



Conservation Services Programme Project MIT2014-01:

Protected species bycatch newsletter

Annual Progress Report

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Johanna Pierre

johanna@jpec.co.nz



Executive summary

The objective of Conservation Services Programme project MIT2014-01 is to produce a bimonthly newsletter to communicate protected species-related information to commercial fishermen. This project is now halfway through its term, with six issues of the newsletter '*Bycatch Bylines*' produced to date. Articles cover 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. Key references are also provided, to facilitate reader access to additional information. The target audience for the newsletter comprises commercial fishers and others involved in the fishing industry. Recipients include 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. Currently, the newsletter is circulated to around 1,500 recipients. It is distributed in three forms, as an html newsletter delivered via email, an A4 2-page pdf file distributed electronically, or a hard copy newsletter mailed to recipients who have indicated a preference for this medium, or who do not have an electronic point of contact. The second year of the project provides for the development and circulation of another 6 newsletters. At the end of the project, a final report will be produced.

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Progress update

Objective:

The objective of project MIT2014-01, funded through DOC's Conservation Services Programme, is to produce a bimonthly newsletter to communicate protected species-related information to commercial fishermen.

Scope of newsletter:

The focus of the newsletter is interactions between protected species and New Zealand commercial fisheries, with emphasis on methods for reducing those interactions. Articles cover 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.

The newsletter is two sides of A4 in length. The sections appearing in the newsletter are:

Headline: This is the leading story of the issue. This section comprises around half to two-thirds of the front page of the newsletter. It includes a relevant photo. The Headline section focuses on any aspect of the newsletter's scope.

What's Up?: This section features 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 covers news items or events relating to the newsletter's scope.

Best Practice Baselines: This is 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 "best practice" measures actually comprise. Material is presented concisely in bullet point form with an image illustrating the measure discussed.

The Big Picture: This section highlights the broader context of New Zealand protected species and bycatch mitigation issues. It also includes 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), 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 presents different views on controversial topics relating to protected species interactions with commercial fisheries. It is intended to stimulate discussion amongst fishers, and present views (with rationale) which fishers may not otherwise encounter. Opinions are presented

alongside factual information and with key references. This section was initiated in the previous version of Bycatch Bylines, implementing a recommendation presented in Pierre (2012).

Who's who?: Fishers sometimes comment that they don't know who does what and why, in government and amongst stakeholders. This section is included to help address that issue, by profiling a practitioner working in the bycatch arena. It follows an informal interview-style question and answer format, with both professional and personal interest questions. The interviewee's photo is also included, ideally showing them in a marine or fisheries-related context.

What the FAQ?!: This section includes a collection of short and quirky facts on a protected species, or species group, and a relevant image. It is intended to highlight the diversity amongst New Zealand protected species and thereby support the development of increased knowledge and understanding of the value of resolving bycatch issues.

Want to Know More?: This section links 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 in 2013 and 2014 demonstrates that some fishers have accessed the reference material provided (Pierre 2014).

An overview of the topics covered during this first year of project MIT2014-01 is provided in Appendix 1.

Recipients and distribution:

The target audience for the newsletter comprises 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. While some ACE holders were also included in the list of quota holders, additional recipients were also identified.

Others included in the distribution list are 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 others working in the fishing industry or on fisheries bycatch issues. Recipients are added to the list on request on an ongoing basis.

Currently, the circulation list numbers around 1,500. The newsletter is distributed to the majority of recipients (approximately 1,240) by email, using an html-format newsletter. Other recipients are sent a hard copy of the newsletter by mail.

Feedback:

Feedback from recipients on newsletter content has not been received during the current project term. However, more general feedback includes tracking subscriptions to the electronic newsletter through time. The electronic version includes an “unsubscribe” option. To date, three recipients have unsubscribed, while one additional “subscribe” request has been received.

In addition, some 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. To date, 11 recipients have requested the newsletter in pdf instead of html format.

Next steps

To date, six issues of the newsletter have been produced and circulated. In the second year of this project’s term, a further six issues will be produced. Feedback on the newsletter is welcomed from readers on an ongoing basis. At the end of the project, a final report will be produced.

Acknowledgements

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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.

Appendix 1: Content overview

Topics covered in the first annual term of CSP project MIT2014-01 are summarised below, by newsletter section and edition.

Headline:

- The hook pod, a novel line-weighting measure for surface longline fisheries (November 2014)
- Inshore bottom longline seabird liaison officers and Seabird Management Plans (February 2015)
- An update on the activities of government fisheries observers (April 2015)
- CSP-funded work on smaller-vessel tori lines (May 2015)
- Seabird bycatch reduction measures introduced by the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (June 2015)

Best Practice Baselines:

- Best-practice line-weighting measures for bottom longline fisheries (November 2014)

The Big Picture:

- Use of bottle tests for assessing bottom longline sink rates (November 2014)
- Shark risk assessment (February 2015)
- New Zealand sea lion research and species management updates (April and May 2015)
- New Zealand experts raising awareness of seabird bycatch amongst Chinese colleagues (June 2015)
- New Zealand's involvement in the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (June 2015)

Worldwatch:

- Seabird bycatch reduction measures in South Australian trawl fisheries (November 2014)
- Chatham albatross translocation (February 2015)
- Outcomes of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna's Ecologically Related Species meeting (April 2015)
- Benefits for New Zealand seabirds from the first 10 years of activities resulting from the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (May 2015)
- Australian research on the effect of trawl net dimensions on fur seal bycatch rates (June 2015)

What's up?:

- A new freely available handling guide for sharks and rays (February 2015)
- Seabird catch in recreational fisheries (April 2015)
- The New Zealand Federation of Commercial Fishermen's annual conference (May 2015)
- Update on Māui dolphin research (June 2015)

What the FAQ?:

- Flesh-footed shearwater (November 2014)
- Giant petrels (February 2015)
- New Zealand storm petrel (April 2015)
- Humpback whale (May 2015)
- Black corals (June 2015)