

The case for a Community Plan of Action for reducing incidental catch of seabirds in longline fisheries

A report from BirdLife International's
Global Seabird Programme

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Executive Summary

- 1 Under the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN) International Plan of Action for reducing incidental mortality of seabirds in longline fisheries (IPOA-Seabirds), this report makes the case for the EC (European Community) to develop and implement a Community Plan of Action-Seabirds applicable wherever its longline vessels operate, a process which the European Commission embarked on in 2000 but has never taken to completion.
- 2 Producing such a Plan would be in keeping with the growing international awareness of bycatch issues and the progressive application of an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management. The FAO called for States to start implementation of National Plans of Action (NPOA-Seabirds) no later than 2001. The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), which has promoted adoption of NPOA-Seabirds, is also attracting increasing numbers of signatories and ratifications, including Spain, France and the UK.
- 3 Furthermore, four tuna commissions (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas ICCAT, Indian Ocean Tuna Commission IOTC, Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission WCPFC, Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission IATTC) have all now passed seabird bycatch resolutions and recommendations requesting that members implement NPOA-Seabirds.
- 4 Without a Community Plan of Action-Seabirds, the EC cannot effectively influence - in a consistent and coherent way for Community longline fleets – data collection protocols, the development of observer programmes, provision of information on the spatial and temporal overlap of seabirds and fisheries, and impact assessments. Above all, the EC should be playing a leading role in the implementation of an effective suite of mitigation measures for reducing seabird bycatch in the respective tuna commission Convention Areas. In this regard, EC vessels should be pioneering best practice and setting standards for the fleets of other Contracting Parties.
- 5 The Commission was initially positive to responding to the IPOA-Seabirds (1999) and put a “preliminary draft” proposal for a Community Plan of Action for reducing seabird bycatch to the 24th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in February 2001. However, there has been no elaboration of this draft, despite (a) the ‘high priority’ attached in COM(2002)186 final to ‘propose legislation [on a Community Plan of Action-Seabirds] before end of 2003’; (b) the objective to develop such a Plan in SEC(2006)621 final, endorsed by the Environment Council in December 2006. The history of the Commission’s own proposals to take this issue forward is documented.
- 6 Within Community waters, there are significant longline fisheries by EC-flagged vessels in the Mediterranean, Madeira, Azores, and west of Ireland. We present evidence that especially the demersal (less so surface-pelagic) longline fisheries have significant impacts on shearwater populations. There is evidence that, in the western Mediterranean, Cory’s shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* is being killed at an unsustainable rate in longline fisheries. Of even greater concern, however, is bycatch of Balearic shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*, a species which IUCN lists as Critically Endangered and threatened with extinction in a generation. Recent evidence is also presented for previously unrecorded bycatch of great shearwater *Puffinus gravis* by Galician demersal longline vessels on the Gran Sol, west of Ireland.
- 7 Overall, parts of Community waters face a deteriorating status of seabird populations in which longlining (especially demersal) is invoked as a contributory factor. This makes the development of a Community Plan more urgent than ever.
- 8 Commissioner Borg’s answer to questions by MEPs (see page 10) includes the statement that ‘*In relation to the western Mediterranean, an area where particular problems have been identified with respect to the bycatch of certain species such as Cory’s shearwater, the Spanish authorities have issued guidelines to alleviate bycatches and there are indications that these are having an appreciable effect.*’ We find no evidence to support the contention that the ‘guidelines’ issued by the Spanish authorities are having the alleged beneficial effect in reducing seabird bycatch. Moreover, the new (2006) Spanish guidelines fall far below the best practice promoted by (notably) CCAMLR and are likely to be ineffective.

- 9 BirdLife considers that rejecting the need for a Community Plan of Action is inconsistent with the need to establish a coherent EC strategy for action, following a consistent set of mitigation standards, which was the rationale behind the FAO IPOA-Seabirds. Moreover, the need for a coherent strategy calls for a Community initiative rather than a set of discrete national initiatives (NPOA-Seabirds) which would undoubtedly vary in robustness and create further regulatory confusion for longlining fleets operating in different EEZs (Exclusive Economic Zones). BirdLife envisages a Community Plan of Action serving as a framework for Member States to draw up and strengthen national measures.

- 10 In the light of the evidence presented in this report, a Community Plan of Action is more necessary than ever. The first key step is for the European Commission to conduct an assessment of seabird bycatch by EC vessels in Community and external waters, as recognised in the Commission's 2001 draft Community Plan of Action. BirdLife International welcomes recent statements from the European Commission that an assessment process is now underway, and offers its assistance to the Commission in providing data that we have available in furtherance of a Community Plan. In concluding this report, we map out essential elements of the required assessment.

1 The problem and the solution

Bycatch of seabirds in longline fisheries occurs when birds, attracted to the bait set on longline hooks, get caught on the hooks, dragged underwater and drowned. According to BirdLife International, more than a billion hooks are set annually by the world's longline fleets, killing at least 300,000 seabirds, including about 100,000 albatrosses.

Largely as a result of this mortality, the albatross family (*Diomedidae*) has the highest proportion of species under threat of global extinction of any bird family. Currently, 19 of 21 species are classified as globally threatened, seven of which are listed as Endangered and two as Critically Endangered. The proportion of albatross species threatened with extinction increased from around 30% to 90% between 1994 and 2004. The ecology of albatrosses (a decade to reach breeding age and infrequent successful breeding thereafter) renders them particularly susceptible to increased adult mortality.

The level of albatross mortality in both regulated and unregulated longline fisheries is causing dramatic declines in breeding populations. This poses the risk that populations of several of these iconic species will become extinct in the near future, unless international policy instruments translate into concerted action, in particular the widespread adoption of proven mitigation measures by the world's longline fishing fleets.

It has been known for some time, however, that by applying an appropriate suite of fishery-specific mitigation measures, this is a readily solvable problem and seabird bycatch can be virtually eliminated (see Box p. 11, on CCAMLR (Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources), where bycatch of albatrosses and petrels in the regulated fishery has recently been reduced to zero). This not only removes a primary threat from species which are subject to international conservation obligations, but also reduces the economic losses to the longlining fleets arising from bait-snatching and reduction of fishing efficiency.

