



ALBERT TIMES

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“DON'T BE WARPED—TRAWL FOR FISH, NOT BIRDS”

MATCH OF THE WEEK!

NEW ZEALAND VS SOUTH AFRICA

The above headline has highlighted rivalry between our two nations on the sports field, most notably rugby, for decades.

However in 2006, another shared interest surfaced, when South African Barry Watkins attended the Southern Seabirds Solutions Trawl Workshop in Nelson. He revealed that data collected in 2004-05 showed the **conservative** number of 18,000 (plus or minus some) seabird deaths in their trawl fishery.

This was a nasty revelation to the South African trawl fleet when announced there, and was a concern for us, as nearly half the birds implicated were white capped albatross from the NZ population, based in the Auckland Islands area.

Subsequently it has always been on my radar to get to grips with the nature of the problem there and see what, if anything, can be learned from these efforts to mitigate captures.

Fresh off the plane from Cape Town I can now report! And it should be no surprise to those who have followed the seabird issue for some time, that there are details to the South African experience that make it a different ball

of wax to here. Their primary target species is hake, and hake needs to be gutted quickly whether to be frozen or landed fresh, so even their freshers are producing a lot of offal at times and not all their freezers have meal plants.

Also, the composition of birds around the vessels, and the time that they are most active, differs. They see lots of sooty shearwaters but catch very few.... their net captures are primarily gannets, which apparently have learned to forage on fish in the trawls, diving right in. Their high activity time is winter as opposed to summer problems here, mostly this is because there is a different set of drivers in regards to breeding and feeding. Half the white caps there are juveniles from New Zealand, for instance.

Obviously there are still gross similarities.... they have: mostly warp captures, problems with mollus (white capped and black browed), a net capture issue that's hard to deal with (gannets!) and a wide variety of vessels that need to manage offal and reduce warp strikes. The good news is that tori lines have been implemented as a permit condition, and are reported to have reduced mortalities by around 55%. A major part of their problem is that their toris are very prescriptive (sounds familiar!) leading to an acknowledgement by some vessel operators that while their devices

From the desk of Admiral Albert Ross MBE (mighty big eater)

I hope you enjoyed last month's 50th issue, we also added some "you beaut" seabird photos on the web site, get on there and take a look...

The latest International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) updated "Red List" of Threatened Species for birds officially declared extinct the *Alaotra grebe*, a bird species native to Madagascar. I get a tear in my eye when I hear a bird has gone extinct, poor little blighter! On the upside my "local cousin" the Chatham Island Albatross has been removed from the critically endangered list. A total of 132 bird species are documented as having gone extinct in the last 500 years, no wonder the life insurance levies have been going through the roof. What!

My mate Richard Wells organised a meeting in Nelson on incidental capture estimates for deepwater fisheries. Ed from Dragonfly Ltd compiled 10 years of MFish and DOC capture records and shared this with managers from DWG, DOC, MFish and a few of the local seafood & vessel operators. My long range scouts reported they discussed how data is collected at sea and collated on seabird and marine mammal captures, as well as how this information can be used for future research options and fisheries management work.

The day ended with Russell Harding and Sean Cooper from DOC and Ed having a look around one of the local net sheds and a couple of factory vessels. A good day all-round.

