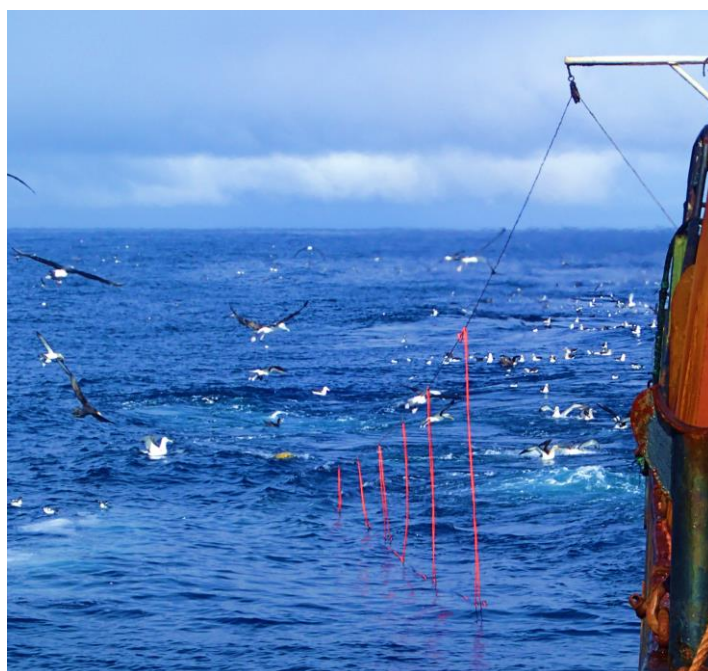

Conservation Services Programme
Project MIT2014-01:
Protected species bycatch newsletter

Final Report

J. P. Pierre

johanna@jpec.co.nz

June 2016



Executive summary

The objective of Conservation Services Programme project MIT2014-01 was to produce a bimonthly newsletter to communicate protected species-related information to commercial fishermen. This project's two-year term has now concluded, with 12 issues of the newsletter produced. Articles covered best practice mitigation methods, new and emerging mitigation measures, work underway to develop bycatch reduction approaches, current events of relevance to commercial fishers, and other protected species information relevant to commercial fishing. Key references were also provided in each issue, to facilitate reader access to additional information on topics of particular interest. The target audience for the newsletter comprised commercial fishers and others involved in the fishing industry. Recipients included holders of fishing quota and annual catch entitlement, seafood company representatives, Seafood New Zealand's Sector Representative Entities and Commercial Stakeholder Organisations, Ministry for Primary Industries regional office staff, the New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen, and individuals working in the fishing industry or on fisheries bycatch issues. In addition, fisheries observers and seabird liaison staff distributed copies to fishers in person, when newsletter items had particular relevance to their activities or the fisheries in which they were deployed. Throughout this project term, the newsletter was circulated directly to around 1,700 recipients. It was distributed in five forms: as an html newsletter delivered via email, via Twitter and Facebook links, as an A4 2-page pdf file distributed electronically, and a hard copy newsletter mailed to recipients who indicated a preference for this medium or who did not have an electronic point of contact. Throughout the project term, the html newsletter was viewed electronically by 33 – 43.3% of the emailed recipients (mean = 39%). The html newsletter included an 'unsubscribe' option as well as providing for recipients to update their contact details. Since December 2014, 47 recipients have unsubscribed. Ten 'subscribe' requests were received and 9 recipients have updated their contact details online. The majority of readers (83 - 94%) were New Zealand-based, with international readers accessing the newsletter from Australia, USA, Japan, Germany, Canada, the Czech Republic and Thailand. In addition, the newsletter's Twitter circulation attracted 57 'opens' on average for each edition (range = 22 - 103).

The newsletter's circulation list was constructed using information from Ministry for Primary Industries databases, fisheries stakeholder circulation lists, government agency staff lists, and personal contacts amongst government and industry. To broaden the audience for key messages regarding protected species interactions with commercial fisheries, the newsletter format could in future be supplemented with the publication of topical articles in industry media and presentations at industry meetings and conferences. This would also provide the opportunity to tailor key messages to particular interest groups (e.g., commercial fishers active in a particular region).

Contents

Introduction	4
Content	4
Circulation.....	5
Recommendations.....	6
Acknowledgements	7
References	7

Introduction

To ensure that captures of marine protected species are minimised, fishers must maintain their knowledge of bycatch avoidance and reduction measures relevant to their fishing method and the species that their gear may interact with. Further, the management of marine protected species occurs in a dynamic context that involves ongoing developments in legislation, government policies, science, research, and management approaches. With their activities based from ports around the country, fishers themselves may be somewhat distant from the decisions and processes that affect management of the environment in which they fish. Therefore, the process of communicating new developments relevant to reducing marine protected species bycatch with fishers is an ongoing one.

Project MIT2014-01, funded through DOC's Conservation Services Programme, addressed this challenge by producing and disseminating a bimonthly newsletter to communicate protected species-related information to commercial fishermen. The focus of the newsletter was interactions between protected species and New Zealand commercial fisheries, with an emphasis on methods for reducing those interactions. Articles cover legislative and government policy developments relevant to protected species, best practice mitigation methods, new and emerging mitigation measures, work underway to develop bycatch reduction approaches, current events of relevance to fishers, and other protected species information relevant to commercial fishing.

Content

The newsletter was equivalent in length to two sides of A4. It was divided into the following sections:

Headline: This was the leading story of each issue. This section comprised half to two-thirds of the front page of the newsletter. A relevant photo was included. The Headline section focused on any aspect of the newsletter's scope.

What's Up?: This section featured short bullet points of current issues and news relating to protected species and commercial fishing, new ideas for mitigation measures, work done by fishers to address bycatch issues, meetings and forums. In short, the section covered news items or events relating to the newsletter's scope.

