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FALKLAND ISLANDS ILLEX JIGGING ASSESSMENT DIRECTIVE



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Ben Sullivan
(Seabirds at Sea Team, Falklands Conservation)



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Cover photo: Jiggers from Saunders Island (Nic Huin, Falklands Conservation)

Illex Jigging Assessment Directive

1.0 Introduction

In response to international pressure, in 1997 the Committee of Fisheries (COFI) of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) established a technical working group to draft guidelines on reducing incidental mortality and prepare a draft Plan of Action to implement the mitigation guidelines. In 1999 the resulting International Plan of Action-Seabirds (IPOA-S, FAO 1999a) was produced. IPOA-S is a hortatory document that provides the framework for the development of National Plans of Action –Seabirds (NPOA-S) to reduce the incidental catch of seabirds in longline fisheries, where this occurs. IPOA-S is voluntary and relates to States in the waters of which longline fisheries are being conducted by their own or foreign vessels and to States that conduct longline fisheries on the high seas and in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of other States (hereafter, countries).

The clearly stated objective of IPOA-S is to provide international guidance to reduce seabird bycatch in longline fisheries. IPOA-S was developed within the framework of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, particularly Articles 7.6.9 and 8.5 (see Appendix I), which state that fisheries should take appropriate measures and use fishing gear and methods that minimise catch of non-target species both fish and non-fish species, and negative impacts on associated or dependent species.

2.0 The Assessment Process

As outlined in the technical notes of IPOA-S an assessment should be conducted to ‘determine the extent and nature of a country’s incidental catch of seabirds in longline fisheries where it occurs.’ In the absence of similar FAO policies addressing jigging, and with few data on seabird interactions with Argentine shortfin squid (*Illex argentinus*, hereafter, *Illex*) jiggers operating in Falkland Waters¹ or on the wider Patagonian Shelf, this Assessment Directive has been drafted to provide a strategic approach to procuring the necessary data in Falkland Island Waters for a thorough assessment to be conducted within the next four years. IPOA-S (Technical Notes I) provides several recommended components to an assessment, most of which involve summarising fisheries management data, which are readily available for the Falkland Island jigging fleet. However, the vital component missing is the estimated total annual catch of seabirds, if this occurs within the fleet.

¹ *Falkland Island waters*: refers to those parts of the southern Atlantic Ocean under governance of the Falkland Islands Government. These include the Falklands Interim Conservation and Management Zone, which covers a 150nm radius around the islands (FICZ, declared by the United Kingdom in 1986) and the Falklands Outer Conservation Zone (FOCZ, declared by the United Kingdom in 1990), which extends the fishery conservation zone to 200nm in the north, east and south of the islands.

3.0 Jiggers in Falkland Island Waters

In the waters of the south-west Atlantic, there is a large fishery for *Illex*, with over 950,000 tonnes caught in 1997. A significant proportion of this is caught in Falkland Island waters (64,000-266,000 tonnes per year between 1990-1999) by specialised squid jigging vessels (Barton 2002). Within Falkland Island waters the season for this fishery operates from February to June. The *Illex* fleet is the largest operating in the Falkland Islands in terms of number of vessels, catch size and income generated for the Falkland Islands Government. There are currently no Falkland Island flagged jiggers and the fishery consists of a large Asian based fleet, predominantly Korean, Taiwanese, Chinese and Japanese flagged vessels. Typically, the fleet begins fishing in international and Argentine waters (including trawlers) to the north of FOCZ, and follows the southward migration of *Illex* into Falkland Island waters as the season progresses.

4.0 Seabird and Jigger Interactions

Prior to March 2003, there were no data collected by dedicated seabird observers on seabird interactions with the Falkland Island jigging fleet. In March 2003, Falklands Conservation, Seabirds at-Sea Team conducted the first such trip and in 2004, SAST plan to conduct a further two trips to further investigate the situation. However, there are currently insufficient data from a fleet of around 120 vessels per season (FIFD *unpubl. data*) to determine if the *Illex* jigging fleet causes significant levels of seabird mortality.

