

Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



REGISTERED CHARITY No. 206719

BULLETIN No. 139

SEPTEMBER 1998

THE FIFTY SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will take place at 1400 on Friday 4 December in the MOD Theatre in Northumberland House, in Northumberland Avenue just off Trafalgar Square. The nearest London Underground Stations are Charing Cross and Embankment.

After the meeting SLt D Gates RN will give a talk on the 1998 Universities Expedition to the Bolivian Foothills of the Andes.

All members, their friends and relatives are welcome, but for security reasons we have to provide a nominal list of those attending before the meeting. **Members are requested to let Hon Sec know if they are attending and the names of any guests not later than 28 November.**

EXPED NEWS SEE PAGE 2

SPECIAL REDUCED OFFERS TO RNBWS MEMBERS

British Birds. In news from other organisations members can see a selection of seabird articles from recent editions. Apart from papers on identification, ecology, behaviour and conservation there are now monthly reports on migrants, breeding birds and rarities plus numerous other features. Good value at £36.00 a year (£35.00 direct debit). A 25% saving on the normal price.

Bird Watchers Yearbook. This is offered at £11.45 (normal price £12.99). It includes articles, news of books and papers published during the year, a list of reserves and observatories and a directory of County, National and International bodies. It also has Sunset and Tide Tables. I find it very handy to have. (overseas postage £1.00). This year Buckingham Press are also offering 'Who's Who in Ornithology' at a reduced price of £23.45, or if both the Birdwatchers Yearbook and Who's Who are ordered they are available for only £29.95 pp, a 39% discount.

BUPA Private Healthcare. BUPA are offering discounts on their private healthcare policies placed through societies. The amount of discount will depend on the number of members joining. If anyone is interested please contact Hon Sec RNBWS who will formally put you in touch with BUPA.

RNBWS TIES AND LOGOS

Navy blue ties with a multiple Sea Swallow motif are available from Hon Treasurer at £6.00 each including postage. Shield shaped logos suitable for windcheaters etc. are also available at 50p each plus postage (20p in UK).

PRIZE FOR THE BEST ARTICLE FOR SEA SWALLOW BY A NEW CONTRIBUTOR

It is intended to offer a prize each year of £20 for the best article submitted to the Editor during the year by a member whose work has not previously been published in *Sea Swallow*. The conditions of the award are as follows:

- Articles must be about seabirds at sea, seabird colonies, or landbirds at sea.
- Articles should be between 1,500 and 2,000 words long, typed double-spaced on A4 paper, and accompanied by appropriate maps and illustrations. It would be helpful, though not essential, if the text could also be supplied on 3.5" diskette, specifying the word-processing software used. ASCII back-up is also desirable, in case of incompatibility.
- Entries must reach the Editor by 31 May.

Entries will be judged by a panel consisting of the Editor and 2 other members of the Executive Committee, who will only make the award if they are satisfied that an article of sufficiently high standard has been submitted.

DATA PROTECTION ACT

Members are requested to advise the Hon Sec if they do not want their name and address to appear in the next computer generated List of Members.

FIELD WORK COOPERATION BETWEEN RNBWS, AOS AND RAFOS

As matters stand at the moment, the following major expeditions are planned in the foreseeable future:

Diego Survey 2. An RNBWS led expedition planned for late 1999 following on from successful pilot work which brought out raw data from uninhabited atolls in the Chagos Archipelago, Indian Ocean in 1997.

Comment: This survey is open to one member from AOS and RAFOS respectively.

Varangerfjord 1999. A RAFOS led trip to study high-Arctic species, in particular Steller's Eider, in support of Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Work, proposed for June 1999.

Comment: May be single Service

Danube Delta 2000. A RAFOS proposed six week expedition primarily designed to census Red-fronted Geese. The possibility has been discussed of each society "leading" a two-week section.

Millennium Bird Count. An AOS proposal, the exact format to be undertaken has still to be confirmed.

