included a presentation on the albatross task force that Birdlife International are establishing in South America (ten advisory officers will

be employed to work with fishermen), the role of observers and ways to make them more effective and welcome on board vessels, emerging markets for sustainable seafood, and lessons learnt from addressing turtle bycatch (ways to work with fishermen).

On the final day after a brief recap of the second day, participants broke into small groups and discussed the following topics:

Group 1: Best known mitigation measures for each fishing method used in South America

Group 2: On board observers – increasing their acceptance in fisheries

Group 3: Effective ways to introduce fishermen to mitigation measures

Group 4: Strategies to attain the benefits of sustainable seafood markets for South America

Groups were asked to identify priority actions under each heading.

A full description of the findings of each group will be included in the proceedings, but in summary:

Group 1 developed a table that listed all fisheries in each country, the type of mitigation measures already in use, measures that could be immediately adopted and those that needed testing. From this table, the group generated a list of priority actions for each country in relation to mitigation measures.

Group 2 developed a table that listed problems associated with observer schemes and solutions.

Group 3 reviewed ways that have been used to introduce mitigation measures to fishermen to date and identified the important elements

Group 4 tackled their topic by firstly suggesting four questions are answered: What is the objective, who is the audience, what is the message, and how can the message be best delivered. By answering these questions, the usefulness of certification schemes and other types of sustainable market schemes can be considered alongside other methods of communication. This group also came up with a series of actions that would help evaluate the benefits, costs and effectiveness of certification.

In the final session of the forum, each person made a personal commitment to actions that they would take to help address seabird bycatch. These were projected onto a screen for everyone to read during this session. The statements will appear in the proceedings. It was agreed that there would be a second South American Fishers Forum in early 2008 in Argentina, and participants would report back on progress they have made on their commitment, as well as other initiatives born as a result of the forum.

5 Comments on the Forum

1. The Forum was very useful in exposing a new group of fishermen to the seabird bycatch issue. They all showed a keen interest in the issue and as a result of the forum there is now a nucleus of fishermen in South America spread across all of the countries present who will be excellent ambassadors for seabirds in their fleets. It will be important to maintain contact with these individuals to ensure they feel supported and to keep their motivation up. Participants asked for a list of everyone's emails – it will be important for people to keep in contact and let each other know about progress in their country. This will ensure that the good ideas developed at the forum are acted on. The second forum provides an imperative to make quick progress. It would be useful to have a central coordinator within South America to keep everyone in touch.
2. There were opportunities within the sessions and in the breaks for fishermen to exchange technical information on mitigation techniques and ways to implement these. During lunchtimes and tea breaks, huddles formed around laptops to view photos and video footage of mitigation measures in use. Notable amongst these were the following, all of which will be tested further in new fisheries:
 - A new way of setting Spanish double line fishing gear that appears to eliminate seabird bycatch, as well as stop orca feeding on caught fish. The later effect will act as a strong incentive for fishermen to use it. So far it has been tested in Chile and Falkland/Malvinas.
 - Mark Lundsten informed fishermen about a light-weight tori line he developed for small inshore vessels in Alaska. This could have great application in South America. Mark is sending some examples for people to test.
 - For larger longline vessels, Dave Kreutz from Australia showed video footage of a tori line used in Australia that incorporates a road cone to provide tension
 - Different line weighting regimes were discussed for pelagic longlines. Data on sink rates of different weights and positions of weights was discussed and several fishermen agreed to test these in their fisheries
 - Mitigation measures for trawlers that have been tested in the Falklands/Malvinas and New Zealand were described, and the suitability of these for other trawl fisheries such as the Argentinean trawl fishery were discussed.
 - A Vessel Management Plan template for seabirds in trawl fisheries used in New Zealand which could be of use in trawl fleets in Argentina and other countries
3. Peru and Ecuador have large artisanal fleets. Anecdotal information suggests that incidental bycatch is relatively low (except perhaps central Peru where bycatch may be higher), but because of the huge number of vessels operating, cumulatively this could translate into a problem. More information is needed in these countries.
4. There was some discussion about seabirds being caught on purpose for food in cases where vessels are not carrying adequate food. There is evidence of this in the artisanal fleet in Peru and the jigging fleet in Falkland/Malvinas. This could be a serious issue and needs further attention.
5. A number of participants suggested that there are programmes where region wide collaboration would be beneficial. Two examples are standard observer data collection

and analysis protocols, and education material. These could benefit from a central coordinator.

6 Conclusion

Participants left the forum highly motivated to get to work on seabird bycatch in their area of influence. The timing for the Forum in South America was good (the issue has reached a point where there was already a network of people working on the issue and there was enough information to share) and people showed a willingness to take what they had learnt at the forum and put it into practice. Follow up will be critical to fully reap the benefits of the forum.

Projecto Albatroz did excellent job with organization and deserve praise for the effort they put in to ensure the forum was a success. Sponsorship from Care for the Wild made the forum possible. Support from IBAMA, NZ Ministry of Fisheries, and the US State Department allowed simultaneous interpretation in English, Spanish and Portuguese and also covered airfares of additional participants.