

The Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act of 2024

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Background

Many albatross and petrel species are among the most threatened seabirds in the world due to habitat loss and fisheries bycatch (unwanted fish and other marine creatures caught during commercial fishing for a different species). Thousands of albatrosses, petrels, and shearwaters die each year due to fisheries operations, coming into contact with longline fishing equipment as they migrate to nest and find food.

International cooperation is already in place to prevent these highly migratory birds from international fishing threats. The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) is an international conservation agreement that has been signed by 13 member countries since 2001 and covers 31 species of albatrosses, petrels, and shearwaters

As a leader in international ocean conservation, the U.S. already protects the three species of albatrosses and petrels that breed within the U.S. through the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Endangered Species Act. However, these protections do not extend to these bird species once they travel beyond U.S. waters. As migratory birds, albatrosses, petrels, and shearwaters spend up to 90 percent of their lives at sea, crossing multiple international boundaries to nest and find food. Around 40 percent of that time is spent outside of the U.S. national borders.

Although the U.S. has attended and contributed to ACAP meetings regularly since the Agreement's signing in 2001, up to now, it has not joined the 13 member countries that have signed as a Party.

Bill Summary

The *Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act* ties together existing U.S. laws and statutes to implement the international Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels. The legislation would also authorize the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service to implement fisheries conservation measures, increase international fisheries enforcement, restore habitat, reduce non-native species, develop educational programs, and cooperate internationally on conservation efforts.

The *Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act* is endorsed by the Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy.