



ANTARCTIC SPECIALLY PROTECTED SPECIES

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Introduction

1. At XXV ATCM The Inter-sessional Contact Group on Specially Protected Species reported its conclusions on how best to proceed. It concluded that there was support for such a designation, that Annex II currently provides inadequate guidelines of how such a designation might be applied and controlled, and that all parties in the Contact Group had agreed that the IUCN criteria, already in use everywhere else in the world, provided a sound scientific basis for assessing the conservation status of Antarctic species.
2. In XXV ATCM WP-038 SCAR proposed a process for providing the CEP with recommendations for Special Protection based on an international assessment of all the available scientific evidence. SCAR proposed to undertake the assessment with the appropriate groups in IUCN to establish which species fell into the categories Vulnerable, Endangered and Critically Endangered and the CEP endorsed this way forward.

Report on progress

3. SCAR agreed to undertake initial studies on birds to establish a formal approach for all future studies. IUCN has been undertaking a global review of the threat status for sea birds using Birdlife International as their contractor for this.
4. The SCAR Group of Experts on Birds, a part of the Life Sciences Standing Scientific Group, is linked directly with the IUCN birds co-ordinator. Population data and trends, where they are available, have been provided to ensure that the Antarctic data provides a complete context for those species that occur both within the Antarctic and outside it.
5. The results of the international assessment by Birdlife International were presented at a conference "Empowering people for change" in Durban, South Africa in March 2004. The general conclusions for the Antarctic species were that most species are not under any immediate threat, immediate concern is limited to five species but that there are others which will need longer term attention.
6. There are two different levels of concern: firstly those species that breed and live largely within the Antarctic, and secondly those species that breed outside the Antarctic (often on the subAntarctic islands) but feed and fly within the waters around the Antarctic. Some species breed both in the Antarctic and outside and so may occur with a different threat status in two categories.
7. For species breeding in the Antarctic there are no Critically Endangered or Endangered species. Only the Southern Giant Petrel and the Macaroni Penguin fall into the Vulnerable category. In the lowest threat class, Nearly Threatened, there is only one species breeding in Antarctica: Gentoo Penguin.
8. At present five species, all found within the Antarctic but breeding north of 60°S, have been assessed as falling into the two highest threat categories of Critically Endangered (Amsterdam Albatross) and Endangered (Northern Royal Albatross, Black-browed Albatross, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross and Sooty Albatross).
9. Nine other species are classed as Vulnerable (Rockhopper Penguin, Macaroni Penguin, Wandering Albatross, Salvin's Albatross, Southern Royal Albatross, Grey headed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, White chinned Petrel, Eaton's Pintail).

10. It is now important to examine the data in more detail for a regional assessment, using the IUCN guidelines to identify species that are not threatened or near threatened in respect of their global status but which for particular reasons are under threat in the Antarctic.
11. As yet the CEP has not decided for what level of threat Specially Protected Species status should be applied, nor has it yet considered what management activities such status should encompass.
12. SCAR suggests that all species relevant to the ATS region already accorded globally threatened status by IUCN should be considered as potential candidates for SPS status. This approach will then include both those species that are resident, in addition to those species that migrate to the ATS region within the list of species reviewed. However, although the Endangered level is almost certainly the wrong level to be the first trigger for examining the case for eventual SPS application, it might be the correct level for normal designation. IUCN regard the level of Vulnerable as the level at which concern about conservation should be raised and this could also be an appropriate level for the Antarctic species to attract concern.

Future action

13. Now that SCAR has received the global recommendations from IUCN these will be discussed the SCAR Bremen meeting this summer and a formal documented proposal will be prepared for each species that is deemed to be under serious threat at either the global or regional level. The CEP will then have the information available to consider which species should be formally designated as Specially Protected within the Antarctic Treaty Area.
14. SCAR will continue to develop its working relationship with the appropriate IUCN committees and will next consider the case for Antarctic seals.