It would appear that with these major expeditions happening in the near

Mr S.M. Lister, MV Poolster, Sharm el Sheikh, Red Sea July 1996(2)
Nigel Millis, RRS Bransfield, Adeliade Is. – Argentina – South Orkneys – Falklands – Grimsby(UK), 23 Mar – 3 May 1998(20 census sheets).

LANDBIRDS

Nigel Millis, RRS Bransfield, Adeliade Is. – Argentina – South Orkneys – Falklands – Grimsby(UK), 23 Mar – 3 May 1998 (3 sheets + 14 35mm colour slides).
Mrs Judith Pentreath. Yacht Fiskery, around Azores and to Oporto, Apr – May 1998 several landbird records with seabird observations.

AMENDMENT LIST No 4 TO MEMBERSHIP LIST dated Oct 1996

MEMBERS

New Members

Bainbridge P. AB(SR) – 7 Seaton Place, Ford, Plymouth, PL2 1PS
Cowdray A.J.B. Lt Cdr RNR – West by North, 15 & 17 Bennells Ave, Tankerton, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 2HL.
Down E.H. Esq – 18 Birklands Park, London Rd, St Albans, Herts, AL1 1TS.
Morton N.P.B. Esq – 5 Primrose Drive, Craigiehall, South Queensferry, Edinburgh, EH30 9TW.
Change of Address
Astley-Jones E. Cdr RN – Meadow View, 25 Dunsany Park, New Road, Haverfordwest, SA61 1OD.
Carr P. WO2 RM – HQ Squadron, RMB Chivenor, Nr Barnstaple, N. Devon, EX32 8ND.
Finn M.G. Radio Off MN – 122 Kingsrey, Maynooth, Co Kildare, Eire.
Morgan P.J.C. Mr – Gabbard, 16 Cunninghill Rd, Inverurie, Aberdeen, AB51 3TS.
Peach C C Capt RN - FCO(MANILLA) King Charles St, London, SW1A 2AH.
Wragg G Capt MN - Beach Rd, RD7, ASHBURTON, New Zealand.

Resigned

Petrie M.J.P. Lt Cdr Retd.
Strickland M.J. Lt Cdr Retd.

Lost Touch

Bloomfield E.G. Esq
Cuthbert L.S. Miss
Dodd R.A. PO
Snell A.J. CPO

LIBRARY MEMBERS

Change of Address

Museum Nationaal, Leiden is now the Naturalis Bibliothek, Postbus 9517, 2300 RA, Leiden

future, some form of tri-service ornithological training would assist leaders, and particularly participants, in achieving some worthwhile conservation orientated results. It is proposed that a RNBWS/AOS/RAFOS training week should be run the week of 28 June – 2 July 1999. The format would take the form of the following:

Sunday 27 June 1999

Participants arrive at RMB Chivenor (near Barnstaple) and accommodated overnight.

Monday 28 June

Helo flight to Lundy – Establish tented camp – Introductory brief – Divide into teams – Island acquaint/general birding.

Tuesday 29 June

Team A – All day – Introduction to bird ringing (seabird pulli)

Team B – Introduction into survey techniques – counting seabird colonies

Team A – Night – Introduction to night ringing (Storm Petrels and Manx Shearwater)

Team B – Night- Pub

Wednesday 30 June

Reverse of 29 June

Thursday 1 July

Team A – Morning – Advanced ringing – Cliff nesting species (Roping to Shags and Kittiwakes)

Team B – Morning – Further Survey Techniques – Breeding passerines

Team A – As per morning Team B

Team B – As per morning Team A

Friday 2 July

Either general birding or mammal census work (Soay Sheep/Sika Deer/Feral Goat)

Weeks wash-up/debrief

Return by helo to RMB Chivenor

With Diego Survey 2 on the horizon the ringing and census work will prove invaluable experience for potential candidates. Danube Delta and Varangerfjord would both benefit from observers being taught standardised survey techniques. The Lundy trip could also potentially be used to assess candidate's suitability for expeditions.