Globally, as an ecosystem approach becomes increasingly embedded in fisheries management, there is growing interest in addressing seabird bycatch following the FAO IPOA-Seabirds. To date only five NPOA-Seabirds have been officially adopted (Brazil, Falklands/Malvinas, Japan, New Zealand and the USA). However, in the past 18 months there has been considerable progress, with several other NPOA-Seabirds in advanced draft stage or awaiting government endorsement, (e.g. Australia, Chile, South Africa), while others are currently being drafted (e.g. Argentina, Uruguay). Canada tabled its NPOA-Seabirds at the 27th FAO-COFI in March 2007.

There is also increasing international buy-in, including by three EU Member States, to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) which seeks to conserve albatrosses and petrels by coordinating international activity to mitigate known threats to their populations. To date, the following have been signatories to ACAP – Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, France, New Zealand, Peru, South Africa, Spain and the United Kingdom. Of these, Australia, Chile, Ecuador, France, New Zealand, Peru, South Africa, Spain and the United Kingdom have also ratified ACAP. In February 2007, Norway became the tenth ratifying country. One of the chief mechanisms promoted by ACAP for achieving its goals is the development and implementation of NPOA-Seabirds.

This report makes the case for the EC to formalise the IPOA-Seabirds approach to mitigating seabird bycatch through development and implementation of a Community Plan of Action-Seabirds applicable wherever its longline vessels operate, a process which the EC embarked on in 2000 but has never taken to completion. BirdLife International offers its assistance to this process.

2 EC longline fisheries

Longline vessels flagged to EC Member States operate in both Community and external waters.

Within Community waters, there are significant longline fisheries in the Mediterranean, Azores, Madeira and west of Ireland. These fisheries have impacts on shearwater populations and there is evidence that in the Western Mediterranean Cory's shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* is being killed at an unsustainable rate (see section 5.3.1, below for details). There are also concerns for Balearic shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*, a species of global conservation concern. However, the incidence and scale of seabird bycatch rates in many parts of Community waters are poorly known and there is an urgent need for better observer assessment both of bycatch rates and the measures currently being deployed by EC vessels to mitigate incidental mortality of seabirds.

With regard to external waters, the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) (see section 4 for details) have an increasingly critical role to play in reducing incidental mortality of albatrosses and petrels. The EC is an active member in almost all of the RFMOs which BirdLife International has identified¹ as relevant to this issue. ICCAT and IOTC have particular relevance for the EC, given that one-third of the world's albatrosses breed on the overseas territories in the South Atlantic and South Indian Ocean belonging to the UK and France, respectively. Some of the most severe declines in albatross populations are taking place in colonies in the South Atlantic, and research has identified that incidental mortality in fisheries is the most likely cause of these losses.

3 The FAO International Plan of Action (IPOA-Seabirds)

In 1996, an IUCN (The World Conservation Union) resolution called for concerted action to reduce seabird mortality in fisheries. Within the framework of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, this led to the development of a FAO *International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries* (IPOA-Seabirds), formally adopted by the 23rd session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in February 1999 and endorsed by FAO Council in June 1999. As a voluntary instrument, the IPOA-Seabirds gives a range of practical guidelines for action that States should take in order to reduce seabird mortality, primarily through each developing a National Plan of Action-Seabirds (NPOA-Seabirds).

The FAO has encouraged member countries to assess their own seabird bycatch problem and to develop and implement a NPOA-Seabirds, based on the recommendations listed in the IPOA. As indicated above, several global fishing nations have produced and implemented NPOAs but progress is slow and several key countries are still in a state of denial that they have a bycatch problem or that they need a formal plan.

3.1 History of European Commission response to the IPOA-Seabirds

In line with the IPOA-Seabirds, in September 2000 the European Commission circulated a questionnaire to Member States with a view to assessing the need for developing a Community Plan of Action. Responses were received from seven Member States (Table 1). Based on this evidence, the Commission put a "preliminary draft" proposal for a Community Plan of Action for reducing seabird bycatch to the 24th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in February 2001.

BirdLife International welcomed this initiative and particularly the statement that there is a '*need for a specific programme of data collection focused on seabird bycatch*'. Nevertheless, this draft was clearly hurriedly written, missed input from several key fishing nations (notably in the Mediterranean) and effectively only reiterated the FAO Guidelines for producing a NPOA-Seabirds.

Biennial reporting on action plans is invited at FAO-COFI as part of the need for parties to report to COFI on their progress towards fulfilling the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995). The next opportunity for the Commission to do this was the 25th session of FAO-COFI in March 2003.

¹ Small, CJ (2005) Regional Fisheries Management Organisations: their duties and performance in reducing bycatch of albatrosses and other species. BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK.

To this end, BirdLife International met with the Commission in Brussels in February 2002 to discuss the next steps in terms of assessing seabird bycatch, the funding opportunities from the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG), and to explore how best BirdLife could assist in taking the issue forward. The most significant commitment from the Commission's side was that they would engage the Scientific Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) in the second half of 2002 to prepare a Community Action Plan-Seabirds for March 2003, and would invite BirdLife to assist STECF in this work. However, to our knowledge, STECF was never engaged to do this and no assistance was subsequently sought from BirdLife. The Commission did not report back to COFI in March 2003 on progress with its draft Community Plan of Action.

Indeed, there has never been any elaboration of the 'preliminary draft' plan since 2001, despite the fact that the Commission has made documented commitments to take this issue forward (e.g. COM(2002) 186 final; the Malahide (Ireland) meeting (May 2004) on "Biodiversity in the EU" during the Irish Presidency, and SEC(2006) 621, for details see Table 1). In summary, the Commission, having shown initial resolve to adopt a Community Plan to combat the bycatch of seabirds in longline fisheries, has – over five years – set and missed successive deadlines to deliver such a plan.

BirdLife International believes that, despite these missed opportunities, it is vital (even more so now, given the deteriorating conservation status of albatrosses and petrels) that the Commission builds on its preliminary draft plan in 2001 to develop in 2007 a comprehensive Community Plan of Action applicable not just to Community waters but also to the EC's external fisheries.

