

ALBERT TIMES

"Don't get warped – trawl for fish, not birds" Jun-Jul 2014 Issue 76

Albert's Column

Mabel and I have made the 4000nm flight (7,500km for you landlubbers) to the Chilean Coast, nice and warm here, anything beats sitting on the nest in a 'blizzard' at the Auckland Islands. Another southern ocean breeding season is over.... only a dozen of those big steel 'lunch-boxes' to follow this season...

Causalities have been light this squid season, half that of last year....with most causalities coming from my 'brave; and foolhardy cousins, diving on the nets! Thanks to Dave and his fishing mates over 50% were fortunately released alive. The 'chattering classes' had around 90% of the vessels with 'bird-counters' on them, so we know the number is pretty accurate! Plenty of food around all over the place this year, so we had a lot more feeding options, not like last year, when the kamikaze-mutton birds 'bailed' half way through the breeding season leaving there chicks to starve and the white chin petrels were so hungry they dived 'on-mass' on every net to scavenge a feed, no wonder we had 4 times more get tangled up in nets last year, this year things back to 'normal'

Only two if those pesky sea lions were captured this squid season, I make it only 7 captures in 5 squid seasons, It wasn't that long ago, that number was considered 'not-bad' for a single season....how things change....!

SLEDS to the rescue again, this time in the SBW fishery, my long range scouts tell me SLEDs were carried on all vessels and deployed immediately this season, after 21 pesky juvenile male captures last year. We saw heaps of sealion following behind the vessels again this year, I hear only two got stuck in the nets, while helping themselves to whole fish. At least me and the 'cousins' only take the left-over's, offal/guts, etc; those pesky seals 'steel' Dave best export fish right out of the net....dam cheek, what!

Chow Albert

Seabird Risk Management Plans

Seabird Risk Management Plans, (SRMP) have been developed for the fresh fish hoki fleet of >28mtr vessels. These 'plans' are a much simpler version of the deepwater VMPs, but retain the basic management procedures; Offal Control, Mitigation, Risk-Awareness, Risk-Management and Reporting! The SRMP also incorporates marine-mammal risk-reduction measures as Hoki boats, particular in Cook Strait often have interactions with fur seals.

The SRMP is a one page document containing; picture of the vessel, vessel details; background information on what increases the risk of captures, vessel specific information on the offal control system and mitigation devices onboard and a picture of the actual warp-mitigation device onboard (The picture of the mitigation device ensures each vessel physically has the device onboard and ready to deploy when required)

There are around 16 fresh fish vessels that target Hoki in the West Coast and Cook Strait fisheries between July and September. During the hoki season there is next to no offal discharge as the midwater hoki spawn-fishery has very little fish bycatch and all Hoki is landed green/whole to local processing factory's ashore. During the

winter fishery seabird behaviour is far less aggressive and with almost no offal discharge seabird numbers around the vessel while towing is very low, hence the fresh fish spawn fishery has a very low risk of seabird capture.

These 'coastal-vessels' generally have very good experienced skippers, most vessels already had mitigations devices onboard and were well informed around the risk of seabird captures. Typically these size boats have the trawl block positioned in-line with the hull, so any offal discharged over/down side of the vessel can run directly into the path of the warps greatly increasing risk of warp strike, on the 'flip side they don't process/gut fish in the hoki season, so this offsets that risk!

During the rest of the fishing year when fishing mixed-species (depending on fishing area) often they are gutting fish and then there's increased risk when offal is being discharged. We found many different types of warp mitigation devices already in use; windy buoys, plastic pipe, road cones, plastic containers, water sprayer, trawl floats. Some vessels have two devices; one device that clips directly onto the warp (to isolate/protect birds from hitting the warp) on the offal discharge side of the vessel and 2nd



(From left) Daryl Smith, Scott Gillanders, and Darren King-Turner

device (often a line of floats) running along the side of the hull from the offal discharge-point back to the warp, to make it more difficult for birds to feed alongside the vessel.

The SRMP is also a reference guide and reminder for the crew of the importance of applying and following best practice procedures. The document covers how this crew runs their risk reduction measures to suit their fishing operations and the specific equipment they have onboard. They already know the risks, and understand the mitigation practices, but increased awareness of risks...and incorporating the measures into 'everyday' fishing operations needs improving

SWAs and Cray Bait

Last year the DWG fleet had a few instances of multiple seabird warp captures of Salvin's Mollymawk's occurring more often than we'd like on the Chatham Rise on vessels that normally wouldn't have this type of problem.



SEA2015P2B4

FV Ata Whenua

When we 'drilled-down' as to the cause we found a few common issues, Hoki vessels either targeting Silver Warehou (SWA) or sometimes getting a large by-catch of SWA and having offal control issues resulting in warp captures.

These vessels normally fishmeal everything, (well almost everything) but SWA heads can't be processed in large amounts through the fish meal plant (the SWA oil content ruins the quality of the fish meal) so the heads have to be discharged overboard...increasing seabird attendance to the vessel and if the offal flows back into the path of the warps, greatly increasing the risk of warp strikes!

The Seabird National Plan of Action (NPOA) risk assessment, has rated Salvin's the highest risk score 'seabird' for the deepwater hoki fleet, so some action was required to manage the issue and where ever possible reduce the risk leading to the captures!

While these vessels pack some other more valuable species 'heads' Ling etc, SWA heads didn't have any real value (not enough to warrant taking up valuable freezer space) so without any market value, the only viable option is to discharged the SWA heads overboard!

If we could find a use for the heads the vessel could turn this waste product into \$\$\$ and we would reduce the risk of seabird warp captures at the same time! Often heads are packed for bait and cray fishermen pay reasonable money for quality bait. A quick visit to Des and Vick, King-Turner confirmed while they weren't sure about SWA, back in the 'old days' common or blue-

warehou (WAR) was great bait and was a 'favourite' when they could get it! Des said 'not sure how'd, SWA would go, Cray's can be fussy with bait, just have to test it, but worth a try he said'.

Des's son, Darren King-Turner, skipper of the FV Ata Whenua, was due onto Port Nelson for survey and then would return to Milford, this was a good time to get the SWA bait onboard for sea trials.

We called Sealord, asked if they would like to supply some SWA heads to test as Cray bait...they were more than happy to oblige! Scott Gillanders (Factory vessel manager) requested FV Ocean Dawn to pack some SWA heads as 'sample-bait'...Scott and Geoff personally delivered the bait to FV Ata Whenua, where Darren gave them a quick demo hydraulic bait hasher he had just had built, so frozen bait could go straight in to the bait holder into the cray pots.

Darren King-Turner has since used the SWA bait, he reckons it great, nothing like sea frozen bait, it's fresh... crays like it, I am keen to test out some more!

Who's my cousin?



Do you know what this bird is called?
Large Albatross, wingspan of 640mm.
Breed only at Auckland Island 'group'.

One egg, laying begin in Dec, mainly every two years

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Albert Ross' Cap
Field Guide to NZ Birds



Last Month's Cousin:
Snares Penguin

Did You Know?

Salvin's Albatross:

Most of the world's population breed on crowded tiny islets off the Bounty Islands, the rest at the Chatham Islands, between September and March.

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