



CCAMLR

Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
Commission pour la conservation de la faune et la flore marines de l'Antarctique
Комиссия по сохранению морских живых ресурсов Антарктики
Comisión para la Conservación de los Recursos Vivos Marinos Antárticos

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ASOC Report to CCAMLR

Submitted by ASOC



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Abstract

ASOC has submitted six background papers to CCAMLR-41. These papers highlight several key issues for CCAMLR, including: management of the krill fishery, the designation of marine protected areas, decision making processes in CCAMLR, and guidelines adopted by the International Maritime Organisation for fishing vessels operating in polar waters. During the intersessional period, ASOC and its member organizations have participated in a variety of activities to support Antarctic conservation, such as funding scientific research, facilitating opportunities for discussion between CCAMLR stakeholders, and organizing numerous educational and outreach activities.

Introduction

ASOC is delighted to be attending the 41st annual meeting of CCAMLR. This report briefly describes ASOC's work over the past year. ASOC's Secretariat is located in Washington, DC, USA, and its website is <https://www.asoc.org>. ASOC has 24 member organizations active in a wide range of countries.

ASOC is pleased to report that the International Cryosphere Climate Initiative has re-joined ASOC since the 40th meeting of CCAMLR.

ASOC is pleased to submit six background papers, which highlight several key issues for CCAMLR, including: management of the krill fishery, the designation of marine protected areas, decision making processes in CCAMLR, and guidelines adopted by the International Maritime Organisation for fishing vessels operating in polar waters. These issues are highly relevant to the work and objectives of CCAMLR and require immediate action.

ASOC appreciates the opportunity to work with CCAMLR Members and Observers to find compromise and promote international cooperation for the protection of Antarctica.

Key Priorities and Activities of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition

Many of ASOC's activities in 2022 focused on the designation of MPAs in the Southern Ocean, educational outreach on the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, protection for species and habitats, and the celebration of the first-ever World Krill Day.

Marine Protected Areas in the Southern Ocean

ASOC firmly believes that CCAMLR should realize its commitment to establishing a representative system of MPAs in the Southern Ocean. The urgency to designate large marine no-take MPAs in the Antarctic Peninsula, the Weddell Sea and the East Antarctic is clear. Species of the Antarctic region are vulnerable to climate change, with some populations of penguins in the Antarctic Peninsula already in decline due to global warming and concentrated fishing. In contrast, large groups of southern fin whales were observed in the Weddell Sea feeding on krill¹. The rebound in the number of whales in the region and the decline in some penguin populations requires full consideration in the management of the krill fishery and the creation of MPAs.

ASOC and its members have engaged in a variety of activities throughout the year to promote Antarctic conservation, including participation in the:

- 10th SCAR Open Science Conference hosted virtually by India (1-10 August). The results of the ASOC-funded project *Identifying Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas in the Southern Ocean* were discussed at an expert workshop during the conference, which was attended by 150 participants affiliated with CCAMLR.

¹ 150 Whales Observed Feeding Together. <https://www.awi.de/en/about-us/service/press/single-view/150-wale-beim-gemeinsamen-fressen-beobachtet.html>

- UN Oceans Conference in Portugal (Lisbon, 27 June – 1 July) including the virtual side event *From the Southern Ocean to the Arctic – A Call to Action via the UN Ocean Decade*. The event emphasized the importance of fisheries management for a healthy ecosystem in the Southern Ocean. The International Cryosphere Climate Initiative (ICCI) participated in the side event *Polar Oceans: Engine to the Global Ocean* which identified that interactions around Antarctica are fundamental to driving global circulation and drawing down heat and carbon from the atmosphere.
- 44th ATCM hosted by Germany (Berlin, 23 May – 2 June) and related intersessional activities including discussions on designating the emperor penguin as a Specially Protected Species.
- Southern Ocean Decade Task Force which included a webinar presentation by the Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy to launch the Southern Ocean Action Plan. The Action Plan is the key Southern Ocean focused activity of the UN Decade for Ocean Science, which aims to allow stakeholders to co-design and deliver solution-oriented research needed for a well-functioning ocean.
- WWF hosted the *Superheroes and blue carbon habitats of the Southern Ocean* event at COP26, where they launched the *Krill: Superheroes of the Southern Ocean* video, also presented at the ATCM.
- Weddell Sea Phase II workshop organized by Norway (Oslo, 27-29 September).