Table 1: History of the Commission's strategy for developing a Community Plan

Year	EC initiative	Objective	Outcome
2000 (Sep)	DGXIV circulated questionnaire to relevant Member States	To assess the need for a Community Plan of Action-Seabirds	Responses received from UK, Ireland, France, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Spain
2001 (Feb)	Preliminary draft Community Plan of Action	For presentation to FAO-COFI Feb 2001	Rudimentary but a signal of intent
2001 (Mar)	COM(2001)162 final: <i>Biodiversity Action Plan for Fisheries</i>	Includes claim of 'active participation' in the development of FAO IPOAs on sharks and seabirds	No 'active participation' beyond production of a preliminary draft Community Plan.
2002 (Feb)	Meeting between DG Fish/DG Environment and BirdLife International	To discuss next steps after the draft Plan	DG Fish said they would engage STECF to prepare a seabird plan for Mar 2003, and would invite BirdLife to assist.
2002 (May)	COM(2002)186 Final: <i>setting out a Community Action Plan to integrate environmental protection requirements into the CFP</i>	Priority Measures (p4) – ' <i>In the coming months, the Commission shall devise... proposals to protect sharks, cetaceans and sea birds from adverse effects of fishing.</i> ' Annex, p. 7: Implement Community Action Plans to manage sharks and protect seabirds in the context of FAO IPOAs: <i>Propose legislation before end of 2003</i>	No such implementation or legislative proposal
2004-05	Duke, Guy (ed) (2005) <i>Biodiversity and the EU – Sustaining Life, sustaining livelihoods</i> . Report of Stakeholder Conference held under the Irish Presidency in partnership with the European Commission, 25-27 May 2004, Malahide, Ireland	Objective 7.4 (p. 152): Community Action Plans on sharks and seabirds adopted by 2006 with progressive implementation thereafter	No such plans adopted in 2006
2006	SEC(2006)621: <i>Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond: sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being</i> (Technical annex)	Action A3.6.2: Adopt Community Plans of Action for the conservation of sharks and seabirds and implement progressively thereafter	'Community level action' against this objective is to 'Propose plans of action' (no deadline)

3.2 The current view of DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs

In regard to the failure to make progress in 2006 after the Malahide recommendation, the answer (17 January 2006) by Commissioner Borg to Written Questions by MEPs Elspeth Attwooll and Catherine Stihler on the Commission's failure to implement a Community Plan of Action-Seabirds includes the following points:

- ⇒ 'Although the role of Community vessels in this [Southern Ocean] problem seems to be relatively limited, the European Community has continued to promote the necessary work and measures within Regional Fisheries Organisations.'
- ⇒ '...the Community has already incorporated into Community law a number of technical measures under CCAMLR to which the Community is a contracting party.'
- ⇒ '...the Community action plan for the eradication of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing...is also of particular significance in the context of incidental mortality of albatrosses in fisheries.'
- ⇒ '...on a Community initiative, ICCAT, which also covers the Mediterranean Sea, has adopted Recommendation 02-14 related to seabird protection ... the first measures in the ICCAT area to tackle such a matter.'
- ⇒ 'In relation to the western Mediterranean, an area where particular problems have been identified with respect to the bycatch of certain species such as Cory's shearwater, the Spanish authorities have issued guidelines to alleviate bycatches and there are indications that these are having an appreciable effect.'

Commissioner Borg concludes with the following overview of why the Commission does not currently consider a Community Plan worth developing further:

'International Plans of Action under FAO are voluntary instruments, within the framework of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Subsequent national plans of action may represent a useful tool to prepare the ways in which to address some specific problems, where the development of such a tool would prove appropriate and justified.'

In the present circumstances, considering the numerous and increasing challenges that the Community is facing, the already limited resources available to address such challenges and the future prospects for such resources, and taking into account the principle of proportionality in regard to the added value of such an initiative, I cannot consider that developing a Community plan of action for seabirds should be among the Commissioner's priorities in 2006.

This does not mean that the Commission is not concerned about the need to reduce bycatch of seabirds in fisheries; however in tackling the problem, I clearly prefer my services to focus and give priority to possible proposals for practical measures, where the information available indicates that such measures would have immediate and concrete effect in terms of bycatch reduction and where there is justified need to do so at Community level.'

BirdLife International challenges some of the facts presented in this letter:

- ⇒ While the EC has participated in and been generally supportive of the new raft of measures being developed within RFMOs (including by ICCAT) to combat seabird bycatch, NPOAs have been identified by RFMOs as a central element of their seabird bycatch measures to date, and a Community Plan of Action-Seabirds would not only demonstrate leadership but would also provide the EC with a coherent strategy for engagement with RFMOs in relation to seabird bycatch issues.
- ⇒ In the case of the Mediterranean, the Commission's information is not up to date and there is no evidence of improving seabird status – on the contrary, serious concerns remain. The Commission also appears to be unaware of seabird bycatch issues elsewhere in Community waters.
- ⇒ Addressing seabird bycatch was judged to be of the 'highest priority' in 2002 and the need to do so has only increased. According to the "precautionary principle", the first stage of an NPOA, the assessment, is vital as a matter of urgency. The implementation of studies of seabird bycatch should be undertaken in those waters (ie west of Ireland, Azores) where almost no historical data exist.

⇒ The Commission's judgement that it now prefers to address this issue on an ad hoc basis rather than by a Community Action Plan is inconsistent with the need to establish a coherent strategy for action, following a consistent set of mitigation standards, which was the rationale behind the FAO IPOA-Seabirds. Only such a framework will enable the Community to address a problem that has global dimensions.

These arguments are elaborated below as evidence of the need to for the Community to develop and implement a Community Plan of Action-Seabirds.

4 Linking the Community Plan of Action to RFMOs

RFMOs have a critical part to play in relation to the conservation of albatrosses and petrels; particularly CCSBT (Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna), ICCAT, IOTC, WCPFC, IATTC, SEAFO (Southeast Atlantic Fisheries Organisation) and CCAMLR. As an active Contracting Party or Cooperating Non Member in all of these, the EC has both the opportunity and responsibility to assist effective action to reduce incidental mortality of seabirds and other bycatch species.

Commissioner Borg rightly points to the EC's compliance with seabird mitigation measures in the CCAMLR region but CCAMLR is unique in the extent to which it has tackled seabird bycatch successfully (see Box), and is not typical of other RFMOs in which longline fishing effort overlaps with the distribution of endangered albatrosses and petrels. Moreover, 84% of albatross distribution lies outside CCAMLR waters.

