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Review of seabird bycatch mitigation measures for pelagic longline fisheries

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

Paper prepared for the 2011 Meeting of the IOTC WPEB Working Party on Ecosystems & Bycatch

SUMMARY

ACAP's Seabird Bycatch Working Group (SBWG), which comprises global experts in seabird bycatch mitigation research and implementation, met in Guayaquil, Ecuador in August-September 2011. One of the major products coming out of the meeting was an updated review of current mitigation research for pelagic longline fisheries. The products of this work include a summary review, presented below in this document, and a best practice advice statement (presented separately), which represents the current best scientific advice. The SBWG acknowledges that 'best practice' reflects the state of knowledge at any given time and is subject to periodic revision.

REVIEW OF SEABIRD BYCATCH MITIGATION MEASURES FOR PELAGIC LONGLINE FISHERIES

Weighted branchlines, bird scaring streamer lines and night setting are best practice mitigation in pelagic longline fisheries. The ACAP-SBWG has comprehensively reviewed the scientific literature dealing with seabird bycatch mitigation in pelagic fisheries and this document is a distillation of that review.

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BEST PRACTICE MEASURES

1. Branchline weighting

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

PROVEN AND RECOMMENDED. Should be used in combination with night setting and bird scaring lines. Brothers 1991; Boggs 2001; Sakai et al. 2001; Brothers et al. 2001; Anderson & McArdle 2002; Gilman et al. 2003a, Hu et al. 2005.

Caveats /Notes

Weights will shorten but not eliminate the zone behind the vessel in which birds can be caught. Even in demersal fisheries where weights are much heavier, weights must be combined with other mitigation measures (e.g. CCAMLR Conservation Measure 25-02).

Need for combination

Should be combined with bird scaring lines and night setting

Research needs

Mass and position of weight both affect sink rate. Further research on the effect of a range of weighting regimes on seabird mortality and catch rates of target and non-target fishes is needed (as has been completed for demersal [Spanish system) fisheries). Continued work to identify branchline weighting configurations (mass, placement, shape, number of leads, and materials) that are effective at reducing seabird bycatch with and without other mitigation, and that are safe and practical. Effect of propeller turbulence on baited hook sink rate and seabird mortality need to be quantified.

Minimum standards

Current minimum standards for branchline weighting configurations are:

Greater than 45 g attached within 1 m of the hook or;
Greater than 60 g attached within 3.5 m of the hook or;
Greater than 98 g weight attached within 4 m of the hook.

Positioning weight farther than 4 m from the hook is not recommended.

These regimes have been adopted in the Hawaiian (45 g at 1 m) and Australian (60 g at 3.5 m and 98 g at 4 m) pelagic longline fisheries and latter two regimes have been adopted by the Western and Central Pacific Fishing Commission (the WCPFC provisions also include the option of branchlines being configured with weights of 45 g to 60 g within 1 m of the hook). NB. The 98 g weights specified in the Australian fishery pertain to the line weighting experiment of Robertson et al. 2010. The commercially available leaded swivels used in the experiment weighed 98 g (not 100 g).

Implementation monitoring

Coastal state fisheries (<35 m): Line weights crimped into branch lines technically very difficult to remove at sea. Inspection before departure from port of all gear bins on vessels considered an acceptable form of implementation monitoring.

Distant water fisheries (>35 m): Technically possible to remove and/or re-configure gear at sea. Implementation monitoring by monitoring line sets using appropriate methods (e.g., observer inspection of line setting operations; video surveillance; at-sea compliance checks). Video surveillance conditional on mainline setter being fitted with motion sensors to trigger cameras.

2. Night setting

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

PROVEN AND RECOMMENDED. Should be used in combination with weighted branch lines and bird scaring lines. Duckworth 1995; Brothers et al. 1999; Gales et al 1998; Klaer & Polacheck 1998; Brothers et al. 1999; McNamara et al. 1999; Gilman et al. 2005; Baker & Wise 2005; Jiménez et al 2009.

Caveats /Notes

Less effective during full moon, under intensive deck lighting or in high latitude fisheries in summer.Less effective on nocturnal foragers e.g. White-chinned Petrels (Brothers et al. 1999; Cherel et al. 1996).

