



Bird of the year – vote Antipodean albatross

The fight to get the Antipodean albatross over the finish line in first place in this year's Bird of the Year Awards is starting hard and starting early.

Last year, the endangered albatross was pipped at the post. After leading the field for the entire race, and getting the most votes, the preferential voting system, where people have multiple votes, favoured the Kakapo to take the crown.

Whilst this, in our opinion was blatantly unfair, we are determined this year to seize victory.

The New Zealand commercial fishing industry goes to great lengths all year not to be responsible for incidental catch of the albatross and like most mariners has huge respect for the magnificent seabirds.

Whilst some Antipodean albatrosses are incidentally caught by vessels in the New Zealand fleet, the vast majority are caught in international waters.

The Bird of the Year has become a fierce, if light-hearted, annual battle and even the Aussies have started a Bird of the Year competition.

In last year's Bird of the year, the Antipodean albatross received endorsement from America's Cup sailors Blair Tuke and Peter Burling, John Campbell, the New Zealand embassy in Washington, and Leonardo DiCaprio, and we are encouraging anyone to help us out this year in order to highlight the plight of Antipodean albatrosses and the work we are all doing to take the pressure off the population.

The albatrosses have, in recent years, been tracked by satellite to find out where they are coming to harm. Most of the risk is from foreign vessels fishing in the Tasman, and to the north and east of the EEZ.

The Department of Conservation (DoC) graph below shows the extent to which different fleets were fishing in the same area as the Antipodes albatrosses. The Vanuatu-flagged vessels are Chinese and Taiwanese.

Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) have made it a priority to check these high seas vessels for tori line compliance this year, which they are doing by Orion overflights.

Southern Seabirds, a charitable trust of which the New Zealand seafood industry is part of, is searching out the fishing companies and tuna producers operating in these areas, to ensure they are aware of the situation with Antipodean albatrosses, and to encourage them to take steps to prevent albatross captures.

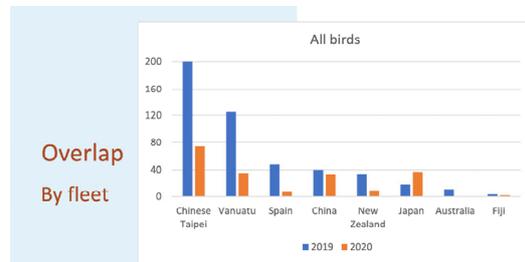
DoC estimate there may only be 400 pairs left by 2050 if pressure on the population stays on its current track.

So, let's do all we can to have the Antipodean albatross take the top prize this year.

We will let you know how to vote once the competition opens in October.



Photo credit Jodi Osgood-Webber



Graph courtesy of DoC

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CONTACT

Email info@seafood.org.nz

Phone [+64 4 385 4005](tel:+6443854005)

Physical address

Level 6

Eagle Technology House

135 Victoria Street

Wellington 6011

New Zealand

This email was sent to janan@seafood.org.nz

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