



ALBERT TIMES

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"Don't be warped - trawl for fish, not birds"

Its "business time" (wink, wink) and I have been away with the wife for a "dirty weekend" at the Antipodes, so I have asked George Clement to write this weeks Albert's Column. See you next month, Chow Albert.

There's plenty happening on the seabird front. John Cleal jumped onboard the FV Taimania last month while it was fishing in Cook Strait targeting spawning hoki, to carry out sea trials of two seabird mitigation practices; net binding when shooting; and closing up the net by turning the vessel during the haul.

Richard Wells has been attending seabird meetings in Wellington outlining the structure and content of the next VMPs for freshers. The seabird standard and NPOA is all up for discussion, submissions have been made to the MFish IPP. The FAO is also due to release a set of standards that would provide information to feed into the MFish seabird standards.

Southern Seabird Solutions (SSS) are having their seabird review workshop in Nelson on the 10th and 11th of November, with international guest speakers and information on local work to reduce seabird bycatch.

The Environmental Learning Resource is also being updated, much of this training resource covers seabird mitigation. This training resource will be re-printed in English, Korean and Russian. This resource will be sent to all vessels in the deep-water fleet by late October. Each deep-sea trawler/vessel operator can also book the delivery of this information with John Cleal to attend the vessel during a port call and the information will be delivered to senior crew.

Thanks to Johanna Pierre for the article on those nasty rodents terrifying the local cousins on Gough Island.

Seabird Mitigation Sea Trials

As part of a project to identify ways of reducing the risk of seabird net captures. I recently spent 5 days on the FV Taimania in Cook Strait testing two seabird mitigation practices. Both methods trialed are to reduce the amount of netting on the surface of the water, reducing the mesh or netting volume on the surface should in turn help reduce net captures when hauling and shooting the net.

This sea trial aimed to see if the protocols and operational practices could be carried out at sea while being practically applied to the trawl deck operations. The two methods tested were, (1) net binding when shooting the gear and (2) closing the net off by turning the vessel when hauling.

Net binding consists of attaching mussel rope to the midwater net at set intervals, which slips undone when the net is spread

open when the trawl doors are deployed.

Turning the vessel while hauling the net so the net is pulled across the stern ramp to bunch up the netting.

The next stage of this project is to trial both methods again on a large factory trawler to see if the practices can be followed on the deck of a larger vessel.

You would not believe how many mollymawks are out in the Cook Strait Hoki fishery just a short distance from Wellington. Hundreds and hundreds of birds arrive on cue during hauling all after a "free feed".

Even though there are large numbers of birds there, there are no interactions with the fishing gear, with no processing carried out onboard, so theres no offal; the birds stay well back from the vessel waiting for the codend to come to the surface.

The trials went well, thanks to the



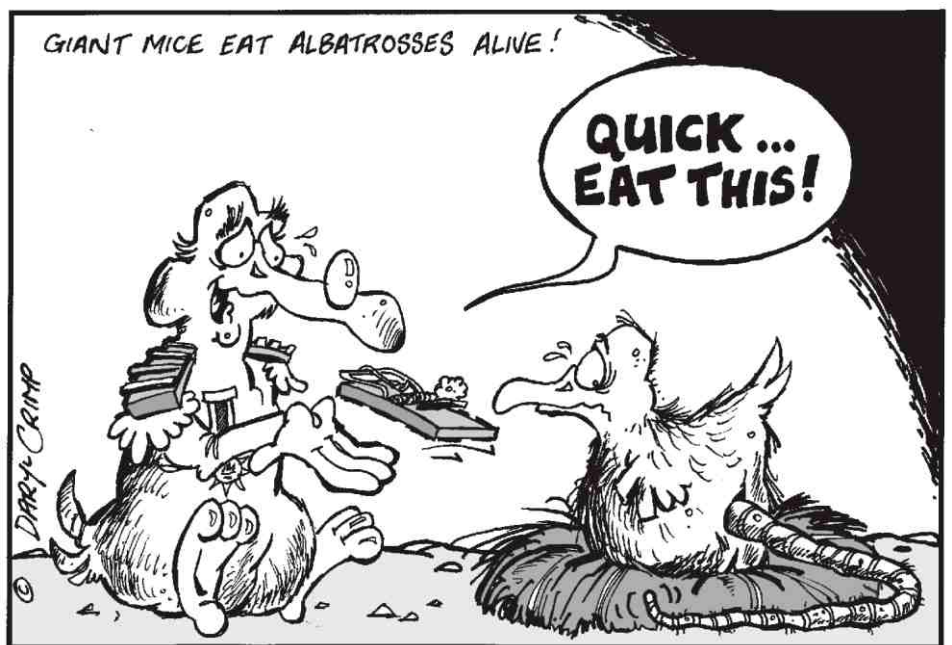
Birds around codends, Cook Strait, FV Taimania

help from the crew of the *FV Taimania*.

John Cleal, FVMS

[Eaten alive! - the albatrosses and giant mice of Gough Island](#)

Imagine a house mouse that's big enough to be a small rat. Now, imagine it eating an albatross alive, while the bird sits on its nest. First the mouse makes a small hole in the bird, then gradually over consecutive nights it burrows into the body cavity and feeds on the bird's insides. Remember that this is all still happening while the bird is still alive..... then eventually the stress gets too great and there's not enough



WHICH COUSIN OF MINE IS THIS?



This cousin is a youngster and probably following a vessel to see if they can get a free feed.

If you know the name of this bird then email your answer, name, postal address and date of publication to albertross@fishinfo.co.nz

BE IN TO WIN: Albert Ross' cap and the "Field Guide to New Zealand Seabirds"



The cousin of last month:
Lightmantled Sooty Albatross

bird left and it dies. On a small island in the southwest Atlantic, this horror story plays out every year.

Gough Island is in the Tristan da Cunha archipelago. Mice have been there at least since 1888, and they've made a very good living. Now, the mouse population is thought to be at least 224 mice per hectare of island. However, rather than remaining normal sized, Gough mice have become giants. They are almost twice the weight of mice on South Georgia, another island in the South Atlantic. Unfortunately, they have also developed a taste for seabirds.

Gough Island is home to a number of threatened seabirds including the endangered Tristan albatross and Atlantic petrel, and the giant mice eat them both. Mice visit many seabird nests, and start by taking small nibbles of chicks. Over time, the mice enlarge these nibbles into holes, until eventually they actually burrow into the birds' body cavities, inside the skin. Bear in mind that while this is happening, the albatross chicks are not all small - they can weigh up to 6 kg!

The Tristan albatross is considered extremely likely to become extinct

in 30 to 60 years, in part due to mice eating the chicks. However, the albatrosses may catch a break if mouse eradication can be carried out. Think about that next time you're baiting a mouse trap, and be glad you're not dealing with a giant..... get on line and take a look at these oversized mice on action!

[Http://link.brightcove.com/services/link/bcpid1513658585/bctid1668543332](http://link.brightcove.com/services/link/bcpid1513658585/bctid1668543332)

Johanna Pierre, DoC

DID YOU KNOW?

The total population of black browed albatross is estimated between 1 million and 2.5 million birds, which makes it more abundant than all other southern ocean albatrosses combined. In spite of its large population, the species is listed as endangered because it is believed to be in sharp decline at a rate of 65% over 65 years.

The black browed albatross is a recent coloniser in New Zealand. They breed on Campbell, Antipodes and Snares Islands.

To learn more go to www.albertross.co.nz and pick up this month's issue



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