Chow
Albert



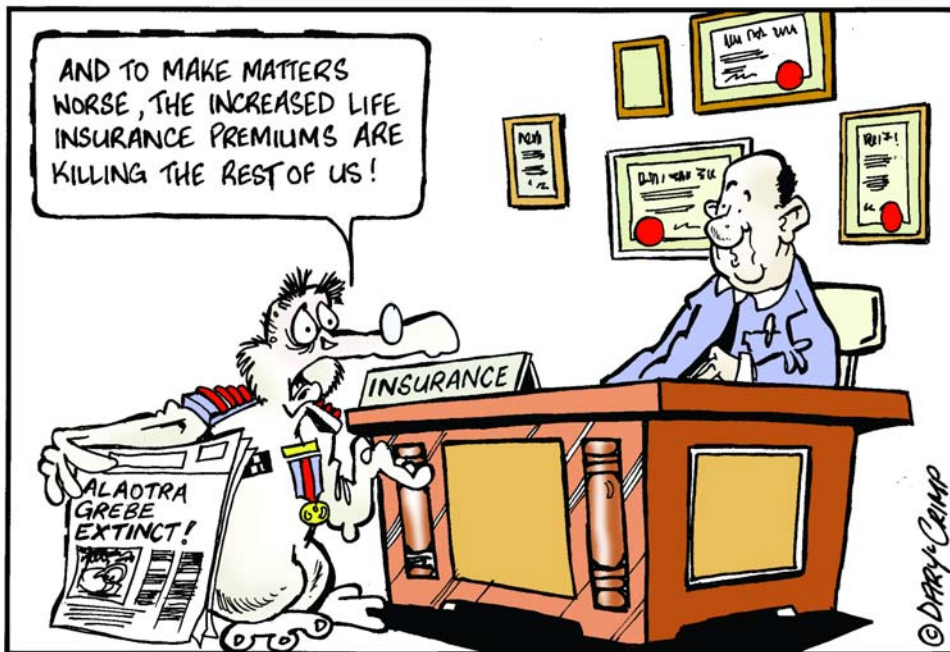
Fishing off the coast of Cape Town, with Table Mountain in the background

meet the law they do not actually work due to the size and shape of their vessels. C'mon guys!! They struggle to deploy toris when shooting the warps and they are often discharging offal at this time. So that's the bulk of their issue still to resolve.

It brings home the fact that every fishery in every nation has its own set of peculiarities around seabird interactions both in fishery operation and seabird behaviour....hence much care needs to be taken before management regimes or tools are touted and directly transferred from one nation to the next. Often the principles are the same but the detail demands for more attention and more finessed management. I said it in South Africa and I say it again here "One size does not fit all!".

Regulations that are clearly not fit for purpose or do not allow regimes or equipment to be effective, are a real problem, as those required to understand, implement and operate these policies in reality (i.e. at sea) can grow quickly cynical about the overall objective—which is of course less seabird mortalities.

Richard Wells



DID YOU KNOW?

The very cool looking dude here is my "super extended cousin", the rockhopper penguin. He's the smallest of the crested penguins. The yellow feathers around his eyes are actually his eyebrows. They breed on many islands in the circumpolar sub-Antarctic region. In New Zealand waters, he's mainly found on Campbell, Antipodes and Auckland Islands.



Southern Seabird Solution Seabird Safe Award



The crew of Sealord's *FV Thomas Harrison* have won the Seabird Safe Award 2010! The crew and vessel management team were awarded the trophy for their numerous offal mincing and batching trials over the past four years. Representatives of the vessel will go to Wellington to receive the award during an official ceremony.

The cousins and I thank them for their offally good efforts to help us!

Extinct bird

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Birdlife International updated the Red List of Threatened Species and announced the extinction of the Alaotra grebe, named after Lake Alaotra, a small area of lakes in the east of Madagascar where the birds were known to live. The last confirmed sighting of this grebe was over twenty years ago.

The species declined rapidly after non-native species of carnivorous fish and plant life were introduced into the lakes. These wiped out the native fish and plants that were the bird's major food source. This, along with the increased fishing and use of nylon gill-nets has driven this species into the abyss. The small wings of this bird made it incapable of flying any lengthy distance, which make it unlikely that we'll find these birds are in any other areas. A spokesperson for Birdlife International has stated: "No hope now remains for this species".

Other hammer blows to the Alaotra grebe included land erosion, loss of natural habitat especially due to areas being turned into rice farms, and poaching. The reason for the extinction of the Alaotra grebe has not been pinpointed to one direct cause but is most likely, the result of a combination of factors.



To learn more, go to www.albertross.co.nz and pick up any back issue



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