

**INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION**

**WORKING GROUP ON BYCATCH**

**8<sup>TH</sup> MEETING**

**La Jolla, California (USA)**

**10-11 May 2018**

**CO-CHAIRS' REPORT**

**AGENDA**

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of agenda
3. Review recommendations from 2017 Bycatch Working Group
4. Brief overview on species of concern and bycatch from purse seine and longline fisheries in the EPO (Chairs)
  - a. Presentations by Members on recent bycatch activities
5. Seabirds
  - a. Seabird distribution and fisheries bycatch in the EPO (NOAA/Lisa Ballance)
  - b. Update on conservation status and foraging distribution of ACAP species in the EPO and bycatch mitigation best practices (ACAP-BirdLife/ Igor Debski)
  - c. Discussion of potential recommendations
6. Sea turtles
  - a. Leatherback turtles and fisheries overlap in the EPO (IAC/ Bryan Wallace)
  - b. Update on sea turtle bycatch in the EPO/ Update on implementation of resolution C-07003 (IATTC/ Martin Hall)
  - c. Discussion of potential recommendations
7. Sharks and rays
  - a. Update on post-release mortality sharks in purse seine and longline fisheries, including mitigation (NOAA/Melanie Hutchinson)
  - b. Update on interaction with whale sharks in the EPO (IATTC/Marlon Román)
  - c. Report on fisheries bycatch of Mobulid rays in the EPO (IATTC)
  - d. Discussion of potential recommendations
8. Monitoring
  - a. Update on electronic monitoring from a WCPO tuna fishery (Observer/ Craig Heberer) and others (NOAA/ John Wang)
9. Perspectives for future actions, including research
  - a. Replacing unintended cross-taxa conflicts with intentional tradeoffs by moving from piecemeal to integrated fisheries bycatch management (Observer/ Eric Gilman)
10. Recommendations to the Scientific Advisory Committee
11. Adjournment

<b>APPENDICES</b>	
1.	List of attendees
2.	Recommendations for the Scientific Advisory Committee
3.	Scientific references

The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Bycatch Working Group was held in La Jolla, California, USA, on May 10 and 11, 2018. The attendees are listed in Appendix 1.

### **1. Opening of the meeting.**

The meeting was opened by Dr. Alexandre Aires-da-Silva of the IATTC, who introduced the co-chairs of the meeting, Dr. Yonat Swimmer of the United States and Manuel Correia of Venezuela. Colombia, Korea, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, United States, Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Chinese Taipei, European Union, and Venezuela were present. Observers present included the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), the Inter-American Convention for the Protection of Sea Turtles (IAC), Defenders of Wildlife, and Humane Society International.

### **2. Adoption of the agenda**

The Committee adopted its agenda with minimal changes, whereby it was suggested by Venezuela to consider bycatch of juvenile tunas if time permits<sup>1</sup>.

### **3. Review recommendations from 2017 Bycatch Working Group**

Review of 2017 recommendations, summarized by Co-chair, Yonat Swimmer.

### **4. Brief overview on species of concern and bycatch from purse seine and longline fisheries in the EPO (Chairs)**

Presentation on various definitions of bycatch and bycatch-associated resolutions on conservation measures within IATTC from Co-chair Manuel Correia.

#### **a. Presentations by Members on recent bycatch activities**

The Committee heard presentations by Panama, Colombia, European Union, Ecuador, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Peru, Japan, United States, Mexico, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Each of the countries provided updates on key research. For instance, Panama provided information on implementing a new framework for hook size and shape in its longline fleets. Colombia noted its national action plan for the conservation of marine mammals. Costa Rica mentioned its fishery improvement project for dorado and swordfish. Further, Costa Rica will eliminate all shrimp trawling by 2019. Throughout this session, countries exchanged their views on the various topics.