NEWS FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The Army Ornithological Societies Newsletter of 20 July 1998 includes a report of the AGM, a review of the MOD Bird Count in Army establishments together with reports on the ringing and nest box programmes.

The RAF Ornithological Society Journal No 27 covers an expedition to Orfordness which included a study of nest site preference of Lesser Black-backed Gull, *L.fuscus* and Herring Gull, *L.argentatus*. The former preferred long grass whilst Herring Gulls preferred more open sites. Herring Gulls also seemed to make more use of posts etc as lookouts. An item by Dr Bourne suggests that birds seen flying south west out to sea from SW Portugal are most likely to be migrants overshooting, many

realise their mistake returning later in the day. The last two items concern an expedition to Varangerfjord, Norway mainly studying Steller's, *P.stelleri* and King Eider, *S.spectabilis*.

World Birdwatch Vol 20 No 1 reports that the population of Sooty Shearwater, *P.griseus* has fallen 90% from its 1987-94 figure of 5 million, p2, probably due to climatic changes. Pages 8-11 are devoted to Pitcairn, Dulcie and Oeno Islands which have been targeted for rat eradication with encouraging results. On Oeno hundreds of young petrels, Murphy's *P.ultima*, Herald, *P.arminjoniana* and Kermadec, *P.neglecta*, have hatched and survived, whereas before hardly any survived. Three species are already prospecting Pitcairn Island. The search for the Jamaican Petrel, *P.caribbaea* has led to the discovery of a possible new breeding species for Jamaica, Audubon's Shearwater, *P.ilherminieri* p.22.

British Birds Vol 91 No 7 records the unusual display behaviour of one of a flock of Fulmar, *F.glacialis* on the sea which gave a threat display each time a Great Skua, *S.skua* approached, p.280. In Western Madagascar a party of Caspian Terns, *S.caspia* which roosted in Lake Bemamba were seen 'buzzing' Herons on their way to and from their feeding grounds, they flew straight at the heads of the herons forcing them to duck, p.285. Thirty centimetre lengths of plastic piping, coated in glue and then rolled in sand for camouflage were left in a Little Tern, *S.albifrons*, colony at Great Yarmouth. Many chicks used the pipes for shelter while their parents were absent and breeding results are very encouraging, p.260. **Vol 91 No 9** discusses the effects of weather conditions on the appearance of large numbers of Sabine's Gulls *L.sabini*, off SW England and NW France, usually associated with deep depressions crossing or to the north of the Bay of Biscay. This suggests a late summer and autumn feeding area much closer inshore than previously thought, p.386-397.

Fulmar No 84, Winter-Spring 98, has an account of a passage from Peterhead to the Arabian Sea via Suez and another between the South Moscos Islands off Burma, p.3. An article on page 4 is by a North Sea observer who sails on a gravel dumper, he has set up a 5ft pine tree which is hung with apples, plums, grapes and even kiwi fruit. His main customers have been Blackcaps, *S.atracapilla*, but another 9-10 species have taken advantage of the tree, including a Barred Warbler, *S.nisoria*.

Scottish Birds, Spring 98 has a survey of Storm-petrels, *H.pelagicus* on the Treshnish Isles in 1996 with over 3000 on Fladda, p.145-153. The status of Storm-petrels on Mousa, Shetland Isles in examined, p.154-159. Fish prey in the diet of Great Skua on St Kilda is examined, most fish were probably scavenged from fishing boats, p.160-5. The Summer 98 edition has a study of seaduck, divers and grebes in the Moray Firth during the winters of 1977 to 1995 and shows nationally important concentrations which are unprotected, p.206-222.

Scottish Bird News No 49, March 98 pages 6-7 outline the birds of the Firth of Forth and their activities, together with the human activities in the area. Whilst the breeding grounds are protected the feeding grounds are not; this poses a problem for any seabird management. Pages 8-9 present a similar survey of Fair Island. Here a

Grebe in a whole condition are required for monitoring pesticide levels. Pack in a sealed plastic bag inside a box or padded envelope and send first class post to Miss L. Dale, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood, Abbots Ripton, HUNTINGDON, Cambridgeshire, PE17 2LS. Mark package 'Perishable Goods'. Please include your name, address, place found, date and circumstances of finding.

