

Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



REGISTERED CHARITY No. 206719

BULLETIN No. 140

APRIL 1999

The 52nd AGM was held in the MoD Theatre, Northumberland House, Whitehall on Friday 4 December 1998 at 1400. Commander F Ward RN was in the chair, and the President, Vice Admiral Sir David Dobson KBE, Vice Chairman, Captain Sir Thomas Barlow RN and 9 other members and guests were present.

THE MINUTES

Item 1 Apologies Apologies for absence were received from Capt Barritt, Col Smith, W Curtis, Dr R Porter, D Simpson, Dr W P Bourne, K Partridge, N Bailey and S Hales. Group Captain Springett (RAFOS) had hoped to attend, but apologies were received during the meeting as he had been unavoidably detained.

Item 2 Minutes of 51st AGM The minutes of the 51st AGM, which had been circulated in Bulletin 138, were put to the meeting. Approval and adoption were proposed by Captain Barlow and seconded by Cdr Casement. They were carried unanimously.

Item 3 Matters Arising

Item 3 Millenium Bird Count A volunteer is still needed to act as the RNBWS point of contact with the AOS co-ordinator, Major Hilary Nash. RAFOS is reviewing participation favourably following clarification that the count will place emphasis on endangered and rare species.

Items 4, 7, 11 & 13 The Chairman renewed his appeal for members to volunteer to assist with the administration of the Society. There had been no response to the request made the previous year. In particular there is a need to find a new Treasurer to replace Lt Cdr Lewis who resigns the position on 30 Nov 99 to devote his time to editing Sea Swallow.

Item 5 Financial Statement The Chairman has written to the WWF and those Establishments that supported the 1997 Diego Garcia expedition.

Item 11 The Chairman has submitted an article for publication in SEAWAYS

that is under consideration by the editor of that publication.

Item 12 Data Analysis

- a. An article appeared in Sea Swallow 47 updating the progress of the Working Group using PCs for data analysis. Stan Howe reported on progress later in the meeting.
- b. No feedback was received from the sample single reporting form circulated with Bulletin 138. The consensus within the meeting was that the form was adequate, but may need to be reviewed as data processing became more refined.
- c. Lt Cdr O' Connell- Davidson was not present and could not report back on his investigation into the advantages or otherwise of an RNBWS web-site. Members present were asked to identify those with Internet knowledge to produce information relevant for placing on a web-site - initially on the RN Intranet.

Item 13 Representatives for Rosyth & Faslane Admiral Rankin had not suggested any nominations to fill these two posts.

Post AGM Note – Commander Nigel Morton has kindly agreed to act as the Scottish representative. He is currently the Secretary to FOSNNI and works at Faslane Naval Base.

Item 4 Chairman's Report In the absence of Captain Barritt on duty in the Caribbean, Commander Ward read a prepared Chairman's Report which is reproduced here:

“Members may have noted press coverage of the prayer with an environmental theme which our patron has written. Awareness of human impact on our surroundings is increasing, and the Services can be an easy target for adverse comment. It is becoming highly probable that in the not too distant future it will become obligatory for warships to keep a record of wildlife and its behaviour eg. to confirm that Low Frequency Active Sonar has not caused disruption to marine mammals. Hence, RNBWS' role in patiently commending the practice of routine observation and recording remains vital. Additionally, any contribution such as the record of the avifauna of Ascension Island analysed by Drs Bourne and Simmons in the latest volume of Sea Swallow provides positive testimony to the role of serving personnel in conservation. The Diego Garcia report is another example of which RNBWS can be proud. But the core of our work remains routine observation from ships on

Heron *A.cinerea* (4) and Northern Wheatear *O.oenanthe* at 39.9°N 02.9°E, heading south. One Wheatear was aboard for 90 mins.]

Amendment No 5 To List Of Members And Associate Members 1996 New Members

Barton, T J Capt RN, HMS ENDURANCE, BFPO 279, LONDON
Eppinger, F N, Capt USNR (retired), 125 Main St, NORTH STONINGTON, CT0639 USA

Morrison, G W Capt MN, 5 Arran Close, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 0HJ

Change of Address

Cutts, M, 90 Fairmead Rd, YEOVIL, Somerset, BA21 5SF

Gates, D Mr, Hillhead, Steading, Gothel, By Fintray, AB21 0HU

Griffiths, D Mr, 14 Clover Close, Melksham, Wilts, SN21 7SL

Simpson, D M Capt MN, The Mead, 2 Churchill Lane, Theddlethorpe, Mablethorpe, Lincs, LN12 1PQ

Todd, A H Mr, 1 Ranvilles Lane, Fareham, Hants, PO14 3DS

Lost Touch

Gaywood, D Mr

Deceased

The Hon Secretary regrets to report the following deaths:

Head, R G Capt MN

Sheppard W W Capt RN (Ex Life Member)

Wilsdon H M Mr

Associate Members

Change of Address

Gale, E Mrs, c/o Cdr H N Gale RN, WEU Military Staff, UK Military Rep, NATO HQ, BFPO 49.

Lost Touch

Bailey R Dr

Representative – Arabian Gulf

Colin Richardson has a new phone number, +9714 472277 or mobile +97150 6503398

in the Cyprus Birds Breeding Survey please contact David Whaley, Armon, Paphos 8522, Tel +356(0)6 249788 if possible before you go.

Gibraltar Autumn 1999 Monitoring Of Migration

From mid-July to mid-October in Regional Government of Andalucia is funding food and accommodation for volunteers willing to man one of 4 observatories for 12-15 days. Applications should be made before 15 May and further details can be obtained from – Programa MIGRES, Sociedad Espanola de Ornitologia, C3C/ Miguel Bravo Ferrer, 25 Bajo, E-41005 SEVILLA, SPAIN. E-mail – migres@seo.org.

RECORDS RECEIVED.

The following Seabird and Landbird Reports have been received since the publication of Bulletin 139:

Seabirds.

Mrs Judith Pentreath. Yacht *Salvation Jane*, 11 Sep-7 Oct'98, Minorca-Majorca-Ibiza - W. Med. (2C) - includes several Landbirds; 5 Feb'98, one page of seabird records observed off Goa, Indian Ocean.

AB(SR) Peter Bainbridge. HMS BULLDOG, 2 June-25 July, 1-13 Oct '98 - surveys off Western Isles and Irish Sea (4).

Chief Engineer S.J. Hingston MN, MV TABRIZ KHALILBEYLI, Fixed position 40.0°N 51.4°E, S. Caspian Sea, 24 Jan - 31 Dec'97 - 56 report sheets.

Captain N.G. Cheshire MN, R.V. FRANKLIN, March '98 - Feb'99, six survey trips around E. coast Tasmania, Bass Strait and N. Coast NSW, (36 report sheets + Met. data).

Capt. Thomas Johannsen, German MN, MV DORTHE OLDENDORFF, 20 Nov-10 Dec '98,

Vancouver to Squamish & Port Rupert (Pacific), (1C); 4 Jan-17 Feb'99, Singapore to Aqaba and back (Indian Ocean/Red Sea) (1C)."

Landbirds

Mrs Judith Pentreath. Yacht *Salvation Jane*, 11 Sep-7 Oct'98, Minorca-Majorca-Ibiza - W. Med. (2C) - includes several Landbirds.

Claire Pollock, Genevieve Leaper & Caroline Stone (Seabirds at Sea Team - SAST) - ten sheets of Landbird observations in UK coastal waters (N. Sea, E. Atlantic) aboard various vessels in 1993 and 1994..

Chief Engineer S.J. Hingston MN, MV TABRIZ KHALILBEYLI, Fixed position 40.0°N 51.4°E, S. Caspian Sea, 17 Apr - 31 Dec'97 - 38 report sheets of detailed observations including weather data.

Captain N.G. Cheshire MN, R.V. FRANKLIN, 22 March '98, off S. Australia (1)

[On 21 Sep'98 JP saw evidence of autumn migration at 39.9°N 02.9°E, on rounding Cap de Formentos, including Eleonora's Falcons *F.eleonorae* (8), Grey

passage, and the paucity of incoming reports remains a cause of disappointment and concern.

Turning to the second recurrent theme of this Report, it has been good to see a number of serving personnel joining the Society during the last year. We continue to need new blood, and particularly members who are prepared to take part in running the activities of RNBWS. In addition to the areas of need which have already been highlighted, it would be good to see members providing co-ordination and encouragement of observation and opportunities for local liaison during major Fleet deployments. Peter Carr would also welcome assistance with the exciting programme of fieldwork which is outlined in Sea Swallow. There is much to enjoy.

Item 5 Financial Statement The Hon Treasurer put the 1997 Financial Statement, issued with Bulletin 138, to the meeting. Acceptance was proposed by S Howe and seconded by C Patrick. The proposal was carried without dissent. An unaudited Balance Creditor of approx £7,500 was stated for 1998. During the past year the Society had purchased a PC, Printer, Scanner and associated software for use by the Editor Sea Swallow and this would be accounted for as property during the forthcoming audit. Current accounts and investments were deemed the best option and would be retained.