Need for combination

Should be used in combination with bird scaring lines and weighted branch lines

Research needs

Determine effectiveness of bird scaring lines and branchline weighting at night by characterizing seabird behaviour at night using thermal or night vision technologies.

Minimum standards

Night defined as between nautical twilight and nautical dawn.

Implementation monitoring

Requires VMS (satellite transmitter) or fishery observers. Vessel speed and direction vary between transiting, line setting, line hauling and when vessels are stationary on fishing grounds. VMS-derived assessment of vessel activity in relation to time of nautical dawn and dusk considered acceptable for implementation monitoring. Alternatively VMS-linked sensors fitted to mainline setting and hauling drum could be used to indicate compliance, as could sensors to trigger video surveillance cameras. This facility is currently unavailable and requires development.

3 (a). Bird scaring streamer lines for vessels > 35m in total length

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

PROVEN AND RECOMMENDED. For vessels > 35 m in length two streamer lines is considered best practice. Streamer lines with the appropriate aerial extent can be more easily rigged on large vessels. Two streamer lines are considered to provide better protection of baited hooks in crosswinds (Melvin et al. 2004; Melvin et al., 2011). Hybrid tori lines (with long and short streamers) were more effective than short tori lines (only short streamers) in deterring diving seabirds (white-chinned petrels) (Melvin et.al., 2010**.** Melvin et al., 2011.

Caveats /Notes

Potentially increased likelihood of entanglement, particularly if attachment points on davits (tori poles) are insufficiently outboard of vessels. Development of a towed device to prevent tangling with fishing gear essential to improve adoption and compliance.

Diving species increase vulnerability of surface foragers (albatrosses) due to secondary interactions.

Need for combination

Should be used with appropriate line weighting and night setting.

Research needs

Compare the effectiveness of one versus two bird scaring lines, including with respect to both primary and secondary interactions; develop methods that create drag to maximize aerial extent while minimizing entanglements of the in-water portion of bird scaring lines with longline floats; and compare the effectiveness of bird scaring lines with different steamer lengths, configurations, and materials.

Minimum standards

Vessels should deploy bird scaring lines with a minimum aerial extent of 100 m. Streamers should be: brightly coloured, a mix of long and short streamers, placed at intervals of no more than 5 m, and long streamers attached to the line with swivels that prevent streamers from wrapping around the line. All streamers should reach the sea-surface in calm conditions.

If large vessels use only one streamer line it should be set to windward of sinking baits. If baited hooks are set outboard of the wake, the streamer line attachment point to the vessel should be positioned several meters outboard of the side of the vessel that baits are deployed.

Baited hooks shall be deployed within the area bounded by the two streamer lines. Bait-casting machines shall be adjusted so as to land baited hooks within the area bounded by streamer lines

Implementation monitoring

Requires fisheries observers, video surveillance or at-sea surveillance (e.g. patrol boats or aerial over-flights).

3 (b). Bird scaring streamer lines for vessels <35m in total length

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

PROVEN AND RECOMMENDED. Imber 1994; Uozomi & Takeuchi 1998; Brothers et al. 1999; Klaer & Polacheck 1998; McNamara et al. 1999; Boggs 2001; CCAMLR 2002; Minami & Kiyota 2004. Melvin 2003. For vessels < 35 m in length a single BSL in combination with night setting and appropriate line weighting has been found effective for mixed and short streamer bird-scaring lines (ATF, 2011; Domingo**;et. al.,** Gianuca, et. al., 2011).

Caveats /Notes

Development of a towed device to prevent tangling with fishing gear essential to improve adoption and compliance.

Diving species increase vulnerability of surface foragers (albatrosses) due to secondary interactions.

Need for combination

Should be used with appropriate line weighting and night setting.

Minimum standards

Vessels should deploy bird scaring lines with a minimum aerial extent 75 m. Streamers should be brightly coloured. Short streamers (>1 m) should be placed at 1 m intervals along

the length of the aerial extent. Two designs have been shown to be effective: a mixed design that includes long streamers placed at 5 m intervals over the first 55 m of the bird scaring line and a design that does not include long streamers. Bird scaring lines should be the lightest practical strong fine line. Lines should be attached to the vessel with a barrel swivel to minimize rotation of the line from torque created as it is dragged behind the vessel.