CCAMLR – a case study of best practice

CCAMLR has pioneered a suite of measures to reduce seabird bycatch, including technical measures (e.g. night setting, streamer lines, line weighting) and operational measures (e.g. closed seasons and 100% observer coverage) that when used in combination have created a truly 'seabird friendly' fishery in some of the most critical areas for threatened albatrosses and petrels.

As a result of implementing these measures, in the 2006 fishing season not a single albatross was caught by legal longline vessels operating in CCAMLR waters, a remarkable achievement of international will and concerted action.

BirdLife International² has engaged closely with RFMOs over the last two years to provide input that will assist in the development of measures that build on the experience and success of CCAMLR in minimising seabird bycatch. Four tuna commissions (ICCAT, IOTC, WCPFC, IATTC) have now passed seabird bycatch resolutions and recommendations requesting that members implement the IPOA-Seabirds, as appropriate.

Central to this is a strong expectation of Contracting Parties to report back on the status of their NPOA-Seabirds and to develop and implement such a plan if none yet exists. Contracting Parties are also encouraged to collect and furnish data on seabird bycatch and to assess the impact of this bycatch. The ICCAT resolution is shown in **Annex 1** as an example.

Having been modelled on ICCAT, the seabird resolutions of IATTC, IOTC and WCPFC are very similar to ICCAT's. The IOTC resolution (Recommendation 05/09, adopted 2005) additionally encourages Contracting Parties to support the implementation of NPOA-Seabirds by developing countries.

Commissioner Borg refers to the commendable Community initiative in ICCAT in 2002 which led to Resolution 02-14. In compliance with the resolution, the Community has provided some data on seabird bycatch and this has been fortified by the UK's recent announcement that, acknowledging the alarming decline of threatened albatrosses in the South Atlantic Overseas Territories, it will provide funding for the assessment of the impact on seabirds of longline fishing within ICCAT waters³.

² BirdLife International is an observer at IOTC, IATTC, ICCAT, WCPFC, and has provided input to CCAMLR, CCSBT and to the preparatory meetings for the new RFMO in the South Pacific.

³ This will be a significant step toward to further understanding and mitigating seabird by-catch in this region, which will – in turn – assist in halting the rapid decline of many albatross and petrel populations in UK's Atlantic Overseas Territories. It is hoped that this UK initiative will also set an example that will stimulate similar assessment in other key RFMOs.

The key point here for the EC, however, is that it has failed to comply with the resolution's central request, namely to undertake a Plan of Action. The first stage of implementation of such a Plan of Action is to collect data to assess whether – and to what extent – a seabird bycatch problem exists in EC fisheries.

Beyond this, without such a plan, the EC cannot effectively influence – in a consistent and coherent way for Community longline fleets – data collection protocols, the development of observer programmes, provision of information on the spatial and temporal overlap of seabirds and fisheries, and impact assessments. Given the membership of EC member states in ACAP (Spain, France, UK), and the proportion of the world's albatrosses on UK and French Overseas Territories (more than 30% of the world's breeding pairs), the Community should be playing a leading role in the implementation of an effective suite of mitigation measures for reducing seabird bycatch in the respective tuna commission Convention Areas. In this regard, EC vessels should be pioneering best practice and setting standards for the fleets of other Contracting Parties. A Community Action Plan-Seabirds would create an agreed framework of standards for proposals by the EC delegation at these fora.

The case-by-case approach to resolving bycatch issues advocated by the Commission is not consistent with the aspirations of a NPOA or – in the EC's case – a Community Plan, which takes a strategic approach to the issue. Until and unless the Commission proposes the development of a Community Action Plan, the EC is not complying with the spirit or the letter of the RFMOs' request to member States, and is falling short of contributing to the collective international cooperation needed to make progress on this issue.

Case study: Spanish pelagic longlining in the Pacific Ocean

While there are still few assessments of seabird bycatch by EC longline vessels operating in distant water fisheries, a recent report to IATTC⁴ estimates the bycatch of non-target fish, marine turtles and seabirds in the Spanish longline fleet targeting swordfish in the Pacific Ocean between 1990 and 2005.

The number of hooks observed to estimate interaction rates with turtles and seabirds was 3.282 million (2.153 and 1.129 for IATTC and WCPFC areas, respectively). Eight albatross species and three petrel species were potentially affected in the two Convention areas. The overall rate of interaction with seabirds for the Pacific area was estimated as 0.0375 birds caught per 1000 hooks, with an overall mortality rate of 0.0372 birds killed per 1000 hooks.

5 Seabird bycatch in Community waters

5.1 Seabird bycatch in Mediterranean and Macaronesian waters

In 2002, a country-by-country review was undertaken of seabird mortality from longline fishing in the Mediterranean Sea and in Macaronesian waters⁵. Of twelve Mediterranean countries known to undertake longlining, data on seabird mortality were only available for six: France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain and Tunisia. Seabird mortality from longlining has been reported from the Azores (Portugal) but no data are available for other Macaronesian islands.

Compared to other EC fisheries, the data for the Spanish fleet is relatively good (see section 5.3, below). The presumption must be that the substantial longline activity by other Mediterranean countries also has an impact which needs to be assessed. Greece, with its extensive fleet of small coastal longline vessels, has fisheries which target swordfish, tuna and bream species. Italy's fleet of small longliners targets mainly swordfish, with 700 vessels based in Sicily alone. Longline fisheries in French and Maltese waters have also been implicated in bycatch of seabirds⁵.

⁴ Mejuto, J, Garcia-Cortés, B, Ramos-Cartelle, A and Ariz, J (2007) Preliminary overall estimations of bycatch landed by the Spanish surface longline fleet targeting swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) in the Pacific Ocean and interaction with marine turtles and sea birds: years 1990-2005. Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, Working Group on Bycatch, 6th Meeting, La Jolla, California (USA), 9-10 February 2007.