- a. Investigation into the need for a winding up clause was discussed and it was agreed that one was required. Hon Treasurer will pursue and make it in favour of the other Service ornithological societies.

Item 6 Membership Statement The Chairman drew the attention of members to the following table:

| | <u>1997</u> | <u>1998</u> |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Ex officio | 4 | 4 |
| Honorary | 7 | 7 |
| Ordinary | 196 | 197 |
| Associate | 39 | 44 |
| Library | <u>44</u> | <u>45</u> |
| | <u>290</u> | <u>297</u> |

In addition we exchange Sea Swallow for the publications of 23 other Societies. WO Bailey continues to maintain the Membership database and produce mailing labels and once again received a heartfelt vote of thanks.

Item 7 Executive Committee and Honorary Appointments Hon Treasurer took the chair and proposed that Commander Ward's position as a co-opted member

should be retitled Deputy Chairman in order for him to carry out the full duties of the Chairman in the situation of the Chairman's absence. Acceptance was proposed by Cdr Casement and seconded by Captain Barlow and carried unanimously.

Under the terms of the Charities Act 1960 and 1985, the Executive Committee, the UK based members of which are Trustees of the Society, offered themselves for election/re-election.

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Chairman | Capt M K Barritt RN |
| Vice Chairman | Captain Sir Thomas Barlow RN |
| Vice Chairman (MN) | Captain N Cheshire MN |
| Deputy Chairman | Cdr F S Ward RN |
| Hon Secretary | Col P J S Smith RM |
| Hon Treasurer | Lt Cdr G D Lewis RN |
| Editor <i>Sea Swallow</i> | Lt Cdr G D Lewis RN |
| Exped and Fieldwork Member | W02 P Carr RM |

This was proposed by Mike Casement and seconded by C Patrick and carried.

Item 8 Honorary Auditor Lt D Twist RN had carried out the 1997 audit, and thanks have been conveyed to him. The Hon Treasurer reported that Cdr M Winter RN had offered to carry out the 1998 audit and that arrangements were in hand to achieve this.

Item 9 Local Representatives' Reports There were no Local Representatives present at the AGM, but Mr K Partridge (Devonport) had forwarded a written report that outlined the progress made with the rat infestation survey on Great Mewstone and its affect on breeding seabirds. He reported that Navy Days 1999 were due to be held in HMNB Devonport and suggested investigation into the manning of an RNBWS stand.

The Chairman informed the AGM of a new local representative for Humberside. He is Bill Curtis and can be contacted at Farm Cottage, Church Lane, Atwick, Nr Driffield, E Yorks YO25 8DH Tel. 01964 532477.

SANCTUARY Members were asked to submit articles for this publication as soon as possible; the deadline is Feb 99. The 3 Service ornithological societies were to be given 2 pages to use to advertise for new members. S/Lt D Gates agreed to provide the RNBWS input.

MOD Bird Count Some of this year's reports were still awaited, but Hon Secretary

west have adversely affected many species and that work on the Marbled Murrelet, *B.marmoratus*, continues at a high level. The target for losses of Short-tailed Albatross, *D.albatrus*, to long-lining has been set at not more than 2 every 2 years (2 were lost recently) p.77. Marbled Murrelets at Auke Bay were found to be making a daily 259 km round trip to fishing grounds at Icy Straights, p.78 and on the same page counts of King, *S.fischeri*, and Common Eider migrating across the Beaufort Sea have fallen by 50% in the last 20 years. Fulmar, *F.glacialis*, are continuing to increase on Canada's East coast, Leach's Storm-petrel, *O.leucorhoa*, on Great Island suffered most predation from gulls when capelin were not available for the latter, this also applied to Black-legged Kittiwake, *R.tridactyla*, in other areas, p.79. Egg predation of Rhinoceros Auklets, *C.monocerata*, by mice is increased by the absence of pairs for several days during incubation, p.80. Increased predator control at Kaena Point, Hawaii has resulted in successful fledging of Laysan Albatross, *D.immutabilis*, and a growing colony of Wedge-tailed Shearwater, *P.pacificus*, p.82. Seabird restoration projects on the Maine coast have attracted Puffins, F.arctica, and Razorbill, A.torda, p.81. Work has started on the effect of Endocrine disrupting chemicals on the Black-tailed Gull, L.crassirostris, in Japan, p.82. Terry Wahl has continued pelagic counts off Westport, Washington ... the ocean productivity continues to be low and many species are suffering except those which are attracted to fishing vessels, p.83.