Year of the Nightingale 1999 – A survey of sites will be carried out to see how they have fared in recent years and will be part of a wider enquiry into the loss of the woodland species. BTO are asking for funds to help.

Details of other current surveys are available from Hon Sec RNBWS.

Durham University will be examining sites along the Northumberland coast to assess the possible effects of cleaner effluent on estuarine species. Terns are one of the species being studied, p.11-12.

MOD Bird Count – The results of this years count have not reached me in time for the bulletin, but I understand that this year Little Egret have bred in an MOD(N) establishment.

RINGING

Shags – Birds breeding on the Isle of May have been marked with yellow rings in the past, white in 1997 and some birds have red rings. Any sightings should be reported to Mike Harris, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Hill of Brathens, Banchory, Kincardineshire, AB31 4BY.

TOURS

The British-Bulgarian Friendship Society are sponsoring an 11 day tour on the Black Sea coast to see Red-breasted Geese and other wintering geese and ducks, under the leadership of Maurice Whitehouse, RSPB, 20-30 Nov 1998. £650 a head excluding lunches, travel insurance, airport taxes £26 and single room supplement £66. Further details are available from Hon Sec RNBWS.

REPORTS RECEIVED

The following Seabird and Landbird Reports have been received since the publication of Bulletin 138:

SEABIRDS

Captain Gabriel Banica. Observations from the Romanian coast, 1995-97(8)
Hydrographic Department Surveys around Britain, especially Naval Party 1016 off SE England, Mar – Sept 1997(15), and HMS SCOTT "Natural Phenomena Sheets"(7)

Mrs Judith Pentreath. Yacht Fiskery, around Azores and to Oporto, Apr-May 1998 (3).

Also Yacht Salvation Jane 23 Jun – 20 Jul 1998 Greece to Sicily (Ionian Sea)(4)
Captain D M Simpson MN. Notes from the Gulf of Papua, 1997.

Mr Henry Turner. Notes from Black Sea coast of Bulgaria, 15-16 May 1997(1).

EXXON VALDEZ indicates that while some species in Price William Sound are showing some signs of recovery most species are not, p.33. An attempt to assess the value of courtship feeding by male Common Tern, *S.hirundo* failed to show any direct increase in egg size, p.38. A population of orange billed Masked Boobies, *S.dactylatra* has been found breeding in the Galapagos and Malpelo Island, Columbia. It is recommended that this be given separate species recognition as the Nazca Booby, *S.granti*, p.40. Red-footed Bobbies, *S.sula* have expanded strongly over the last 50 years probably as a result of Tuna fishing. In the long term a reduction in tuna, which drive the Boobies prey to the surface may have an adverse effect, p.41.

HONGKONG Bird Report 1996 records a mixed year for seabirds. A Red-footed Bobby was seen for the first time and a Christmas Island Frigate Bird, *F.andrewsi* for the third, both in early August. An immature Lesser Frigate Bird, *F.aerial* was seen 5 Jan. It was a poor year for many gulls, Great Black-headed, *L.ichthyaetus* were down to 5, Brown-headed, *L.brunnicephalus* to one, Heuglin's Gull, *L.heuglini* at 285 was down on recent years and Slaty-backed, *L.schistisagus* were down to 4. Saunder's Gull reached 79. Caspian Terns, *S.caspia* (10) were down and there were no wintering birds but Black-Naped, *S.sumatrana*, Bridled, *S.anaethetus* and Roseate Tern, *S.dougalli* had their most successful breeding season. Common Tern, *S.hirundo* and Aleutian Tern, *S.aleutica* had good spring numbers and low autumn numbers, whilst Little Tern, *S.albifrons* were well down. There were several sightings of Ancient Murrelet, *S.antiquus*.

