



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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**PROPOSAL FOR A CONCERTED ACTION FOR
THE ANTIPODEAN ALBATROSS (*Diomedea antipodensis*)
PROPOSED FOR LISTING ON APPENDIX I OF THE CONVENTION***

Summary:

The Governments of New Zealand, Australia and Chile have submitted the attached proposal for a Concerted Action for the Antipodean Albatross (*Diomedea antipodensis*) in accordance with the process elaborated in Resolution 12.28.

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Concerted Action for Antipodean Albatross (*Diomedea antipodensis*)

- (i). **Proponents:** Governments of New Zealand, Australia and Chile.
- (ii). **Target species, lower taxon or population, or group of taxa with needs in common:** *Diomedea antipodensis* (Robertson & Warham 1992), which includes two subspecies: *Diomedea antipodensis antipodensis* and *Diomedea antipodensis gibsoni*.
- (iii). **Geographical range:** *Diomedea antipodensis* breeds on four island groups off southern New Zealand and migrates across the waters of the South Pacific Ocean, from Chile to Australia.
- (iv). **Summary of Activities:** This Concerted Action focuses on managing fisheries bycatch, considered to be the greatest threat to *Diomedea antipodensis*. This threat occurs across national jurisdictions as well as in the high seas.

The activities to address fisheries bycatch under this Concerted Action include:

- the use of effective seabird bycatch mitigation measures in pelagic longline fishing operations and associated monitoring and compliance;
- data sharing and bycatch risk assessment, including for other fishing methods, such as trawl and demersal longline that are known to pose some level of risk, and the use of effective seabird bycatch mitigation where appropriate; and
- the collection of data from other fisheries such as squid jigging where there may be a risk of bycatch, vessel collision or other indirect effects.

Other activities, such as maintaining protection and quarantine of breeding sites, and research to better understand the population dynamics and foraging behaviour, are already being undertaken by the New Zealand Government. The research programme provides opportunities to develop mātauranga Māori (New Zealand's indigenous knowledge) and develop a stronger connection between Ngāi Tahu (the principal indigenous tribe of the southern region of New Zealand) and *Diomedea antipodensis*. Further international collaboration with the scientific elements would be beneficial.

- (v). **Activities and expected outcomes:** Activities and expected outcomes under this Concerted Action cover the following work areas:
 1. Fisheries bycatch in Range State jurisdictions;
 2. Fisheries bycatch on the high seas;
 3. Research; and
 4. Breeding site management.

Activities and expected outcomes can be found in Annex 1: Concerted Actions for Conservation of Antipodean Albatross (*Diomedea antipodensis*) under the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

- (vi). **Associated benefits:** The risk posed by bycatch in fisheries is not restricted to *Diomedea antipodensis* alone, but also impacts other migratory seabird species that overlap with fishing effort. These include those albatross and petrel species listed on Appendix II of CMS that forage exclusively or in part in the South Pacific Ocean. The bycatch mitigation practices that reduce the risk of bycatch of *Diomedea antipodensis* will also reduce the risk of bycatch of other seabird species.

Whilst the activities required for *Diomedea antipodensis* are restricted to the South Pacific Ocean, these Concerted Actions may act as a precedent to improve seabird bycatch management in similar fisheries operating in other oceans.

Additional benefits include opportunities for awareness raising of the conservation status of *Diomedea antipodensis* and the threats it faces amongst CMS Parties and non-CMS Parties that belong to relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs). The Concerted Action may also create a catalyst for capacity building activities relating to seabird bycatch mitigation and data collection among CMS Parties.

- (vii). **Timeframe:** Timeframes have been identified for each activity (see Annex).
- (viii). **Relationship to other CMS actions:** This Concerted Action supports implementation of the CMS Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023 (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.2) and the CMS Bycatch Resolution (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 12.22).

It also supports and complements the work of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), a CMS subsidiary agreement.

- (ix). **Conservation priority:** The conservation priority of *Diomedea antipodensis* is extremely high and is classified as Endangered (IUCN).

Both subspecies have undergone substantial population declines since 2004, following a period of population increase or stability in 1990s. The Antipodes Island breeding population has halved since 2004. These great albatross species don't begin nesting until they are typically 10-12 years or older and only raise a maximum of one chick every two years. The current rate of decline, if it continues, could lead to functional extinction of the Antipodes Island population in the next 20-30 years. The Antipodes Island population is recognised as a priority conservation concern by ACAP.