In Bulletin No 128 I mentioned that efforts were being made to wipe out rabbits on Cabbage Tree Island, New South Wales, the only known nesting ground of Gould's Petrel, *P.leucoptera*. The campaign was successful, and combined with the elimination of the Lime tree whose sticky fruits could cripple unlucky birds, and the introduction of nest boxes, has allowed 500 pairs to nest last year. Boxes are now being placed on a neighbouring island in the hope of colonisation. It is reckoned that another 15 years work will be needed to secure the population. Our thanks to Frank Walker who sent the information to Dr Bourne.

Landlubbers Corner

The next MOD bird count will be held between 23-31 May. If you are serving in a shore establishment please support the official team, or if there is not one, make you own count and send it to Hon Sec. Please include a note of the weather and any species breeding.

BTO are looking for help in surveying Nightingale sites recorded in 1980 or later and counting the number of singing males in 1999. Three visits should be made between midnight and mid-morning. Nil returns are important.

Cyprus

Anyone visiting North or South Cyprus before the end of July and willing to help

VALDEZ Oil Spill, Seabird Restoration Workshop, 172p, ISBN 1521-3366. This is a comprehensive, state of the art, review of the complex factors affecting the recovery of seabird species and underlines the lack of knowledge in many areas. Because of this complexity different strategies may be required for each individual species affected by the same disaster. Even such popular and often effective options such as the removal of introduced predators are not necessarily a cure all. The authors of this publication are to be congratulated and it should be compulsory study for seabird conservationists.

WORLD BIRDWATCH Vol 21 No 1 is a special seabird conservation issue and continues the 'long lining' problem which has more committee stages to go through before it can be fully enforced. Also on page 2 a small item on Bird Island in the Seychelles where the elimination of rats has led to an increase in Crazy Ants which displaced 60,000 pairs of Sooty Terns, *S.fuscata*, in 1998. An oil spill in the Waddenzee on Dutch/German border killed around 16,000 birds mainly Eider, *S.mollissima*, efforts are being made to establish a joint approach in future, p.3. The seabird conservation programme for the Antarctic is outlined in p.6-7. Pages 8-11 include suggestions for a world-wide seabird breeding database, more predator eradication, rewards to ships with a good environmental record and giving fishermen a positive reason to employ good conservation practices. Pages 12-15 covers tourism and the need for adequate data to manage tourist visits to seabird breeding colonies. Ascension Island's problems are discussed on p.17-18. A study of Pink-footed Shearwater, *P.creatopus*, on Isla Mocha off Chile notes that illegal harvesting of the young is probably the main cause of decline, though local opinion is beginning to accept conservation. On page 24 there is an article on the Spectacled Petrel, *P.conspicillata*, which only breeds on Inaccessible Island, Tristan da Cunha. This species was recently separated from the White-chinned Petrel, *P.aequinoctialis*, largely because of its calls.

PACIFIC SEABIRDS Vol 25 No 2 opens with a discussion on the pros and cons of a free seabird journal on the web, p.58-60. Brown Pelicans, *P.occidentalis*, normally rare off Canada were in numbers off Vancouver Island in 1997 due to severe El Nino like warming, p.61-64. The introduction of modified gill nets with bird strips 2 metres below the cork line and restricting fishing to daylight resulted in about a 98% reduction in bycatch with no apparent loss of fishing efficiency when enforced in Puget Sound, p.69. Previously around 3500 birds have died annually. PSG are fighting a decision by the National Maritime Fishing Service (NMFS) to destroy the largest Caspian Tern, *S.caspia*, colony in North America because of the damage they do to young salmon. NMFS have failed to carry out a full evaluation and there are numerous other factors which could give as good or better results, p.69-70. Follow up work on the effect of hydrocarbons on bird life continues post EXXON VALDEZ, p.75. Picking items from the vast list of work in progress it seems clear that warmer waters on the

reported that a Goshawk was reported from Ernesettle during the count. Outside the period a Gyrfalcon was on the Great Mewstone offshore from Wembury. Of great significance was the successful breeding of Little Egret in a south coast establishment this year; this is only the second recorded incidence in the UK.

SEABIRD 2000 The Chairman reminded members of the insert in the latest bulletin. RAFOS plan to concentrate their efforts in NW Scotland and local RNBWS members were welcome to participate.

Item 10 Expedition/Fieldwork Member's Report WO2 P Carr was not present at the AGM and no report was available. The Chairman reminded members of the article regarding future work published in Bulletin 139 and invited those interested to contact WO Carr.

