



## Preventable Bycatch Continues to Threaten Seabirds

Annie Chester  
Outreach Associate  
ABC Action Fund

202-630-0399  
achester@abcbirdsactionfund.org

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4301 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 451  
Washington, D.C. 20008  
202-234-7181  
info@abcbirdsactionfund.org  
abcbirdsactionfund.org

**Bycatch** is the incidental capture or unwanted catch of non-target marine species by fishing vessels and gear. It is also one of the [top three threats](#) confronting seabirds. One million endangered, threatened, and protected seabirds are [discarded annually](#) as bycatch, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

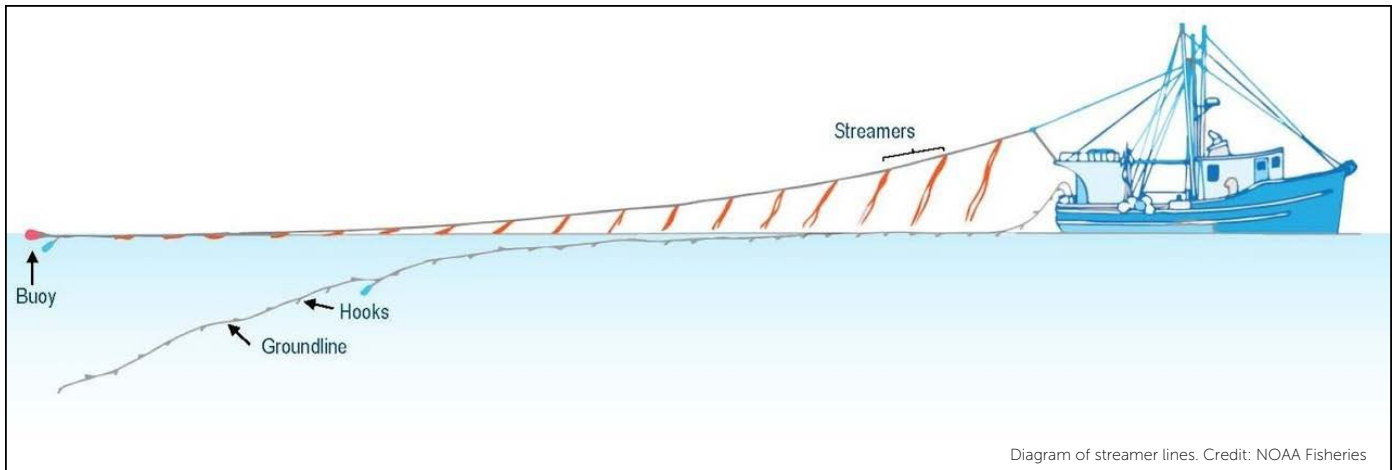
**Seabirds are the [most threatened](#) bird group.** Losing seabirds to bycatch has far-reaching consequences beyond the loss of an individual. Bycatch can significantly diminish populations of seabird species, which are long-lived and slow to reproduce. Currently, [15 of the world's 22 albatross species](#) are considered Critically Endangered, Endangered, or Vulnerable according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's [Red List](#).

**Fishery interactions occur when seabirds feed.** Some seabirds will forage for food on the surface of the water; however, the majority dive to retrieve their food. In the pursuit of bait, bycatch thrown overboard, or fish brought to the surface, many seabirds are hooked by lines, entangled in nets, or fatally injured after collisions with equipment or the fishing vessel's mast.

**Gillnet and hook-and-line fisheries** are documented to have the most **negative interactions with seabirds.** Scientists estimate that at least [400,000 seabirds](#) die in gillnets annually. Longlines kill between [160,000–320,000 seabirds](#) annually.



Albatross bycatch. Photo by Fabiano Peppes, Projeto Albatroz.



## Bycatch Reduction Strategies Save Birds

Bycatch reduction strategies are proven to save seabirds and ensure that fisheries are operating sustainably. Bycatch reduction approaches look different depending on the type of fishery. For example, in longline fisheries, employing tori (streamer) lines above the fishing line distracts birds and reduces the incidences of seabirds diving for food and becoming hooked. Other strategies include setting lines at night because most seabirds feed during the day, and improving discard and offal management so that fishing vessels attract fewer seabirds.

**American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is working to reduce bycatch.** In Ecuador, ABC has been engaged in long-term bycatch reduction efforts for the [Waved Albatross](#) and other species. By working with artisanal longline fisheries, ABC and partners helped develop the [NISURI device](#), which makes line setting quicker for fishers. This efficiency reduces human-bird interactions and protects birds from being hooked in the process.

## What You Can Do

- **Ask your Representative and Senators** to support legislation like the [Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels](#) and [Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#).
- **Avoid seafood from fisheries that harm birds**, such as those that use longlines and gillnets/driftnets.
- **Support ABC's efforts to reduce bycatch.** In addition to ongoing efforts to reduce bycatch in Ecuador, ABC has created informational materials, such as a [website](#) with bycatch reduction strategies for fishers and those engaged in sustainable fisheries work. Additionally, ABC created a comprehensive report on [seabird bycatch solutions](#). The creation of these useful materials are made possible with your support.



Sooty Tern by Mike Parr.