



June 2001

NZ Signs International Albatross and Petrel Treaty

As Minister of Conservation I am delighted to be one of the leading signatories on an international treaty which seeks to secure the future of albatrosses and petrels.

Australia's Minister of the Environment, Senator Robert Hill hosted a ceremony in Canberra on 19th June to sign the new conservation agreement to protect species of migrating albatrosses and petrels under the Convention on Migratory Species. The Agreement was expected to be signed by New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, Chile, France, and the UK.

I am particularly pleased with this milestone in conservation because it has been one of my priorities to reduce the unintentional killing of seabirds in the waters around New Zealand and in the Southern Ocean.

These birds are being killed on longlines in commercial fisheries and in some areas

are being predated by alien predators on their breeding grounds. The destruction of their breeding habitats is also still occurring in some places. Urgent action is required to prevent looming extinctions as thousands of petrels and albatrosses are killed each year in the Southern Ocean long line fisheries.

It is essential that seabird deaths in commercial fisheries are reduced to insignificant levels or hopefully eliminated. We need to find ways of catching fish without catching seabirds. This should not be an impossible challenge for the fishing industry and scientists to solve.

This international agreement has the potential to make a real difference to the survival chances of these magnificent, but vulnerable, seabirds. Co-

operation between countries will allow better conservation, monitoring and information sharing.

Albatrosses and petrels have wandered the roaring winds of the Southern Oceans for millions of years. I hope the international show of concern that has led to the development of this agreement will now translate into action that will ensure a future for these beautiful creatures.

Sandra Lee
CONSERVATION MINISTER

Published by
Department of Conservation
PO Box 10 420
Wellington, New Zealand
Telephone (04) 471 0726
www.doc.govt.nz



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



***What does
the
agreement
contain?***

Parties agree to achieve and maintain, through co-ordinated and co-operative measures, a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels. They also undertake to apply a precautionary approach in applying those measures.

Key elements;

- build capacity in all countries involved to improve the environment for albatrosses and petrels
- implement a range of co-operative conservation, monitoring and information sharing actions specified in the Agreement's action plan
- hold a triennial Meeting of Parties to the agreement
- establish an Agreement Secretariat
- establish a Scientific Committee as an advisory body to the Meeting of Parties of the Agreement

***What will be
its impact?***

New Zealand has much to gain as 13 of the 28 species to be managed under the agreement are either endemic or native to New Zealand. Many of these species regularly leave New Zealand territory for long periods when they are exposed to greater threats. The benefits will include;

- improved effectiveness of conservation efforts related to the species concerned
- improved protection of species, such as the royal albatross, important for eco-tourism in New Zealand
- a clearly demonstrated commitment to globally based conservation of albatross and petrel species
- greater co-operation in albatross and petrel conservation efforts with other countries
- improved access to technologies and information available from other parties





***What was
New
Zealand's
involvement?***

New Zealand was among those leading the development of the agreement, and supported South Africa's efforts to host the meeting to finalise the text of the new agreement in January. New Zealand will be one of the first countries to sign the Agreement and expects to ratify it shortly thereafter. Iwi, the fishing industry and other involved organisations, including Government agencies, were consulted during its development.



***Why was it
developed?***

The Agreement was developed under the Convention on Migratory Species, to which 73 countries are members, though membership of that convention is not a prerequisite for participation in the new Agreement. The Convention recognises that, while countries can pass legislation to protect species in their own territories, international agreements are needed to extend the protection along migratory routes and in vast ocean areas. The New Zealand Government signed the Convention on Migratory Species in September 1999. It provides the framework for generating the more specific migratory species agreements, such as this albatross and petrel conservation agreement.





Photography by CJR Roberts, C Robertson, A Wright, D Merton, CR Veitch, P Moore, H Cox, R Morris, P Morrison, G Taylor.