

Albatross Task Force Namibia

Interim Report: April to September 2017

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This is the interim report for the Albatross Task Force project in Namibia, the project is hosted by the Namibia Nature Foundation



General overview and objectives

In 2008 seabird mortality due to the long line fishery in Namibia was documented at 22, 000 seabirds killed per year plus another 8, 000 by the trawl fishery. As a result of regulations on seabird by-catch mitigation measures being ratified on 15 November 2015 there has been 100% adoption of the mitigation measures across the entire Hake demersal fleet. The number of hake vessels operating in 2017 with active licenses is 65 demersal Hake trawl vessels and nine demersal long line vessels.

The main objective of the Albatross Task Force (ATF) project is to reduce the mortality of albatross and petrels in trawl/long line fisheries. Activities to achieve the objective include:

- Ensure monthly trips¹ are conducted on demersal long line and trawl vessels to collect data to permit an updated seabird by-catch estimate for the two fisheries;
- Work with the Namibian Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources staff to reinstate an effective NPOA-Seabirds working group;
- Provide technical guidance and troubleshooting to fishing company representatives and fishing crew on the best practice use of mitigation measures;
- Input at-sea data collection into the ATF database spread sheet after each trip and provide regular updates to the RSPB;
- Conduct at least one observer training workshop and hold monthly meetings to support the initiation of seabird by-catch and mitigation compliance data collection by the National Observer Agency;
- Provide 100% of active long line and trawl vessels with a pair of bird-scaring lines (BSLs) and further
- develop and streamline the Meme Itumbapo bird-scaring line provision project with a view to make the project more efficient, effective and sustainable;
- Collaborate with Birdlife International and RSPB in the preparation of reports on the effect of seabird by-catch following the adoption of mitigation measures in Namibian fisheries for publication in relevant scientific journals;
- Contribute to regular media and project progress updates via NNF, BirdLife and RSPB websites;
- Attend NNF and BirdLife national and regional meetings to promote the work of the ATF Namibia team.

¹Except October (October is closed season)



Progress against objectives

Trawl fishery

A total of 65 demersal trawl vessels were licensed in 2017. The annual target for at-sea observation is set at 80 days. Four trips were done on the trawl vessels this year. These trips translate into a total of 32 days spent at sea, equivalent to a total of 40% of the targeted achievement.

There was close to 100% compliance to the regulations on all trips except for the trip dated 27 June 2017 (Table1). The reason why the bird scaring lines were not deployed during this trip was because of bad weather (beaufort scale 4). There was concern for crew safety and bird scaring line entanglement during bad weather. BSLs were set for the first two shoots and when it entangled with the fishing gear the captain argued that it was risky for the bosun to deploy the bird-scaring lines during these times. No seabird by-catch was observed during any of the trips undertaken on trawl vessels during the reporting period. April and August, indicating that the mitigation measures are reducing interaction rates of seabirds with nets and warp cables.

Table 1: ATF at sea monitoring effort for the demersal trawl fleet between March and September 2017

Date	OBSTRIP_ID	Vessel Name	Instructor	Days at sea	Fishing effort (number of trawls)	Fishing effort (hrs)	Observed effort (number of trawls)	Observed effort (hrs)	Seabird by-catch	Seabird by-catch rate (birds/hrs/trawl)	Observed mitigation compliance (%)
01-03-2017	SMAT8	Otter Bank	Samantha	6	18	54	12	24	0	0	90
28-05-2017	SMAT9	Zambezi	Samantha	9	26	77.4	12	29.58	0	0	100
27-06-2017	SMAT10	Begonia	Samantha	7	20	65	6	15.30	0	0	35
14-08-2017	SMAT11	Otter Bank	Samantha	10	25	126.8	12	56.8	0	0	100
Total		-	-	32	89	323.3	42	125.71	0	0	81.25



A total of 4 085 birds were seen in all four trips with 11 different species recorded. The most abundant species were the White-chinned petrels (2 182), Cape gannets (432) and the Storm petrels (284). The highest number of seabirds was recorded on trip SMAT8, with a total of 1 355 birds and the lowest on trip SMAT10 with a total of 1 116 birds.

