

***French Professor Matthieu Le Corre Awarded 2009 Pew Fellowship
in Marine Conservation
Three-year Project Studies Seabird Behavior to Locate Hotspots in
the Indian Ocean***

WASHINGTON – Matthieu Le Corre, Ph.D., a lecturer at the University of Réunion Island in Réunion, France, has been awarded the 2009 Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation for his project to use seabird behavior to identify biodiversity hotspots in the Indian Ocean. He is the second recipient from France, and the first from Réunion, an island located east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean.

“My project is the first in the tropics to study seabird foraging patterns on such a large scale,” said Dr. Le Corre. “My hope is that it will help to establish some marine protected areas and to improve the conservation status of many endangered marine animals of the region.”

Pew Fellows in Marine Conservation receive \$150,000 to conduct a three-year conservation project designed to address critical challenges to healthy oceans. Le Corre will use miniaturized transmitters to study the foraging patterns of seabirds. With this data, he will provide the first substantial clues of where biodiversity hotspots occur in the western Indian Ocean. Top predators like seabirds are powerful indicators of such areas because they often feed on prey driven to the surface by large fish. Le Corre will use this research to design marine protected areas to help reduce the ecological impacts of Indian Ocean fisheries. He also hopes to collect data that can help identify potential threats to seabirds when at sea.

“Dr. Le Corre’s project brilliantly uses nature’s own ‘tracking device’ to locate areas of significant biological diversity and concentration,” said Joshua S. Reichert, managing director of the Pew Environment Group. “By pinpointing these ‘hotspots,’ he can focus his efforts on protecting the most critical locations for the long-term health of the western Indian Ocean.”

Le Corre has been studying seabirds in the western Indian Ocean for more than 15 years. He is Réunion Island’s country coordinator for the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Associations, an international organization dedicated to the study and conservation of marine life in this region. Le Corre is also assistant director of the Marine Ecology Laboratory at the University of Réunion Island and the leader of its Seabird Ecology team. Le Corre studied biology and ecology before receiving a Ph.D. in marine ecology at the Chizé Centre for Biological Studies in 1998.

The Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation funds science and other projects that address critical challenges in the conservation of the sea, including communication of project

information to increase awareness of global marine issues. Through a rigorous nomination and review process, an international committee of marine specialists selects Pew Fellows based on the strengths of their proposed projects, including their potential to protect ocean environments. Five unique and timely projects led by outstanding professionals in their fields are chosen annually. Since 1996, the Pew Marine Fellows Program has awarded 110 Fellowships to individuals from 29 countries.

Photographs and more information about each of the 2009 Pew Fellows in Marine Conservation are available at <http://www.pewmarinefellows.org/2009>.

The Pew Environment Group is the conservation arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-governmental organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improving public policy, informing the public and stimulating civic life.

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