This Concerted Action will contribute to achieving priority conservation actions in the CMS Bycatch Resolution (UNEP/CMS/Resolution 12.22).

- (x). **Relevance:** The major threat to *Diomedea antipodensis* is fisheries bycatch at an ocean-basin scale, across multiple jurisdictions and the high seas. The widespread nature of this threat is due to the highly migratory nature of the species, which breeds only in one jurisdiction (New Zealand). To meaningfully manage this threat across the migratory range of the species requires cooperation and alignment of fishery management efforts by the Range States and states operating distant water fishing fleets in the area. The Range States include a number of CMS Parties.
- (xi). **Absence of better remedies:** Other mechanisms in place to improve the conservation status of *Diomedea antipodensis* and address the threats it faces include cooperation amongst ACAP Parties on matters such as development of seabird bycatch mitigation advice, and through conservation and management measures adopted by RFMOs. In spite of these mechanisms in place, a number of challenges remain, such as New Zealand having limited influence in management organisations such as Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) where *Diomedea antipodensis* forages. While it is important to continue working in ACAP and RFMOs, a Concerted Action under CMS will increase awareness among CMS Parties and will facilitate action by a broader number of Parties. A Concerted Action under CMS is therefore considered fundamental to improving the conservation status of *Diomedea antipodensis* and will complement and potentially enhance mechanisms already in place.

- (xii). **Readiness and feasibility:** The activities identified in this Concerted Action are focussed on using existing conservation and fisheries management structures in which many Parties already engage. Effective seabird bycatch mitigation practices, such as those options recommended as ACAP best practice mitigation advice, have been proven and are used by a number of fleets. Current challenges in the type of fisheries management activities described in this Concerted Action may include observer coverage, monitoring of use of mitigation and data collection and sharing. It is envisaged that adoption of this Concerted Action will facilitate the cooperation to overcome these challenges. As such, the activities are ready and feasible, and require leadership driven by this Concerted Action to achieve the desired outcomes.

The research activities are largely underway and based on standard protocols and are thus ready and feasible. Risk assessment methods have been developed and used at a number of scales, and the main challenge (as already highlighted) will be to source adequate data on fishery operations. Breeding site management and biosecurity controls are already in place.

- (xiii). **Likelihood of success:** There remains some uncertainty as to the level of threat to *Diomedea antipodensis* that fisheries bycatch poses. As such, there remains the risk that the population could still decline even with well managed fisheries bycatch. However, the management of all fisheries impacts, including possible utilization for food by vessel crews operating in the high seas, is the only substantive and readily manageable threat to the species and thus represents the management intervention with the highest potential benefit to the species.

- (xiv). **Magnitude of likely impact:** The activities described in this Concerted Action aim to reduce seabird bycatch across fisheries in the main Range States and on the high seas of the South Pacific Ocean south of the area approximately 25° South. Other seabird species known, or likely, to be bycaught in fisheries operating in these areas, and therefore also impacted by the activities to be addressed in this Concerted Action Plan, include the following CMS Appendix II and ACAP-listed species: *Diomedea exulans*, *Diomedea epomophora*, *Diomedea sanfordi*, *Thalassarche carteri*, *Thalassarche melanophris*, *Thalassarche impavida*, *Thalassarche chrysostoma*, *Thalassarche bulleri*, *Thalassarche cauta*, *Thalassarche steadi*, *Thalassarche eremita*, *Thalassarche salvini*, *Phoebastria palpebrata*, *Macronectes giganteus*, *Macronectes halli*, *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, *Procellaria westlandica*, *Procellaria parkinsoni* and *Procellaria cinerea*.

- (xv). **Cost-effectiveness:** The activities identified in this Concerted Action are focussed on using existing fisheries management structures. As such any additional costs related to management of domestic fisheries, or engaging with relevant RFMOs, are low and will consist of resourcing sufficient capacity, and/or prioritising existing capacity, to engage with the bycatch management elements of these fisheries management processes. For relevant fishing fleets that do not currently deploy effective seabird mitigation measures, and/or collect data on seabird interactions, there may be costs involved in improving their operations. Additional costs would be related to the monitoring of the use of mitigation practices and recording the data. However, it must be noted that actions taken by fishing fleets to reduce the risk of *Diomedea antipodensis* bycatch will also reduce the risk of other seabird species bycatch and therefore enhance sustainability aspects of their operation.

