

News and notices

BOOK REVIEWS

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL 2004. *Tracking ocean wanderers: the global distribution of albatrosses and petrels. Results from the Global Procellariiform Tracking Workshop, 1-5 September, 2003, Gordon's Bay, South Africa.* BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK. ISBN 0-946888-55-8, softback 100 pp.

Humans are the main threat albatrosses and petrels face at sea; thousands of albatrosses are caught each year as incidental bycatch, particularly in long-line fisheries. With 19 of 21 albatross species globally threatened and the remainder near threatened, albatrosses are recognised as the bird family most threatened with extinction.

In this context in September 2003, all custodians of remote-tracking data of albatrosses and petrels, collected using satellite (PTT) and geolocation (GLS) devices, were invited to a Global *Procellariiform* Tracking Workshop at Gordon's Bay, South Africa. BirdLife International's report, *Tracking Ocean Wanderers: The global distribution of albatrosses and petrels*, along with its associated database containing 90% of extant albatross and petrel tracking data, is the culmination of the workshop.

Drawing on data from 16 species of albatross and three species of petrel, this report presents the first coherent summary of albatross and petrel distributions, generated using kernel density estimator analyses. The authors hope that these data, and other future remote tracking data, will be used in conjunction with at-sea survey data to develop criteria for the selection of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the marine environment. Additionally, they could be used in conjunction with other marine taxa and resource use data for the definition of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). With increased exploitation of the sea's resources, protection of all marine bird species has never been more important. Against a background of such catastrophic mortality of albatrosses and petrels through bycatch, this report provides a crucial information source to aid in the conservation of these species.

Throughout the document, the authors have highlighted caveats and limitations of use of these data, allowing informed interpretation of the results by the reader. The two chapters on the distribution of each species and the regional summaries are an excellent reference for conservationists, marine biologists and marine resource managers alike. The discussion and conclusion develop these essentially data-filled chapters by investigating fisheries interactions and priorities for conservation.

For species that travel such vast distances across the world's oceans, the importance of understanding the spatial overlap between albatross and petrel distributions and fishing effort cannot be understated. One of the most useful and applied aspects of this report is the identification of marine areas that have significant risk of incidental bycatch of albatrosses and petrels. The report identifies and prioritises the 13 Regional Fishery Management Organisations (RFMOs) responsible for these significant risk areas; for example, the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) is the highest priority RFMO. The CCSBT coincides with the ranges of 14 of the 16 albatross species covered in the report, including 70% of the total distribution of breeding albatrosses.

Conservation measures undertaken by RFMOs are listed, and make for worrying, and short, reading; of the five highest priority RFMOs listed, only one, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and the lowest priority of the five, has undertaken comprehensive measures to reduce albatross mortality. CCSBT, the highest priority RFMO, only requires its vessels to use streamers lines. Worryingly, the authors state that fish prices and quotas have led to the expansion of Illegal Unregulated or Unreported (IUU) longline fishing; so, despite any efforts made by RFMOs, illegal fishing is taking place with no mitigation measures employed to conserve birds, exacerbating an already dire problem.

The report also presents a list of those countries whose Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), which extend from the coastline to 200 nautical miles offshore, are used most by albatrosses and petrels. New Zealand is the most important because of its high number of endemic albatrosses, with seven species spending 29% of their time during the breeding season within its EEZ. The next four countries, in order of decreasing importance, are France, Australia, the UK (through its Overseas and Dependent Territories, and the USA. Although the RFMOs may perform some regulation in the high seas, the authors state that it is within these territorial waters and EEZs that enforcement of conservation measures is most practical. The main international instrument aimed at global conservation of threatened procelariids is the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP; <http://www.acap.aq/index.php/acap>), - "a multilateral agreement which seeks to conserve albatrosses and petrels by co-ordinating international activity to mitigate known threats to albatross and petrel populations". New Zealand, Australia and the UK have ratified ACAP, France is a signatory, and the USA has drafted a National Plan of Action.

The ideological content of this report is excellent and the supporting information is good, but there is a lack of detail in some areas. Data processing is dealt with logically but briefly, with the reader occasionally needing time for reflection to fully understand the processes. Methods are again only briefly

described, with limited description of analytical procedures. This section may have benefited from the inclusion of comprehensive descriptions of the analytical tools used, and also justifications for using them and their associated software applications.

Some of distribution maps contain arrays of colour that are difficult to differentiate, but with so much information to pack into a concise report, this is not surprising. Overall, John Croxall (British Antarctic Survey) and Frances Taylor (BirdLife Seabird Programme) assisted by Janet Silk (BAS), who respectively edited and compiled this report, have ensured that the utilisation distribution maps present the results of complex analyses clearly, and that the text is coherent and flows well. With 28 workshop participants, this is no mean feat!

Although a global effort is required to successfully conserve these wide-ranging species, which may seem eminently aspirational in our present political climate, effective conservation may start at a country level. To date, 11 countries are signatories to ACAP, seven of them having ratified the Agreement (Peru being the latest to do so in May 2005). With the production of this report, and its associated database, showing the at-sea global distributions of 16 species of albatross and three species of petrel, hopefully more countries will become proactive in conserving these charismatic and critically threatened species.

Claire A. McSorley

DAVIS, L.S., & RENNER, M. 2003. *Penguins*. T. & A.D. Poyser, London. ISBN 0-7136-6550-5, 212 pp including 8 colour plates, b/w photos, line illustrations. £35.00.

The contents of this book are so well summarised in the Preface that this is worth quoting in full: 'This work does not pretend to be a complete summary of everything that is known about penguins. Rather it attempts to derive an understanding of the diversity of penguins by examining the most influential factors that affect their lives. In essence, the book has evolved from a thesis put forward by John Croxall and Lloyd Davis as part of a keynote address to the Third International Conference on penguins held in Cape Town in 1996 and subsequently published in *Marine Ornithology*. That thesis suggested that patterns and apparent paradoxes in penguin biology could be best explained by recognizing the importance of foraging distance on their lifestyles. Penguins must balance living in two worlds – water for feeding, land for breeding – and much of what they do is dictated by how far they must go when at sea; whether

they are inshore foragers or offshore foragers.’ This focus immediately explains the seemingly idiosyncratic choice of contents of the book; for instance, there are 20 pages on Taxonomy, 20 pages on Parental Investment and 22 pages on Mate Selection and Courtship but virtually nothing on populations, demography and only one page on the effects of climate change. However, this somewhat novel approach works well, the authors put forward some interesting ideas, and I found myself thinking about some aspects of my own life in a new light.

This relatively short book is well-written and very easy to read. My only criticisms are that it is slightly patronising in places, given the generally well-informed readers of Poyser books, and perhaps a little hard on the interpretations of results made by previous workers. The production is generally good, except for the poor reproduction of the black-and-white photographs in the text. The authors have been ill-served by the writer of the jacket notes – there are no Emperor Penguins at the South Pole and although Little Penguins are indeed smaller than other penguins they can by no stretch of the imagination be described as ‘dainty’. A subtitle to the book would have been useful to indicate its focus, but maybe the publishers thought that this would have restricted sales.

I found this book a good, easy and stimulating read. Anyone interested in seabirds will gain substantially by reading this volume and I anticipate seeing it in the bookcases of many marine ornithologists and birdwatchers.

Michael P. Harris