



Meeting: Conservation Services Programme Technical Working Group

Date: Friday 19th May 2023

Time: 1:00 pm – 2.00 pm

Place: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Chair: Kris Ramm (Manager, Marine Bycatch and Threats team)

Attendance:

Kris Ramm, Kat Manno, Laura Boren, Katie Clemens-Seely, Hollie McGovern, Hannah Hendricks, Mel Young, Chris Hankin, Phred Dobbins (DOC), David Middleton (Pisces Research for SNZ – DWG), Chelsea McGaw (Forest & Bird), Bruce Robertson (University of Otago), Rochelle Constantine (University of Auckland), Richard Wells (SNZ DW), Wendi Roe (Massey University), Nathan McNally, Alexander Hann, Greg Lydon, William Gibson (FNZ), Lucy Waller (West Coast Penguin Trust), Amelie Auge (Wild Coast NZ), Barry Weeber (ECO), Jack Fenaughty (SRL for Sanford), Nathan McNally (PF2050Ltd), Shaun McConkey (NZ Sealion Trust), Sarah Michael

Apologies:

Ben Steele-Mortimer (SNZ DW)

Presentations:

1.00 pm POP2022-09 Auckland Islands New Zealand sea lions DOC

1. POP2022-09 Auckland Islands New Zealand sea lions (DOC)

Kat Manno presented the draft report for POP2022-09. This season, pup production was significantly lower than 2021/22 and falls below the minimum level set to trigger reviews of the NZ sea lion Threat Management Plan and Squid 6T Operational Plan. Another year of data collection is recommended, with a view to updating the demographic model and investigations into likely drivers.

Discussion:

DM In terms of direct pup count estimates and standard errors, it should be made clear that it was multiple counts undertaken by different people.

KM Noted, that can be included.

DM Regarding Dundas count, did this occur on the standardised day as in previous years?

KM It was undertaken pretty close to the standardised day.

MY This year's count was on 18 January; the standardized dates are between 18-21 January.

RW How does the number of resighted individuals compare to previous years?

KM We have not compared with previous years, however have verified resighting records in the Dragonfly database and confidence in the records we do have for this year is quite high. We are intending to increase our efforts in resighting next summer to see if we can pinpoint which animals are breeding and which are non-breeding.

SM Does cumulative dead pup count of 10 untagged pups mean that no tagged pups were found dead?

KM No it just means that tagged pups that were found dead were not counted, as they had already been counted in tagged total.

DM Lower pup count this year could be due to a variety of reasons. One relatively quick check would be to look at whether the number of females is lower than in previous years, which if so, could indicate it is a breeding effect.

KM Table 1 in the report compares number of females at Sandy Bay over the years. Counts of females not included between period 2017/18 to 2021/22 because the data were not comparable (since the teams were only on site for 2-3 weeks in January).

DM This could be addressed by showing data cumulative by date of season to allow comparisons of counts.

SM There are certainly comparable datasets for females and pup counts for 2017-18.

KM Can add this to the report if it's available. Amelie is also investigating resights.

DM Was any work carried out to look at klebsiella in pups?

KM We considered treating pups with ivermectin, however this was not progressed due to health and safety concerns for field team handling one month old pups, and we did not have the capacity due to other work.

SM Based on my PhD work, one month would be too late, I observed the improvements in survival when treated at one week of age.

KM Agreed, I misspoke, one week is correct. The concern was about pulling pups away from their mums at birth for marking, and at one week of age for Ivermectin dosing, which would be stressful and dangerous for the field teams, especially at Dundas.

SM Do you know the total dead pup count for the time you were there?

KM Can provide the number after the meeting. Seven (7) tagged pups had died by 21 January, so a total of 17 pups from this year's cohort were found dead by the time the team left Sandy Bay

WG Can you provide some context around your request for fisheries data in April and what it will be used for?

AA It will be used as part of an exploratory analysis looking at the amount of different fish that are caught and comparing that with years where the sea lion population has dropped to see if there are any patterns, and to inform what data we could look to collect next year.

RC Can you comment on when you might have enough resource to be able to do all the things you need to in order to, i.e full counts to compare with previous years and administering ivermectin to pups.

KM An increase in funding has allowed us to do a lot more than in recent years. Once we have a good idea of the way forward from this data set, things should improve. Treating pups with ivermectin is a separate discussion, as CSP funding is specifically for pup count work.

KR We are pushing to get maximum funding within DOC to be able to do all the necessary work, in addition to trying to work more efficiently to save costs where we can.

RC Appreciate and understand that, however we do need to be having these conversations, as it's not just about looking at the direct impacts from fisheries, DOC is mandated to protect this species. Thanks to the team for the hard work and useful dataset this year.

BW Endorse Rochelle's comment about having a longer season to get more data, and looking at indirect fisheries effects in addition to direct. The pup count is the main work, and there is no further info about the health status of females, which hasn't been repeated for 5-10 years?

KM Correct, there hasn't been much other work undertaken other than pup count for quite a few years, due to funding.

BW No further work into where females go from the colony?

KM Correct, however tracking of females is a high priority to start up if we have funding and agreement.

BW Important to have broader discussion about fisheries as a whole, rather than just the squid fishery, when looking at the Auckland Islands shelf.

SM Are there plans to check whether Campbell Island experienced a similar decline in pup numbers?

KM Yes there is a loose plan to do a survey there next year, which is connected to hoiho work that is also planned for down there. There are some larger infrastructure and logistical issues regarding Campbell Island to work through at the moment.

RC Could we look into alternative approaches for getting down to Campbell, as there have been logistical challenges for some time now.

KM There are ongoing discussions regarding alternative methods, e.g. use of drones. However, it mostly comes down to funding, Campbell is an expensive place to get to, and is just on a different magnitude compared to Enderby.

SM As we are not privy to management discussions, it would be useful to understand what the issues are, some potential solutions and why various solutions have to be ruled out.

KR Mainly around vessel, building and Health and Safety standards, however we could look to pull together a state of play summary.

KM Transport to the subants continues to be a problem for cost and health and safety. Small vessel and helicopters are the main health and safety restrictions. There are active conversations going on to try and get past these barriers.

BW What is the next stage of the process, in terms of the implication of this report?

KM In the first instance, Amelie is undertaking investigations, followed by workshops

and discussions about what new things we can do, and plan for the next season. Management changes will be worked through within DOC, FNZ and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu over the next few years, as part of the reviews of the Threat Management Plan and the Squid 6T Operational Plan.

DM The draft report contains links that are only accessible via internal server, suggest including as appendices.

KM I can look at adding some detail on the methods as an appendix. The terrain trap report will be uploaded to our ftp server, so I can include links to that.

Any additional comments should be provided to csp@doc.govt.nz by 5pm, 6 June 2023.

Close of Meeting @ 1:50 pm