Item 11 Sea Swallow Editor's Report Cdr Casement gave his final report as Editor and noted the continued high standard and interest in the journal. He was disappointed that his last publication had resulted in some printing difficulties and issued a small erratum. Further copies of this erratum will be distributed with the Apr 99 bulletin. At the end of his statement, the President presented Cdr Casement with a small token of the Society's gratitude to his dedicated and loyal work over many years.

The new Editor will be Lt Cdr Gary Lewis and articles can either be sent direct to him at 40, Pondfield Road, Saltash, Cornwall, PL12 4UA or via Cdr Casement who has kindly offered to act as a postbox for the time being.

Item 12 Report of the Working Group on the use of PCs for Data Analysis

Data-basing Stan Howe reported on the progress of the group. To date some 17,500 records from 5565 sites have been entered into the database covering 1367 species. It is estimated that some 25,000 records have been published through SS Volumes 1-47 and soon all these will have been captured. The most frequently recorded birds are Fulmar, Gannet, Kittiwake, Wandering Albatross, Wilson's Petrel, Great and Pomarine Skua. Surprisingly, the most recorded bird at sea was not a seabird, but Barn Swallow with over 200 records so far!

The present trawl of records will soon be complete. Although a second pass will be required to polish the data, the next priority will be to intercept the current flow of incoming records. It is planned to photocopy datasheets as they reach the Editor and send them to the working group for capture and recording.

RNBWS Reporting Forms It is expected that the established members may choose to remain using the current reporting form, but new members need a new form that more readily lends itself to PC analysis. The style circulated with Bulletin 138 did not solicit any feedback. The Chairman stated that the Hon Advisor counsels "while

it may be useful to have the more copious observations tabulated, it is still essential to have adequate descriptions of the more unusual or questionable items”.

Item 13 Any Other Business The following matters were discussed:

- a. Wildlife Expeditions RNBWS member, Tony Soper has provided details of Expeditions he will be leading in 1999. This was available to members following the AGM.
- b. A letter of thanks had been received from the Hitchin RSPB Group following Lt Cdr Lewis' recent presentation on the role of RNBWS during one of their Club evenings.
- c. Admiral Harris informed members of the publication of a new Checklist of Birds of the World. Cdr Casement has taken a copy to review for Sea Swallow 48.

Item 14 Presentations

- a. Prize for Best Article for SS from a New Contributor Awarded to S/Lt Dan Gates RN for his article “Black Guillemot Chick Feeding on Papa Westray, Orkney”. The prize, a copy of Harrison's Photographic Seabirds of the World, was presented by Cdr Casement.
- b. AOS Trophy Awarded each year to the ship in the Fleet submitting the best environmental observations, including bird reports, to the RN Marine Biological Data-bases in UKHO. Following fierce competition this year, NP1016, NP 1008, HMS HERALD and HMS RICHMOND all deserve honourable mention. However, the winner was HMS SCOTT who has rendered over 500 observations of marine life. With HMS SCOTT deployed away from the UK, arrangements will be made for her to receive her trophy when she returns.

Item 15 AOS State of the Nation Major Leslie Bond asked to give a brief resume of AOS' activities during 1998. Membership is increasing slowly, but, as with RNBWS, problems exist both in finding volunteers in the running of the society and funding for expeditions. Despite this, expeditions are planned for Gambia and Bulgaria in 1999. He offered an invitation for an RNBWS representative to attend their AGM to be held at Castle Martin, Pembrokeshire over the second weekend of May.

island, De Hond, in the Waddenzee.

ALAUDA Vol. 66 No.3 has an article on the effects of a thunderstorm on a colony of King Penguins, *A.patagonicus*, on Possession Island, Crozet Archipelago. The storm, fortunately rare in these waters caused the departure of most adult birds most of which returned after 2-5 days. Another exodus took place when a powerful ships light was accidentally shone on the colony. Fortunately the weather was calm and there were no apparent casualties amongst the young, p.195-8. An update on the birds of Socotra, p.235-246, includes Jouanin's Petrel, *B.fallax*, attracted by light in Nov 97, Masked Booby, *S.dactylatra*, Brown Booby, *S.leucogaster*, 3 species of visiting gulls and 5 of Terns. No.4 p.306 has a note discussing yet another move to sub-divide the gull group. This time to name those breeding in the Azores as *argentatus/fuscus/cachinnans atlantis*... the evidence seemed rather confusing. Another article on the birds of the Cap-Vert archipelago off Senegal notes that Bulwer's Petrel, *B.bulwerii*, Madeiran Storm-petrel, *O.castro*, the Red-billed Tropic bird, *P.aethereus*, and the Magnificent Frigate bird, *F.magnificens*, had been seen, p.307-11 had been known to nest.

