

Managing artificial lights to reduce seabird vessel strikes



Aotearoa New Zealand is the seabird capital of the world. Our seabirds are taonga (treasures) and our long coastline is dotted with their colonies. Unfortunately, many of our seabirds are threatened with extinction, so managing threats, including light pollution, is critical to their survival.

Why is light management important?

Many seabirds get disorientated by artificial lights at night, which can lead to collisions with vessels (vessel strikes). Following vessel strikes, seabirds can be contaminated with chemicals on deck (eg oil or fuel), causing loss of waterproofing and subsequent drowning. Vessel strikes can also cause direct seabird deaths. The risk of vessel strike is highest during foggy and rainy nights.

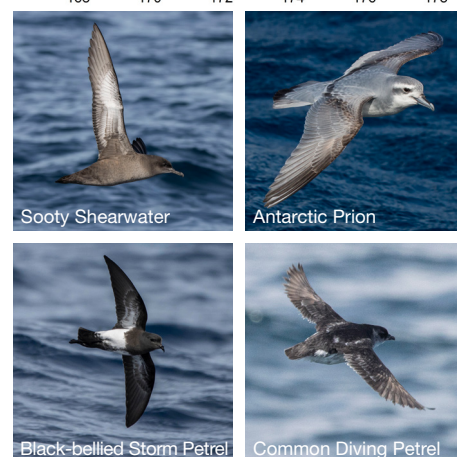
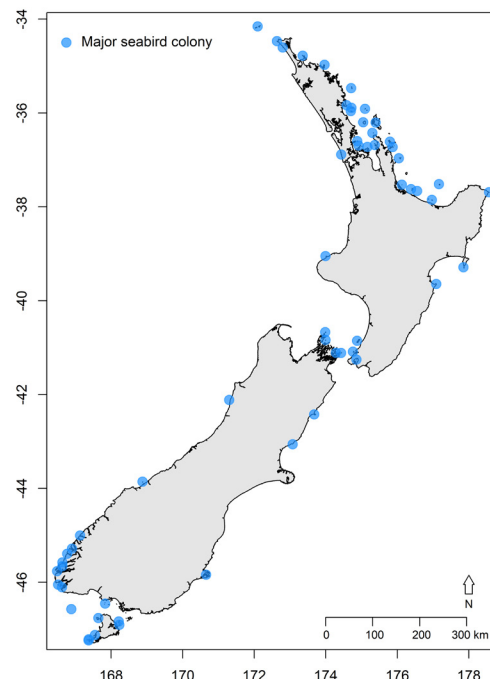
What can you do to help seabirds?

We recommend taking the following actions, while maintaining vessel and crew safety.

- Minimise light use, especially spotlights and floodlights, when you are within 5 km of an offshore island, where most seabird colonies are located.
- Avoid unnecessary movements and activities at night.
- Eliminate unnecessary lights.
- Shield lights to only light areas essential for safe operations.
- Use lights with reduced or filtered blue and violet wavelengths (eg 2200 K).
- Use black-out blinds wherever possible.
- Practice safe seabird handling and release techniques when vessel strikes occur (see diagrams below).
- Record and report vessel strikes.

Commercial fishers

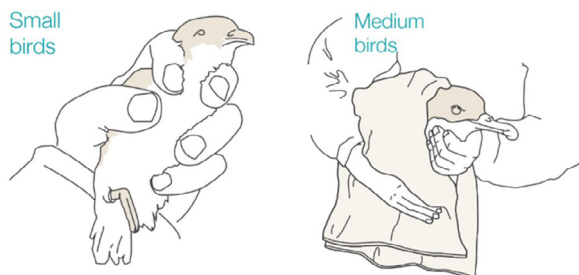
- Follow your Protected Species Risk Management Plan and operational procedures.
- Contact your liaison officer for more information.



Shearwaters and petrels (including diving petrels, storm petrels and prions) are particularly susceptible to vessel strikes. Photos: Oscar Thomas

For more information contact marine@doc.govt.nz.

Safe seabird handling techniques



Safe release techniques

