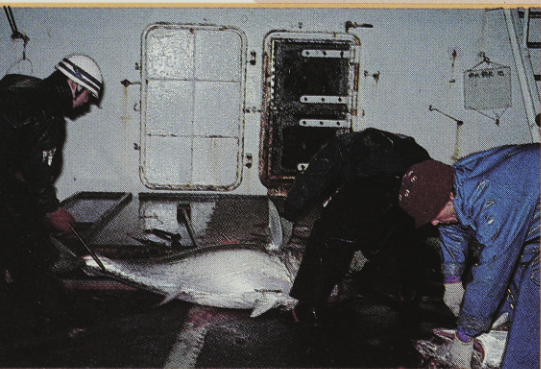


*NZ black-browed mollymawk and chick (December 1984) – large numbers drown on longlines in the East Cape area. Photo: Graeme Taylor*



*Bluefin tuna – the target species of longlining boats – being cleaned. Bluefin tuna can grow up to 250 kilograms and are worth \$3,000 (NZ) each. Photo: Nigel Brothers.*

Hutton's shearwaters, and pied, Stewart Island and spotted shags.

### **A fatal attraction**

The bird species worst affected by trawl and longline fishery by-catch are those most strongly attracted to offal and rubbish from boats. Seasoned mariners are well aware of this attraction – in the vastness of the open ocean, albatrosses often seem to appear from nowhere and will follow ships for days on end waiting for a morsel to be cast overboard. Albatrosses can cover huge distances in a few days, so are vulnerable to being killed in fisheries thousands of kilometres from their nesting islands. The tuna longliners' baits, which are usually 30cm squid or fish, are an ideal size for an albatross to swallow. Smaller birds are less likely to be able to swallow the bait before it sinks.

Vast flocks of birds often follow trawlers. In one instance, 3,000 white-capped mollymawks were reported following the Auckland Island squid trawler fleet. With such large flocks of birds around these boats, it is easy to see how some are hit by a cable swinging through the middle of them. Overseas, huge numbers of migrating birds are killed by flying into pylon wires at night. In both instances, the birds are unable to see the cables in time to avoid them.

### **Lack of population information**

There is a serious lack of information on the sizes of our seabird colonies. The Department of Conservation must urgently start regular monitoring of all populations. Population falls overseas and estimated seabird fisheries by-catch numbers clearly warrant detailed breeding colony surveys – especially of albatrosses, such as the white-capped mollymawk, Buller's mollymawk and wan-



### **NZ Black-browed Mollymawk**

The NZ black-browed mollymawk nests only on Campbell Island, our most southern sub-antarctic island. A survey in 1987-88 revealed 19-26,000 pairs, which points to a total population of about 90,000. Immatures of this species often disperse northwards and are common in temperate waters around mainland New Zealand.

Large numbers of immatures and some adults drown on longlines in our waters but exact figures are not known. Marked birds from Campbell Island have been recovered drowned on longlines off southern Australia.

A 38-57 percent decline in numbers on Campbell Island has occurred since the 1940s with the worst affected colonies falling by 88 percent. Temperature changes affecting food supplies have been implicated in causing declines in marine species, such as sea elephants and rockhopper penguins at Campbell Island, but fisheries by-catch may well be affecting mollymawk numbers. The decline in the South Indian Ocean Kerguelen Island population of black-browed mollymawks has been attributed to trawler mortality.