Recent Ornithological Literature No 75 includes references to items on the flight behaviour of seabirds relative to wind direction and their wing shape, p.3. A Laughing Gull, *L.atricilla* being killed by Least Terns, *S.antillarum*, p.5. Over 54% of Lesser Black-backed Gull, *L.fuscus* do not contain eggs, p.8. References to articles on seabirds of Rum Island and Beagle Island off Tasmania and confirmation of sightings of Streaked Shearwater, *C.leucomelas*, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, *P.pacificus* and Hutton's Shearwater, *P.huttoni* off Broome, Australia are mentioned on page 12. The Asiatic form of Marbled Murrelet, *B.perdix* was found for the first time in Alberta in 1994.

An article in the **Daily Telegraph, 27 Aug**, reports that by fitting radio transmitters to Short-tailed Shearwaters, *S.tenuirostris* it had been found that parent birds had a cycle of several short local trips followed by a long one which might extend up to 9,600 miles and which probably enabled the birds to feed up as well as deliver a large meal on their return. Birds were also recorded as diving up to 30m when hunting.

LANDLUBBERS CORNER

BTO News No 215 has requests for intact corpses for post mortems:

Song Thrush – Dr James Kirkwood, Tel no 01582 831818 or Fax 01582 831414 would appreciate any corpses, which should not be touched with bare hands. A record of date found, place and circumstances must be kept.

Birds of Prey – Corpses including those of Heron, Kingfisher and Great Crested

marine protected area has been proposed and this is supported by the Fair Isle community and the Scottish National Trust. Great Skua predation on seabirds is discussed on pages 10 and 11. Seabirds appear to form an increasing part of breeding Skua's diets varying from 15 to 45% at the worst site on Fair Isle. The majority of their food is whitefish discards from the fishing fleet and proposals to reduce discards could have a serious effect on seabird populations. The 1997 breeding season was the worst since 1990 for Shetland Kittiwakes, *R.tridactyla* with a result of around 0.25/pair, p.12. The most important seabird colony on the Clyde on Sanda was reached by mink in 1996, efforts will be made to trap them before they destroy the colony, p.13. No 50, June 98 has a brief item on watching all 4 species of Skua passing Hound Point in the Firth of Forth, p.10 and another on a Hungarian ringed first winter Mediterranean Gull, *L.melanocephalus* at Leven in August 97, possible sources of Scottish birds are considered, p.11.

London Bird Report 1996 includes 2 Ring-billed Gulls, *L.delawarensis* Mar 23 and Nov 23, a Pomarine Skua, *S.pomarinus* 14-17 Nov and Great Skua Sept 2 and 18. A Sandwich Tern, *S.sandvicensis* arrived on March 21, the earliest ever recorded. Mediterranean Gull, *L.melanocephalus* and Yellow-legged Gull, *L.a.michahellis/cachinnans* were both down on 1965 numbers as were Kittiwake. A Razorbill, *A.torda* appeared on the Thames on Feb 20, the first for 6 years.

Dutch Birding Vol 20 No 2, pages 66-8 discuss the dark phase of the Fulmar, *F.glacialis* and notes the risk of confusing one with a Soft-plumaged Petrel, *P.fae/madeira/mollis*. The latter have a distinctive flight style with constantly angled boomerang shaped wings. A pure white belly and underparts with blackish underwings and the absence of the pale flash which appears on both surfaces of the Fulmar's inner primaries should help to separate the 2 species. Unconfirmed records include a Pink-footed Shearwater, *P.cratopus* collected in 1981 at Valdes Peninsula, Chubut, Argentina is the first record for the Atlantic. Two Red-tailed Tropicbirds, *P.aethereus* were seen at Fuenteventura, Canary Islands, 20 Apr. Laughing Gulls, *L.atricilla* were reported at Boddam Voe Shetland 18-9 Mar. Sabine's Gull, *L.sabini* occurred at Agadir, Tamri, Oued Sous and Cap Rhia 17 Apr – 1 May, whilst Bonaparte's Gull, *L.philadelphia* were seen at Lough, Cork in March, also at Aasee, Munster, Germany and at Plymouth, 5 Apr. A spring peak of Ring-billed Gulls, *L.delawarensis* occurred at Sandymount, Dublin on 17 Mar. American Herring Gulls, *L.smithsonianus* were seen at four sites in Britain. Two Pontic Gulls, *L.cachinnans* were seen at Boulogne. A Kumlien's Gull, *L.g.kumlieni* stayed at St Mary's Scilly, 6 Apr. Vol 20 No 3 has an article (in Dutch) on an adult Laughing Gull, which spent from 22 Aug to 20 Oct at Groningen, the first record for the Netherlands, p.107-110. Unchecked reports include 39 Bulwer's Petrel, *B.bulwerii* 3-4 km off La Palma, Canary Islands and the first Swinhoe's Storm-petrel, *O.monorhis* for Portugal which was trapped in the Algarve 27 Jun. The Gannet, *M.bassanus* colony on Helgoland has increased to 26 pairs. Reports from the Belarus area include the first Great Black-headed Gull, *L.ichthyaetus* at Bielai 27 May, two nests of Mediterranean Black-headed Gulls, *L.melanocephalus*, possibly on its

