

Perfect storm threatens seabirds

Efforts to rid Waiheke of predators aren't enough to save the island's seabirds, according to a new report.

The University of Auckland-led study found the combination of six major threats - human impacts, invasive species, fisheries, pollution, climate change and disease - was promoting population decline.

"Although there has been some great progress in eradicating invasive species from islands to restore seabird populations, this isn't enough for seabirds facing multiple threats both on land and at sea," says report co-author James Russell.

Waiheke is home to seabirds including the little penguin, grey-faced petrel and spotted shags. Northern New Zealand is

a seabird biodiversity hotspot with more than 28 species breeding in the region, five of which are found nowhere else in the world. Because many of these birds are threatened species, the report's authors are calling for urgent action to prevent further decline.

"We must first understand what threats these seabirds are up against before we can establish a baseline from which to work on researching and conserving them," says lead author Edin Whitehead.

Seabird specialist and report co-author Chris Gaskin says the primary threats faced by seabirds on Waiheke include predation from mammals, disturbance from people and coastal development.

"The commissioning and release of the threats to seabirds review highlights the challenges we face and what we need to be doing."

So, what can people do to help to protect Waiheke's seabird populations?

Chris says the first step is to find colonies and breeding sites and to collate responses from the community on seabird sightings and activity.

Some of the most vulnerable seabirds include black petrels which are often threatened by fisheries by-catch and artificial light. Karen Saunders of Native Bird Rescue recently rehabilitated and released a black petrel after it was injured flying into a brightly lit business sign in Onetangi.

"The petrel, which we called Tai, had impact injuries and mild head trauma. In captivity, they don't and won't eat, so we tube-fed him to get his weight up."

Tai stayed at Native Bird Rescue for three nights, before Karen released him from a



A black petrel injured in Onetangi after flying into a brightly lit sign at night, spent three nights at Native Bird Rescue before being released from a cliff-top property. Photo Karen Saunders

cliffside property.

Karen says runoff going into the ocean is also a big issue, as well as overfishing.

"It's important to turn off lights at night and to think about what fish you're consuming, go for sustainable options to prevent overfishing."

The report, published by the Northern New Zealand Seabird Trust with support from the Hauraki Gulf Forum and Foundation North's GIFT initiative was released on 2 June and is available online.

• Sophie Boladeras

MOTU ELECTRICAL
electrical ~ solar ~ energy

021~632~145
office@motuelectrical.co.nz

FIND THE PENGUIN COMPETITION

Find this penguin hiding in one of the other ads in this week's Gulf News and go into the draw to win a \$25 voucher from Oneroa Four Square.

Drop your answer (with your name and contact details) in the box in the Gulf News office by 12pm Tuesday, or email accounts@waihekegulfnews.co.nz.

Brought to you by Oneroa Four Square 151 Ocean View Rd, Oneroa ph 372 7150 Open 7.30am - 8.30pm 7 Days