ARDEOLA Vol 45(2) Dec 98 has an interesting article on Cormorant and other predation at fish ponds (in Spanish). The wide variation in damage ranging from less than 1% to 83% suggests that there could be a number of factors involved, p.171-182.

SEEVOGEL Dec 98 has a review of coastal species along the shores of the east sea in winter 1991-95, p.105-15. An article on garbage washed ashore on a Baltic reserve shows an increase of 100% in spite of the Marpol convention, p.121-2.

MARINE ORNITHOLOGY Vol. 23 No.2, 95, just received, reviews the breeding distribution of the Snow Petrel, *P.nivea*, but detailed counts of breeding sites were still needed, p.69-100. A trial involving the feeding of an Imperial Cormorant, *P.atriceps*, showed that information derived from the examination of pellets could be misleading, p.101-6. A summary of knowledge about the Manx Shearwater, *P.puffinus*, off the SE States of America suggests that summer birds are non breeding immatures and that the numbers present may be increasing, p.107-120. A study of Kelp Gulls, *L.dominicans* shows that they preferred to nest under cover, p.121-8. Lastly a study of birds breeding in the Errera Channel, Antarctic Peninsula was carried out 1992/3 to provide a baseline against which the effects of tourist disturbance could be assessed, p.10129-134.

SANDGROUSE Vol 20(2) 1998 shows what can be done with a telescope from the top of a block of flats on the West Beirut seafront in April, p.142-3. Large numbers of Cory's Shearwater, *C.diomedea* and Common Tern, *S.hirundo*, were observed as well as smaller numbers of Arctic Tern, *S.paradisaea*, Arctic *S.parasiticus*, and Pomarine Skuas, *S.pomarinus*, Gannets, *M.bassanus*, and a Storm-petrel.

PACIFIC SEABIRDS GROUP, Technical Publication No 1, EXXON

included for comparison and show a white panel similar to Cory's, a darker head and upperparts and a smaller blackish bill. It is also a smaller bird. Whilst the main population of immature wintering Cory's favour South American Waters, Scopoli's prefer South African waters. The precise distribution of these sub-species is not clear. RNBWS observers are asked to report back on the practical possibilities of identifying birds and any observations on their distribution. As Bill Bourne remarks the trend to breaking species down into sub-species has limited value if they cannot be reliably separated in the field, p.216-225. An item on the variability of bare parts in the adult Pontic Gull, *L.cachinnans*, p.238-9 suggests that in spite of all the variations when all bare part colours are taken into consideration they can still be a useful guide. Unconfirmed records include a Great Winged Petrel, *P.macroptera*, in Monterey Bay, California 8 Oct, a Cape Verde Shearwater seen from the Gomera ferry 13 Oct, a first for the Canaries, a Cory's off Camperduin, Holland 1 Nov and possibly the biggest recorded influx of European Storm-petrel, *H.pelagicus*, some 50 birds at Scheveningen 26-31 Oct. The first breeding record in the southern hemisphere for Leach's Storm-petrel, *O.leucorhoa*, occurred at Dyer Island, South Africa. A Franklin's Gull was seen at Baltray Lough, Ireland possibly the same bird at Eglwys Nynydd, West Glamorgan 28 Oct -1 Nov. Baltic Gulls, *L.fuscus*, appeared in greater numbers than usual in eastern Niedersachsen, Germany during October. Finally a summer Kittiwake, *R.tridactyla*, was seen at Istanbul 26 Sep.

Vol. 20 No.6 has a number of interesting unconfirmed reports – A Great Black-headed Gull, *L.ichthyaetus*, and the first Great Black-backed Gull, *L.marinus*, were recorded from Sicily in December. Following a severe storm in November numbers of Franklin's Gull appeared in NE USA especially around Cape May. A possible Heuglin's Gull, *L.heuglini*, was seen at Larnaca sewage works, Cyprus on 23 Nov, if accepted this will be a first. A Black-tailed Gull, *L.crassirostris*, was seen off Cape May 3-10 Dec. A first winter Forster's Tern, *S.fosteri*, was reported off Cornwall 5 Nov, and 27 Nov a Long-billed Murrelet, *B.perdix*, was seen at Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island and another was seen off Oregon last autumn. An Ancient Murrelet, *S.antiquum*, was seen flying past Pt Pelee, Ontario in the second week of Nov.