Towed devices to create drag can tangle with float lines leading to interruptions in vessel operations and in some cases lost fishing gear. Short streamers can be tied into the line to bristle the line and create a bottlebrush like configuration to generate drag while minimizing the chance of fouling streamer lines on float lines. Breakaways should be incorporated into the streamer line in-water extent to minimize safety and operational problems should a longline float foul or tangle with the in-water extent of a streamer line.

Implementation monitoring

Requires fisheries observers, video surveillance or at-sea surveillance (e.g. patrol boats or aerial over-flights).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

4. Side setting with line weighting and bird curtain

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

UNPROVEN AND NOT RECOMMENDED FOR SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE FISHERIES. Brothers & Gilman 2006; Yokota &Kiyota 2006.

Caveats /Notes

Only effective if hooks are sufficiently below the surface by the time they reach the stern of the vessel and protected by a bird curtain. In Hawaii, side-setting trials were conducted with bird curtain and 45-60 g weighted swivels placed within 0.5 m of hooks. Japanese research concludes must be used with other measures (Yokota & Kiyota 2006). Not tested in southern hemisphere fisheries and cannot be recommended at this time.

Need for combination

Lines set from the side of vessels must be appropriately weighted and protected by an effective bird curtain. Requires thorough testing in southern hemisphere fisheries.

Research needs

Currently untested in southern hemisphere fisheries against assemblages of diving seabirds (e.g., *Procellaria* sp. Petrels and *Puffinus* sp. Shearwaters) and albatrosses - urgent need for research.

Minimum standards

Clear definition of side setting is required. As noted, side setting trials in Hawaii were conducted in conjunction with a bird curtain and 45-60 g leaded swivel < 1 m of the baited hook. Hawaiian definition is a minimum of only 1 m forward of the stern, which is likely to reduce effectiveness. The distance forward of the stern refers to the position from which baits are manually deployed. Baited hooks must be thrown by hand forward of the bait deployment location if they are to be afforded “protection” by being close to the side of the vessel.

Implementation monitoring

Requires fisheries observers or video surveillance.

5. Blue dyed bait

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

UNPROVEN AND NOT RECOMMENDED. Boggs 2001; Brothers 1991; Gilman et al. 2003a; Minami & Kiyota 2001; Minami & Kiyota 2004; Lydon & Starr 2005.Cocking et al. 2008.

Caveats /Notes

New data suggests only effective with squid bait (Cocking et al. 2008). Onboard dyeing requires labour and is difficult under stormy conditions. Results inconsistent across studies.

Need for combination

Must be combined with bird scaring lines or night setting

Research needs

Need for tests in Southern Ocean.

Minimum standards

Mix to standardized colour placard or specify (e.g. use ‘Brilliant Blue’ food dye (Colour Index 42090, also known as Food Additive number E133) mixed at 0.5% for minimum 20 minutes)

Implementation monitoring

The current practice of dyeing bait on board vessels at sea requires observer presence or video surveillance to monitor implementation. Assessment of implementation in the absence of on-board observers or video surveillance requires baits be dyed on land and monitored through port inspection of all bait on vessels prior to departure on fishing trips**.**

6. Line shooter

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

UNPROVEN AND NOT RECOMMENDED. Robertson et al (2010).

Caveats /Notes

Mainline set into propeller turbulence with a line shooter without tension astern (e.g. slack) as in deep setting significantly slows the sink rates of hooks (Robertson et al 2010). Use of a line shooter to set gear deep cannot be considered a mitigation measure.

Need for combination

Not Applicable.

Research needs

Not Applicable.

Minimum standards

Use of this measure is not recommended as a mitigation measure.

Implementation monitoring

Not Applicable.

7. Bait caster

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

UNPROVEN AND NOT RECOMMENDED. Duckworth 1995; Klaer & Polacheck 1998.