### **5. Seabirds<sup>2</sup>**

Dr. Lisa Ballance presented on seabird biology, including hot spots of species of most concern, particularly the waved and antipodean albatrosses. Then Dr. Igor Debski presented on the ACAP best practices to reduce interactions and mortality of seabirds in fisheries. After the presentation, Dr. Martin Hall suggested the idea of hook-shielding devices opening at greater depths, perhaps at 20 m, if there are gains for other species. Dr. Debski noted that target catch was a key criterion in their studies, and they have not seen a

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<sup>1</sup>Venezuela expressed concern that the Commission's latest conservation resolutions, with the obligatory retention of yellowfin, skipjack and bigeye tunas, achieved a reduction of discards, but in the last year there has been a significant increase in catches of juveniles of yellowfin and bigeye, which should be considered as bycatches, and thought that this Group should analyze this.

reduction in target catch. The European Union asked whether the implementation of these bycatch mitigation measures has produced a tangible effect. Dr. Debski said that has been difficult to evaluate as reporting by CPCs has not always been complete. He said that with the Common Oceans project they are now starting to look at this issue.

The session then concluded with a discussion of possible recommendations. Co-chair Manuel Correia suggested that the ACAP recommendations could serve as a starting point for the IATTC Bycatch Working Group recommendations. Co-chair Yonat Swimmer requested that Dr. Debski provide a table comparing the ACAP best practices with the existing IATTC seabird resolution (C-11-02)

## **6. Sea turtles<sup>3</sup>**

Dr. Bryan Wallace, IAC Leatherback Task Force chair, presented on leatherback sea turtle population declines and bycatch within the EPO. He emphasized migratory movements within the EPO and threats from different gear types. He noted that the movements of inter-nesting females and males off the major nesting beaches of Mexico and Costa Rica from October to March increased the likelihood of interactions with fisheries. Dr. Martin Hall then discussed sea turtle bycatch mitigation measures in longline fisheries with regards to efficacy for sea turtles as well as potential impacts to other taxonomic groups. Participants were provided the opportunity to ask questions and make comments. Co-chair Yonat Swimmer then summarized the possible recommendations discussed, which included improved or standardized data report format, increased observer coverage, and the use of circle hooks. Japan added that the use of fish bait should be considered a mitigation option as well.

## **7. Sharks and rays**

Dr. Melanie Hutchinson of the United States National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) gave a presentation on post-release mortality of sharks. She was followed by a presentation from Marlon Román (IATTC) on whale shark interactions in the EPO. After his presentation, there was discussion on the existing resolutions related to whale sharks. Venezuela asked that whale sharks be taken out the FADs resolution and a specific resolution on whale sharks be developed. It was noted that this could be proposed at the annual meeting of the IATTC. Dr. Martin Hall, Dr. Josh Stewart and Dr. Nerea Lezama Ochoa presented the knowledge of mobulid rays in the EPO. Additionally, basic biology and distribution of mobulid was discussed, as well as safe handling to increase post-release survival. Participants were provided the opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

## **8. Monitoring**

Craig Heberer, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Dr. John Wang (NMFS) each presented on electronic monitoring, one from a tuna fishery in the WCPO as well as from a small-scale fishery in the EPO. Advances and limitations in electronic monitoring systems were discussed. Participants were provided the opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

## **9. Perspectives for future actions, including research**

Dr. Eric Gilman (TNC) made a presentation on the trade-offs involved in single-taxa focused management efforts given the potential for unintended negative consequences for other taxa. He provided examples where bycatch management was undertaken for one species, but had consequences for other species. He advocated for taking an ecosystem-based approach to bycatch management. Participants were provided the opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

## **10. Other business proposed by Chairs**

Venezuela requested that whale sharks be taken out the FADs resolution.

## **11. Recommendations to the Scientific Advisory Committee**

After a robust discussion, the Working Group decided to present the recommendations in Appendix 2, based on the presentations and discussions at the meeting and the scientific references in Appendix 3, to the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee for consideration.

