

MARINE MAMMAL AND BIRD POPULATIONS

6.1 At the Seventh Meeting of the Scientific Committee, a summary of information on the status and trends of marine mammal and bird populations was reviewed (SC-CAMLR-VII/9). This summary had been prepared with the assistance of the SCAR Sub-Committee on Bird Biology, the SCAR Group of Specialists on Seals, and the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission.

6.2 During the intersessional period, the Executive Secretary asked the Conveners of the SCAR Group of Specialists on Seals and the SCAR Sub-Committee on Bird Biology if they would be prepared to continue to assemble and update data pertaining to the status and trends in Antarctic seal and bird populations. The Chairman of the Bird Biology Sub-Committee responded that a review of bird populations will be initiated at its next meeting (to be held in 1990), concluded at its 1992 meeting, and the results made available prior to the 1992 Meeting of the CCAMLR Scientific Committee. The Secretary of the Seals Group indicated that a review of seal populations would be undertaken on a schedule similar to the one outlined above.

6.3 Dr Kerry drew the attention of the Scientific Committee to the Report of the CCAMLR Observer to the latest meeting of the International Whaling Commission's Scientific Committee (SC-CAMLR-VIII/10). This document lists recent estimates of whale populations based on data from IDCR/IWC sightings cruises.

6.4 The Scientific Committee agreed that a comprehensive review of Antarctic seal and bird populations should be undertaken every five years, which is consistent with the timetable indicated by the SCAR groups.

6.5 It was noted that scheduling a comprehensive review of marine mammal and bird populations every five years does not preclude raising issues pertaining to the status of these populations at any time when discussion of such topics seem warranted.

6.6 E. Marschoff, noting the decline in southern elephant seal (*Mirounga leonina*) populations in some sectors of the Antarctic, suggested that the SCAR Group of Specialists on Seals and the SCAR Sub-Committee on Bird Biology should be asked to provide advice to the Scientific Committee when significant population declines are identified. The Scientific Committee agreed to seek such advice, specifically requesting guidance concerning:

- (a) the likely or possible causes of particular marine mammal and bird population declines; and
- (b) steps that might be taken to halt these declines.

6.7 Dr Croxall noted that new information pertaining to the declining populations of wandering albatross (*Diomedea exulans*) has recently become available (CCAMLR-VIII/BG/6). There is now considerable evidence that this population decline is due principally to incidental mortality by injury or entrapment from active gear in longline fisheries on tuna outside the Convention Area.

6.8 The Chairman had been asked by the Commission to correspond with the Conveners of the SCAR Group of Specialists on Seals and the SCAR Sub-Committee on Bird Biology concerning incidental mortality, ingestion of plastics, and entanglement in marine debris. The Sub-Committee on Bird Biology noted that the incidence of plastic ingestion by seabirds within the Convention Area is geographically widespread and includes a high proportion of species as well as a high proportion of individuals within certain populations. The Sub-Committee also made specific suggestions for appropriate research and monitoring. The reply from the Seals Group suggested standardising a sampling scheme at breeding colonies to monitor the incidence of entanglement of pinnipeds in marine debris. The Seals Group also indicated the need for CCAMLR to acquire more detailed information on seal entanglement at sea in order to assess the magnitude of this problem.

6.9 The Scientific Committee noted that although issues pertaining to the assessment and avoidance of incidental mortality are currently being addressed in the Commission, it would be desirable and appropriate for the Scientific Committee to consider these topics and provide advice to the Commission on recommended actions. The Scientific Committee agreed that in the future, it would consider these issues either as part of discussions on marine mammal and bird populations or under a separate agenda item.