

SOP saving stranded seabirds

Title

The Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie (SOP MANU - BirdLife in French Polynesia) has started a rescue program for grounded petrels and shearwaters attracted by lights on Tahiti. Following awareness raising activities by SOP MANU, the number of confirmed cases of grounded Near Threatened Tahiti Petrel has risen from 10 to over 100 birds per annum. “This is thought to be the tip off the ice-berg, with the number of seabirds attracted to bright lights at night being likely to be much higher”, said Lucie Faulquier from SOP MANU.

As a result, a new rescue program has been launched on Tahiti this year with funding from Fondation Nicolas Hulot, Fondation GDF-Suez, EDT (Electricity of Tahiti), Brasserie de Tahiti, Environment Direction of French Polynesia and TE ME UM. “Posters, flyers and stickers have been designed and distributed, articles published in the local newspapers, short documentaries performed on the local television channels and radios, and presentations were given in schools”, added Lucie. Similar actions are planned in the coming months. Furthermore, a network of voluntary ‘petrel rescuers’ is currently being established.

Conferences and information meetings are organised so anyone who wants to learn more about the species can be trained to release them safely. Finally, before being released, the grounded birds are measured and banded, and some blood or feathers are taken for genetic analyses. All the data collected from this program will be used to improve knowledge on this species and on the impact of lights. “We’ve already successfully released 60 petrels and shearwaters this year, and the team is hopeful as it is only the very beginning of the Tahiti Petrel fledgling season which lasts from July to October”, concluded Lucie. For more details, contact Lucie Faulquier at lfaulquier@manu.pf **Subscribe to The BirdLife Pacific Quarterly E-Newsletter**