

## WWF's whoppers over marine protected areas

Tall tales and fishing go together like All Blacks and winning.

But it is the World Wildlife Fund that is telling the whoppers in a current campaign aimed at influencing the Government over marine protected areas.

WWF, traditionally one of the more credible and responsible environmental NGOs, appears to have abandoned that reputation in a series of full page advertisements in the country's metropolitan newspapers.

Is this New Zealand's biggest fishing whopper?, the headline asks.

The Deepwater Group has responded that WWF's claim that "less than 1 percent of New Zealand's marine environment meets the international standard of a Marine Protected Area" is simply not true.

"New Zealand has protected over 30 percent of waters managed under our jurisdiction (ie, 0 to 200 nautical miles) through the use of MPAs, the largest contribution to that protection being Benthic Protected Areas," chief executive George Clement wrote in a letter to Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage and Fisheries Minister Stuart Nash.

"New Zealand's MPAs equate to more than 14 times the size of New Zealand's protected land area and more than four times the size of New Zealand's land area overall, which is one of the largest networks of MPAs in the world.

"The 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) acknowledges that different forms of protection contribute to Aichi target 11 (an international agreement calling for protection of

10 percent of marine areas by 2020), including those that allow for sustainable use like New Zealand's Benthic Protection Areas.

"These MPAs have been internationally recognised for their contribution to New Zealand's conservation estate, to New Zealand's international obligations and to global marine protection efforts."

[The BPAs](#) were set up over a decade ago at the instigation of the deepwater sector and introduced by then Fisheries Minister Jim Anderton.

They extend from sub-tropical waters in the north to the sub-Antarctic in the south, covering all types of marine environment.

Three are situated on the Chatham Rise region, the country's most productive deepwater fishery.

Clement has also sought to [put the record straight](#) with the New Zealand Marine Sciences Society, whose members are being lobbied by WWF, pointing out no bottom trawling or dredging can take place in a BPA. Mid water trawling is permitted but only if two observers are aboard and an electronic net monitoring system ensures the gear does not go below 100 metres above the seabed.

There has only ever been one application for a mining permit in a BPA (Chatham Rock Phosphate) and that was declined by the Environmental Protection Authority.

The fact is in New Zealand waters MPAs currently protect:

- 12 percent of the territorial sea
- 30 percent of the Exclusive Economic Zone
- 10 percent or more of each of the marine environment classifications
- 28 percent of underwater topographic features
- 52 percent of known true seamounts
- 88 percent of known active hydrothermal vents
- six designated marine mammal sanctuaries, the largest off the North Island's west coast to protect Maui dolphins

None of this is acknowledged in the WWF campaign, which is supported by the US-based Pew Foundation, which was founded on oil drilling.

"We believe New Zealanders deserve honest reporting," WWF says.

So does the seafood industry and we look forward to a little more of it from activists who believe the end justifies the means.

---

## **Albatrosses keeping tabs on off-the-grid fishers**

Vessels in the Indian Ocean will soon be tracked by a new type of fisheries watch guard – albatrosses.

Scientific program Ocean Sentinel plans to attach tiny beacons to 150 albatrosses from the remote Crozet, Kerguelen and Amsterdam Islands.

Built in collaboration with New Zealand, the beacons weigh just 70 grams and will be fitted to the back of the birds to record their movements.

The beacons also detect radar signals from vessels at sea – a feature that researchers realised would assist in pinpointing unauthorised vessels.

Albatrosses fitted with the device will be able to identify vessels (300 gross tonnage or more) that have turned off their automatic identification system (AIS) in prohibited fishing grounds.

Even if AIS is switched off, vessels still rely on low-level radar emissions for safety purposes which the beacon is capable of detecting.

Any albatross flying within a three kilometre range would log the signal and provide a location for those fishers within half an hour of the information being received.

Director of Chizé Biological Research Centre Henry Weimerskirch said that if vessels are avoiding detection, the information could be passed onto authorities for possible interception.

"Half the boats we detected (during tests) did not have their AIS switched on," he said.

Funded by the Council of Europe, the programme will run from November until March next year and is expected to be trialed in other countries in the near future.



