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Buller's Mollymawk hooked

On 13 July 1991, I walked the length of Papakanui Spit, South Kaipara Head, looking for Fairy Terns. On the way back I discovered a beached-wrecked mollymawk with about five metres of fishing line protruding from the bill. The hook was deeply embedded in the gut and the end of the line had been cut.

I sent the bird to Graeme Taylor and Alan Tennyson, who confirmed the identification as Buller's Mollymawk (*Diomedea bulleri*). Alan Tennyson believed the hook to be one used on southern Japanese bluefin tuna longline boats. Part of the fleet was working off the west coast of Auckland during June/July and "there is a good chance it came from one of these vessels" (A. Tennyson, pers. comm.).

A minimum of 44 000 albatrosses are estimated to die on tuna longlines in the southern oceans each year and Buller's Mollymawk appears to suffer some of the heaviest mortality of any bird in New Zealand waters (Tennyson 1990, *Seabirds in strife, Forest & Bird* 21: 24-30).

Tuna longline fishing fleets to the north and west of New Zealand are not monitored by independent observers, and so how many birds are killed by these fleets is not known. With Buller's Mollymawk having an estimated population of 150 000 (Tennyson 1990), these deaths on longlines could have serious consequences for the long term survival of the species.

Anybody finding beach-wrecked seabirds with fishing hooks in their bills or gut, or birds entangled in fishing lines, should send the specimens to the Department of Conservation or the National Museum.

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