SULA Vol. 12 No.2 has 2 articles both in Dutch, the first covers the recovery of beached birds 1997/98 showing a reduction in findings partly due to a mild winter and partly to fewer oiled birds. The second deals with separation of Cormorants and Shags in the hand, p.73-80. No 3 has a short article on 3 water birds found with ruptured ventricles. This is a newly noted cause of death and its significance is unknown, p.89-91. An article, p.91-94 on variations in mass of the Northern Fulmar, *F.glacialis*, by Dr Bourne shows that, like other petrels its mass varies with different stages of the breeding cycle being heaviest at the start and lightest at the end, birds may also lay down reserves for moulting. P.102-5 covers the first recorded breeding of Great Black-backed Gulls, *L.marinus*, on an artificial

Item 16 Date of the Next Meeting Friday 3 December 1999 at 1400 at Northumberland House.

Item 17 Presentation on Glasgow University Expedition BOLIVIA 98: The Threatened Birds of the Yungas The presentation was given by S/Lt Dan Gates who is currently a student at Glasgow University, and who was the expedition co-ordinator and leader. It gave an overview of the expedition and identified some of the endangered species in this key area of the world.

F S Ward
Cdr RN
Deputy Chairman

G D Lewis
Lt Cdr RN
Honorary Treasurer

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Congratulations to Admiral Blackburn LVO on his CB and to Admiral Abbot KCB on his GBE.

Captain D M Simpson MN whose articles have often appeared in Sea Swallow has now retired to Lincolnshire not far from Gibraltar Point. His address is at 'Changes of Address'. Any members in the area are welcome to contact him on 01507 338247.

NEWS FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Army Ornithological Society Newsletter 1/98 has a report of a visit to Portland in Sep 77, sea watching was poorly rewarded. Other articles include a visit to the Gambia and birding opportunities if you have a long stopover at Washington National Airport. There is also a list of some ornithological sites on the World Wide Web. Their magazine, **The Adjutant Vol. 27 1997**, covers the Gambia in Feb 77 when some of the largest flocks of Audouin's Gull, *L.audouinii*, 30 to 38, ever recorded were seen over 3 days, p.6. Other articles cover Arabia, Kenya and Mongolia. There is also an account of seabird ringing at Cape Wrath, p.80, 82 and 89.

RAFOS Journal No 27 reports the 97 expedition to the Akamas Peninsula, Cyprus, which recorded 2 Audouin's Gull, *L.audouinii*, offshore and also reports a raptor count at Akrotiri. An article in their **Newsletter No 66** touches on seabird passage off the Algarve in 1992.

British BTO Birds News No 220 reviews a revised edition of the Photographic Handbook of the Seabirds of the World (£29.99) noting that the revision appears to be confined to correcting errors in the titling of some photographs.

World Bird Watch Vol. 20 No 3 notes that the Caribbean island of Sombrero off

Antigua is threatened with a civilian base for satellite launching. It is one of the largest seabird breeding grounds in the Caribbean, species include the Roseate Tern, *S.dougallii*, and the endangered Black-capped Petrel, *P.hasitata*. The colonies have already suffered from human disturbance in recent years, p.3. A new colony of Saunders Tern, *S.saundersi*, has been found on the west coast of South Korea, the first outside China, p.5. Birdlife Seychelles now has funds for a seabird monitoring programme on Cousins Island started in 1998, p.15.

RSPB Birds Spring 99 reports that agreement on reducing longline catches of seabirds was reached at the FAO meeting in Rome with a plan to be mandatory in 2001. A new treaty, OSPAR, for the protection of the NE Atlantic environment has been signed by 15 countries. A Danish ship has just been fined £259k for discharging oil at sea, p.56. It was a bad year for breeding by Arctic Terns, *S.paradisaea*, Arctic Skua, *S.parasiticus* and Great Skua, *C.skua*, in Orkney and Shetland, the failure is blamed on bad weather rather than food shortages, p.59. Experiments with partly enclosed nest boxes have increased the breeding success of Roseate Terns, p.77.

Scottish Birds, Winter 98, compares counts of Diving Duck and Cormorant, *P.carbo*, made in NE Scotland during 1944-50 with more recent counts 1985-97, there is a possible fall in cormorants, p.249-58. Accepted records, p.259, include the second Forster's Tern, *S.fosteri*, 16 Dec – 10 Apr 95 in the Forth Area and the fourth Bridled Tern, *S.anaethetus*, Tiree in Jun – July 94.

