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One size does not fit all

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ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

One size does not fit all: a successful collaboration with **South African Hake Longline Association** members to adapt and improve seabird bycatch mitigation measures.

Bird-scaring Lines (BSLs) have become the primary and most prescribed seabird bycatch mitigation measure in longline fisheries worldwide. They keep birds from accessing baited hooks before these have had a chance to sink beyond the reach of diving birds or till the hooks reach a depth of at least 10 metres. A BSL is normally composed of a backbone section with colourful streamers, and a drag section or towing device to keep it taut.





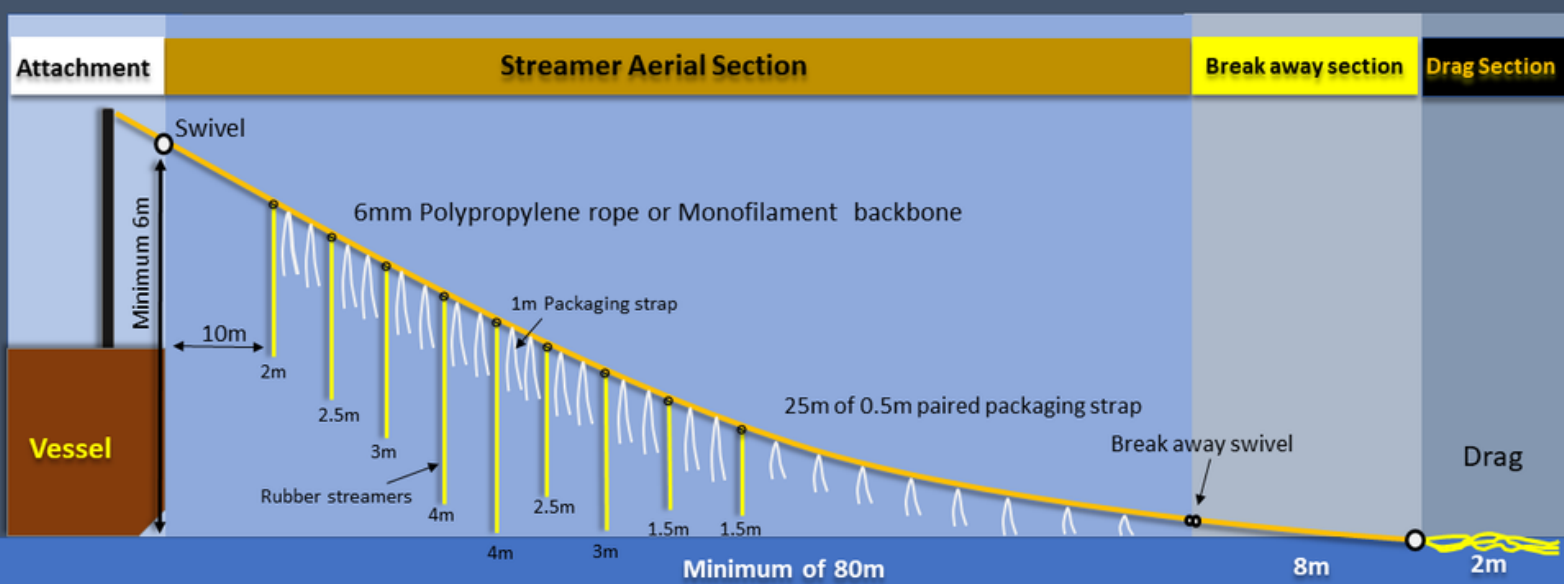
They have been shown to be extremely effective at keeping foraging birds away from the 'danger zone' and thus reducing seabird bycatch, particularly when used in combination with other mitigation measures such as night setting, line weighting and offal management.

BSLs were primarily developed for use on large vessels, of over 35 metres in length, and while some skippers report successfully deploying BSLs, others mentioned difficulties, primarily because many of our domestic vessels are much smaller. Skippers reported struggling with deployments in bad weather conditions, entanglements with fishing gear, lack of high attachment points and BSLs being unnecessarily cumbersome and bulky.

With a clear challenge ahead the Albatross Task Force (ATF), a programme with BirdLife South Africa, set out to design a BSL better suited to our domestic longline fleets.

Working together with the South African Hake Longline Association (SAHLLA) crew members, we trialled various BSL designs to ensure its effectiveness not only as a mitigation measure but for it to be operationally feasible, practical and safe to use by the crew. They needed to minimise the propensity for entanglements with fishing gear, be easy to replicate, repair and store. As well as affordable and made of local materials that maximise durability and minimise waste.

We began work _ in 2017 and after many sea trips and the trialling of various versions we presented a final design to the members of SAHLLA during their annual general meeting in 2019. Later that same year the new design was introduced into permit conditions.



The new design was a result of a collaborative effort between the ATF and fishing crew. They would on occasion give us sympathetic looks of encouragement, as a colourful bunch of trial streamers went flying off into the distance. We were also all hands-on deck helping when a BSL would on occasion cause entanglements with the fishing gear and frustration levels would rise. We believe however that the success of the future uptake and commitment to deploying BSLs depends on a sense of ownership and participation by the crew.

We therefore owe a great thanks to skippers who welcomed us on-board, and to _ all the crew who actively contributed with ideas on the use of materials that would facilitate deployment, storage, and crew safety.

Acknowledgements:

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 Images taken on-board hake logline vessels