

## Chapter 6

### Breeding seabirds of conservation interest

Julien Baudat-Franceschi, Jérôme Spaggiari and  
Nicolas Barré

---

#### SUMMARY

- Among the thirteen seabird and three coastal species studied, the number of species confirmed to be breeding ranged from one to five species per site for the 28 sites sampled. (see Table 6.1). In total, 12 species were observed as confirmed breeding.
- A new breeding species for the area, the Beach Thick-Knee (*Esacus magnirostris*) was observed (one to two pairs).
- Two lagoon marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs) were identified that included the main breeding area in New Caledonia (about a hundred pairs) for a highly endangered subspecies of Fairy Tern (*Sterna nereis exsul*). Previously, only about 20 pairs had been recorded in New Caledonia.
- A relict population of an endemic subspecies of Island Thrush (*Turdus poliocephalus xanthopus*) was rediscovered on Yandé Island. This subspecies is considered extinct from Grande Terre and had not been observed for 30 years.
- Several first or new reports were recorded during the survey. These included: nine new colonies of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters (*Puffinus pacificus chlororhynchos*); two new nesting sites of Tahiti Petrels (*Pseudobulweria rostrata trouessarti*); confirmation of the presence on Carrey Islet of the only colony of Brown Boobies (*Sula leucogaster plotus*) on the New Caledonian lagoon and of the only two pairs of Masked Boobies (*Sula dactylatra personata*); and the first census of the population of Australian Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus cristatus*) in the area.
- Several recommendations are made based on our findings. These include the implementation of participatory management plans on the IBAs of Koumac and Yandé Island in collaboration with local institutions and communities, management of human frequentation to ensure protection of seabirds' breeding sites and eradication or at least control of introduced predators. Additionally, a monitoring component of seabirds' populations and a specific study with the aim of preserving the last Caledonian population of Island Thrushes should be included. Recommended actions include local ecotourism-based development and creation of a small natural reserves network. For Yandé Island, the latter action should be implemented in synergy with the inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

---

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the conservation challenges facing breeding seabirds in the survey area. Additionally, information is included on two terrestrial birds of interest. While seabirds are endothermic species living outside of the water and breeding on land, they are indissociable from seas and oceans. Most tropical species using the islets of a lagoon to breed depend on coral reefs for food. These birds form a singular community of organisms that is dependent on the marine environment and is easy to survey. As a community of species consuming a large