Scottish Bird News No 51, p.7, gives some information on seabird breeding in 98. Kittiwake, *R.tridactyla*, were down in numbers in many places and are not expected to have had much success. Terns arrived in good numbers but were affected by weather and in some places by ferrets and mink. A census of Puffins, *F.arctica*, on the Isle of May found 40,000 pairs. Gales and blizzards struck the Moray Firth at the start of the seabird breeding season driving birds into the inner firths where many died of starvation. Over 500 corpses were found, mainly Guillemot, *U.aalge*, and Razorbill, *A.torda*, though this is far from the real total and subsequent breeding in the area has been affected. Amongst the dead in Beaulieu Firth was a Balearic Shearwater, *P.mauretanicus*. No.52 discusses the need for greater coverage of the Clyde which approaches national and international levels of importance for Divers, Grebes, Gulls, Cormorant and Shags, p.1-2. On p.10 there is an invitation to take part in SEABIRD 2000 in Scotland. This is a census of breeding seabirds in Britain and Ireland, also a brief survey of breeding on the Isle of May, early breeding Shag were washed out by easterly gales and birds were still feeding young in late August. Kittiwakes had a very poor season. On p.11 an article on avian predation quotes the case of a crow using the concealment of some plants to steal out and grab chicks from a Tern colony, and in another a Buzzard, *B.buteo*, using a wire mesh to fence to shelter from gulls as it plucked their chicks.

LONDON Bird Report for 1997 has the second record for a Wilson's Storm-

petrel *O.oceanicus* on 5 Sep at Staines. There was a Manx Shearwater, *P.puffinus*, at the Thames Barrier on Sep 7. During the winter about 67 Mediterranean Gulls, *L.melanocephalus* were recorded along with 2 Sabines, *L.sabini*, at least 3 Ring-billed Gulls, *L.delawarensis*. "Yellow-Legged" Gulls, *L.michahellisi/cachinnans* reached 118, Iceland Gulls, *L.glaucoides*, 14, and Glaucous, *L.hyperboreus*, 12. Nine pairs of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, *L.fuscus* and 8 pairs of Herring Gull, *L.argentatus* breeding in Central London was a slight increase but as they breed on rooftops this may well be an underestimate. Of the Skuas, only Arctic, *S.parasiticus*, were recorded including an unusual flock of 8, p.94.

Dutch Birding Vol. 20 No.4 reviews the list of rare birds accepted in the Netherlands during 1996. Molecular studies indicate that there has been interbreeding between the Atlantic Cormorant, *P.carbo* and the continental Great Cormorant, *P.sinensis*. This interbreeding may account for some of the large increase in inland breeding in the UK p.174-7. Under recent publications they note a new Checklist of Birds of Eurasia by Ben F King, ISBN No 0-934797-15-3. In unconfirmed records – Soft-plumaged Petrels, *P.feaie / madeira / mollis*, seen off Bridge of Ross, Co Clare 20 Aug, off Newbiggin, Northern Ireland 24 Aug and Cape Clear, Co Cork 10 Sept. A passage from Madeira to Lisbon confirmed the presence of Bulwer's Petrel, *B.bulwerii*, and Little Shearwater, *P.assimilis*, in Portuguese waters during late summer. The first American sighting of Swinhoe's Storm-petrel, *O.monorhis*, was photographed 49m SSE of Cape Hatteras Inlet, California 8 Aug, on the same day a Bulwer's Petrel was sighted 4-50m to the north. Laughing Gulls, *L.atricilla*, were recorded from Boddam, Shetland, off Dorset 15 Jul, also at Bouin, Vendée 4 Aug and Ile de Re, Charente Maritime 25 Aug. Franklin's Gulls, *L.pipixcan*, seen off L'Estartit, Gerona on 21 Jun could be the fifth record for Spain. Bonaparte's Gull, *L.philadelphia*, were seen at Deuridge Bay, Northumberland 20 Jul – 11 Aug and 9 Sep also at Musselburgh, Scotland from 17 Aug into Sep. A Ring-billed Gull, *L.delawarensis*, seen at Goes, Zeeland 18 Jan – 11 Feb and 18 Sep could be the seventh for the Netherlands. An adult Summer Ross's Gull, *R.rosea*, flew past the Texel Ferry 21 Aug.

Vol 20 No.5 has an article on Cory's Shearwater, *C.diomedea*, dividing it into 3 sub-species, Cory's Shearwater, *C.d.borealis*, Scopoli's Shearwater, *C.d.diomedea* (possibly a separate species) and the Cape Verde Shearwater, *C.d.edwardsii*. Separation of the first two at sea should be possible, mainly by the shape of the white panel on the underwing. In Scopoli's this conforms to the general shape of the wing and ends in a point leaving a small dark tip to the wing. In Cory's the panel has a more rounded end leaving a substantial black tip and there is more black on the tips of the other primaries. In addition, Cory's is normally darker above with a heavier bill and a slower wingbeat, features which should also be taken into account. Photographs of the Cape Verde Shearwater are