$200 bird scaring line for trawlers can cut albatross deaths by over 90 percent

May 6 2014

This is a sub-adult black-browed albatross with discarded hake head, scavenged from a trawler. Credit: Ross Wanless

The sight of seabirds following trawlers in order to feast from discarded fish is a common maritime sight, but each year many thousands of

seabirds are killed by overhanging cables or in nets. New research in *Animal Conservation* assesses mortality figures from South Africa to show that a simple bird scaring line can reduce the mortality rate by over 90%.

The research compiled data from five years of observations to compare current and historic mortality rates. Previous research shows that in 2006 approximately 18,000 seabirds were killed each year by the South African hake trawl fishery, of which 14,000 were albatrosses.

By reviewing five years of data the team could assess the impact of bird scaring lines, streamers costing $200 that hang from a line attached to the stern of a fishing vessel. The results show that bird scaring lines alone resulted in 73 to 95% lower mortality in the winter, including a 95% reduction in albatross deaths.

A hake trawler with thousands of birds in attendance is shown. The orange buoy and bird scaring lines are visible off the stern of the vessel. Credit: Ross Wanless

Albatrosses are the most threatened group of birds on earth, with fishery-related deaths being the biggest threat to this group. Due to the many months they spend at sea, albatrosses produce few off-spring, meaning that these deaths have a disproportionately damaging impact on the global population.

More information: Maree, B, Wanless, R, Town, P, Fairweather, T, Sullivan, B, Yates, O, 'Significant reductions in mortality of threatened seabirds in a South African trawl fishery', Animal Conservation, DOI: 10.1111/acv.12126

Provided by Wiley

Citation: $200 bird scaring line for trawlers can cut albatross deaths by over 90 percent (2014, May 6) retrieved 19 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2014-05-bird-line-trawlers-albatross-deaths.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.