



Meeting: Conservation Services Programme Technical Working Group
Date: 17 February 2026
Time: 9:00 am – 1.30 pm
Place: Microsoft Teams Meeting
Chair: Katie Clemens-Seely (Programme Manager, Conservation Services Programme)

Attendees: Katie-Clemens-Seely, Libby Rowley, Igor Debski, Graeme Taylor, Tiffany Plencner, Lyndsey Holland, Johannes Fischer, Kat Manno, Maria Dussler, Hendrik Schultz, Erin Hewetson, Scott Latimer, Sharyn Broni (DOC); Richard Wells (Resourcewise); Peter Frost (Science Support Service); Dave Goad (Seafood NZ/Vita Maris); Theo Thompson (Otago University/DOC); Patricia Pereira Serafini (PaCSWG Co-convenor (ACAP), National Center for Wild Bird Research and Conservation – CEMAVE, ICMBio/Ministry of the Environment Brazil); Chris Gaskin (The Seabird Trust (Northern NZ Seabird Trust)); Gaia Dell'Arricia (Auckland Council); Ben Steele-Mortimer (Deepwater Council), Mike Bell (Toroa Consulting); Johannes Chambon (University of Otago); William Gibson, Olivia Hamilton, Lyla Tapusoa (MPI/Fisheries NZ); Nigel Brothers; Jason Hamill (Earth Sciences NZ/NIWA); Joy Sagar; Azwianewi Makhado; Kalinka Rexer-Huber.

Presentations:

9:05 am	A model of Salvin's Albatross breeding success combined with passive data collection	Otago University & DOC
9:20 am	Black petrel distribution and range-wide overlap with pelagic longline fisheries	DOC
10:05 am	Trail-camera monitoring of white-capped albatross on Disappointment Island: 2018, 2022 and 2023 breeding seasons	Science Support Service
10:50 am	POP2025-07 Chatham albatross research and updates from Rangitahi and Motuhara	Toroha Consulting
11:45 am	A standardised framework for processing abundance data of albatrosses and petrels, and modelling their multi-decadal trends – a case study with nine New Zealand endemics	DOC
12:45 pm	MIT2024-03 Assessment of weighted hooks as a seabird bycatch mitigation option for SLL fisheries	Vita Maris

1. A model of Salvin's Albatross breeding success combined with passive data collection

Theo Thompson (Otago University/DOC) presented on a model of albatross breeding success using passive data collection.

Discussion:

PF: I found that the transition from brood guard stage to post guard stage was not clear because you would have birds that would leave for some time and then come back. How did you define that, was it the first time the bird was away for a whole day?

TT: I went from the first time I saw that the chick was left unattended.

PF: It is a bit arbitrary, I tended to choose the first full day in which there was no adult present at all.

RW: Did the cameras capture any disruption, particularly at the egg stage. Were fur seals or penguins a part of the problem and did you get a record of disruption?

TT: That is one of the things Kalinka Rexer-Huber discussed a lot when she analysed the first season of this data and fur seals could be increasing on the bounties. There were a couple of observations of that but probably the same number of missed mortality events, where the egg is intact in one picture and then crushed the next. It is a busy colony so could be that there is too much competition for space but I couldn't and didn't attempt to quantify the cause of mortality.

RW: Other researchers have observed on islands off the Snares, a lot of broken eggs and eggs lying on rocks unattended, so similar problems.

NB: Relating to the reliability of running cameras in marginal places, need to pick a suite that provides a range of information. Do you know to what extent site selection could bias the data and perhaps paint a "rosier" picture of breeding success considering other areas may be more worse environments?

TT: That is a good point and I think you're correct, particularly on the Bounties where there is high nesting density in gullies and low nest density on flat areas, so uneven dispersal of nests which could be caused by exposure or nesting success in different areas. We probably do focus cameras on areas of high nest density which means we may be choosing areas of high nest success, unsure how you get around this.

NB: In shy albatrosses and other species that nest in similar marginal habitat I suspect that the quality of the nest itself is the crucial aspect to consider and this can vary a lot from one season to another. Noticed in some of the pictures that many of the nests are quite well formed in mud, if there is enough mud to construct a nest this probably helps. Wondering if the nests could be identified by structure and correlated to nest success?