⁵ Cooper, J, Baccetti, N, Belda, EJ, Borg, JJ, Oro, D, Papaconstantinou, C and Sánchez, A (2002) Seabird mortality from longline fishing in the Mediterranean Sea and Macaronesian waters: a review and a way forward. In: Mediterranean seabirds and their conservation (E Mínguez, D Oro, E De Juana and A Martínez-Abraín, Eds). *Scientia Marina* 67, 89-94.

Seabirds recorded as bycatch in Spanish Mediterranean (C Carboneras, in litt.)

(A) Listed in Spanish Red Data Book:

- ⇒ Balearic shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* (**Critically Endangered – CR**)
- ⇒ Cory's shearwater *Calonectris diomedea diomedea* (**Endangered – EN**)
- ⇒ Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii* (**Vulnerable – VU**)
- ⇒ Audouin's gull *Larus audouinii* (**VU**)

(B) Recorded as bycatch but Not listed in Spanish Red Data Book:

- ⇒ Yelkouan (or Mediterranean) shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*
- ⇒ Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*
- ⇒ Great skua *Catharacta skua*
- ⇒ Mediterranean gull *Larus melanocephalus*
- ⇒ Yellow-legged gull *Larus michahellis*

5.2 Seabird bycatch in Maltese waters – a new study

Adult and juvenile **Yelkouan shearwaters** *Puffinus yelkouan* breeding in Malta have been reported as incidental bycatch in longline fisheries operating in French, Italian, Spanish and Maltese territorial waters^{5,6}. In Maltese waters alone, an estimated 160 birds are caught and killed annually (BirdLife Malta). However, the total bycatch of this species in Community waters is not known.

To address this problem and to promote remedial action, in 2006 BirdLife Malta and SPEA (Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves – Portuguese BirdLife partner), along with a consortium of local Maltese partners including Government authorities, were awarded a LIFE project to identify a marine IBA (prior to designating a SPA) for the Yelkouan shearwater in Maltese waters. The actions include evaluating the impact of the Maltese fleet on this species, and influencing fishing practices accordingly to reduce bycatch. The project will work closely with the local fishing industry to this end. Along with land-based conservation measures, the overall objective of this 4-year LIFE Project is to increase the breeding strength of the species from 500 pairs to 700 pairs in the project site, and from 1500 pairs to 2000 pairs nationally in Malta. This is clearly a key study that could assist the EC in developing a Community Plan of Action.

5.3 Seabird bycatch in Spanish waters

5.3.1 Spanish demersal longline fisheries

The species likely to be taken in the greatest numbers in the Mediterranean is **Cory's shearwater** which comprised 67% of the seabird mortality in demersal longlining around Columbretes Is⁶. The total Mediterranean population for this species has been estimated at 50,000-80,000 breeding pairs, located at 103 known colonies belonging to eight countries (see Cooper et al. 2002 for references). However the total population in the Spanish region of the western Mediterranean is less than 10,000 breeding pairs (Carboneras 2004⁷), of which 4-6% (i.e. mostly adult birds) may be killed annually by longlining, a mortality rate which is unsustainable in the long term, threatening the species with extinction if it were to continue.

Bycatch in this study was concentrated at sunrise and sunset when most birds were around the vessels (80% of bait loss occurred at these times). This led to the recommendation that night-setting would be the most effective mitigation measure, and would also mitigate economic losses from snatched bait⁸. Accordingly, fishermen in the area are starting (voluntarily) to set lines at night or during the day instead. Apart from this, some fishermen

⁶ Belda, EJ and Sánchez, A (2001) Seabird mortality on longline fisheries in the western Mediterranean; factors affecting bycatch and proposed mitigation measures. *Biological Conservation* 98, 357-363.

⁷ Carboneras, C (2004) Pardela Cenicienta, *Calonectris diomedea diomedea*. In Madroño, A, González, C & Atienza, JC (eds) Libro Rojo de las Aves de España, pp 39-43. SEO/BirdLife & Ministerio de Medio Ambiente. Madrid.

⁸ Sánchez, A and Belda, EJ (2003) Bait loss caused by seabirds on longline fisheries in the northwestern Mediterranean: is night setting an effective mitigation measure? *Fisheries Research* 60(1), 99-106.

(again voluntarily) use a single line (without streamers) towed behind the vessel but this is considered inefficient in reducing seabird bycatch. The authors of the study therefore recommended compulsory night setting and trials of streamer (tori) lines.

More recently, a study⁹ building on these findings was carried out by SEO/BirdLife covering a larger area – the whole of the Valencia region, yielding a recorded mortality of 0.25 birds (various species)/1000 hooks. Significant mortality of **Balearic shearwater** was recorded outside the study and was included in the extrapolations. Annual bycatch in the Valencia region may represent 4% of Cory's shearwater populations breeding in the Valencia and Balearic Islands and 0.9-1.4% of Balearic shearwater populations. Two mitigation measures were tested: because night setting can in some cases affect target fish catch rates and issues remain to be resolved on the ease of use and hauling of streamer lines. Both showed medium-high effectiveness but the author considered that they might not be accepted by the fishermen. The author recommended line weighting and use of an underwater-setting capsule (New Zealand model) as additional mitigation measures.

There is particular concern for the Critically Endangered Balearic shearwater. Significant longline mortality of Balearic shearwater is strongly suspected¹⁰, given the high overall mortality experienced by the species (see Box). Although there is still insufficient evidence of interaction between this species and longline fisheries, the gregarious behaviour of the species and its frequent attendance at fishing vessels could result in occasional (i.e. difficult to detect) but serious incidence of mortality, and there are reports of up to 50 individuals entangled in a single line¹¹.

Balearic shearwater – at high risk of extinction

Balearic shearwater is the rarest Mediterranean seabird, with a breeding population estimated at only 2000 pairs and restricted to the Balearic Archipelago. The demography and extinction risk of this species has recently been modelled¹². The estimated adult survival rate of 0.78 is unusually low for a Procellariiform bird, suggesting that sources of mortality (e.g. fishing gears) other than predators also occur.

Based on the modelled rate of decline of the breeding population, the mean extinction time for the world population was estimated at 40.4 years (SE = 0.2), and the probabilities of extinction judged by the authors to be 'extremely high'.

Apart from recommending effective mitigation measures for longline fisheries, two large marine protected areas were proposed in 2004 as SPAMIs (Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Interest) under the Barcelona Convention¹³.