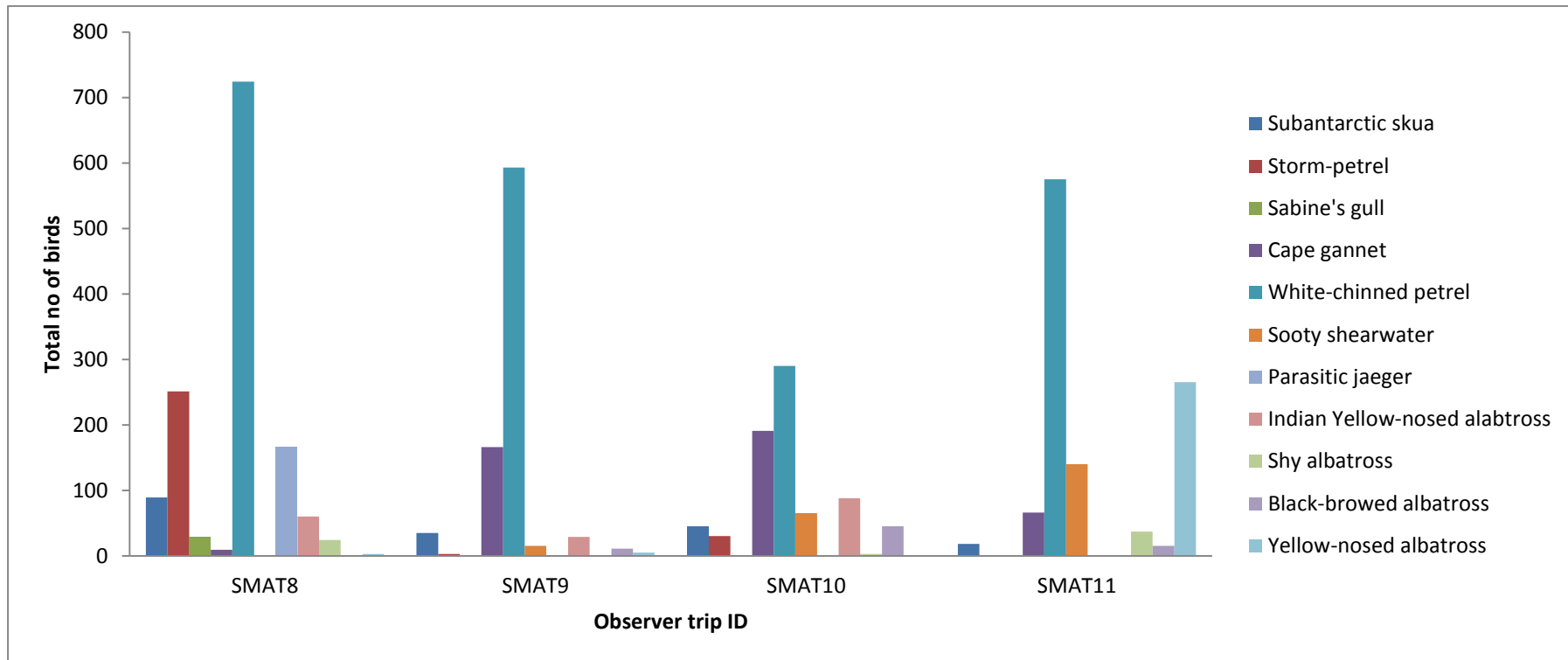


Figure 1: Seabird abundance from the monitoring effort between April 2017 and August 2017 on trawl vessels



Long line fishery

A total of nine demersal long line vessels were licensed in 2017, but only seven are currently active. The annual target for at sea observation is set at 80 days. Four trips were done on the long line vessels for this year. These trips translate into a total of 34 days spent at sea, equivalent to a total of 42.5 % of targeted achievement.

From a total monitoring effort of 312.1 hours observed, three seabirds (White-chinned Petrel) were observed killed (see Table 2 below) at a rate of 0.01 birds / 1000 hooks. BSLs were deployed at all times during these trips and there was no offal discards during the sets. The moon phase (1st Quarter) may have played a role in the by-catch of the seabirds, as the bait was visible during the night. There was also a high abundance of seabirds during the April and September trips (see Figure 2) increasing the risk of by-catch. The fishing effort was also high for these two trips increasing the risk of seabird by-catch. Another reason for the increase in observed by-catch compared to last year can be attributed to the extra sea trips currently being undertaken on the long line vessels.

