



**COMMISSION**  
**SIXTEENTH REGULAR SESSION**  
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**SAFE HANDLING AND RELEASE GUIDELINES FOR SEABIRDS**

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**Suppl\_CMM 2018-03**

Bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries is one of the greatest threats to seabirds, particularly albatrosses and petrels.

This proposal is aimed at meeting the requirements of para 11 of CMM 2018-03 - ensuring that seabirds captured alive are released alive and in as good a condition as possible and that, wherever possible, hooks are removed without jeopardizing the life of the seabird concerned.

SC15 noted that some seabirds are captured and released alive, with higher chances of survival when safe handling procedures are implemented. Together with the implementation of effective seabird bycatch mitigation measures, safe handling and release of seabirds will help reduce the impact of pelagic longline and other hook fisheries bycatch on these vulnerable seabirds.

The guidelines on Hook Removal from Seabirds, developed by the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), are recommended as non-binding guidelines for safe handling and release of live caught seabirds in all WCPFC pelagic longline and other hook fisheries.

The current ACAP guidelines, in a range of languages, are freely available on the ACAP website: <https://acap.aq/en/resources/bycatch-mitigation> . The format of the advice has been tailored to fishing vessel crew. The current ACAP guidelines are provided in Appendix 1.

**Appendix 1.** Hook release guidelines developed by the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels

# HOOK REMOVAL FROM SEABIRDS

*Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels*

## Release Kit



Towel /  
Blanket



Pliers /  
Bolt cutters



Net



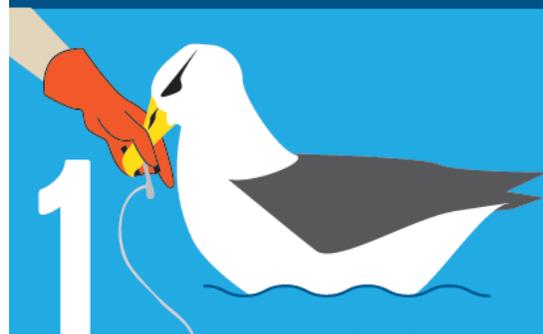
Box / Bin



Gloves



Visit [www.acap.aq](http://www.acap.aq) for more information



## Bring bird aboard

If possible, slow or stop hauling and slow or stop vessel to release line tension. If practical, use a landing net to lift small birds on board, otherwise retrieve the bird on the line as safely and quickly as possible. When within reach, grab it by the bill. **Never grab the wing.**



## Restrain bird and hold securely

Carefully fold the wings into the bird's body. Wrap the bird in a towel/blanket (not too tightly) and cover the eyes if possible. Make sure the bird doesn't come into contact with oil on deck.

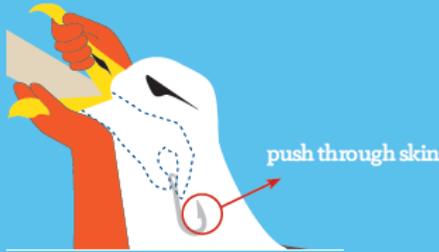
**For large birds** that you cannot manage under your arm, restrain the bird securely between your legs without squeezing. Hold the bill gently shut but **do not cover the nostrils.**



If the bird vomits, loosen hold on bill so the bird does not suffocate.



OR



push through skin

## Remove the hook

### *If the hook is visible*

Use pliers (or bolt cutters for large hooks) to cut through the hook shaft (or to flatten the barb). Pull the hook back out of the bird.

### *If the hook is swallowed and removal is possible*

A second person can find the hook position externally by feeling along the neck or internally by following the line to the hook. Gently force the tip of the hook so that it bulges under the skin of the bird (for **large birds**, this may be easier if you reach down the bird's throat and hold the hook). If you can get a good grip on the hook, push the tip of the hook through the skin and remove.

**Never try to extract the hook backwards.**



OR

### *If hook removal is not possible*

Either because removing the hook will cause further damage to the bird or the hook is too deeply ingested, cut the line as close to the hook as possible and leave the hook in the bird.



## If the bird is exhausted or waterlogged

If possible, place in a **ventilated** box or bin in a quiet, dry, shaded place to recover for an hour or two. Otherwise, contain bird in a quiet dry area, **away from oil**. The bird is ready for release when the feathers are dry, bird is alert and able to stand.



wind

## Release the bird

If the bird is strong and mostly dry, release it onto the water (but clear of the vessel) immediately after hook removal. Having again first grabbed the bill, lift and slowly lower the bird onto the water letting go of the bill last.

**Where birds cannot be lowered directly onto water**, lift and release the bird from the side of the vessel into the wind letting go of the bill at the same time. The bird may remain on the water for some time after release.



January 2019

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