Title New Zealand Storm-petrel *Oceanites maorianus* was presumed extinct until its rediscovery by bird watchers in New Zealand's Hauraki Gulf Marine Park in 2003. Since then there has been much speculation as to whether this diminutive 35 g seabird breeds on one of the area's many Islands, or is a visitor to New Zealand waters, breeding elsewhere, and has thus little claim to the name 'New Zealand' Storm-petrel. With funding from The Birdlife International Community Conservation Fund - and support of the Hauraki Gulf Forum, DOC, the Auckland Council and Forest & Bird (BirdLife in New Zealand) - a team of researchers have now collected the best evidence yet that the Critically Endangered bird breeds somewhere in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. Before dawn on Wednesday 1 Feb, Chris Gaskin, Dr Matt Rayner (University of Auckland), Shane McInnes (DOC) and boat skipper Brett Rathe headed out into the Hauraki Gulf to try and capture New Zealand Storm-petrels and identify signs of breeding on the birds. The team was able to capture five birds using specially designed net guns. Most importantly, four of the birds showed signs of breeding with bare 'brood patches' on their belly that are used to incubate eggs. This evidence strongly suggests the birds are breeding locally, with islands within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park most likely sites. ?It?s wonderful to think that these birds are breeding right now on islands within the Hauraki Gulf, quite possibly in sight of where we captured them?, said Chris Gaskin. The team will continue their capture programme through February and March to find out as much as they can about the birds? breeding cycle. Armed with that information they will determine when would be the best time to try and track birds to their island breeding location using radio tracking devices.

Safely releasing one of the storm petrels (photo: Shane McInnes).

New Zealand Storm-petrel are listed as Critically Endangered by BirdLife on behalf of the IUCN Red List, and finding where the species breed is of paramount importance for the species conservation. Facing growing threats from invasive species, habitat loss and climate change - the BirdLife International Community Conservation Fund was established in 2007 to support locally-led, practical actions for birds. It?s a timely and vital lifeline. In its first five years the fund has helped communities to establish 23 successful projects in New Zealand and across the Pacific including: Fiji, the Cook Islands, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Palau and the Solomon Islands. The fund is built on the generous support of individuals and organisations. It urgently requires support to continue its vital work and protect threatened species. Donations to the BirdLife International Community Conservation Fund go straight to local action to reverse the growing tide of bird extinctions in New Zealand and

the Pacific. To find out more about how can support the work of the Fund or to become involved with the BirdLife International Community Conservation Fund, please contact: Rebecca Scelly (R.Scelly@forestandbird.org.nz). For more information about BirdLife's Species work click here **Subscribe to The BirdLife Pacific Quarterly E-Newsletter**