Date	OBSTRIP_ID	Vessel name	Instructor	Days at sea	Fishing effort (number of hooks)	Fishing effort (hrs)	Observed effort (number of hooks)	Seabird by-catch	Seabird by-catch rate (birds/1000 hooks)	Observed mitigation compliance (%)
03-04-2017	CNAO4	West Coast 2	Clemens	9	151488	97.9	78741	1	0.01	100
10-06-2017	CNAO5	Carolina Castro	Clemens	8	88900	69.1	48310	0	0	100
29-07-2017	CNAO6	Blomeha	Clemens	7	42700	48.8	24100	0	0	100
12-09-2017	CNAO7	West Coast 2	Clemens	10	147052	96.3	81100	2	0.02	100
Total	-	-	-	34	430140	312.1	232251	3	0.01	-

Table 2: ATF at sea monitoring effort for the demersal long line fleet between April and September 2017



A total of 2394 birds were seen in all four trips with 12 different species recorded. The most abundant species were White-chinned Petrel (845), Wilsons Storm Petrel (578), Black-Back Browed Albatross (296) and Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross (210). Highest abundance of seabirds was recorded in the trip CNAO4, with 862 seabirds recorded.

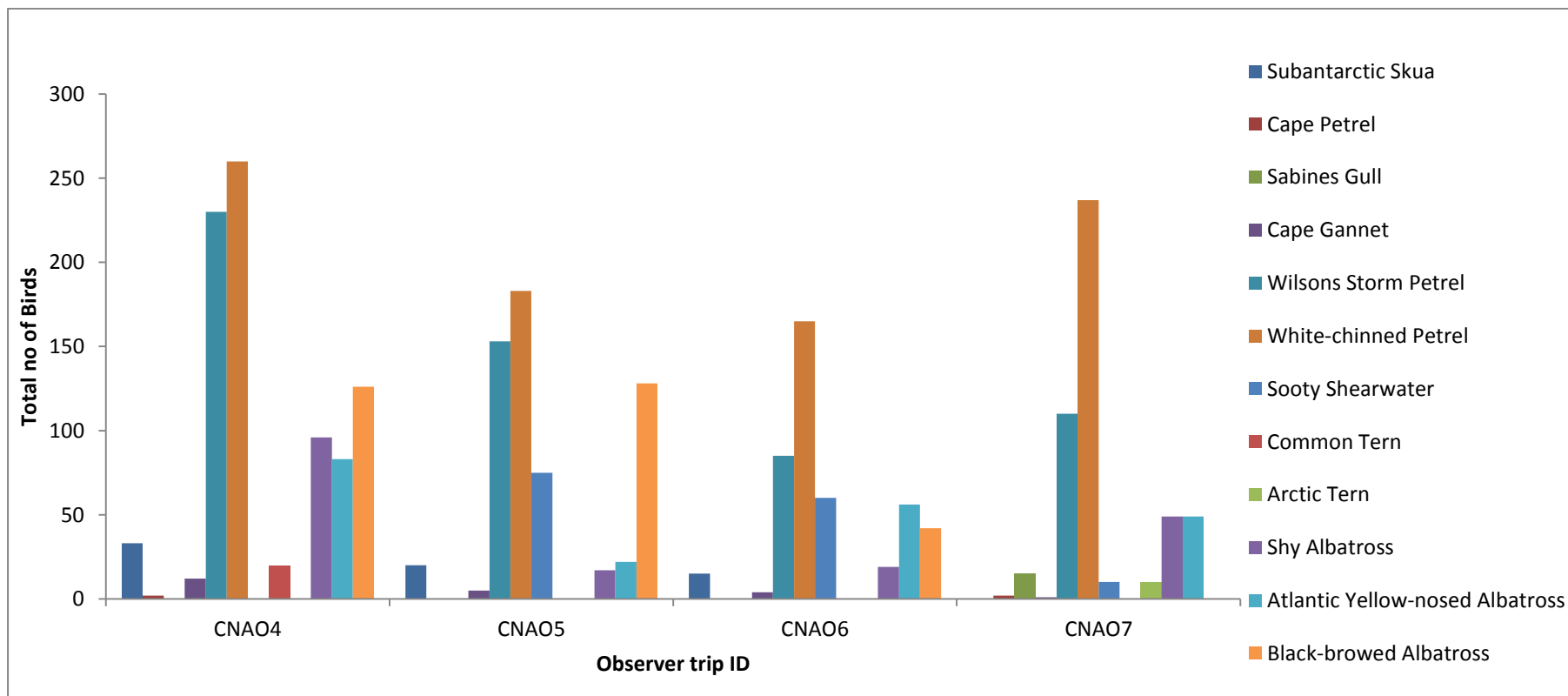


Figure 2: Seabird abundance from the monitoring effort between April 2017 and September 2017 on long line vessels



Compliance with seabird conservation regulations

As per government regulations, all demersal hake vessels are obligated to use seabird by-catch mitigation measures. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the uptake of BSLs across the fleet, the ATF requested the Fisheries Observer Agency to start collecting basic seabird by-catch data and monitor the use of bird scaring lines on all vessels in the fishery. The Observer Agency has agreed to do this and the ATF team is excited about the opportunity to be provided with data from all vessels working in the demersal hake fishery in Namibia. The team has already received its first sets of data from the Observer Agency.

