



ALBERT TIMES

"Don't get warped - trawl for fish, not birds" - 19 June 2021



Salvin's albatross, Campbell albatross and giant petrels squabble over a feed. Image: Tamzin Henderson

FROM THE DESK OF ADMIRAL ALBERT ROSS, MBE (MIGHTY BIG EATER)

Albert Ross here, head honcho of the world-famous organisation OFFAL (Oceans For Free Albatross Lunches). I am still running our HQ like a well-oiled 'fish meal plant'... *What!* It is becoming harder and harder to keep the cousins fed as less scraps are going into the sea.

Been sending out my long-range scouts each day, tracking down those "big steel lunch boxes" so we can keep the free feeds flowing! All of this, while working closely with Dave the Deepwater Group skipper to develop safer ways for the flock to get at those free feeds without losing our heads... *What!*

Well, I'm happy to be back here for World Albatross Day. How great of ACAP to give us albatrosses the limelight!

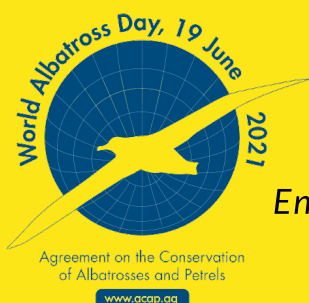
I am pleased to share with you some of the progress that Dave and his mates have made... looks like us Royals and even my second-class cousins the mollymawks are safer from those warp strikes. They are down to a smidgen of what they were when I first squawked about it back in 2006 (we have raised 7 chicks since then... *What!*).

But there's still a lot to do, those crazy kamikaze diving mutton birds and their white-chinned petrel mates are still getting

their necks caught in the mesh of those trawls and my white-capped molly cousins seem to have caught the bug too! What are they thinking? It's a real job solving that problem but if anyone can, Dave can... *What!*

Dave must be doing something right as New Zealand's bird mitigation systems and devices are seen as world class. But there's more to do, it's not easy leading the way. Sometimes it feels like some won't be happy until there are no "steel lunch boxes" left, but what will we do for our free feeds then, *what!?* It's moving onward and upward I say. Us albatross want to have our fish and eat it too!

**Chow,
Albert**



**WORLD ALBATROSS DAY
SPECIAL EDITION**

Ensuring albatross-friendly fisheries

NEW ZEALAND'S DEEPWATER FISHERIES - A SUCCESS STORY

With misinformation on fishing at an all-time high right now, it is more important than ever to spread the truth as widely as possible about the sustainability of New Zealand deepwater fisheries and the environmental care that is going into protecting our marine space.

There will still be some who reject facts and science in favour of Netflix. However, finding facts and science to back up the success and responsible nature of the New Zealand seafood industry is easy for those with a desire to search for them.

Deepwater Group's (DWG) publication **Towards a deeper understanding** is a good place to start.

DWG is a non-profit group formed in 2005 to ensure the sustainability of New Zealand's deepwater fisheries. Its achievements over the past 15 years have had a strong environmental focus.

Deepwater trawl and longline vessels have invested heavily in effective seabird risk reduction practices. These include using bird deterrent devices, converting fish waste to fish meal, holding processing waste on board while trawling, and using tori lines and bafflers to deter birds from coming close to trawl wires or longlines at the stern of deepwater vessels.

Between 2004-05 and 2017-18, the estimated number of seabirds (from observer records) captured each year by deepwater trawlers has been reduced by 61% (from 1,985 to 774).

Deepwater Group's primary focus has been to reduce harm to albatross species while they are foraging in the 'danger zone', close to the stern of our trawlers and ahead of the trawl wires.

The estimated annual number of albatross captured by deepwater trawlers since 2004-05 has been reduced by 74% (from 1,186 to 307 birds).

Towards a deeper understanding

DEEPWATER GROUP REPORT 2021



DWG's 2021 Report can be downloaded from www.deepwatergroup.org

Not all seabird 'captures' result in harm or death.

In recent years, due to improved care and handling, up to 55% of observed captured seabirds were released alive.

DWG remains actively engaged to further reduce our interactions with seabirds.

The seabird risk assessment by DOC estimates three seabird species are likely to be at risk from New Zealand deepwater fisheries - Salvin's albatross, southern Buller's albatross, and Westland petrel.

DWG's seabird mitigation programmes on trawlers and longliners continue to be directed at reducing the risk of harm to all seabird species, including these three. ■



COUSIN OF MINE

Tell us who this cousin of mine is and **BE IN TO WIN** a \$200 seafood voucher, Albert Ross cap and a Field guide to NZ seabirds.

Email your answer and contact details to the admiral at albertross@deepwatergroup.org by 28 June 2021. The winner will be drawn at random and contacted on 29 June.

With their greyish-white bill with a faint yellow tip these cousins are distributed widely over the Southern Ocean where in summer they feed aggressively around trawlers.

DEEPWATER PROTECTED SPECIES MANAGEMENT - A BRIEF HISTORY

Fifteen years ago, faced with the stark reality that we could and must do better, DWG addressed one of the main issues head-on: how to reduce trawl warp strikes of albatross.

DWG went to the facts to examine when, why, and how warp strikes were occurring, then used this to inform a practical risk mitigation approach based on hazard management principles to address the problem. Armed with this novel management approach and the required operational expertise, DWG engaged experienced vessel operators and crew to invent and operationalise the fix!

Back then there wasn't a lot of collaboration between government, NGOs, and the fishing industry when it came to addressing environmental issues. Often parties were at opposite ends of the spectrum! Eventually, through engagement based on facts, not on emotions, and through industry's delivery of significantly reduced captures, levels of communication and trust have improved. As a result of closer collaboration with Fisheries New Zealand, DOC and other organisations, we have seen some real and impressive reductions in seabird and marine mammal interactions.

Constructive feedback from vessel managers, vessel skippers and MPI observers (who review and assess the crew's performance at sea) enabled the incorporation of further improvements.

DWG's seabird risk management system addresses risks and relies on expertise from scientists, fisheries managers, vessel managers, and skippers to breakdown the *what, how and why*. It relies on the application of correct procedures, the use of dedicated equipment that reduces risk, following up and implementing continuous improvements, based on sound observation and consistent and persistent information-based action.

This process of continuous improvement has led to the ongoing development of many new and improved mitigation devices, onboard Operational Procedures, and management systems. Many

DID YOU KNOW

ALBATROSSES PAIR FOR LIFE (BUT DON'T PRACTICE MONOGAMY)

Almost all couples stick together until one party dies, forming unions that can last 50 years or longer.

Still, infidelity is rampant. According to a 2006 mass paternity test, 8 of 75 sampled albatross chicks weren't sired by their mother's mate.

Another study found that one female had sex with 49 partners over a seven-week period. Males are equally promiscuous but stay committed to helping raise their mate's babies—including those fathered by other birds.



Image: Tamzin Henderson

of these have been now adopted for reducing the risk of protected species captures in other fisheries in New Zealand and around the world.

DWG is very proud of the world-class results the implementation of our protected species management system has delivered over the past 15 years. ■



WORLD-LEADING MITIGATION

DWG has been involved in developing and deploying world-class seabird risk mitigation devices and operational protocols to reduce interactions with seabirds on our deepwater fleet. We have investigated, tested, sea-trialled and pioneered just about every possible mitigation idea heard of, in addition to coming up with some great, new ones of our own.

Discussions and interactions with groups like Southern Seabird Solutions, government technical groups, NGOs, vessel operators and observers globally, enabled us to identify a number of mitigation ideas. Through our network of vessel managers, skippers and, with occasional Government funding assistance, we have taken the best ideas through sea-trials to implementation across the fleet.

DWG shareholders are always keen to allow use of their vessels to undertake project work. MPI observers often contribute by keeping good records. We have tested (and continue to do so) new concepts or 'New Zealandised' existing devices or procedures developed overseas, seeing them through to what has proven to be successful in use across the fleet today!

The successes of the deepwater fleet protected species mitigation devices and practices is not just down to simply coming up with devices that work, it's having the skipper and crew from every vessel in the fleet understanding the risk and deploying reduction measures every day they are fishing.

