Work with New Zealand towards seabird-safe fisheries

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Male Antipodean albatross. *Photo: John Aitchison*

Seabirds traveling the oceans connect us.

Every year, thousands of seabirds are accidentally killed in fisheries.

Many species face extinction if we do not act.

Fishing is not the problem. How we fish is.

Changing how we fish will save seabirds and improve the sustainability and reputation of our fleets.

These changes are simple, inexpensive and effective.

Together we can safeguard seabirds.

Female Antipodean albatross. *Photo: John Aitchison*

Working together we can get seabirds off the hook.

The problem

Nearly half of all albatross and petrel species are threatened with global extinction.

The cause

The main threat driving the disappearance of many seabird species is fisheries bycatch – where seabirds are entangled, hooked and drowned in fishing operations.

The solution

We can solve this by working together to ensure all fishing vessels use the international best practice mitigation measures recommended by the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (see www.acap.aq/link/bpa).

The solutions are simple, inexpensive and effective.

The gains

Using seabird mitigation measures will help prevent the extinction of many endangered seabird species.

Using mitigation measures will also meet fast-growing consumer demand for sustainably caught fish. People want seabird-safe seafood. Some major fishing companies are already working to address seabird bycatch. Members of Seafood Business for Ocean Stewardship (SeaBOS), a cross-sector collaboration of 10 of the world's largest seafood companies, are working with scientists to implement global best practice to reduce their impacts on endangered seabirds.

In 2017, the global sustainable seafood market was valued at USD 12.71 billion.[1] By 2025, it is expected to be worth USD 18.63 billion. Investing now in seabird bycatch mitigation is likely to generate greater economic gains in years to come.

[1] www.coherentmarketinsights.com/market-insight/sustainable-seafood-market-1668

Illustration: ©ACAP

Antipodean albatross – a priority for global collaboration

The Antipodean albatross (*Diomedea antipodensis*) is at the forefront of New Zealand's ambition to protect seabirds globally.

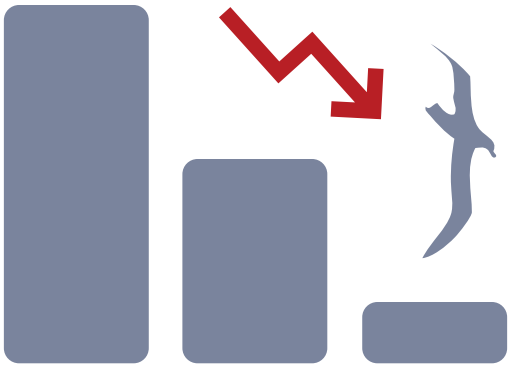
Antipodean albatross are a sacred taonga (treasure) to Ngāi Tahu, a Māori tribe of southern Aotearoa New Zealand.

Antipodean albatross only breed on New Zealand territory – the remote subantarctic Antipodes Island, and is on the brink of extinction.

Monitoring shows that two-thirds of the Antipodean albatross population has disappeared since 2005, and the seabirds continue to decline by 5% each year.

At this rate, the Antipodean albatross population will decline by more than 80% over the next 30 years, and within a single albatross generation.

Antipodean albatross decline: 2/3 pairs lost by 2022

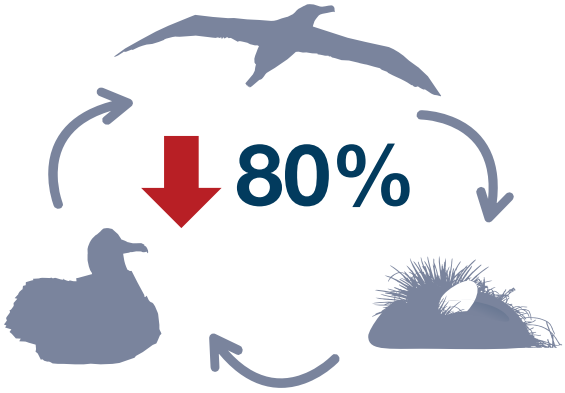


2005 6,750 pairs

2022 3,286 pairs

2048 519 pairs

We will lose another 80% in a single albatross generation unless we take action



Albatross chick. *Photo: Ligs Hoffman*

The bycatch risk hot spots

Antipodean albatross fly across the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean in search of squid and fish. Their foraging overlaps with longline fishing vessels.

