

"Depending on the nutritional status of the seabirds which consume marine plastics, a fraction of these potentially toxic elements may be absorbed, negatively affecting the health of the birds," she said.

Co-author Associate Professor Sophie Petit from the University of South Australia said it is difficult to determine the nutritional and toxicological effects of plastics on migratory birds such as prions that have huge foraging ranges.

"However, this new evidence suggests that even relatively few pieces of plastic can potentially have an impact on bird health," Associate Professor Petit said.

"It's a concern because, although the birds we sampled died as the result of a storm, what happens to ones that ingest many more pieces of plastic?"

"This research is an important first step towards the evaluation of plastic impacts on wild seabirds," Associate Professor Petit said.

Media contact: Andrew Rhodes (03) 6226 6683, email: ajrhodes@utas.edu.au

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Communications and Media Office
University of Tasmania
+61 3 6226 2124
Media.Office@utas.edu.au