5.3.2 Spanish pelagic longline fisheries

In the western Mediterranean, two studies have been carried out in pelagic longline fisheries:

Study 1:

1.57 million hooks (557 sets) by 18 surface longliners (tuna, swordfish, albacore), using no mitigation measures, were monitored for 13 months¹⁴. Twenty-one bird deaths were recorded (9 Cory's shearwater, 2 northern gannet *Morus bassanus*, 11 yellow-legged gull *Larus michahellis*). There was evidence that bycatch rates may be fishery-specific:

0.0234 birds/1000 hooks (albacore)
0.0076 birds/1000 hooks (swordfish)
0 birds (tuna and swordfish semipelagic)

⁹ Guallart, J (2004) Unpublished report of project by SEO/BirdLife with funding from Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

¹⁰ Arcos, JM, Louzao, M and Oro, D (2006) Fisheries ecosystem impacts and management in the Mediterranean: seabirds point of view. American Fisheries Society Symposium 2006, 587-595.

¹¹ Arcos, JM and Oro, D (2004) Pardela Balear (*Puffinus mauretanicus*). Pp. 46-50 in A Madroño, C González and JC Atienza (Eds). Libro Rojo de las Aves de España. Dirección General para la Biodiversidad-SEO/BirdLife, Madrid.

¹² Oro, D, Aguilar, JS, Igual, JM and Louzao, M (2004) Modelling demography and extinction risk in the endangered Balearic shearwater. *Biological Conservation* 116, 93-102.

¹³ Ruiz, A and Martí, R (eds) *La pardela Balear*. SEO/BirdLife-Conselleria de Medi Ambient del Govern de les Illes Balears, Madrid.

¹⁴ Valeiras, J and Camiñas, JA (2003) The incidental capture of seabirds by Spanish drifting longline fisheries in the western Mediterranean Sea. *Scientia Marina* 67(2), 65-68.

Study 2:

Six Spanish longliners targeting swordfish and sharks were monitored by on-board observers over an extensive study area for 6 months, during which 676,000 hooks were deployed (in daylight, hauling day and night)¹⁵. 1181 seabirds of 10 species were recorded attending the vessels but none were caught. However, there was significant bycatch of other species:

290 turtles (*Caretta*) – 0.69/1000 hooks

4 marine mammals (*Physeter*, *Grampus*, *Stenella*) – 0.065/1000 hooks

Other non-target species (rays, sharks, tunids) – 44% of total catch

Fishing which targets swordfish uses highly specialised methods in the Western Mediterranean and results may not extrapolate to other longline fisheries, including for swordfish in other regions. In the Western Mediterranean, lines are set relatively far offshore (> 60 nautical miles) in terms of Mediterranean fisheries, mostly in complete daylight and using quite large bait, conditions which collectively attract few birds to the vessel (note only 1181 birds seen attending setting of over 600,000 hooks). Moreover, the lines (which are deployed using both automated and traditional hand techniques) are apparently set quite deep so are presumably weighted, which further reduces risk of seabird bycatch. These features of the Western Mediterranean swordfish fishery are not typical of swordfish fisheries elsewhere which are often less targeted at swordfish, more coastal, and use less heavily-weighted lines set at lower speeds. Such less specialised techniques would be carried out by multi-purpose vessels and may apply to the majority of hooks set in the Western Mediterranean.

5.4 Seabird bycatch in the North-East Atlantic

5.4.1 Seabird bycatch by Spanish demersal fishery on the Gran Sol

BirdLife International has suspected for some time that the longline fishery for hake and associated species in the western approaches to the British Isles and to the west of Ireland incurs seabird bycatch but up until now there have been few observations to substantiate this. However, in November 2005, an agreement was drawn up between the Department of Environment of the Government of Galicia, the Port Authority of Celeiro (Lugo Province, Galicia) and Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO/BirdLife) to promote sustainable fisheries for seabirds in the Gran Sol fishing grounds (SW Ireland).

On the basis of this collaboration, in October 2006 an observer (Álvaro Barros) undertook the first of a series of seven trips to the Gran Sol to assess the impact of the Galicia longline fishery on seabirds. The purpose of this project, which will continue until September 2007, is to study the spatial and temporal interaction between the fishery and seabirds (i.e. in all seasons, inshore and offshore).

The first observations, reported in December 2006¹⁶, were conducted aboard the vessel '*Breogán Uno*' between 14 and 26 October 2006, a 16-day trip including 10 fishing days to the Gran Sol (about 160kms offshore: between 53°55'032"N-12°30'047"W and 53°054'771"N-12°55'938"W), targeting mainly hake *Merluccius merluccius* and black bream *Brama ramii*. Each day, the vessel set 10,200 hooks along 15-20kms. Of the total of 98,545 hooks set during the whole fishing period, 8496 (9%) were monitored.

The main seabird species accompanying the fishing activities were northern fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* and great shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. In total, 121 birds were caught on the longlines, comprising 116 (96%) great shearwaters, 4 fulmars, and 1 sooty shearwater *Puffinus griseus*, a bycatch rate of 14.2 birds per 1000 hooks. An additional 20 birds (19 great shearwaters, 1 sooty shearwater) were caught during line-hauling (while attacking hooked fish) but were released alive.

Setting was at night and at dawn, and bycatch was strongly associated with the use of deck lighting during the first six days. After the sixth day, the observer requested that – as a control – no deck lighting be used and in the four fishing days that followed, only 2 birds were caught. When the lights were on, 119 birds (98% of the

¹⁵ De la Sterna, JM, Ortiz, JM and García, S (2006) Peces espada en peligro. Cada vez se capturan ejemplares más jóvenes. *Revista Electrónica del Instituto Español de Oceanografía* 5, 12-16.

¹⁶ Barros, Á (2006) Evaluación de la incidencia de la Pesca con palangre sobre las aves marinas en Gran Sol: Informe de resultados preliminares, diciembre de 2006.

total) were killed, an average of 20 birds a day. If this bycatch rate applies to all the hooks set, and not just those observed, then 240 birds would have been caught per day. Bycatch rates were highest at dawn when the birds were most active.

