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TÍTULO: SEABIRDS POPULATION MONITORING: CAUSES OF DEATH AND HEALTH ASSESSMENT IN MARINE BIRDS IN SANTA CATARINA, BRAZIL

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RESUMO:

Implications of pathogens actions upon biodiversity has been recently discussed in a great number of studies, as well as the evaluation of diseases role on species and ecosystems management, breeding programs of wild species in captivity, reintroduction strategies, natural environment restoration and ecosystem health. This study shows an important health investigation on all marine bird found sick and sent to an Rehabilitation and Triage Centre (CETAS SC) held in Santa Catarina State, Brazil, within a 18 months period. CETAS SC is managed by the governmental IBAMA and the Environmental Police of Santa Catarina (BPMA), working also with the NGO Associação R3 Animal in order to receive and treat all birds found within the coast of the region and also seized from the trafficking of illegal pet trade. In case of death of marine birds under rehabilitation, it was performed necropsy in order to analyze health conditions of the bird and infer the cause of death. When possible, histopathological and microbiological analysis were also completed. We considered in this work 56 necropsies accomplished in marine birds from February 2010 till July 2011. The majority of birds sampled were Magellanic Penguins (*Spheniscus magellanicus*), which represented 41% of the birds necropsied, followed by Kelp Gulls (*Larus dominicanus*) which represented 35% of the total. Other analyzed birds included several species of Sternidae, Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*), Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*), Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*), Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*), Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*), Black-browed Albatross (*Thalassarche melanophrys*), Atlantic Petrel (*Pterodroma incerta*) and Northern Giant Petrel (*Macronectes halli*). The main causes of death on all examined marine birds were airsacculitis, endoparasitism, pneumonia, trauma, hepatitis, hypovolemic shock, hepatic insufficiency and sepsis. Considering identified pathogens, *Plasmodium relictum* (avian malaria) were the most significant, especially for penguins. In some cases, cause of death could not be determined due to the carcass autolysis. Most of the animals analyzed were migratory birds, posing a more complex and interesting scenario considering epidemiological concerns and the potential to widespread disease or pathogen dispersion. Reports like these reflect the need to integrate theories and practical experiences in the field of veterinary medicine, ecology, demography, taxonomy and genetics to wildlife epidemiology, enhancing practical approaches to prevent species extinction.