

RECOVERY OUTLINE

Shy Albatross

| | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| 1 | Family | Diomedidae |
| 2 | Scientific name | <i>Thalassarche cauta</i> (Gould, 1841) |
| 3 | Common name | Shy Albatross |
| 4 | Conservation status | Vulnerable: A2d, D2 |

5 Reasons for listing

The population size of this species is likely to decrease by at least 20% over the next three generations (45 years: Vulnerable: A2) as a result of fishing bycatch (d). Breeding occurs at fewer than five locations (Vulnerable: D2).

| | Estimate | Reliability |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| Extent of occurrence | 5,000,000 km ² | high |
| trend | stable | high |
| Area of occupancy | 6 km ² | high |
| trend | stable | high |
| No. of breeding birds | 25,000 | medium |
| trend | increasing | medium |
| No. of sub-populations | 3 | high |
| Largest sub-population | 14,000 | medium |
| Generation time | 15 years | medium |

6 Intraspecific taxa

Separation of *T. steadi* from *T. cauta* (Robertson and Nunn, 1998) is controversial, but adopted here pending publication of genetic analysis.

7 Past range and abundance

Endemic to Australian territory, breeding on Albatross I., Bass Strait, and Mewstone and Pedra Branca, off southern Tasmania (Marchant and Higgins, 1990, Gales, 1998). Non-breeding adults rarely travel more than 700 km from their breeding island, and breeding birds rarely more than 200 km, but immatures from Mewstone migrate to waters as far as South Africa, and those from Albatross I. range as far west as Fremantle, W. A., and as far north as southern Queensland (Brothers *et al.*, 1997, 1998). Formerly 20,000 pairs bred on Albatross I., but this was greatly reduced in the late 18th C, to about 300 pairs present in early 20th century, but slowly recovering (Johnstone *et al.*, 1975, Gales, 1998).

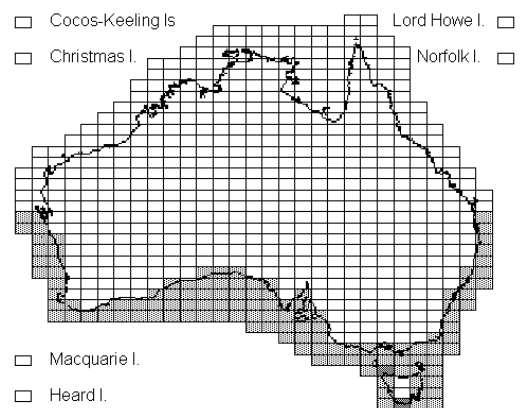
8 Present range and abundance

Breeding distribution unchanged, with 5,000 pairs breeding Albatross I., 7,000 on Mewstone and 250 on Pedra Branca (Croxall and Gales, 1998, Gales, 1998). Current global population estimated at 55,000 to 60,000 individuals, including immatures (Gales, 1998).

9 Ecology

The Shy Albatross nests annually in colonies on three rocky islands and feeds in waters over the continental

shelf, including in harbours and bays. It follows fishing vessels in flocks (Marchant and Higgins, 1990, Gales, 1998, Brothers *et al.*, 1998). The main foods taken are fish, cephalopods, crustaceans and tunicates (Marchant and Higgins, 1990).



10 Threats

Although numbers of Shy Albatross have been increasing through the 20th century, the species is still vulnerable to deaths associated with commercial fishing (Gales, 1998). Around 10% of the feeding ground off Tasmania and 100% of that used by birds from Pedra Branca and Mewstone are also used by longline fishing vessels (Brothers *et al.*, 1998) and the species is among the most frequently killed by longlines in the Australian Fishing Zone (AFZ; Brothers, 1991, Gales, 1993). Such mortality rates are unlikely to be sustainable. Trawl fisheries throughout the species' range also pose a threat to Shy Albatrosses, which drown if they get trapped in the nets or trawl gear or are killed by collisions with cables (Adams, 1992, Gales, 1993, Brothers *et al.*, 1998). They are also shot off Tasmania to reduce bait stealing (T. Reid) and for bait and food in South African waters (Adams, 1992, EABG, 1999). Avian pox virus, probably transmitted by parasitic fleas and ticks, also kills an unknown number of birds (Johnstone *et al.*, 1975, EABG, 1999). Commercial overexploitation of squid or fish reserves in Bass Strait could pose a threat to Shy Albatrosses in the future by direct competition for food (Gales, 1998). Formerly killed for feathers (Johnstone *et al.*, 1975).