Accidental bycatch is the single biggest threat to Antipodean albatross.

Figures 1 shows the areas where albatross and vessels overlap the most.

These are the 'bycatch risk hot spots'. Satellite tracking of albatross and vessels shows where we can focus our efforts.

This science shows that to save the Antipodean albatross, we must work together.

Fig. 1

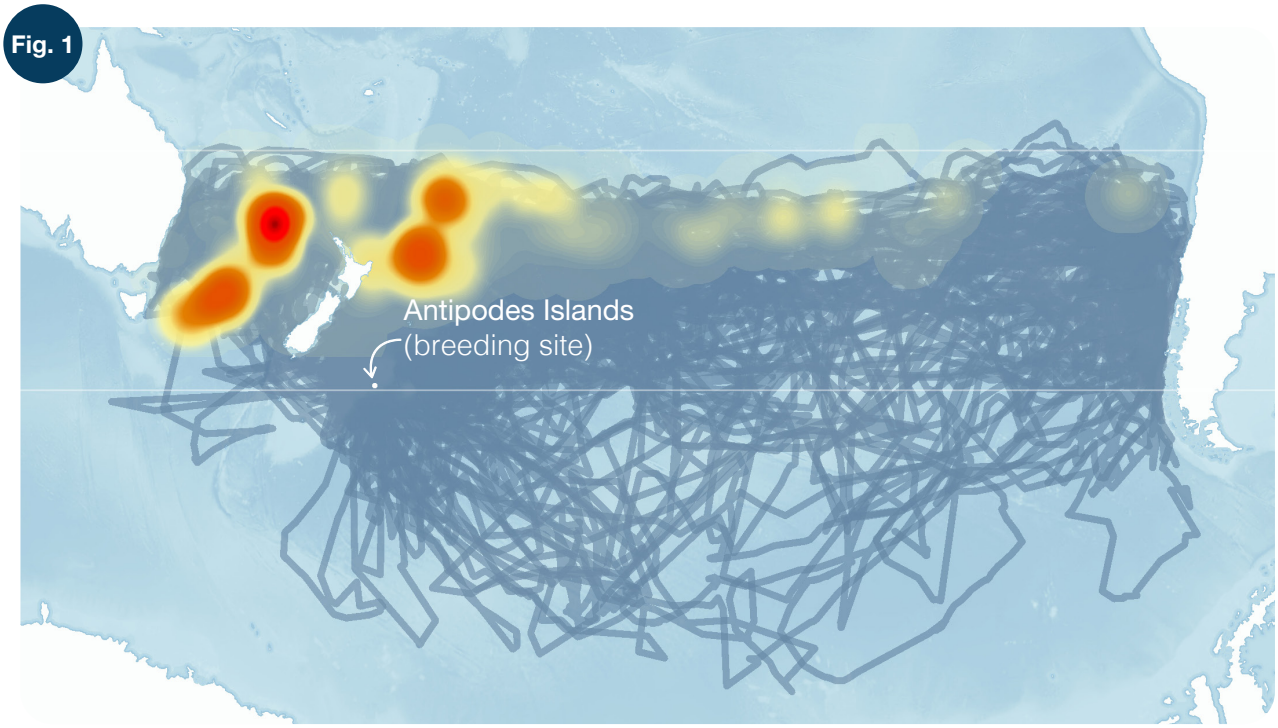


Figure 1. Antipodean albatross distribution based on satellite tracking data from 2019 and 2020 showing flight patterns and hotspots where seabirds overlap with pelagic longline vessels across the South Pacific.