ATF also approached the fisheries Inspectorate to create a link between the Observer Agency and the Inspectorate to report any vessels not using BSLs and issue fines in case of non-compliance. ATF will play an important role in providing training to the Observers on seabird by-catch mitigation monitoring and data collection protocols.

Thus far the ATF team can report 100% compliance on the seabird mitigation measures for long line vessels and 81.25% compliance for trawlers, based on data collected by the ATF team during sea trips (Table 1 and 2). As the ATF team is unable to monitor all vessels in the fishery, we are uncertain of whether all the vessels are complying with the regulations.

Based on very recent data collected from the Observer Agency, 60% compliance was recorded for the five trips on long line vessels and 50% compliance for six trips on trawlers. The observer agency will continue collecting this data in order to clarify the level of compliance. At this stage it is too early to tell whether the effect of ATF staff on-board vessels is a determinant of compliance with regulations. The team hopes to show more conclusive data in our annual report due in April 2018.

ATF team was invited to participate in consultations and provide inputs into the National Plan of Action (NPOA) for reducing the incidental catch of seabirds in the Namibian fisheries. The team provided inputs on:

- specifications on mitigation measures;
- compliance;
- data collection;
- role of fisheries observers agencies;
- establishment of ecosystem and by-catch working group measures

The NPOA is still in the process of being finalised and the team is grateful for the opportunity of being invited to provide inputs toward the development of this important document.

Observer Agency

During the reporting period, one training workshop was conducted by the ATF (Table 3). This training was held in Luderitz because the team saw a need to engage with the Observers in Luderitz as they had not yet received this important training.

We enjoyed good attendance at the workshop with 17 Luderitz based fisheries observers participating. Three facilitators including the Food and Agricultural Organisation instructor for pelagic fisheries as well as the CEO for the Fisheries Observer Agency helped to ensure that the training was comprehensive and well-received.



Table 3: ATF National Observer Training between April and September 2017

Workshop	Location	Objective	Observers attending
Responsible Fisheries Alliance (RFA) training	Lüderitz	To provide training on the implementation of best practice seabird by-catch mitigation measures and compliance monitoring on the fishing vessels.	17

Education and awareness

Project awareness information has been disseminated to industry, government and local communities via our port visits and workshops plus attendance at World Oceans Day event held in Swakopmund in June (Table 4). ATF Namibia is still in partnership with The Namibia Coast Conservation and Management project (NACOMA), who together take part in an annual Biodiversity Week programme (Part I and II) to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable ecosystem use.

This year, the ATF team visited two schools to talk about our current work, and to lead a guided bird tour (September 2017) at the Bird's Paradise with the Meme Itumbapo Women's group (Table 4).

Table 4: Education and awareness events attended between March and September 2017

Event name	Dates	Location	Objective	Attendance
Biodiversity Week Part I and World Ocean's Day	05 – 10 June 2017	Swakopmund	To inform young school children and the local community on species conservation	more than 70 school children: ages 6 to 12, parents, tourists and Swakopmund local community
Biodiversity Week Part II: Bird Tour	15 September 2017	Walvis Bay (Bird's Paradise)	A guided bird tour to educate young students about Namibian coastal seabirds	Students (50) and the local coastal community (20)

Port visits and Mitigation measures

The ATF instructors have been making regular visits to the various fishing companies and vessels to support and provide training to captains, mates and crew on the importance and use of bird scaring lines (Table 5).by-catch, 100% of the vessels in the demersal hake fishery have BSL's on board. Interestingly, preliminary data from the Observer Agency shows that only 60% (long line) and 50% (trawl) vessels are deploying BSL's. This indicates that although 100% of vessels in the demersal hake fishery have BSL's on board, not all vessels are deploying the lines. As yet, we do not have a full picture regarding compliance as the Observers have only recently started to collect data. We hope to have more comprehensive picture to present in our annual report.

ATF started to develop a questionnaire to evaluate the standard and impact of ATF work and the use of the mitigation measures with the fishing companies and their fleet. The questionnaire is almost complete and shall be distributed soon.



Between April 2017 and September 2017 two fishing company (Pereira) and Hangana, has purchased 14 bird-scaring lines for one of their vessels.