11 Information required

11.1 Study of diet at Mewstone and Pedra Branca.

- 11.2 Determine movements and foraging areas of Mewstone and Pedra Branca adults and of immature s from all colonies using satellite telemetry.
- 11.3 Identify and determine the impact of avian diseases and parasites.
- 11.4 Compare genetics between Australian sub-populations and between Australian birds and closely related New Zealand birds.
- 12 Recovery objectives
- 12.1 Reduce at-sea threats to acceptable levels.
- 12.2 Reduce land-based threats to acceptable levels.
- 12.3 Obtain global agreement on conservation measures required.
- 12.4 Promote public awareness of the conservation needs of Albatrosses.
- 12.5 Continue current rate of increase in breeding sub-populations.
- 13 Actions completed or under way
- 13.1 Continued ground-based monitoring of breeding sub-populations.
- 13.2 A Threat Abatement Plan (TAP) to minimise fishing bycatch has been prepared (EABG, 1998).
- 13.3 Effective mitigation techniques have been developed and are being improved.
- 13.4 Bycatch rates in the AFZ and the success of mitigation measures are monitored and the results quickly analysed.
- 13.5 Measures known to be effective in mitigating seabird bycatch within the AFZ are promoted by legislation, a code of practice and education programs.
- 13.6 Monitoring of breeding sub-populations using aerial photography and studies of demography.
- 13.7 A Recovery Plan has been written and a Recovery Team is in place.
- 14 Management actions required
None
- 15 Organisations responsible for conservation
Environment Australia, Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service.
- 16 Other organisations involved
Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry - Australia, Australian Fisheries Management Authority, Convention for Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Ecologically Related Species Working Group of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and its Committee on Fisheries, Incidental Mortality Arising from Longline Fishing – ad hoc Working Group of the Working Group on Fish Stock Assessment of Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, Tasmanian Fisheries Service, professional fishing industry groups.

17 Staff and financial resources required for recovery to be carried out

| | | |
|---|-----|---|
| <i>Staff resources required 2001-2005</i> | 1.0 | <i>Project Officer (international liaison)¹</i> |
| | 1.0 | <i>Extension Officer¹</i> |
| | 3.0 | <i>Technical Officers (fisheries observers)¹</i> |
| | 0.2 | <i>Technical Officer (monitoring and research)</i> |

Financial resources required 2001-2005

| <i>Action</i> | <i>Conservation agencies</i> | <i>Other funding sources</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Develop improved fishing bycatch mitigation¹</i> | \$10,500 | \$10,500 | \$21,000 |
| <i>Monitor bycatch rates in the AFZ and success of mitigation measures¹</i> | \$3,600 | \$8,600 | \$12,200 |
| <i>Analysis of annual bycatch data¹</i> | \$8,300 | \$0 | \$8,300 |
| <i>Educate fishers in the AFZ in mitigation techniques¹</i> | \$6,300 | \$5,400 | \$11,700 |
| <i>Inform national fora about the TAP¹</i> | \$2,300 | \$0 | \$2,300 |
| <i>Inform international fora about the TAP and pursue international threat abatement¹</i> | \$3,900 | \$0 | \$3,900 |
| <i>Maintain currency of TAP and report annually¹</i> | \$2,100 | \$0 | \$2,100 |
| <i>Continue monitoring breeding sub-populations</i> | \$25,000 | \$0 | \$25,000 |

| | | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <i>Determine movements of Pedra Branca sub-population</i> | \$45,000 | \$0 | \$45,000 |
| <i>Demography and foraging studies</i> | \$15,000 | \$0 | \$15,000 |
| <i>Research on plastic pollution, parasites and disease²</i> | \$6,500 | \$6,500 | \$13,000 |
| <i>Research on genetics³</i> | \$500 | \$500 | \$1,000 |
| Total | \$129,000 | \$31,500 | \$160,500 |

1 Costs shared amongst all 20 albatrosses, 2 giant-petrels, White-chinned Petrel and Grey Petrel; costs to fishing industry assumed to be offset by improved catch of fish

2 Costs shared among 2 penguins, 2 giant-petrels, Wandering, Black-browed, Grey-headed, Shy and Light-mantled Albatrosses (although Shy Albatrosses are treated separately from other seabirds, the nature of the research and the expertise required is the same)

3 Costs shared among 20 albatrosses and 2 giant-petrels

18 Bibliography

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