Antipodean albatross courting. *Photo: John Aitchison*

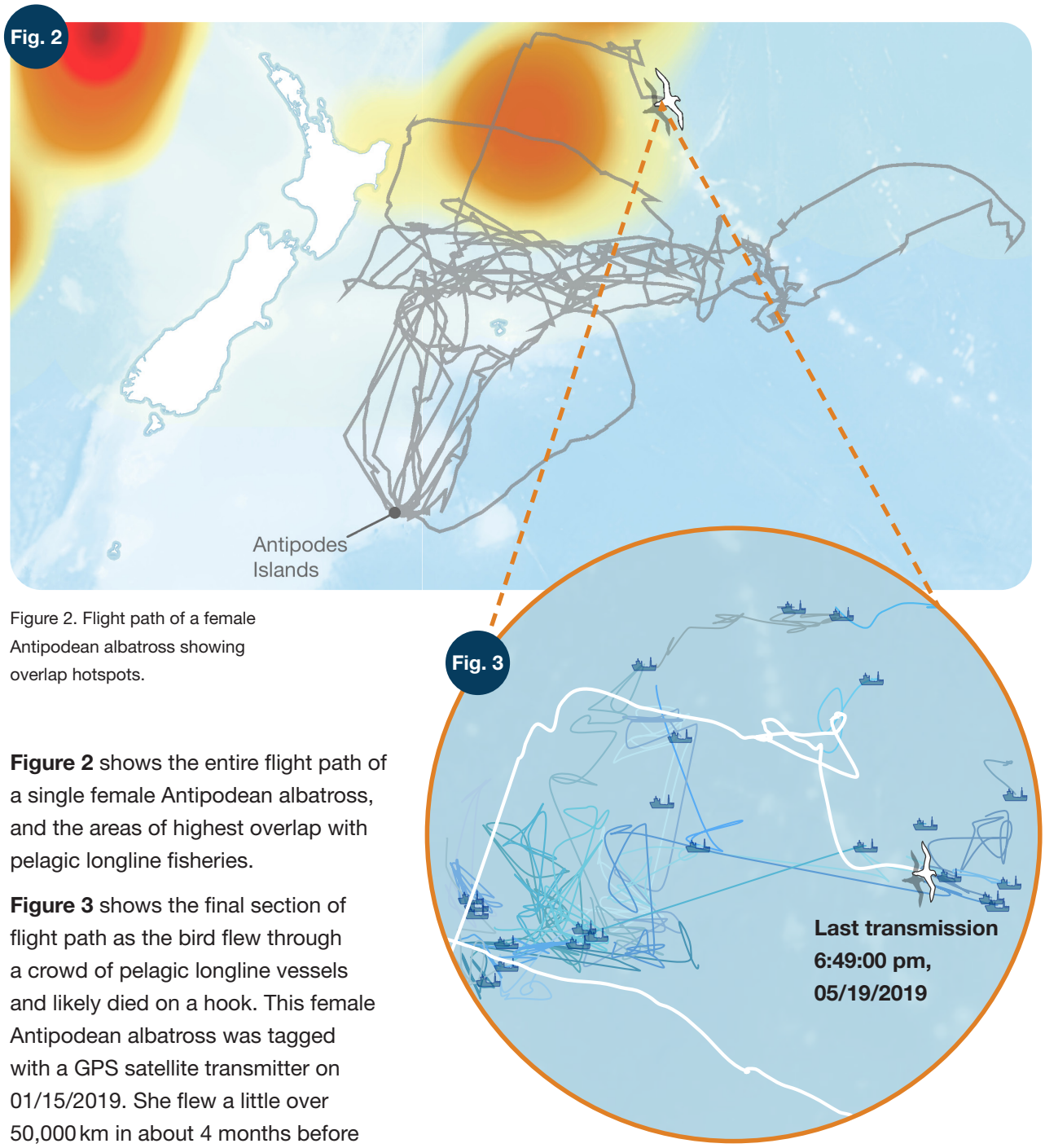


Figure 2. Flight path of a female Antipodean albatross showing overlap hotspots.

Figure 3. Satellite track of a female Antipodean albatross and vessel tracks.

Figure 2 shows the entire flight path of a single female Antipodean albatross, and the areas of highest overlap with pelagic longline fisheries.

Figure 3 shows the final section of flight path as the bird flew through a crowd of pelagic longline vessels and likely died on a hook. This female Antipodean albatross was tagged with a GPS satellite transmitter on 01/15/2019. She flew a little over 50,000 km in about 4 months before the tag stopped transmitting near tuna longline vessels.

Our request

New Zealand is requesting international collaboration to strengthen seabird bycatch mitigation measures at Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, and to implement best practice mitigation on fleets that overlap with threatened species.

Get in touch with the New Zealand team. Please email: **marine@doc.govt.nz**.

Antipodean albatross. *Photo: Charlie Barnett*

Southern royal albatross and chick. *Photo: Debbie Freeman*

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