Summary of Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*) wreck based on gross examination

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A wreck of live and dead stranded Red Phalaropes (*Phalaropus fulicaria*) occurred along the central and northern California coast during heavy storms in late November 2005 through early January 2006. All birds presented at rehabilitation centers were cold, weak, and starving. Many responded to supportive care and were released (see inset photo, © IBRRC), and others, were too compromised and did not respond favorably. These small (60g), pelagic birds are rarely found intact on beach surveys, and this wreck provided unique opportunity to gather basic information about the species, such as the sex ratio at sea, state of molt, and age. As of January 20, 2006, a total of 33 birds were submitted for necropsy from rehabilitation centers and beach survey programs to the Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center. We measured and necropsied all birds submitted, took cytology of the lung, saved tissues in formalin for histology, and banked liver and skeletal muscle at -20 degrees. A subset of approximately 7 birds will be submitted for histological evaluation to help screen for an underlying condition to predispose to starvation and death. As a general summary, all birds were in winter plumage, not molting, and the majority (27 of 31, 87%) were adult females with quiescent reproductive tracts. All birds examined were emaciated, without subcutaneous body fat, often with liver atrophy, and anemic. Most birds had urate stasis evident in the kidneys, ureters and cloaca, which is suggestive of dehydration. We commonly found gastrointestinal hemorrhage, which is indicative of stress. The majority of birds (18 of 27, 67%) also had plastic in the ventriculus (also proventriculus in one case), which was not a great enough burden to cause gastrointestinal

dysfunction but is reflective of ingestion of plastic fragments in the marine environment prior to rehabilitation. Because phalaropes are opportunistic surface-feeding birds they likely ingest plastic indiscriminately while at sea. Infrequently, birds had early respiratory aspergillosis, which likely is secondary to debilitation and rehabilitation. FInal histopathology reports are pending.

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