TT: This would be a cool predictor to try and include in a model of this type but I think it would require more work to setup by going around the different nests and establishing a score and confirming that the egg is there to begin your test with. The poor egg detection from cameras alone made it difficult to tease anything out in this respect, not that I looked at the effect of nest construction in this study.

KR: Just regarding Nigel's point about potentially different nesting success in patches, we do try our best to account for that to maximise sample size but making a point of having them facing different directions that appear to be better/worse habitats and distribute cameras to allow for this variability as best we can though it is quite limited as to what you can do in this circumstance.

2. Trail-camera monitoring of white-capped albatross on Disappointment Island: 2018, 2022 and 2023 breeding seasons

Peter Frost (Science Support Service) presented on trail-camera monitoring of white-capped albatross on Disappointment Island: 2018, 2022 and 2023 breeding seasons

Discussion:

None.

3. Black petrel distribution and range-wide overlap with pelagic longline fisheries

Libby Rowley (DOC) presented on range-wide black petrel distribution and overlap with pelagic longline fisheries: Insights from AIS and VMS vessel tracking.

Discussion:

BS: Very informative to see the breakdown by month and spatially. I was wondering if you attempted to break down the overlap by jurisdiction or by national fleet, understanding that some countries are missing here. Assuming that all of the unregulated fisheries have the same catchability and breaking this down by where they are caught would be useful conclusions. I think there are more useful conclusions to be drawn from this study.

LR: This is definitely something we're aware of and this study is the very start of a more in-depth analysis of the data, the aim of this project was pulling the data together and aligning it in a useful way and then later there will come a more detailed breakdown for targeted action.

WG: Why was a parallel process to the FAO seabird project taken here? That project could have benefited from the Peruvian data being added in there.

JF: The Peruvian artisanal data was provided to us directly through a cooperation engagement with specific clarification that it was only for this particular collaboration to understand risks of black petrels by their mahi fisheries. I'm sure you understand the sensitivity that comes with fisheries data such as this, so we respected their request and didn't push it any further. Probably also preceded the FAO project and given the overall effort in the Peruvian EEZ we didn't push this any further.

WG: Understood, it takes a long time to get access to other countries data.

DG: This highlights the importance of knowing what's going on in South America. I was particularly interested in what was going on right at the edge of the EEZ and just outside. Interested in the density maps, did you take different cell size into account, as the pixels change size?

LR: Ratios were our friend here and we wanted to pull out a valuable number because it was more impactful. When merging different types of data, as in this instance, pulling out a nice number was almost impossible. Would have loved to have seen 'X number of hooks per bird per day' but it was either getting this nice number with minimal data, or we pool the data and create a relative relationship, which a heat map is good for. Kind of gives a little bit of context as to why we relied on the ratio rather than using a nice round big number which would have been preferable.

DG: Just wary that if you're plotting density then you need to make sure you're accounting for the cell size, good job of meshing different types of data.

LR: The reason the cell size changed for the density maps was because I added smoothing for another purpose.

4. POP2025-07 Chatham albatross research and updates from Rangitahi and Motuhara

Mike Bell (Toroa Consulting) presented on seabird research on the "Albatross Islands" of the Chatham Islands, Aug-Dec 2025

Discussion:

PF: In the Northern Buller's study grids slide you mentioned there were 11 with a second egg, do I understand this correctly as two eggs or a nest that was empty, failed and then re-laid in?

MB: I never found two nests with two eggs, this was where there was a bird incubating and then directly below that there was a broken egg but then all the nests around that had evidence of broken eggs. My suspicion is that a pair laid in that nest and then it was turfed out by another bird and then another pair laid in that nest. This is only from what we are seeing on the ground.

PF: With such competition for nest sites, is there any possibility that with pairs that fail early in the season, the nest is then taken over by another pair?

MB: For Bullers and Chatham mollymawks I think the birds are guarding the nests for some time even after failing because if you don't, you get outcompeted quite quickly. And when it starts raining you'll get outcompeted even faster.

PF: Quite important because with aerial photographs and nests on the ground they may later be recorded as nests with no egg but the assumption this is new pairs, they may not be and instead may be birds continuing to guard nests after failure. With the white-caps data it was clear we had both, some nests continuing to be occupied 1 month after failure and also had un-banded birds occupying banded nests for some time after.