These results demonstrate a significant mortality of great shearwaters in this fishery. The observer got the impression from the fishermen that his findings were not unusual, and other vessels fishing in the area were apparently also catching birds. Assuming that deck lighting is routinely used, extrapolating the observed rate of 20 birds per day to the number of vessels operating and the time of year when this species is present in the area, gives an estimated 55,000 great shearwaters killed annually by the Galician fleet on the Gran Sol. Further work is needed in different seasons and fishing zones to evaluate the overall impact of this fishery. Similar observer studies are planned at intervals in 2007 up until September by which time fishing moves into more coastal waters.

The great shearwater is a relatively numerous bird, with the world population, centred on the Tristan da Cunha Group and numbering more than 10 million individuals (P Ryan, pers comm.). There has been some mortality on longlines around Tristan (about 100 birds on one trip), but effort is low. In South African waters, bycatch of great shearwaters has also been recorded on hake and tuna longlines over the last two years and there are unconfirmed reports of hundreds being killed on some tuna pole boats.

Even though the Gran Sol fishery is unlikely, therefore, to be having a major impact on great shearwater populations in conservation terms, the simple expediency of not using deck lighting (or perhaps targeting it in a narrower beam rather than illuminating the whole aft-deck), providing this is consistent with health and safety, could eliminate this seabird bycatch. Such reduction of deck lighting is specified by the Spanish Regulation of 2006 on longline mitigation measures (see section 6.2, below). No other demersal longline mitigation measures – such as streamer (tori) lines or line weighting – are used in this fishery. The observer was told that streamer lines had been tried in the past but that the fishermen were not happy using them as they got tangled with the longline.

BirdLife considers the discovery of seabird bycatch issue in the Gran Sol to be a significant development, which shows up the loose compliance with the 2006 Spanish regulation on longlining. It also points up the potential for similar seabird bycatch in the wider area and south to Macaronesian waters. A Community Action Plan would be the appropriate mechanism for assessing this interaction and giving a basis for statutory measures to monitor the fishery, assess the scale of bycatch, and implement an appropriate and binding suite of mitigation measures.

5.5 Conclusions from available data on seabird bycatch in Community waters

The evidence presented above demonstrates that there is a substantial body of information on Spanish fisheries and their interaction with seabirds, especially compared to other countries in the EU. For instance, the Italian fleet includes 700 vessels based in Sicily alone⁵ but we know next to nothing about the threat they pose to seabirds. Even so, the Spanish information remains scattered and there is a need for gap analysis and further at-sea assessment (in keeping with the Commission's draft proposal for a Plan of Action (2001) which describes the initial '*need for a specific programme of data collection focused on seabirds bycatch*').

Nevertheless, there is strong circumstantial evidence of an unsustainably high bycatch of Cory's shearwater in the Spanish sector of the Western Mediterranean, and serious concern that longline mortality is adding to the decline of Balearic shearwater at a rate which threatens this species with extinction within a generation.

The response to this situation by both Spain and the EC has hitherto not been commensurate with the scale of threat. Political decisions in Spain – as well as recommendations by scientists – have shown little consistency over time, so measures adopted for reducing seabird bycatch have had little success (C Carboneras, SEO/BirdLife).

6 Legislative issues

6.1 International species legislation

There is an international obligation that Critically Endangered Balearic shearwater should be the object of concerted action (Convention on Migratory Species – Concerted Actions for Appendix I species. UNEP/CMS/Resolution 8.29).

In addition, a scoring system¹⁷ developed to assess 128 species of Procellariiformes for consideration as candidate species for the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and petrels (ACAP, which currently applies only to the southern hemisphere) identified Balearic shearwater, Cory's shearwater and Yelkouan shearwater as strong candidates for inclusion. At-sea threats were identified as a major reason for this listing.

6.2 National fisheries legislation

According to its draft National Strategic Plan¹⁸ for the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) distributed to stakeholders in 2006, Spain has two strategic goals in the field of environmental protection of fishing: (1) promote sustainable and ecological fishing; (2) promote use of more selective fishing methods. Actions will include promoting and continuing current studies on populations of vulnerable species (seabirds, turtles, cetaceans) suffering adverse impacts from fishing, and experiments to reduce these impacts.

In May 2002, Spain passed a Regulation¹⁹ applicable to pelagic longlining (tuna, swordfish and related species) operating S of 30°S. It was a weak formulation, however, placing much on the goodwill of skippers to comply.

In 2006, this was superseded by a new Regulation²⁰ applicable to longlining by Spanish vessels in all seas and oceans: Article 7 sets the following measures for reducing bycatch of seabirds and turtles:

- ⇒ Setting shall be done preferably between dusk and dawn; vessel external lights must be reduced to those strictly necessary for navigation and fishing purposes
- ⇒ If offal discharge is unavoidable during setting and hauling, it shall be done on opposite side of vessel to that from where setting is done
- ⇒ If seabirds/turtles are caught, they should be freed alive with minimal damage
- ⇒ The use of devices to reduce bycatch will be favoured

Fleet size of Spanish-flagged longline vessels (April 2006)¹⁸

Operating inside Spanish EEZ:

235 demersal longliners

182 surface longliners

Operating outside EEZ:

105 demersal longliners

93 surface longliners

The recent (2006) revision of the Spanish Regulation setting out mitigation measures for longline fishing (see above) is an improvement on the 2002 Regulation, particularly in now applying to all waters where Spanish vessels operate (not just to pelagic longlining S of 30°S, as in the 2002 Regulation).

However, the new Regulation is still very much in the realm of 'guidelines' (the term used by Commissioner Borg, see section 3.2), not least in the Regulation's clause that *'The use of devices to reduce bycatch will be favoured'*. This falls far short of best practice, notably the statutory requirement to apply an approved suite of mitigation measures as a prerequisite for receiving a fishing licence for CCAMLR waters.

¹⁷ Cooper, J and Baker, B (2005) Choosing candidate species for future inclusion within the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels. ACAP, 2nd meeting of Advisory Committee, Brazilia, 5-8 June 2006.

¹⁸ Secr. Gral. Pesca (2006) Plan Estratégico Nacional del Fondo Europeo de la Pesca (Borrador).

¹⁹ Orden APA/1127/2002, de 13 de mayo, por la que se establecen medidas para reducir la mortalidad incidental de las aves marinas en las pesquerías de palangre de superficie. BOE núm. 124, de 23 de mayo de 2002, pág 18429.