northern breeding limit and a breeding colony of Yellow-legged Herring Gulls, *L. argentatus 'omissus'*. A laughing Gull spent from 9 May into June at Titchwell, Norfolk where it was joined by a Franklin's Gull on the 10th, the latter later went on to Lincolnshire and Shetland. Another Laughing Gull was at Finistere 5 May – 3 Jun. Single Bonaparte's Gull were seen at Anglesey, Wales 16-17 May and in Kent from 25 May to late June. The second Black-headed Gull, *L. ridibundus* for Australia was seen near Darwin 1-15 Feb. The first Black-tailed Gull, *L. crassirostris* for Newfoundland was seen near St Johns 19 May and another was seen at Sable Island. A Ross's Gull, *R. rosea* was at Tingwall Loch until 21 May.

SULA Vol 12 No 1 announces the forthcoming merger of SULA with the Seabird Group magazine in 1999, the new magazine will be called Atlantic Seabirds. Articles include the results of an enquiry into the decline of Black-headed Gulls in the Netherlands. Heavy losses of eggs and young occurred in most colonies especially those where the young were mainly fed on fish. Where their food included a large proportion of insects and invertebrates the colonies were significantly more successful, p.1-11 (in Dutch). The diet of Sandwich Terns, *S. sandvicensis* on Waddensee Island was examined, in the breeding season up to 11% of their fish were stolen by Black-headed Gulls, p.13-17. Tern trapping continues in the Senegal and ring recovery suggests a minimum of 500 Sandwich Terns and about another 500 of other species are killed for fun annually, p.19-25. An article on the increase of Yellow-legged Gulls, *L. cachinnans* on Berlenga Island off Portugal suggests that this is largely due to immigration from the Galician colonies, p.27-38.

ALAUDA No 1 1998 has an unusual record of Black-headed Gulls adopting a young Mediterranean Gull from a nearby nest and feeding it alongside their own young. **No 2** includes a review of winter sightings of Grey Phalarope, *P. fulicarius* in Morocco showing that the winter range of this species extends further north than previously thought, p.113-6. There is also a report of a colony of Common Gulls, *L. canus* nesting in the outskirts of Lille, p.127-130.

ARDEOLA Vol 45(1) has a summary of the Spanish rarities report for 1996 which includes a first record of a Glaucous-winged Gull, *L. glaucescens* at Santa Cruz, Tenerife, Laughing Gull, *L. atricilla* and Lesser Crested Tern, *S. bengalensis* are also recorded for the first time in the Canaries. There is an unconfirmed report of a White-faced Storm-petrel, *P. marina* seen 24 miles off Agadir on 31 May 97. Unconfirmed sightings for 1998 include a report of 2 new breeding sites for Bulwer's Petrel, *B. bulwerii* on Tenerife, both of which have suffered casualties from rats, p.61-2.

