



Photo: Juan F. Masello, New Island, Falkland Islands

Amid the Colony

The Dolphin Gull *Larus scoresbii* lives on the coasts of South America and on the Falkland Islands. The animals breed in colonies that nest near sea lions or other sea birds, such as penguins and cormorants. Dolphin Gulls build their nests in protected areas between boulders or tufts of grass. The clutch contains one to three eggs from which, after nearly four weeks, the chicks hatch. Dolphin Gulls do not feed from the sea, but from the coasts, on such delicacies as sea lion excrement, cormorant vomit, marine invertebrates, mussels and insects. In their search for food, they also regularly comb through washed-up algae. Scientists working with Petra Quillfeldt at the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology are studying the food strategies of these birds. They are investigating whether the individual animals specialize in certain food sources. To follow the birds over a longer time period, they are tagged with a small data logger that uses GPS to capture their position for the coming days, and that stores acceleration data for behavioral analyses. Stable isotopes are used to differentiate the food sources. To capture the birds, the researchers set a wire basket trap on the nest. The seagull watches and, as soon as the researcher leaves, will try to occupy its nest again. The reader for the data dangles from the researcher's neck, and the data is read out via a radio link.