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## AFRICAN BLACK OYSTERCATCHER FATALITY AS A RESULT OF FISHING LINE

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Fishing gear injuries and deaths are common in bird species that frequent water bodies where fishing is done. These result from both commercial fisheries (drowning as a result of longlines, and nets) (Tasker et al. 2000), and recreational fishing, e.g. sinker (Pokras & Chafel 1992) and hook (Anonymous 2015) ingestion, and fishing line entanglement (Anonymous 2015). This is particularly common for marine birds as marine habitats are where commercial fishing takes place, and recreational fishing results in discarded fishing hooks and lines along the shores. Although most studies focus on the deaths occurring in the commercial sector, there are a substantial number of injury records documented from recreational sites (Manville & Albert 2005). Left untreated, these injuries result in loss of limbs, disabilities and death (Anonymous 2015).

SAFRING has documented 73 injuries and 314 fatalities as a result of entanglement in fishing line (until June 2016). The actual numbers are likely to be far greater as these only include reported ringed birds. These records include a wide range of species including albatross, terns and gulls. The most common were the Cape Gannet (96 records) and Black-browed Albatross (73 records). Although most of these records are marine species there are also a number of fresh water species, such as the Red-knobbed Coot and African Darter, and a few passerines (e.g. Red-winged Starling and Cape Sparrow) becoming entangled (Appendix 1).

A record received by SAFRING is that of an African Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus moquini*) initially ringed in Port Elizabeth in December 2007. The individual was discovered badly decomposed and entangled in fishing line (Fig. 1) on 19 March 2015 at the high tide water mark of Lilyvale Creek estuary, Christmas Rock beach, in the Eastern Cape. Although the bird clearly died some time before the discovery, it was evident that the likely cause was the entanglement in fishing line as it was tightly bound and would not have been able to survive in this state. Discarded fishing line is a common site at Christmas Rock and nearby Seavale as they are popular fishing spots where hooks and line get snagged on rocks or wash up on the beach.



**Fig. 1.** Deceased African Black Oystercatcher entangled in fishing line.

The ring itself was badly worn and was missing the last digit (Fig. 2). This made it difficult to trace the initial record, although the sequence

(693017-693019) was used by the same ringer in the same week on African Black Oystercatchers, and the remaining rings in the sequence (693010-693016) were unused, so the location and dates could be assumed. As it was ringed as a >3 year old individual in 2007, the individual was an adult male in excess of 11 years old.



**Fig. 2.** Worn SAFRING bird ring from a deceased African Black Oystercatcher with the last digit missing

This finding is the 10th such SAFRING record of an African Black Oystercatcher where the cause of fatality was fishing line entanglement (one bird did survive). As this species is Near Threatened (IUCN 2012), and many of the similar fatalities recorded in the SAFRING database are of endangered species, ranging Least Concern to Endangered (IUCN 2012); fishing gear injuries require special attention, and should be a great cause for concern and action. Special care is needed when fishing on both a commercial and recreational level to ensure these deaths are minimised.

### Acknowledgements

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**Appendix 1.** Recorded injuries and fatalities within the SAFRING database resulting from fishing line entanglement (1948 - June 2016)

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Latin Name</b>	<b>Total</b>			
Cape Gannet	<i>Morus capensis</i>	96	White-faced Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	1
Black-browed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	73	Blue Crane	<i>Anthropoides paradiseus</i>	1
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	33	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	1
Swift (Great Crested) Tern	<i>Sterna bergii</i>	23	White-fronted Plover	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>	1
Southern Giant-Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	18	African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>	1
White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>	15	Parasitic Jaeger (Skua)	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	1
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	13	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	1
Wandering Albatross	<i>Diomedea exulans</i>	13	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	1
Southern Pochard	<i>Netta erythrophthalma</i>	11	Bank Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax neglectus</i>	1
African Black Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus moquini</i>	11	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	1
Subantarctic Skua	<i>Catharacta antarctica</i>	9	Reed Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>	1
Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>	6	Crowned Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax coronatus</i>	1
Cape Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>	6	Dark-capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i>	1
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	5	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	1
European Storm-Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	4	Red-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus morio</i>	1
Hartlaub's Gull	<i>Larus hartlaubii</i>	4	Cape Sparrow	<i>Passer melanurus</i>	1
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	3	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	1
Tristan Albatross	<i>Diomedea dabbenena</i>	2	African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	1
Shy Albatross	<i>Diomedea cauta</i>	2	Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	1
Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>	2	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	1
White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>	2	Royal Albatross	<i>Diomedea epomophora</i>	1
Grey-headed Gull	<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>	2	Royal Tern	<i>Sterna maxima</i>	1
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	2	<b>Total</b>		<b>387</b>
African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>	2			
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>	2			
Grey-headed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche chrysostoma</i>	2			
Northern Giant-Petrel	<i>Macronectes halli</i>	2			