Caveats /Notes

Not a mitigation measure unless casting machines are available with the capability to control the distance at which baits are cast. This is necessary to allow accurate delivery of baits under a bird scaring line. Current machines (without variable power control) likely to deploy baited hooks well beyond the streaming position of streamer lines, increasing risks to seabirds. Few commercially-available machines have variable power control. Needs more development.

Need for combination

Not recommended as a mitigation measure at this time.

Research needs

Develop (and implement) casting machine with a variable power control.

Minimum standards

Not recommended as a mitigation measure

Implementation monitoring

Not Applicable

8. Underwater setting chute

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

UNPROVEN AND NOT RECOMMENDED. Brothers 1991; Boggs 2001; Gilman et al. 2003a; Gilman et al. 2003b; Sakai et al. 2004; Lawrence et al. 2006.

Caveats /Notes

For pelagic fisheries, existing equipment not yet sturdy enough for large vessels in rough seas. Problems with malfunctions and performance inconsistent (e.g. Gilman et al. 2003a and Australian trials cited in Baker & Wise 2005)

Need for combination

Not recommended for general application at this time.

Research needs

Design problems to overcome.

Minimum standards

Not yet established

Implementation monitoring

Not Applicable.

9. Management of offal discharge

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

UNPROVEN. McNamara et al. 1999; Cherel et al. 1996.

Caveats /Notes

Supplementary measure. Definition essential. Offal attracts birds to vessels and where practical should be eliminated or restricted to discharge when not setting or hauling. Strategic discharge during line setting can increase interactions and should be discouraged. Offal retention and/or incineration may be impractical on small vessels.

Need for combination

Must be combined with other measures.

Research needs

Further information needed on opportunities and constraints in pelagic fisheries (long and short term).

Minimum standards

Not yet established for pelagic fisheries. In CCAMLR demersal fisheries, discharge of offal is prohibited during line setting. During line hauling, storage of waste is encouraged, and if discharged must be discharged on the opposite side of the vessel to the hauling bay

Implementation monitoring

Requires offal discharge practices and events to be monitored by fisheries observers or video surveillance.

10. Live bait

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

LIVE BAIT NOT RECOMMENDED. Trebilco et al 2010; Robertson et al 2010

Caveats /Notes

Live fish bait sinks significantly slower than dead bait (fish and squid), increasing the exposure of baits to seabirds. Use of live bait is associated with higher seabird bycatch rates.

Need for combination

Use of live bait is not a mitigation measure.

Research needs

Not Applicable.

Minimum standards

Live bait is not a mitigation measure.

Implementation monitoring

Not Applicable.

11. Bait thaw status

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

NOT RECOMMENDED. Brothers 1991; Duckworth 1995; Klaer & Polacheck; Brothers et al 1999; Robertson & van den Hoff 2010.

Caveats /Notes

Baits cannot be separated from others in frozen blocks of bait, and hooks cannot be inserted in baits, unless baits are partially thawed (it is not practical for fishers to use fully frozen baits). Partially thawed baits sink at similar rates to fully thawed baits.

Need for combination

Not a mitigation measure

Research needs

Not Applicable.

Minimum standards

Not recommended as a mitigation measure.

Implementation monitoring

Not Applicable.

12. Area closures

Scientific evidence for effectiveness in pelagic fisheries

PROVEN AND RECOMMENDED. Avoiding fishing at peak areas and during periods of intense foraging activity has been used effectively to reduce bycatch in longline fisheries.

Caveats /Notes

An important and effective management response, especially for high risk areas, and when other measures prove ineffective**.** Highly effective for target locations/seasons but may displace fishing effort into adjacent or other areas which may not be as well regulated, thus leading to increased incidental mortality elsewhere.

Need for combination

Must be combined with other measures, both in the specific areas when the fishing season is opened, and also in adjacent areas to ensure displacement of fishing effort does not merely lead to a spatial shift in the incidental mortality.

Research needs

Further information about the seasonal variability in patterns of species abundance around fisheries.

Minimum standards

No work done but highly recommended.

Implementation monitoring

Vessels equipped with VMS and activities monitored by appropriate management authority is considered appropriate monitoring. areas/seasons should be patrolled to ensure effectiveness if IUU activities are suspected.

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