Table 5: Port visits and industry meetings held between April 2017 2016 and September 2017

Town/Port	Company	Date	No of visits	No of meetings	Materials provided
Lüderitz	Seaflower	April	3	1	No Materials provided
Lüderitz	Pereira fishing	April	2	2	No Materials provided
Walvis Bay	Abroma Fishing	May	1	1	Pamphlet
Walvis Bay	Pereira fishing	June	1	1	No Materials provided
Walvis Bay	West coast fishing	July	1	1	No Materials provided

Challenges

Due to budget cuts currently being made in the Namibian government, the Minister of Fisheries (Hon Bernard Esau) has advised the Fisheries Observer Agency to deploy only one observer instead of two on each demersal trawl fleet starting July 2017. This reduces the effort and time spent for observers to monitor each trawl setting during the day due to their commitment to sample fish in the haul. We are uncertain of the possible effect of this on the data collected for ATF by the Observers but we suspect that we might only receive limited or inaccurate data. We therefore need to assess the data for accuracy and discuss the inclusion of this data into overall database with Birdlife International.

The minister of Fisheries (Hon. Bernard Esau) delayed the new quota allocations due to the recent stock assessments which have restrained some of the vessels from fishing. As a result, fewer vessels are operational reducing the chances of ATF instructors booking a vessel. We expect this to be resolved after the closed fishing season in October.

Meme Itumbapo women’s group have just built its first 39 bird scaring lines since last year. Currently, the project only has one supplier for the bird scaring line material. The process for ordering material is time consuming and expensive since only one supplier in Namibia offers all required material. Sourcing material from South Africa is possible but not practical as NNF does not have permission to import such a large quantity of material.

The cost of building lines currently outweighs the profit needed to make the project sustainable. The team is looking into sourcing alternative funds to help boost the operation and sustainability of the project. Funds would potentially be used for providing practical training and advice on small business operation including financial management, marketing and business administration. Funds would also conceivably be used to purchase basic office equipment and help to set up a business sustainability plan. We have conducted an economic analysis of the project and have found that with an increase in price of the BSL the project can become sustainable and start to turn a profit for the women employed. If the price is increased, this will not necessarily mean that the project’s BSL’s are more expensive than the competitors as the production has historically been funded by NAMPORT since the inception of the project. Therefore the increase in price would mean that the BSL’s remain competitive in terms of their pricing when compared to competitors that are producing BSL’s in Walvis Bay. Lastly, the ATF team is also working with fishing companies in order to try to ensure purchase of BSL’s as a form of cooperate social responsibility. We are currently developing project proposals to this end and NAMPORT has also requested that ATF submit a new funding proposal for the BSL project which will include some of the objectives mentioned above.



From the nine long line vessels that have active licenses, two are not operational. One of the vessels (South West Eagle) caught fire and burned down at sea and the other vessel (Boston Wayferer) experienced an engine failure. One of the long line vessels (Leandra) is too small to accommodate observers. This leaves only six potential vessels that can accommodate an ATF instructor reducing the likelihood of finding a vessel on time.

Highlights

- Observer agency has started collecting seabird by-catch data and mitigation compliance data.
- ATF together with FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) hosted a successful RFA (Responsible Fisheries Alliance) training in Lüderitz in April 2017.
- ATF Namibia featured in Mongabay news with our article on “Low cost, sustainable solution to seabird by-catch” turned out to be their most successful story of June, with over 100 000 views.
- The NPOA-seabirds workshop was held on 12 May in Swakopmund. ATF was part of the integral team that was involved in the revision of NPOA-seabirds
- Attendance at the third Ecologically or Biological Significant Areas (EBSA) meeting. EBSAs are special areas in the ocean that serve important purposes, in one way or another, to support the healthy functioning of oceans and the many services that it provides.

The main objective of the EBSA-TT workshop in June 2017 was to:

- Review Namibia’s current EBSAs and identify potential areas qualifying as EBSAs
- Determine required/additional data and information
- Develop the EBSA-TT work plan

Planned Activities

- In order to reach the 80 days at sea target in the demersal trawl and long line fishery, the ATF team has to complete two trips per month.
- ATF will attend the Observer training in Cape Town in October and also present on the Namibian ATF project progress. The workshop will focus mainly on data collection protocols for fisheries observers.
- A full seabird by-catch reassessment for the Namibian hake fisheries will be conducted in 2018 in order to cover the data collected since the implementation of seabird by-catch mitigation measures
- Submission of follow-up proposal to NAMPORT for Meme Itumbapo’s Women’s Group. This proposal will focus on helping the group to become a sustainable business operation