---

**Lost shark tags carry a trove of data**

The discovery of a lost shark tag on a Northland beach has given NIWA scientists a trove of new data to scour through.

Clare Veltman was walking along Ninety Mile Beach when she found the antenna-like object lodged in the sand.

A group of juvenile and adult mako sharks were fitted with the electronic satellite tags as part of a Pacific-wide study tracking shark movements.

The objective was to measure the survival rate of mako and silky sharks that are returned to sea by commercial longliners and determine if catch and release methods make a difference to survival.

A serial number and the manufacturer's details were on the tag, enabling it to be traced back to NIWA.

"I'm a wildlife scientist by trade, so I knew what it was and immediately thought about the person waiting to get the data it holds. So I put it in my pack and decided to do something about it once I got to Kaitia," said Veltman.

NIWA researcher Warrick Lyon was eager to examine the data the tag had collected.

It's the first tag returned of the 75 that were deployed when the study began in May last year.

"It provides us with really detailed information that we wouldn't otherwise have," said Lyon.

The data belonged to a 2.5 metre mako shark whose tag was deployed by a fisheries observer working aboard a tuna longline vessel in New Caledonia on July 3, 2017. The tag also tracked the shark's journey, starting at its release location and following its swim to New Zealand.

The tags also provide a daily recording of minimum and maximum water temperatures and the maximum depth the shark reached.

At 60 days, the steel pin connecting the tag to the shark's dorsal fin begins to corrode and eventually breaks free. When the tag floats to the surface, it broadcasts the data it has collected to NIWA's satellite system.

"If we get the tag back, we can retrieve much higher resolution data at ten minute intervals. That level of detail is far more valuable and very exciting," explained Lyon.

The use of plastic dart tags over the last decade has established that makos move around the south-western pacific, but doesn't provide any additional information on the routes they take, their preferred habitats or whether New Zealand's mako population interacts with those found in tropical waters.

The satellite tags will provide a stock assessment of the population, address questions around their movement and will help inform the best management method for the mako shark population.

"This will build on information we already have and help us establish more about how these sharks use the ocean," said Lyon.



Mako shark with a dorsal fin satellite tag. Photo credit: Scott Tindale, NIWA.

---

## News

The New Zealand Defence Force and the Ministry for Primary Industries have inspected 10 vessels during recent maritime patrols in the exclusive economic zones of Samoa and Tokelau. The Commander of Joint Forces New Zealand major general Tim Gall, said New Zealand recognises the importance of fishery resources to the island nations. The patrols didn't detect any serious offending under Samoa's or Tokelau's fisheries legislation. He said vigilance through regular compliance patrols was necessary to ensure the sustainable use of fishery resources. The patrols assist the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency to manage, control and develop the tuna fisheries of its 17 members.

A new camera has been installed at what has been described as the Bay of Plenty's 'most dangerous bar' - the Kaituna Cut. The camera aims to provide an up-to-date look at bar conditions and is positive news for boating safety, as crossing a bar is risky. The idea for the camera has long been in the pipeline for the regional council and was helped by Trustpower which provided the internet service. Bay of Plenty Regional Council Harbourmaster Peter Buell said the live feed will be far more convenient for boaties needing to judge the sea conditions and far safer. Previously the only way to review conditions was by physically visiting the bar and people who had travelled some distance would arrive at the mouth of Kaituna River to realise it's too dangerous to cross. The live stream can be viewed [here](#).

Recreational fishers around the Coromandel Peninsula were fined approximately \$4,000 over Labour Weekend for various fisheries related offences. MPI fishery officers uncovered the offending while patrolling both the west and east coast of the peninsula. Spokesman Jason Howat says around 400 recreational fishers were subject to inspections and some paid the price for committing a range of offences. Fourteen infringements were issued for

offenses ranging from undersized snapper, undersized scallops and for taking crayfish that were carrying eggs. One recreational fishing boat was inspected by fishery officers in Opito Bay and found 132 scallops, of which 52 were undersized. "In general, compliance with fisheries regulations was high, with fishers playing their part in protecting the fishery by sticking to the rules," said Howat. "The result of the weekend's patrol sends a very clear message. People who choose to break the rules will be dealt with accordingly."

---

**[Check out the latest Seafood Magazines](#)**