



CCSBT-ESC/2409/06

**Report from  
the Fifteenth Meeting of the Ecologically Related Species Working Group  
(ESC Agenda item 11)**

***Background***

The Ecologically Related Species Working Group's (ERSWG) met from 4-7 June 2024.

In accordance with the Ecologically Related Species Working Group's (ERSWG) Terms of Reference, the report of the ERSWG has been provided to the Extended Scientific Committee (ESC) as CCSBT-ESC/2409/Rep02. The ESC may provide comments on the report to the Extended Commission (EC).

***Outcomes from ERSWG 15 directly related to the ESC's discussion***

The ESC may wish to refer to the following outcomes from ERSWG 15 for its consideration:

1. The report back from the ERSWG 15 to the EC on Progress Against the CCSBT Strategic Plan. The ESC will discuss this matter under ESC Agenda item 6, and details are provided in the Secretariat paper CCSBT-ESC/2409/05.
2. ERSWG's discussion on Electronic Monitoring (EM) and the Scientific Observer Program Standards (SOPS), which is shown in **Attachment A** of this paper. The ESC will discuss this matter under ESC Agenda item 12, and details are provided in the Secretariat paper CCSBT-ESC/2409/07.

***Other relevant recommendations to the Extended Commission from ERSWG 15***

The ERSWG recommended that the EC adopt/agree to the following:

1. The ERSWG has revised its advice on seabirds to the following:
  - The level of interaction between seabirds and SBT fisheries remains a significant concern.
  - The ERSWG noted that the most recent version of the Spatially Explicit Fisheries Risk Assessment (SEFRA) indicates that Wandering and Royal Albatross species groups are at high risk. Species in these groups are of high conservation concern and ACAP indicated that some populations are in sharp decline.
  - The SEFRA indicates areas with higher risk in some parts of the Tasman Sea (especially), Southern Atlantic, and Southern Indian Ocean. These areas account for a large proportion of the modelled risk to seabirds from SBT surface longline fisheries, but contain a very small proportion of SBT surface longline fishing effort.
  - Based on the best scientific information available, the ERSWG recommends that CCSBT Members consider taking further actions that would ensure robust seabird

mitigation measures and effective monitoring of implementation of the mitigation measures, whilst minimising impacts on SBT surface longline fisheries effort

2. The SEFRA Workplan and its associated resource request (Attachment 5 of CCSBT-ESC/2409/Rep02);
3. The revised timeframe for the Multi-Year Seabird Strategy Action items (Attachment 8 of the CCSBT-ESC/2409/Rep02);
4. Terms of Reference for the Technical Ecologically Related Species Working Group (Attachment 9 of the CCSBT-ESC/2409/Rep02); and
5. Add hook-shielding devices as one of the specified measures in the ERS Data Exchange.

### ***Relevant advice to the Extended Commission from ERSWG 15***

The ERSWG provided the following advice to the EC, which has relevance to the ESC:

1. Note the outputs of the most recent SEFRA exercise;
2. There were no specific or additional concerns about shark bycatch that warranted action by ERSWG 15, noting that significant gaps in observer coverage may be impacting ERSWG's ability to assess the impact of SBT Fisheries on sharks;
3. ERSWG has provided the EC with a report back against the objectives and agreed actions contained in the CCSBT Strategic Plan (Attachment 6 of the CCSBT-ESC/2409/Rep02); and
4. ERSWG recommends that the current methodology applied to calculate representativeness of scientific observer coverage be retained without change.
5. ERSWG will be seeking approval from EC 32 on the adoption of an ERS Bycatch Action Plan.

### ***Other matters***

Some other matters were considered by ERSWG 15, that were not included in its formal recommendations and advice from the ERSWG but are nonetheless worth noting. These included:

1. The ERSWG plans to hold the next ERSTech meeting around June 2025. The format of the next ERSTech meeting will be in-person and be used to progress SEFRA work and the development of an agreed list of non-target shark species for the ERS Bycatch Action Plan.
2. The ERSWG discussed next steps for the SEFRA work and the need for additional resourcing either through the Commission or as part of the Marine Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) Common Oceans Program and recommended the EC to approve the future SEFRA workplan, including the request for funding from the Commission and ABNJ (Attachment 5 of CCSBT-ESC/2409/Rep02). This may affect the discussion by EC/FAC on the 2025 draft budget and the balance of resourcing between the ESC and ERSWG.

**Prepared by the Secretariat**

**Extract of Agenda Item 7.2 from the Report of ERSWG 15**

***7.2 Review of ERS related data elements in the CCSBT's Scientific Observer Program Standard***

89. The Chair advised that, based on the discussion of the EM workshop in 2023, Members were requested to provide their view about availability through EM and actual usage/necessity of data elements required through the CCSBT's Scientific Observer Program Standard (SOPS).
90. The Secretariat presented paper CCSBT-ERS/2406/08 (Rev.1) on Impacts of Electronic Monitoring on ERS data, which summarised the feedback received from Members when assessing the potential impact of EM/S on data currently required as part of SOPS. During the pre-meeting discussion, the meeting was asked to:
- Review the feedback from Member submissions;
  - Consider whether there are ERS information gaps, not currently addressed by the existing SOPS, that could be addressed by EM; and
  - Consider what changes may be required of the SOPS and, if any, propose these to the ESC.
91. During the pre-meeting discussion, it was suggested that:
- EM is incapable of collecting many of the 'observer' data fields which Members have indicated are necessary;
  - With respect to ERS information gaps, consider:
    - The potential for 100% coverage (depending on review) vs observers which typically observe only part of the fishing operations;
    - Verifiable identification of species depending on footage quality;
    - The capability for multiple reviews of captures to increase certainty and verify data; and
    - The ability to target footage review to high risk areas/times/vessels as needed;
  - The SOPS could be revised in the following ways:
    - Clarify the numbers and types of ERS species interacted with, including life status;
    - Include hook-shielding devices under 'seabird mitigation measure'; and
    - Include other ERS mitigations besides for seabirds i.e. circle hooks, wire vs nylon leaders.
92. It was pointed out that all the information currently required by the SOPS can be collected through the use of EM/S and the issue becomes one of cost effectiveness where information from other sources, such as logbooks, may be able to provide the information at a lower cost. In some cases, EM/S can exceed the performance of

traditional human observers and there may be benefits in updating the SOPS to recognise those instances.

93. It was noted the importance to maintain the consistency between discussions in ERSWG with those discussions currently going on in other tRFMOs.
94. It was noted that consistency across logbook reporting among Members would be important if this information is to be used to supplement EM/S data.
95. Clarification was sought whether the current SOPS allow for the recording of numbers and types of ERS species interacted with, including life status.
96. The meeting agreed to recommend the addition of hook-shielding devices as one of the mitigation types captured as part of the EDE.