



2010 Seabird Safe Awards - winner Nelson fishing vessel lauded for its efforts to save seabirds

A Nelson-based deepsea trawler that embraced and consistently supported trials to find new ways to reduce the number of seabirds injured or killed by fishing vessels has won the 2010 Seabird Safe Award.

The prestigious conservation award was presented today by Minister of Fisheries, Hon. Phil Heatley to the Sealord deepsea trawler *F.V. Thomas Harrison*. Skipper Ted Goomes and Mate John Saxon accepted the award on behalf of all the fishing crew who have worked on the vessel over the past three years.

The Seabird Safe Awards are managed by Southern Seabird Solutions Trust, an alliance that includes representatives from the fishing industry, government, WWF and Te Ohu Kaimoana. The Trust supports and encourages fishermen in Southern Ocean fisheries to adopt responsible fishing practices.

Trust Chairman Bill Mansfield says because New Zealand waters are so rich in seabirds, Kiwi fishers face a particular challenge when it comes to seabird safe fishing.

“We believe that empowering fishers to find solutions to reduce seabird mortalities in fishing is an important way of achieving progress. This award recognises those who are going the extra mile.”

The independent judging panel for this year’s nominations said the skippers and fishing crew of the Sealord-owned *F.V. Thomas Harrison* have shown ‘consistent leadership and perseverance’.

They have taken part in numerous joint trials over the past three years with the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries. The trials have advanced understanding of the effectiveness of different mitigation practices in reducing seabird captures by trawlers.

Trials included holding and discharging offal in batches at different intervals, and pumping minced offal onto the sea surface. Carrying out the trials involved fitting equipment onto the vessel during port calls, interrupting normal factory and processing procedures while fishing, and carrying cameras and Ministry of Fisheries observers to record seabird responses to the different treatments.

“Controlling offal discharges is critically important for managing interactions between commercial fishing and protected seabirds,” according to Kevin O’Connor, General Manager for Research and Development at DOC.

“The Department congratulates Sealord and the skippers and crews who have worked on the *F.V. Thomas Harrison* on this award. Without the willingness and cooperation of the skippers and crew to undertake these trials they would not have been as successful.”

“I am pleased that DOC’s funding for this project has resulted in industry innovation which will lead to practices to reduce seabird captures further,” said O’Connor.

“The crew of the *Thomas Harrison* has been great to work with throughout these trials. What they have achieved will give better information and more effective mitigation measures for government and the fishing industry to work with and, most importantly, help keep the Southern Ocean’s seabirds safe,” says Ministry of Fisheries Deputy Chief Executive Gavin Lockwood.

Finalists:

Two 2010 Seabird Safe Award finalists were also announced – Leigh Commercial Fishermen’s Association and John Cleal of F.V. Management Services Ltd.

Also based in Nelson, John Cleal is the DeepWater Group Seabird Liaison Officer. He travels the country’s ports training deepwater trawler crews and managers how they can reduce seabird captures.

John is available 24/7 for vessels at sea, providing real time support and advice to solve seabird incidents and improve individual vessel practices,” says Bill Mansfield. “He also writes the innovative *Albert Times* in the guise of ‘Admiral Albert Ross’, promoting and raising public and industry awareness of seabird mortality problems and solutions. John is a firm believer in ‘if it can be fixed, then fix it’. His background in fleet management means he is highly respected by fishers and knows how to communicate with crew to get positive results.

The second finalist, Leigh Commercial Fishermen’s Association, has been proactive over many years in its efforts to address seabird bycatch.

They have pioneered seabird safe fishing practices for the inshore longline fleet, and in 1992 incorporated these into a Code of Practice. The Leigh fleet has demonstrated inventiveness and has been behind several ingenious ideas. For example, setting baits underwater away from seabirds, and dripping fish oil behind a vessel to keep seabirds away. They have played an important role in bringing about a positive change in culture among Kiwi fishermen regarding seabirds.

The 2010 Seabird Safe Awards were judged by an independent panel.

The 2010 Seabird Safe Awards are sponsored by the Ministry of Fisheries, Sealord, and DeepWater Group Ltd. Southern Seabird Solutions Trust is financially supported by the New Zealand Seafood Industry Council and the Department of Conservation.

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