Research Support

Funding to ASOC from the Blue Nature Alliance supported several research projects with relevance to CCAMLR's work. ASOC partnered with the National Centre for Scientific Research/Museum of Natural History (France) and the Bayworld Centre for Research and Education (South Africa) to study mesopelagic ecosystems in the epi- and mesopelagic zones across the CCAMLR subantarctic Indian Ocean region. The project will determine how the distribution of plankton and mesopelagic fish communities support the foraging strategies of marine predators including seabirds and marine mammals. ASOC also partnered with the University of Auckland and Live Oceans to deploy 14 satellite tags on southern right whales in the New Zealand Sub Antarctic islands. In 2020, the Tohorānō Aotearoa-New Zealand Southern Right Whale Research project tagged whales going through the proposed East Antarctic MPA and the existing Ross Sea MPA, highlighting the validity of the MPA design for protection of threatened species. Also, Alliance funding supported a project by the French Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN) to assess the phylogenetic diversity of the Southern Ocean to aid in conservation planning. Initial results suggest that the evolutionary history of some taxa is not always fully represented in existing MPAs.

The Antarctic Wildlife Research Fund (AWR) opened a new call for research project proposals for 2022. The AWR Board considered nine proposals and selected two new projects to be supported this year. These projects are in line with the priorities selected by AWR's Scientific Advisory Group, which is composed of key CCAMLR scientists.

ASOC Member organizations also supported critical research on Antarctic marine ecosystems:

- Pew funded a study led by the British Antarctic Survey which provides the first up to date estimate of the amount of krill needed by a variety of predators in the region, whose populations continue to rebound after centuries of decimation. The study highlights the overlap of predator consumption with the krill fishery and illustrates the importance of evidence-based management at fine-scales to mitigate the risks of the krill fishery to krill-dependent predators. The research was published in *Ecosphere*, Southern Ocean Decade and contributed to the SC-CAMLR symposium.
- WWF funded work mapping Southern Ocean blue carbon habitats, which was reflected in the UK's ATCM 44/IP 107: *The Southern Ocean contribution to the UN Decade of Ocean Science*, and work to further understanding the role of krill in the global carbon cycle. WWF collaborated with partners to publish *Protecting Blue Corridors* mapping the global routes of migratory whales from the Antarctic to the Arctic and overlapping threats, and highlights the Southern Ocean as a key foraging area for whales.
- Greenpeace International conducted a research cruise on the MV *Arctic Sunrise* during early 2022. The expedition consisted of two legs in the Antarctic Peninsula and Northwest Weddell Sea and conducted a study of penguin populations and seabed surveys to identify Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems. The initial findings from the penguin population surveys reveal the ecosystem's response

to climate change and the region's role as a climate refuge. Initial assessment of the transect data from the seabed suggest presence of VME indicator taxa in the vast majority of the surveyed locations.

Climate Change

The ICCI participated in the Bonn Climate Conference, which identified interactions around Antarctica for a potentially extreme future of sea level rise. Two major Antarctic glaciers are losing ice at alarming rates which may contribute as much as 3.4 meters to global sea-level rise over the next several centuries. ICCI also prepared posters on climate change for the ATCM explaining the interaction between ocean acidification, warming temperatures and sea ice melt.

Polar Code and Shipping

ASOC has again been active during the discussions at the International Maritime Organization (IMO), including during discussions on the new International Guidelines for Safety Measures for Fishing Vessels of 24m in length and over Operating in Polar Waters. ASOC's work to reduce the risk to both lives and to the environment is also supporting analysis of challenges and gaps in the implementation of the Polar Code and seeks to address the need for marking of fishing gear and reporting of abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). ASOC supported the preparation of two new infographics focused on addressing ALDFGs.

Outreach and Education

ASOC made presentations on Antarctic issues at various educational events including at Tedx Bariloche and Tedx Archivorum, the Dutch Polar Symposium 2021 and the Opération éducative's appel des pôles 2021-2022.

On May 27, ASOC, and partners the Blue Nature Alliance, Greenpeace Germany, UNLESS, Deutsche Umwelthilfe, Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy, Fridays for Future Germany, Scientists for Future, and AWIs for Future joined together in Berlin at the Brandenburg Gate to rally for Antarctic conservation. The "rally for Antarctica" called on ATS bodies to take bold steps towards protecting the Antarctic region.

On August 11, ASOC and its member organizations celebrated the first-ever World Krill Day by promoting the holiday on social media, and hosting a webinar on krill for participants in China, Japan and South Korea. A large number of NGOs, scientists, governments and organisations also participated in the day.