BATCHING

DWG came up with batching when grappling with how to prevent continuous discharge of fish offal (the prime seabird attractant) on vessels without fishmeal plants. It's a simple and common sense solution. Holding fish waste on board for as long as needed to break the birds' attention, then discharging it as quickly as possible in smaller batches, greatly reduces the amount of time fish waste is ahead of the warp (the danger zone). DWG completed many projects on discharge intervals, discharge durations and how that affected seabird attendance to the discharging vessel and more importantly the numbers of seabird attracted to the warp danger zone. **Batching is now accepted by ACAP as best practice.**

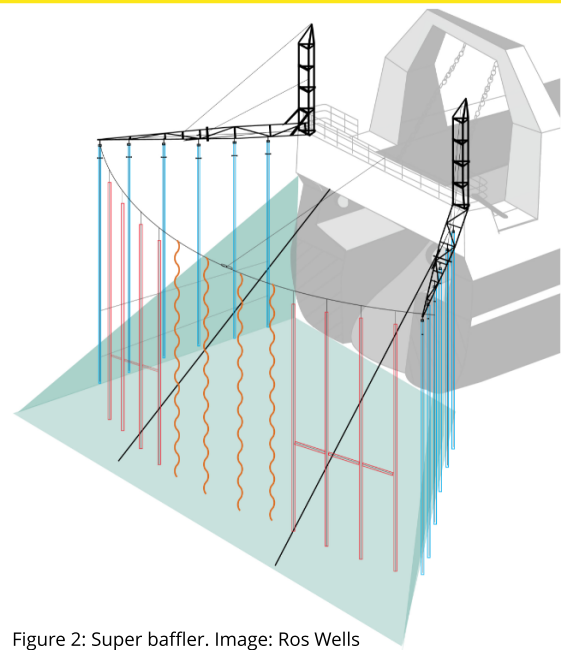
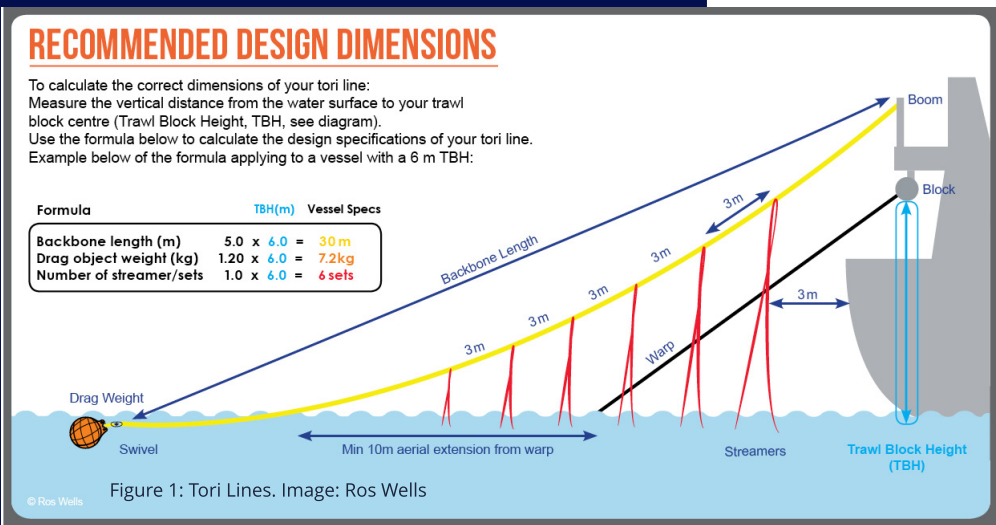


Figure 2: Super baffler. Image: Ros Wells

TORI LINE DESIGN & BUILD FORMULA

A tori line is a line of supporting vertical streamers providing a visual barrier to disrupt seabirds flying into the "warp zone". The length of warp exposed to birds between the vessel and the sea surface is related to the trawl block height, where the warp leaves the stern, and the fishing depth. Based on simple mathematical formula (Figure 1), we are able to calculate the best design for a tori line of correct length and number of streamers, and the right amount of drag to keep the tori line over the warp.

SUPER BAFFLER

Tori lines offer great protection in calm conditions. This is reduced in poor weather conditions. What's more, tori lines need to be retrieved after every tow prior to hauling trawl gear back on board. To overcome these we have developed the *bird baffler*.

Over the years the deepwater trawl fleet has come up with various *bird baffler* designs with varying degrees of success.

DWG, with the support of DOC, has now developed the *Super Baffler*, (Figure 2) which has longer booms set at a 30° angle and is designed to offer more protection around both warps, right back to where the warp enters the water astern.

TRAINING AND OUTREACH

Consistent and persistent messaging is key - over the past 15 years the DWG Environmental Liaison Officer, has completed over 800 vessel visits, delivered training to over 3,000 crew, and has completed over 1,750 vessel MPI Observer audits, with each being assessed and feedback given to the vessel operator. ■