



**COMMISSION
SIXTEENTH REGULAR SESSION**
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
5 – 11 December 2019

**PROPOSAL FOR ADOPTION OF SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION – SAFE HANDLING
AND RELEASE GUIDELINES FOR SEABIRDS**

**WCPFC16-2019-DP07
5 November 2019**

SUBMITTED BY NEW ZEALAND



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SAFE HANDLING AND RELEASE GUIDELINES FOR SEABIRDS

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



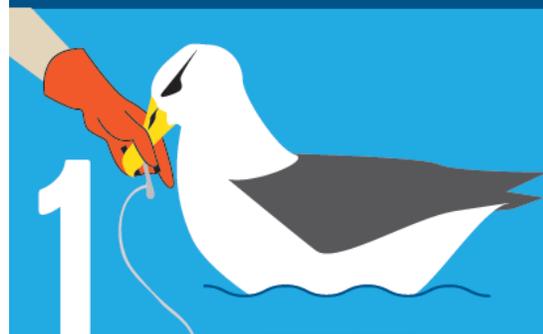
Box / Bin



Gloves



Visit www.acap.aq 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.

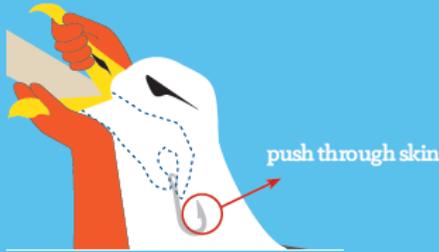
For large birds that you cannot manage under your arm, restrain the bird securely between your legs without squeezing. Hold the bill gently shut but **do not cover the nostrils.**



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.

4



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

5



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

HOOK REMOVAL FROM SEABIRDS

Visit www.acap.aq for more information

New Zealand proposal: Adoption of Supplementary Information – safe handling and release guidelines for seabirds

Consideration of CMM 2013-06

- 1) *CCMs shall develop, interpret and apply conservation and management measures in the context of and in a manner consistent with the 1982 Convention and Articles 24, 25 and 26 of the Agreement. To this end, CCMs shall cooperate, either directly or through the Commission, to enhance the ability of developing States, particularly the least developed among them and SIDS and territories in the Convention Area, to develop their own fisheries for highly migratory fish stocks, including but not limited to the high seas within the Convention Area.*

This proposal would not impact the ability of developing States, including SIDS and territories in the Convention Area, to develop their fisheries. The proposal is for the adoption of a supplementary non-binding information paper, which supports the seabird CMM (CMM 2018-03) by outlining international best practice hook release guidelines developed by the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). The proposal is that WCPFC adopt these guidelines and encourage CMMs to apply them across all WCPFC longline and other hook fisheries.

- 2) *The Commission shall ensure that any conservation and management measures do not result in transferring, directly or indirectly, a disproportionate burden of conservation action onto SIDS and territories.*

The proposal does not seek to alter the seabird CMM (CMM 2018-03). Rather it seeks agreement on the non-binding and voluntary use of ACAP best practice hook release guidelines. This would not transfer a disproportionate burden of conservation action to SIDS and Territories.

- 3) *In considering any new proposal the Commission shall apply the following questions to determine the nature and extent of the impact of the proposal on SIDS and territories in the Convention Area:*
 - a) *Who is required to implement the proposal?*

This proposal is non-binding, encouraging all CMMs to use the ACAP best practice hook release guidelines across all WCPFC longline and other hook fisheries.

- b) *Which CCMs would this proposal impact and in what way(s) and what proportion?*

This proposal would encourage any CMM operating longline or other hook fisheries under the WCPFC to use the latest ACAP best practice hook release guidelines. The practices are simple, and would not unduly impact daily operations.

- c) *Are there linkages with other proposals or instruments in other regional fisheries management organisations or international organisations that reduce the burden of implementation?*

No, there are no linkages to other proposals/instruments that would reduce the burden of implementation.

- d) *Does the proposal affect development opportunities for SIDS?*

This proposal would not create any loss of opportunity to fish and access resources by SIDS and Territories. The proposal only seeks to encourage the use the ACAP best practice hook release guidelines across WCPFC longline and other hook fisheries.

There may be a marginal administrative burden on the Governments of SIDS and Territories in making their vessels aware of the guidelines and to encourage their use. However, this would largely be as a supplement to the administration of measures in the seabird CMM (CMM 2018-03). Online ACAP resources and the Bycatch Mitigation Information System provide additional resources and advice.

e) *Does the proposal affect SIDS domestic access to resources and development aspirations?*

No, this proposal would not affect access to fisheries resources in the WCPFC area and therefore would not impact the development aspirations of SIDS and Territories.

f) *What resources, including financial and human capacity, are needed by SIDS to implement the proposal?*

This proposal is voluntary, so would not require SIDS and Territories to source any additional resources to implement this measure in their zones. However, the proposal does encourage use of the ACAP best practice hook release guidelines across all WCPFC longline and other hook fisheries. As such, SIDS and Territories would need to make sure their longline and hook fisheries are aware of the guidelines and to encourage their use. The guidelines are free and readily available from the ACAP website. The materials required to safely release seabirds (i.e. towels/blanket, pliers, net, box/bin and gloves) will already be available on most relevant vessels.

g) *What mitigation measures are included in the proposal?*

This proposal seeks to encourage the use of the latest ACAP best practice hook release guidelines across all WCPFC longline and other hook fisheries, including simple handling and hook removal practices 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.

h) *What assistance mechanisms and associated timeframe, including training and financial support, are included in the proposal to avoid a disproportionate burden on SIDS?*

This measure has been designed to avoid imposing a high administrative, monitoring and enforcement burden by being non-mandatory and using an easy and available resource.

A number of resources are also available to support implementation of these guidelines, e.g. expert advice from New Zealand, educational resources prepared by ACAP and Birdlife International.