## **12. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned.

## Appendix 1.

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## Appendix 2.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

#### GENERAL

1. Request the scientific staff to provide, three weeks in advance of every meeting of the Working Group, an updated overview of bycatch data (by species, gears, areas, *etc.*) available to the Commission, outstanding data gaps, progress in the implementation and results of relevant projects, updates on ongoing collaborations with relevant organizations, and suggestions for future work.
2. Prioritize work to assess the conservation status of key bycatch species.
3. Prioritize work to assess the effectiveness of adopted and alternative bycatch mitigation methods, taking into account the potential effects on other affected species (including target species), and the relative impact of the various fisheries on mortality and the conservation status of these species.

#### OBSERVERS

4. Per IATTC recommendation, increase on-board observer coverage for longline vessels greater than 20 m length overall from 5% to 20%, and apply an appropriate level of coverage for all other longline vessels, as determined by the SAC. This could be supplemented or partially achieved by electronic monitoring, in order to meet the staff's data needs.
5. Request the Commission to establish a draft minimum standard protocol for electronic monitoring.
6. Submit summarized national observer data in a standardized form that provides information useful for generating fleet-wide bycatch estimates.

#### SEA BIRDS<sup>2</sup>

7. Based on an assessment of Resolution C-11-02 against the latest review of seabird mitigation measures, consider the following revisions to improve C-11-02:
  - a. Adding hook-shielding devices as a mitigation option;
  - b. Updating the specifications for side-setting in the North Pacific to require that the branchline weighting used meets minimum requirements;
  - c. Updating the minimum *specifications (request info from ACAP)* for branchline weighting and tori lines;
  - d. Removing blue-dyed bait, deep-setting line shooters, and underwater setting chutes from the list of mitigation options;
  - e. Making management of offal discharge a required additional measure;
  - f. Allowing mitigation measures whose effectiveness for seabird bycatch mitigation is proven to be added in the future.

#### SEA TURTLES<sup>3</sup>

8. Organize a regional workshop on sea turtle bycatch and mitigation methods, in order to determine the level of interaction with, and the mortality caused by, different fishing gears relative to factors other than fishing, analyze existing scientific information on mitigation (including *inter alia*, gear depth, soak time, hook type, bait type, *etc.*) for the most endangered sea turtle species that are likely to interact with tuna fisheries, while considering spatial and seasonal factors and the potential effects on other species (including target species).
9. Consider the following options for the protection of leatherback turtles:
  - a. Time-area management measures in areas adjacent to leatherback inter-nesting habitats for a

reasonable period and distance from nesting beaches during the nesting season, that will provide adequate protection, per scientific evidence. This may involve temporary moratoria on fishing and an exploration of options for fishers affected by closures.

- b. Modifying longline fishing methods to mitigate bycatch in pelagic areas, where it is difficult to determine periods and areas where leatherback turtles aggregate, such as requiring the use of circle hooks, deeper setting, or finfish bait as alternative requirements for fishers who cannot implement other mitigation measures.
10. Continue to participate and promote research to improve techniques to further reduce sea turtle bycatch in all gear types used in the EPO.

#### **SHARKS AND RAYS**

- 11. Review the ban on finning sharks (Resolution C-05-03).
- 12. Develop and implement guidelines for the safe release of sharks and rays for different gear types.

### Appendix 3.

#### REFERENCES<sup>2,3</sup>

##### <sup>2</sup>Seabirds:

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). (2017). Review and Best Practice Advice for Reducing the Impact of Pelagic Longline Fisheries on Seabirds. 119 Macquarie St Hobart TAS 7000. Australia. 28p Link: <https://www.acap.aq/en/bycatch-mitigation/mitigation-advice/3240-acap-2017-review-and-best-practice-advice-for-reducing-the-impact-of-demersal-longline-fisheries-on-seabirds/file>

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##### <sup>3</sup>Sea turtles:

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