



ITAGED - Conservation of Threatened Top Marine Predators of the French Southern Territories: Identifying Threats And Getting Essential Data

Targeted territory: French Southern and Antarctic Lands (Amsterdam and Saint Paul)

Total project budget: 163,366 Euros

BEST 2.0 grant awarded: 99,657 Euros

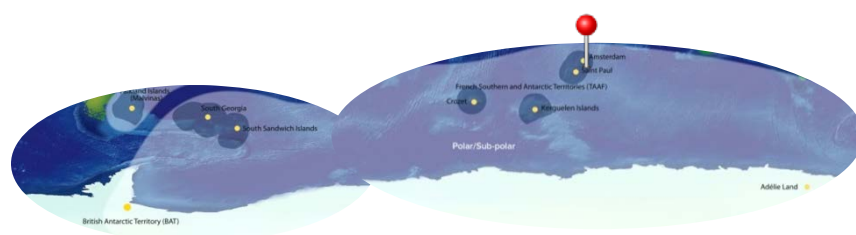
Duration: February 2018 – January 2019 (12 months)

Lead organisation: Délégation régionale Centre Limousin Poitou-Charentes - Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CEBC-CNRS)

Partner organisation: Birdlife International

Background:

Despite its remoteness, Southern Ocean food webs and ecosystems are significantly affected by anthropogenic environmental changes. Therefore, the persistence of marine top predators is increasingly threatened. In the South Indian Ocean the situation in the French Southern and Antarctic Lands is particularly concerning as the seabird community is exceptionally diverse and abundant. The identified or suspected causes of decline include incidental bycatch, introduced species, diseases, density dependence and the effects of competitors and climate change.



Nevertheless, at the population level, the detailed causes of the decline of several seabird species are still poorly known. This lack of knowledge on the specific causes affecting different populations poses a problem when delineating conservation strategies for these threatened communities. As apex marine predators they play a major role in the functioning of marine food webs and are valuable bio-indicators of the state of oceanic ecosystems. To ensure effective conservation efforts more accurate knowledge of their at-sea distribution, key foraging habitats and the overlap between their distributions with human activities, especially fishing grounds, is required.



Description of the Project:

The project will complete at-sea studies of 4 marine top predators which have small, very poorly known, or quickly decreasing populations in the French Southern and Antarctic Lands. Specifically, the Northern Rockhopper Penguin (*Eudyptes moseleyi*), Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche carteri*), Sooty Albatross (*Phoebastria fusca*), and MacGillivray's Prion (*Pachyptila macgillivrayi*). All 4 species are currently classified as globally threatened or data deficient on the IUCN Red List.

The project will utilise existing tracking data for the Northern Rockhopper Penguin, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross and Sooty Albatross, as well as collecting supplementary data for the Northern Rockhopper Penguin and collecting the first tracking datasets for the MacGillivray's Prion at Saint Paul island.

The data will be used to identify the habitat use and foraging areas of the species and will be used to identify marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (mIBAs) to inform the management of the area.

Intended results:

To contribute to the long-term conservation of 4 threatened marine top predators that share a unique biogeographic distribution around Amsterdam and St Paul islands by:



- Improving the understanding of the at-sea distribution and foraging habitat use of the 4 species.
- Identifying the key marine variables and habitats driving the foraging activities of the threatened Northern Rockhopper Penguin, modelling foraging habitat use and using predicted warming scenarios to determine how their foraging range will be affected by climate change.
- Delimiting mIBAs for the breeding and non-breeding periods of the 4 species.

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