La Garcilla No 101 1998 deals mainly with conservation issues including the pollution at Donana, the olive country environment and work on the Ebro. There is an article on the plumages of the Great Skua, *S. skua* and the Chilean Skua, *C. chilensis*, p.24-6 (Spanish only).

SEEVOGEL, March 98 reviews breeding on the coasts of Mecklenburg, Velpommern in 1984 and 1996, p.11-16 and on the coast of Schleswig Holstein in 1996, p.17-18. The distribution of the Common Scoter, *M. nigra* in the Wadden Sea

shows a peak of 31,000 in February, but few birds remain to moult, p.19-20.

Breeding results on their reserves for 1997 are given on pages 30-35. The June 1998 edition has a major paper, in German, on the moulting of the primaries of the Lesser Black-backed Gull, *L. fuscus*. It starts with the innermost during the breeding season and proceeds to the foremost by January, p.45-47. In the last bulletin I referred to a method of bird classification based on 'Burzeldrusensekret' for the benefit of those, like me who were totally in the dark. Seevogel have kindly given me the translation - Oil from the preening gland (Bull. No 138 p.13).

SANDGROUSE Vol 20(1) 1998 has articles on the first recorded breeding of the Swift Tern, *S. bergii* in Egypt, p.48 and on birds of some of Yemen's Red Sea Islands. Breeding species include Sooty Gull, *L. hemprichii*, Caspian Tern, *S. caspia*, Saunder's Tern, *S. saundersi* and Brown Noddy, *A. stolidus*, p.66-7. Unconfirmed reports include a second Black-bellied Storm-petrel, *F. tropica* and a Pale-footed Shearwater, *P. carneipes* off Southern Yemen. Forty-five Leach's Storm-petrel, *O. leucorhoa* were reported off Jaffa, Tel Aviv 12 Jan 98, and an immature Lesser Frigate Bird, *F. aerial* 1 Dec 97. A Mediterranean Gull, *L. melanocephalus* was seen at Ramtha Lagoons 17-20 Feb. A Little Gull, *L. minutus*, 13 Nov and a Great Black-backed Gull, *L. marinus*, 19 Mar, were both seen at Kalba, UAE and a Great Black-backed Gull was also seen at Larnaca, Cyprus, 19 Feb 96.

Pacific Seabirds Vol 25 No 1 1998 is, as usual, packed with information. Pages 6-8 provide a guide to assessing the age of Marbled Murrelets, *B. marmoratus* in the field. Page 9 has an article by Dr Bourne on a *Larus fuscus* Sp from Alaska which appears to fall between *graeli* in UK spring and *taimyrensis* from Bombay in winter and is small for Heuglin's Gull, *L. heuglini*, which he had suggested should turn up in Alaska. Considerable difficulty is being met in distinguishing Lesser Black-backed Sp found west of the American continental divide and he questions the need for so many species and for attempting to distinguish them in the field. An item on page 11 reports that recommended guidelines to reduce the seabird bycatch in longline fisheries have been prepared and will be tabled at a FAO meeting in Rome next November. If agreed they will be put to the full FAO/COFI meeting in 1999. Paralytic shellfish poisoning has been reported in Gannets and Herring Gulls off the southern Gulf of St Laurence, p.15 and birds have also fallen to 'Red tides' (Bloom of the toxic diflagellate *A. tamarense*). A new idea has been to place transmitters in simulated eggs and nestlings of the Marbled Murrelet to identify predators, p.22. The major wreck of Short-tailed Shearwater, *P. tenuirostris* in the Bering Sea in the autumn of 1997 is now considered to be due to lower wind speeds reducing water mixing, and higher water temperatures, which decreased the availability of food, p.21. Beached birds were marked with coloured ties and left in situ to see what had happened to them in later counts, p.29, also on this page is a proposed trial to assess the effects of visitors on seabird colonies on the Great Barrier Reef. Page 32 has an item on the telemetry tracking of Black-footed Albatross, *D. nigripes* off the California coast showing that they covered greater distances than previously thought as they searched over strong thermal gradients and sea mounts. A report post