Costs for baseline research and monitoring of the species have already been allocated by the New Zealand Government. Collaboration or additional funds would allow an expanded programme of research (e.g. additional at-sea tracking, diet assessment).

The costs for continued protection and biosecurity control of the breeding sites have already been allocated by the New Zealand Government. The mammalian pest eradication at Auckland Island has been allocated NZD2 million by the New Zealand Government for the feasibility and planning stages, and the full operation is currently estimated at NZD60 million, for which funds have yet to be secured. The costs of these site-based management actions benefit a range of other species of conservation concern.

- (xvi). **Consultations Planned/Undertaken:** All CMS Range States have been consulted on this Concerted Action, as well as the ACAP Secretariat, Birdlife International and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

Consultation has also been undertaken with Ngāi Tahu, the principal Māori (indigenous) iwi (tribe) of the southern region of New Zealand where the Antipodean albatross, or Toroa, breed.

Consultations around actions to recover *Diomedea antipodensis* have been undertaken between New Zealand and Chile as part of an Arrangement on seabird conservation between the Governments of New Zealand and Chile.

New Zealand has collaborated with Birdlife International and ACAP on seabird bycatch projects in Fiji and French Polynesia.

Annex . Concerted Actions for Conservation of Antipodean Albatross (*Diomedea antipodensis*) under the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

| Activity | Output/outcome | Timeframe | Responsibility | Funding |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| 1. Fisheries bycatch in Range State jurisdictions | | | | |
| 1.1 Continue implementation of effective bycatch mitigation measures in pelagic longline fisheries, trawl and any other relevant fisheries, including outreach to fishers regarding seabird bycatch | Fisheries bycatch risk minimised within Range State jurisdictions | Ongoing | CMS Party Range States | Mechanisms are in place to manage fisheries bycatch. Any new requirements for fisheries operators may incur costs to them |
| 1.2 Ensure there is adequate observation coverage to monitor mitigation use and identify any seabird bycatch to species level | Fisheries bycatch levels and risk, at species level, are known and can be reported | Ongoing | CMS Party Range States | Observation programmes are already in place, and increased requirements will require funding from relevant Parties. May require improvements in seabird identification in some fisheries |
| 1.3 Develop and maintain bilateral/multilateral collaboration on mitigation development, data collection, data sharing and risk assessment. A cooperation arrangement between New Zealand and Chile on seabird conservation has already been agreed and provides a framework for this activity between these two Range States | Collaboration facilities achieving Activities 1.1 and 1.2 | Ongoing | CMS Party Range States | Collaborative actions may require new funds on a case by case basis, though many actions will be based on existing activities |
| 2. Fisheries bycatch on the high seas | | | | |
| 2.1 Support regular review, and improvement where necessary, of seabird bycatch conservation and management measures to ensure use of effective bycatch mitigation measures is required, in the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and in relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs): Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin (CCSBT) and the South Pacific Regional Fisheries management Organisation (SPRFMO) | Fisheries bycatch risk minimised in relevant RFMOs through use of effective bycatch mitigation measures | 2020-2022 for initial review; further regular reviews - ongoing | CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs | This can be met either through reprioritisation of existing capacity from Parties engaging with RFMOs, or by additional capacity which will require funds for time and travel to meetings |

