



FACT SHEETS

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses & Petrels (ACAP)

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels, or ACAP, is a legally binding international agreement promoting the conservation of several species of migratory seabirds. Involving thirteen member nations, ACAP aims to promote activities that will minimize harm to albatrosses and petrels, improve research for albatross and petrel conservation, and increase public awareness of the dangers facing these storied species.

WHY IS ACAP NEEDED?

Many migratory seabird species are in trouble. Of the 22 species of albatross, 15 are threatened with extinction, while the remaining seven species are near threatened, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). More than half of all petrel species are threatened with extinction. **The most significant threat to these species is from bycatch in longline fisheries, especially from foreign fleets in the Pacific Ocean and illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries (IUU).** Other threats include marine pollution and invasive predators on nesting islands.

The Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act (H.R. 4480) would allow the United States to implement the ACAP treaty, by committing to the U.S. to the principles in the Agreement. The U.S. is a global leader in addressing bycatch and other threats to these species, but international threats remain. Passing the implementing legislation and ratifying the treaty will give the U.S. more international influence to protect albatrosses and petrels around the world. **This will benefit U.S. fisheries which are often disadvantaged by the United States' comparatively strict regulations to protect wildlife.**

WHAT DOES THE ACT DO?

The legislation implements the ACAP treaty and authorizes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to engage in activities that will improve conditions for albatrosses and petrels, including:

- Bycatch reduction measures and international fisheries enforcement
- Research into the conservation of albatrosses and petrels
- Habitat restoration
- Control of non-native species
- Development of awareness programs

WHAT IS LONGLINE FISHING?

Longline fishing is commonly used to catch swordfish, tuna, and other large ocean fish. Fishing vessels trail a main line for up to several miles with baited hooks suspended at intervals. This technique is prone to the incidental bycatch of seabirds, which will often become caught on the hooks as they dive for the bait. The birds are then dragged underwater and drowned. Many IUU vessels do not take measures to minimize bycatch in longline fishing.



WHAT DOES THE ACT NOT DO?

The legislation *does not* expand or alter the enforcement scheme for albatrosses and petrels found within U.S. jurisdiction, because these species are already protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Domestic fisheries *would not* be subject to additional restrictions on their activities under the proposed legislation.

Instead, joining ACAP creates leverage for the U.S. to bring other nations up to its standards, while providing agencies the authority to ensure foreign fleets follow international conservation measures designed to protect albatrosses and petrels. This will make U.S. fisheries more competitive in the long-run.

WHY SHOULD CONGRESS ACT?

Protecting albatrosses and petrels necessitates international cooperation in regulating longline fishing and other activities. The United States is currently a world leader in seabird bycatch mitigation through laws such as the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act, and agency regulations.

By ratifying and formally joining ACAP, the U.S. would increase the Agreement’s international influence and resources and would improve its ability to conserve seabirds. The United States would also be able to promote more stringent international regulations to *level the playing field* between domestic fisheries and international fisheries.

The ratification of ACAP has enjoyed bipartisan support, including by former President George W. Bush and President Obama.



Black-browed Albatross. Albatross typically form pair bonds for life, which can be up to 60 years or more.

Photo: BMJ/Shutterstock

ACAP Species

All species that occur in U.S. territory are already protected under the MBTA

Species Name	MBTA Protected	Occurs in the U.S.
Short-tailed Albatross* ¹	Yes	Yes
Laysan Albatross	Yes	Yes
Black-footed Albatross	Yes	Yes
Pink-Footed Shearwater*	Yes	Yes
Black-browed Albatross	Yes	Rare
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross**	Yes	Rare
Light-mantled Sooty Albatross	Yes	Rare
Shy Albatross	Yes	Rare
Wandering Albatross*	Yes	Rare
Tristan Albatross***	No	No
Antipodean Albatross*	No	No
Amsterdam Albatross***	No	No
Southern Royal Albatross*	No	No
Northern Royal Albatross**	No	No
Waved Albatross***	No	No
White-capped Albatross	No	No
Salvin’s Albatross*	No	No
Chatham Albatross*	No	No
Buller’s Albatross	No	No
Grey-headed Albatross**	No	No
Campbell Albatross*	No	No
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross**	No	No
Sooty Albatross**	No	No
Southern Giant Petrel	No	No
Northern Giant Petrel	No	No
White-chinned Petrel*	No	No
Spectacled Petrel*	No	No
Black Petrel*	No	No
Westland Petrel*	No	No
Gray Petrel	No	No
Balearic Shearwater***	No	No

*Vulnerable, **Endangered, ***Critically Endangered IUCN status as of 8/5/15

¹Listed as Endangered under the Endangered Species Act