

# New technique may help assess how plastic pollution impacts wildlife

November 4 2014

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By swabbing oil from a gland located at the end of a seabird's tail and analyzing the sample with gas chromatography-mass spectrometry, researchers have developed a way to measure wildlife's exposure to plastics.

The minimally invasive technique will prove useful for detecting plastics exposure at population and species levels. Such monitoring is increasingly important as annual plastics production continues to rise—production has increased from less than 2 tons per year in the 1950s to nearly 280 million tons in 2011.

"We're excited about this new method we've developed and we are collaborating with BirdLife International, Oikonos and other [seabird](#) biologists as we hope to assess population- and species-level impacts to [plastics](#) exposure at the global scale," said Dr. Britta Hardesty, lead author of the *Methods in Ecology and Evolution* study.

"We hope that by applying this approach, we can provide critical information needed to inform [policy makers](#) and citizens about the impacts of our plastic litter."

Provided by Wiley

Citation: New technique may help assess how plastic pollution impacts wildlife (2014, November 4) retrieved 24 April 2024 from

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