²⁰ Orden APA/2521/2006, de 27 de julio, por la que se regula la pesca con el arte de palangre de superficie para la captura de especies altamente migratorias y por la que se crea el censo unificado de palangre de superficie. BOE núm. 183, de 2 de agosto de 2006, págs. 28896-28901.

In this regard, the Commission's defence of the regulatory response by Spain is at best over-optimistic, at worst misinformed. According to Commissioner Borg (p 10, above):

'In relation to the western Mediterranean, an area where particular problems have been identified with respect to the bycatch of certain species such as Cory's shearwater, the Spanish authorities have issued guidelines to alleviate bycatches and there are indications that these are having an appreciable effect.'

The extensive literature review carried out here has produced no evidence to support the contention that the 'guidelines' issued by the Spanish authorities (only in 2006) are having the alleged beneficial effect in reducing seabird bycatch, and we would be interested to see the Commission's data to support that view.

From BirdLife's perspective, the facts indicate rather that globally threatened seabirds are continuing to decline in the western Mediterranean, and there is insufficient political will to address this both at national and Community level.

It could be argued that a Spanish NPOA-Seabirds would be one approach to addressing the primary threat in the Mediterranean and elsewhere in Community waters where the Spanish fleet operates. However, there is no indication that Spain has the appetite to go beyond the relatively weak Regulation it has already passed. Moreover, no other EC Member States have gone as far as Spain's limited measures, and there appears to be no political will in any Member State to develop NPOA-Seabirds. That said, the need for a coherent strategy for reducing seabird bycatch calls for a Community initiative rather than a set of discrete national initiatives (NPOAs) which would undoubtedly vary in robustness and create further regulatory confusion for longlining fleets operating in different EEZs. Moreover, a Community Plan of Action-Seabirds would provide the necessary steer to relevant Member States to take the national measures needed for mitigating seabird bycatch in longline fisheries.

For these reasons, BirdLife International considers that the priority is to develop a Community Plan of Action capable of setting a framework for national measures. We also consider that, in the light of the evidence presented in this report, such an initiative is more necessary than ever.

7 The way forward: NPOA Assessment

The first stage of development of a NPOA-Seabirds, as stated in IPOA-Seabirds, is to conduct an assessment to determine the extent and nature of a State's incidental catch of seabirds in longline fisheries. An assessment includes description of fishery characteristics, fishing effort and fishing areas; status of seabird species affected and a summary of available bycatch data; and current national and international management measures and regulations affecting seabird bycatch. There is a comprehensive list of assessment components specified in IPOA-Seabirds (see Box below).

Components of an Assessment for NPOA-Seabirds (Source: IPOA-Seabirds)

The assessment may include, but is not limited to, the collection and analysis of the:

- ⇒ Criteria used to evaluate the need for a NPOA-Seabirds.
- ⇒ Fishing fleet data (numbers of vessels by size).
- ⇒ Fishing techniques data (demersal, pelagic, methods).
- ⇒ Description of fishing areas.
- ⇒ Fishing effort by longline fishery (seasons, species, catch, number of hooks/year/fishery).
- ⇒ Status of seabird populations in the fishing areas, if known.
- ⇒ Total annual catch of seabirds (numbers per 1000 hooks set/species/longline fishery).
- ⇒ Existing mitigation measures in use and their effectiveness in reducing incidental catch of seabirds.
- ⇒ Systems for monitoring incidental catch of seabirds (observer program, etc.).
- ⇒ Statement of conclusions and decision to develop and implement a NPOA-Seabirds.

It is important that the criteria used to define what constitutes a 'problem' are explicitly and transparently defined. Ideally, this would comprise of an element of quantitative analysis. However, many States will lack the time series of data required to determine the impact of their longline fishing effort on seabirds, regardless of their provenance. In most cases however, there will be anecdotal evidence and reports of seabird bycatch. The EC may also benefit from recent developments in WCPFC and ICCAT in relation to ecological risk assessment (ERA).

BirdLife International welcomes recent statements from the European Commission that an assessment process for a Community Plan of Action is now underway, and offers its assistance to the Commission in providing data that we have available. The information provided in this report is part of that assessment. In addition, the seabird assessment now being conducted in ICCAT will provide relevant information to the EC in relation to seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. BirdLife can also assist the Commission by providing data from BirdLife's albatross and petrel satellite tracking database, which can be used to identify areas and seasons where there is overlap between EC fishing effort and albatross and petrel distribution.

In conclusion, BirdLife International reiterates its offer of assistance to the Commission in undertaking this assessment. This first stage of a Community Plan of Action-Seabirds is urgently required and should be pursued without further delay with the goodwill and collaboration of BirdLife and other stakeholders.

Annex 1

02-14: Resolution by ICCAT on incidental mortality of seabirds

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the FAO International Plan of Action for Reducing the Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries;

RECOGNIZING the need to evaluate the incidental mortality of seabirds during longline fisheries for tunas and tuna-like species;

NOTING that fisheries other than longline fisheries targeting tuna and tuna-like species may also contribute to the incidental mortality of seabirds;

FURTHER NOTING that other factors, such as swallowing marine debris, are also responsible for seabird mortality.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS (ICCAT) RESOLVES THAT:

1. Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities should inform the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS), if appropriate, and Commission of the status of their National Plans of Action for Reducing Incidental Catches of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries. All are strongly urged to implement, if appropriate, the International Plan of action for Reducing Incidental Catches of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries if they have not already done so.
2. Contracting Parties, Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities should be encouraged to collect and voluntarily provide SCRS with all the available information on interactions with seabirds, including incidental catches in all fisheries under the purview of ICCAT.
3. When feasible and appropriate, SCRS should present to the Commission an assessment of the impact of incidental catch of seabirds resulting from the activities of all vessels for tunas and tuna-like species, in the Convention Area.



BirdLife International is a global Partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. BirdLife Partners operate in over one hundred countries and territories worldwide. BirdLife International has 42 Partners in Europe and is active in all of the EU Member States. BirdLife's European Division, based in Brussels, is responsible for coordinating the work of the Partnership and the BirdLife Task Forces on European policy issues, and for representing the Partnership in the European Institutions.



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