Best Practice Baselines: This was a short section highlighting recognised best practice mitigation measures applicable to New Zealand commercial fishing methods. While fishers are aware of a variety of mitigation measures, it is often less well known what recognised "best practice" measures actually comprise. Material was presented concisely in bullet point form with an image illustrating the measure discussed.

The Big Picture: This section highlighted the broader context of New Zealand protected species and bycatch mitigation issues. It also included issues that are relevant to fishers, but that they may be less

directly connected with. Examples of article content include government policy developments (e.g., progressing the National Plan of Action - Seabirds), technical work influencing or underpinning policy (e.g. the shark risk assessment), updates from regional fisheries management organisations that encompass New Zealand fisheries, and broader protected species management initiatives (e.g., seabird translocations).

Word on the Street: This section presented different views on controversial topics relating to protected species interactions with commercial fisheries, e.g., the status of New Zealand sea lions. It was created to support discussion amongst fishers and present views (with rationale) that they may not otherwise encounter in person but may be exposed to, e.g., through media. Opinions were presented alongside factual information and with key references. This section was initiated following feedback received on the previous version of Bycatch Bylines (Pierre 2012).

World watch: This section presented international developments relating to New Zealand protected species, e.g., developing mitigation techniques. Its intent was to illustrate the global nature of bycatch issues and management, and show how activities in New Zealand relate or can be progressed drawing on international experience and knowledge.

What the FAQ?: This section included a snapshot of unique or quirky characteristics of a protected species or species group, and a relevant image. It highlighted the diversity amongst New Zealand protected species with the goal of promoting increased knowledge and appreciation of the value of resolving bycatch issues.

Want to Know More?: This section linked readers to key sources of additional information relevant to the articles in the newsletter. This section was initiated following a recommendation made in Pierre (2012). Reader feedback received demonstrates that some fishers have accessed the reference material provided, both in previous terms (Pierre 2014) and the current project term.

Circulation

The target audience for the newsletter comprised fishers and others involved in the fishing industry. Fishers were identified in two ways. First, the contact details of quota holders undertaking more than one trip per year and landing > 1,000 kg of catch were requested from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) for the two most recent fishing years for which data are available. Fishers using the trawl, longline, setnet, purse seine, troll, trotline, pot and trap, and minor net (inshore drift net, Danish seine, beach seine, ring net) methods were included in this request. Second, the contact details of all holders of Annual Catch Entitlement (ACE) in all Quota Management Areas (QMAs) (i.e., for all fishstocks) were requested from MPI.

Others included in the distribution list were seafood company representatives, Seafood New Zealand's Sector Representative Entities and Commercial Stakeholder Organisations representing members using the above fishing methods, MPI regional offices, the New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen,

and individuals or groups working in the fishing industry or on fisheries bycatch issues. Recipients were also added to the list on request on an ongoing basis throughout the project term.

Finally, government fisheries observers and seabird liaison officers have taken copies of the newsletter out to vessels. The newsletter has been a mechanism for reporting back to fishers on the activities of these people. In addition, observers and liaison staff have facilitated delivery of the newsletter to vessels in particular sectors that were the focus of government attention. For example, fisheries observers deployed in the surface longline fishery have passed on newsletters to fishers that included information on seabird liaison activities kicking off in that fishery.

Circulation of the newsletter reached around 1,700 recipients directly. The newsletter was distributed to the majority of recipients (approximately 1,240) by email, using an html-format newsletter. Throughout the project term, 33 – 43.3% of the emailed recipients (mean = 39%) viewed the html circulation. Since December 2014, 47 recipients ‘unsubscribed’ to the html circulation. There were 10 additional ‘subscribe’ requests and 9 recipients have updated their contact details. Where subscriptions were terminated, reasons given include exiting the industry, or that the email address was provided on behalf of a fisher but not the best way to access that person (e.g. a fisher’s son or daughter provided an email address that their parent does not regularly access, or the email address belonged to a fisher’s spouse and that relationship had terminated). The majority of readers (83 - 94%) of the html newsletter were New Zealand-based, with international readers based in Australia, USA, Japan, Germany, Canada, the Czech Republic and Thailand. In addition to the html circulation, the newsletter’s Twitter feed attracted 57 ‘opens’ on average for each edition (range = 22 - 103).

Further to the html-format distributions, 220 recipients were sent a hard copy of each newsletter by mail. Another 13 recipients have reported a preference for a pdf version of the newsletter, given issues accessing the html version (e.g., due to company or office system security settings) or the relative ease of archiving and referring to the A4 pdf version.

Recommendations

The newsletter’s circulation list was constructed using information from Ministry for Primary Industries databases, fisheries stakeholder circulation lists, government agency staff lists, and personal contacts amongst government and industry. To broaden the audience for key messages regarding protected species interactions with commercial fisheries, the newsletter format could be supplemented with the publication of topical articles in industry media and presentations at industry meetings and conferences. This would also provide the opportunity to tailor key messages to particular interest groups (e.g., commercial fishers active in a particular region or dealing with particular protected species issues).

Acknowledgements

The author appreciates the assistance of DOC's Conservation Services Programme and Publishing teams in producing the newsletter, MPI for facilitating the development of the distribution list, and contributors of articles and photographs throughout the project term. Cover image courtesy of DOC/MPI.

References

Pierre, J.P. 2012. The Ocean Guardian: Report on MIT2011-05 Protected Species Bycatch Newsletter. Final project report held by the Department of Conservation, Wellington.

Pierre, J.P. 2014. MIT2012 - 05 Protected Species Bycatch Newsletter: Bycatch Bylines. Final project report held by the Department of Conservation, Wellington.