There is emerging anecdotal evidence from the wider Patagonian Shelf of seabirds, particularly penguins, becoming hooked on jigging lures and being hauled onboard, the majority of which are released with only minor puncture wounds from the jigging lures. The long-term effect of such injuries is unknown. Similar events have also been recorded over several years by FIFD fisheries observers (various *pers. comm.*). No direct seabird mortalities have been reported.

There is also anecdotal evidence that jigging vessels operating in the southwest Atlantic deliberately target seabirds, specifically albatrosses, as a source of food for the crew (Anonymous 2003). In April 2003, during routine FPV patrols a FIFD Fisheries Officer and SAST observer collected evidence on four separate occasions (two from the one vessel) of black-browed albatross corpses floating in debris near jiggers that had either their entire body or their legs and breast removed, presumably for human consumption. However, the extent of the problem in Falkland Island waters is unknown.

At the time, under the *Conservation of Wildlife and Nature Ordinance 1999*, it was not an offence to 'kill, injure or capture a wild bird' or 'to disturb a wild bird' outside Falkland Island Territorial Waters (within 12nm of the coast). In contrast, the protection of marine mammals in Falkland Islands is covered by *The Marine Mammals Ordinance 1992* 3. (1) (a) which states that..... it shall be unlawful for any person (a) with intent to do so, any marine mammal on land within the Falkland Islands or within Falkland Islands waters, defined as.. 'internal waters, territorial sea and fishery waters of the Falkland Islands'. After discussions with the Environment Planning Department, The Director of FIFD and the Attorney General it was agreed that the most appropriate and expedient way to deal with the issue was to make an amendment to the *Conservation of Wildlife and Nature Ordinance 1999* so that it is illegal to take, wound or kill 'wild birds' throughout the full extent of the Falkland Islands waters (as defined in *The Marine Mammal Ordinance 1992*). This amendment is planned for the near future. In addition, when the new fishing ordinances are drafted (2003/04), protection of 'wild birds' would also be included throughout the full extent of Falkland Island waters.

5.0 Directive Objectives

General Objective

Within four years, the implementation of the following objectives should facilitate the procurement of the data necessary to draft an assessment of the need for a Falkland Island Plan of Action-Jigging.

Specific Objectives

Each year a *minimum* of two jigger trips should be conducted by specifically tasked seabird observers to investigate seabird interactions with the *Illex* jigging fleet operating in Falkland Islands waters.

If incidental seabird mortality is recorded, and is considered likely to occur throughout a significant proportion of the fleet, the level of observer coverage should be increased to an appropriate level to calculate an annual estimate of seabird mortality.

If required, and where feasible, investigate the development of mitigation measures to reduce the level of incidental mortality.

Ensure the dissemination of information to the crews of all jiggers that clearly explain that all 'wild birds' are fully protected in Falkland island waters.

Place high priority on establishing collaborative projects between the Falkland Islands and South American countries, and/or encouraging them to investigate seabird interactions with the *Illex argentinus* jigger fleet.

6.0 Reporting

It is recommended that an annual review of FI POA-Trawling becomes the mandate of the Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC), with relevant invited guests. This will ensure that locally elected industry members and relevant government officials continue to have significant input into the monitoring and evolution of the plans.

It is proposed that at this meeting a brief annual summary is also presented that contains, but is not limited to:

- an estimate of seabird mortality within the fisheries
- an assessment of the level and utility of observer coverage
- an audit of performance against indicative bycatch objectives
- a summary of the effectiveness of strategies in place, and any recommended changes to further reduce seabird bycatch
- recommendations for the development and/or changes to mitigation measures

The FAC should also be responsible for commissioning the production of an assessment of the Falkland Island jigging fleet, as described in Section 1.0, and subsequent reviews as recommended by the assessment. If a seabird bycatch issue is identified and the subsequent assessment recommends the drafting of FI POA-Jigging, as with FI NPOA-S and FI POA-Trawling, such a document should aim to ensure that mitigation/licensing measures are

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initiated to reduce seabird mortality to levels that will have no deleterious impact on the long-term sustainability of seabird populations, regardless of their provenance.

References

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