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Montevideo, July 23 (RHC)-- In Montevideo, the Uruguayan capital, the SOS Fauna Marina NGO confirmed that over 300 Magellanic penguins appeared dead on the Uruguayan coast in the last week. This occurred during their annual migration from Argentina's Patagonia to Brazil, where the penguins

seek food and warmer waters for the winter.

“Food scarcity as a consequence of the overfishing of the South Atlantic and the effects of climate change on ocean currents could be the causes of the catastrophe,” SOS Fauna Marina environmentalist Richard Tesore said, adding that most of the penguins were very skinny.

“They had no food in their stomachs, not a layer of fat. To make such a long trip, it is essential to eat a lot of calories and have a large layer of fat on the body, which acts as a thermal insulator and protects the animals from low temperatures. The animals died of hypothermia caused by lack of food,” he said.

For many years, the Uruguayan coasts have witnessed the appearance of lifeless penguins. In the last three years, however, these events have intensified. Tesore commented that he began his work as an environmentalist more than 30 years ago, penguins used to die from accidentally ingesting plastic materials.

“On this occasion, the massive deaths show the scarcity of food. The overexploitation of the fishing resource is noticeable and it affects the birds as well,” he explained.

Additionally, global warming began to alter marine currents in the 1990s, which has influenced some species of fish to no longer reach the waters near the Uruguayan coast. Among them is "manila," a species that penguins feed on.

Throughout this week, the Uruguayan Environmental Ministry performed necropsies on the Magellanic penguins. After forensic investigations, authorities determined that their deaths are not related to bird flu.

In the last month, citizens found over 20 dead turtles on the Uruguayan coast. Dead dolphins were also detected on the coasts of Canelones, Maldonado and Rocha.

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