| Activity | Output/outcome | Timeframe | Responsibility | Funding |
|---|---|------------------------------------|--|---|
| 2.2 Support development and distribution of outreach materials to fishers regarding seabird bycatch, including seabird identification guides | Fisheries bycatch risk minimised in relevant RFMOs through increased awareness, improved use of mitigation by fishers, and more accurate reporting to species level | Ongoing | CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs | Development of any new materials will require funds on a case by case basis |
| 2.3 Support compliance monitoring of seabird bycatch conservation and management measures in relevant RFMOs | The compliance monitoring and reporting against each RFMO seabird bycatch conservation and management measure is demonstrated in RFMO reports | 2020-2022 (and maintained ongoing) | CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs | This can be met either through reprioritisation of existing capacity from Parties engaging with RFMOs, or by additional capacity which will require funds for time and travel to meetings |
| 2.4 Support robust bycatch related data collection and sharing in relevant RFMOs | Fisheries bycatch risk is documented and measurable through data reporting | Ongoing | CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs | This can be met either through reprioritisation of existing capacity from Parties engaging with RFMOs, or by additional capacity which will require funds for time and travel to meetings. If increased levels of observation are required this will require funds from relevant RFMO Members |
| 2.5 Support robust bycatch data reporting and periodic bycatch assessments in relevant RFMOs | Estimation of fisheries seabird bycatch risk at RFMO scale | Ongoing | CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs | Assessments may be funded through RFMO or other budgets, or may require funds from supporting Parties on a case by case basis |
| 2.6 Support data gathering in high seas fisheries where other types of seabird interactions, including possible utilization of seabirds as wild meat, remains poorly known. | Risks posed by all relevant fishing methods are understood | 2020-2025 | CMS Parties that are Members of, or engage with, key RFMOs | This can be met either through reprioritisation of existing capacity from Parties engaging with RFMOs, or by additional capacity which will require funds for time and travel to meetings. If increased levels of observation are required this will require funds from relevant RFMO Members, such as those operating squid jig fleets |

| Activity | Output/outcome | Timeframe | Responsibility | Funding |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| 2.7 Develop collaborations on seabird bycatch mitigation measures with non-CMS Parties fishing in the range of Antipodean albatross | Fisheries bycatch risk minimised through use of effective bycatch mitigation measures | Ongoing | CMS Party Range States | Collaborative actions may require new funds on a case by case basis, though many actions will be based on existing activities |
| 3. Research | | | | |
| 3.1 Continue a multi-year population project to provide a platform for key research questions (e.g. foraging range, diet) and monitor progress over time | Ongoing assessment of the current status of the population and a better understanding of biological drivers of change | Population monitoring: annual for 2019-2024, then re-assess | New Zealand with collaboration from other interested CMS Parties | Funds for annual research visits over a five-year period have been committed by the New Zealand Government |
| 3.2 Continue the deployment of tracking devices to better describe areas of fisheries overlap | Detailed knowledge of foraging range, suitable to inform detailed overlap analysis with fishing effort and spatially explicit fisheries risk assessment | 2019-21 | New Zealand with collaboration from other interested CMS Parties | Funds for a two-year tracking programme have been committed by the New Zealand Government. Extension of the tracking programme to 2021 will require additional funds |
| 3.3 Continue diet-related sample collection, and undertake analysis, to describe diet and any changes in diet over time | Better understanding of any changes in diet and how this affects population parameters | 2019-2024 | New Zealand with collaboration from other interested CMS Parties | Sample collection is funded through the programme outlined in 3.1. Additional funds or collaboration will be required for further analysis |
| 3.4 Assess levels of plastic ingestion | Better understanding of the potential risk posed by plastic pollution | 2021-2024 | New Zealand with collaboration from other interested CMS Parties | Sample collection is funded through the programme outlined in 3.1. Additional funds for collaboration will be required for further analysis |
| 3.5 Investigate the nature, extent and drivers of land slips at Antipodes Island | Better understanding of potential risks posed by land slips | 2021-2024 | New Zealand with collaboration from other interested CMS Parties. | Data collection is funded through the programme outlined in 3.1. Additional funds or collaboration will be required for further analysis |
| 3.6 Develop opportunities into mātauranga Māori (New Zealand's indigenous knowledge) to inform the management of the species and help facilitate opportunities for Ngāi Tahu (the principal indigenous tribe of the southern region of New Zealand) to develop a stronger connection between Ngāi Tahu and <i>D. antipodensis</i> | Mātauranga Māori available to inform future management and conservation actions | Ongoing | New Zealand | Additional funds will be required on a case by case basis |

| Activity | Output/outcome | Timeframe | Responsibility | Funding |
|--|---|---|----------------|--|
| 4. Breeding site management | | | | |
| 4.1 Eradication of mammalian pests at Auckland Island | Safe and protected breeding sites with no human-induced threats | Programme under development, with 10-year indicative timeline | New Zealand | The New Zealand Government has committed NZD2 million, but additional funds will be required for completion of the programme |
| 4.2 Continued protection and biosecurity control to main breeding site islands | Safe and protected breeding sites with no human-induced threats | Ongoing | New Zealand | Funds are committed by the New Zealand Government for ongoing site management |