

Southern Seabird Solutions

Conservation through Cooperation



Media Release

10 July 2003

FUNDING FOR SEABIRD INVENTIONS

Inventions aimed at reducing the number of seabirds accidentally caught and killed in the course of commercial fishing are in line for a funding boost.

Southern Seabird Solutions is encouraging New Zealand inventors to apply for international grants to fund research into seabirds and mitigation measures, and education and awareness projects.

Seabirds forage far and wide across the oceans and they have learnt that commercial fishing vessels are an easy source of food. Thousands of seabirds in the southern hemisphere die each year when they dive on baited fishing hooks and are then pulled under the water.

Birds Australia, a partner of Birdlife International which runs the global campaign to save albatrosses, administers funds raised on ships operated by the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO).

This year approximately \$NZ36,000 has been raised from donations following lectures to cruise ship passengers during the Antarctic tourism season.

Fund organiser Graham Robertson says passengers are presented with information about the threats to albatrosses from fishing, along with slides, notes and a separate video prepared by the UK Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

“The purpose is to raise awareness of the threats that seabirds face in fisheries and to raise funds for conservation initiatives,” he says.

An international panel of conservation experts – including two members of Southern Seabird Solutions – will decide which projects to fund. Last year the funding was awarded to an innovative New Zealand fishing industry experiment into the use of integrated line weights which make baited long-lines sink faster than usual.

The convenor of Southern Seabird Solutions, Janice Molloy, who also leads the Department of Conservation's seabird conservation programme, is urging New Zealand inventors to apply for the funding by the cut-off date of 20 July, 2003.

"This particular initiative has a number of benefits. It allows the passengers on cruise ships to contribute in a very direct and meaningful way to the conservation of the seabirds that they see outside their portholes, and they also get feedback about how their money has been spent."

WWF New Zealand also welcomes the funding. Conservation Director Chris Howe:

"We wholeheartedly support this initiative to provide much needed funds for seabird conservation. We applaud the commitment by the tourism industry to establish this mechanism which allows visitors to the Antarctic to put something back into conservation of these special places."

Meanwhile, the chairman of the Seafood Industry Council of New Zealand, Dave Sharp, says fishers today are increasingly committed to seabird mitigation.

"Our approach to solving problems has produced some very innovative mitigation techniques and technologies," he says. "One international seabird expert recently described New Zealand fishers' work with seabird mitigation as a 'hotbed of innovation'."

ENDS

For more information contact:

Graham Robertson
Fund organiser
Email: graham.robertson@aad.gov.au

Cushla Managh
Communications Manager, Southern Seabird Solutions
Ph: 04-4713-299 wk or 027-4455-839, or 04-569-5575 h
Or email: cmanagh@doc.govt.nz

Visit www.birdsaustralia.com.au/albatross/intro.html