MB: We saw in our Bullers study plots unbanded birds occupy nests and then the moment the banded bird comes back to the nest, the unbanded birds leave but are turfed off quickly. Discussion around good/poor nests would be really interesting to test this out more, particularly on the forty-fours (Motuhara) as there are birds nesting straight on the rocks that get broken and the birds with good pedestals seem to be the ones holding on but also lots of birds nesting in gullies that are washed out in big rain events. A complex picture!

GT: I have been looking at the Argos tracking data recently and the vast majority of birds with trackers have headed over to the Eastern Pacific, few are left on The Pyramid. You were seeing birds right through to March/April previously meaning they've left quite early. It appears they've failed, do you know where you put the trackers on and the rate of failure? Were they on northern slopes that could have experienced heat stress?

MB: I think they are failing early and heading off, the trackers were all put on the camp slopes which is exposed but not as exposed as some other areas of the island. The Chathams have had a mixed bag in weather, some significant rain and some reasonable warm spells but not as warm as other years.

GT: Were the trail cameras in the same areas as where the birds were tagged?

MB: Yes, one of these is in the same area on the camp flat which can directly relate to what GPS birds are doing. The other two are in the cave which is the most sheltered part.

GT: If this failure is typical it's potentially quite a poor season for the birds. Fur seals in the area may be another factor.

MB: Some of the Argos trackers were put further up from where the fur seals are interacting, wanted to try to keep some of the tags out of this zone. Some indication of what went on in the cave and flats will be interesting to look into.

5. A standardised framework for processing abundance data of albatrosses and petrels, and modelling their multi-decadal trends – a case study with nine New Zealand endemics

Johannes Fischer (DOC) presented on standardising abundance and trend modelling for albatrosses and petrels

Discussion:

PF: In your definition of metrics, your annual breeding pairs are the number successfully laying an egg each year the count was conducted. In many cases counts are not of eggs but of birds with young, done in the year after. Following ACAP they are assigned to that particular year they fledge. Wondering how one reconciles the different approaches.

JF: With the Northern Royals for example you count the chicks in 2019 then we back calculate how many eggs were counted in 2018 but still expressed as the abundance of 2019 just based on the ACAP definition, the year has a footnote in the paper. When we say year we are referring to biologically relevant year in which that species breeds and the assigned year is based on when they fledge.

PF: Is there any evidence that the IUCN's red list has had any specific impact on the conservation of these species – is this something we should be spending a lot of time on?

JF: Each of these conservation status assessments are a way of communicating how we perceive the world in something that is more palatable to the general public than numbers/lines/graphs, whether or not one assessment is better than the other I'm not sure. Here in NZ, particularly with BioInvest and NZTCS it is now linked directly to what DOC funds and certainly has considerable implications even just beyond perceptions of the general public.

PF: Somehow there is a gap between producing this incredible work in a coherent way but also successfully communicating the urgency. In our case this is to do with fisheries.

6. MIT2024-03 Assessment of weighted hooks as a seabird bycatch mitigation option for SLL fisheries

Dave Goad (Vita Maris) presented on the assessment of weighted hooks as a seabird bycatch mitigation option for surface longline fisheries

Discussion:

NB: There have been difficulties surrounding Procella hooks, especially with recent outcomes relating to safety. Interested to hear your comments as you worked with operators that used Procella hooks and just wanted to point out that the development of Procella has progressed now to endeavour to produce a 40g option which still complies with line weighting minimum requirements in New Zealand but perhaps not elsewhere at this time but unfortunately in this study there is no direct comparison with a 40 g version. The 40 g version as you implied has got to be safer than the original 60 g version, but we need to be mindful that the Procella development was guided by ACAP line weighting requirements and continues to be influenced by the development of line weighting criteria. Questions around health and safety implications. Your findings have essentially supported all the work that has preceded it, but still a long way to go. Sink rate information alone suggests that the birds can't differentiate between 40- and 60-gram hooks so a combination of measures will likely do the trick not just one alone.

DG: The takeaway for me is unsurprisingly that the hook is the best place to have weight from the bird's point of view, so as long as it stacks up against other options we then need fishers to use them which will be based on their preferences and other factors. Takeaway is that this is another valid option.

Any additional comments should be provided to by 5pm, 5th March 2026. Close of Meeting @ 13:40 pm