

However I expect the next MOD Count will take place during the last week of May 2000 and of course there is always the Millennium Count (see separate flier).

The latest **BTO NEWS No 223** has no seabird content but it is interesting as analysis of field returns show a steady movement of many species to the north. In addition the bird nesting report scheme shows many species are nesting earlier, trying to keep in phase with the earlier peak of insect availability.

REPORTS RECEIVED

The following Seabird and Landbird reports have been received since

Bulletin 140:

SEABIRDS

POWEM S Copsey, HMS YORK, Persian Gulf, Aug-Nov 1997 (6)

LANDBIRDS

POWEM S Copsey, HMS YORK, Persian Gulf, Aug-Nov 1997 (4)

AMENDMENT No 1 to LIST OF MEMBERS 1999

Under heading insert(Includes Honorary Members and Local Reps)

MEMBERS

New Member

Moorey, C G Mr, 9 Boulter Lane, Southwick, Nr FAREHAM, PO17 6HH

Change of Address

Baulch, P S Mr, 26 Sunnyvale Drive, Longwell Green, BRISTOL, BS30 9HH

Patrick, C M C POA(METOC), 12 Goldcroft Road, WEYMOUTH, Dorset, DT4 ODZ

Pepper, G M Capt MRIN MNI, Lantern Cottage, Church Lane, FORD END, Essex

Resigned

Hutchings W J Capt MN

Shannon C B Cpl

Deceased

Gray G D Captain MN. Captain Gray was a staunch supporter of the Society for nearly 25 years

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Resigned

Harrison P Mr

LIBRARY MEMBERS

Change of Address

Sociedad Espagnola de Ornitologia, Melquiades Biencinto, 34.E-28053 MADRID, Spain

Delete – Ornithologische Mitteilungen

Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



REGISTERED CHARITY No. 206719

BULLETIN No. 141

SEPTEMBER 1999

THE FIFTY THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will take place at 1400 on Friday 3 December in the MOD Theatre in Northumberland House, in Northumberland Avenue just off Trafalgar Square. The nearest underground stations are Charing Cross and the Embankment.

Business at the AGM will include:

- The need for volunteers to lead and administer the work of the RNBWS.
- Response to joint initiatives with AOS and RAFOS, especially the concept of a tri-service journal.
- Field activities in the year 2000, including the Millennium Count
- Election of committee members.

After the meeting there will be a talk by Sarah North about the way the Meteorological Offices publication, *The Marine Observer*, seeks to educate amateur observers and provides contact with professional scientists.

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 27 November.**

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 £37.50 a year (£36.50 direct debit).

Bird Watchers Yearbook. This is offered at £12.00 (normal price £13.50). 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).

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 Hon Sec if they do not want their name and address to appear in the next computer generated LIST OF MEMBERS.

MILLENNIUM BIRD COUNT

The details of the Joint Service scheme are given in the enclosed flyer, members ashore and at sea are asked to support this exercise.

EXPEDITIONS AND FIELD MEETINGS

RN and RM serving members may apply for RAF expeds and field meetings, see Annex A. All members and associate members are welcome at RAFOS field meetings.

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL'S "THREATENED BIRDS OF THE WORLD"

A book giving the latest information on status, threats and potential conservation measures for every threatened species, which should be a powerful tool for international conservation. Birdlife is looking for sponsors for each species (£95/\$165). Sponsors names will appear on the appropriate page.

NEWS FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The Army Ornithological Society have a new Hon Secretary, Lt Col P S Bennett, SO1 Def Log (Ops/Ex), ACDS(L), Room 767261, MOD Main Building,

breed on the Socotra Peninsula. Swinhoe's Storm petrel was reported off Mirbut in Nov and another at Raysut 3 Dec, the first records for Oman. Red-billed Tropicbird, *P.aethereus*, bred in the Northern Red Sea Islands. The same survey recorded increased numbers of Sooty Gull, *L.hemprichi*, and White-eyed Gull, *L.leucothalmus*.

Australian Seabird Newsletter No 33 Jan 99. Beach patrol results for 93 and 94 are reported on pages 1-8, no oiled birds were seen and the majority of beached birds were Short-tailed Shearwater, *P.tenuirostris* (50-60%) with Little Penguins, *E.minor*, providing around 20%. Wrecks occurred in Feb, Mar and Dec 93 and Jan and Oct 94. Plastic ingestion by seabirds in the Bass Straight is discussed on pages 9-13, although larger items have decreased there has been an increase in smaller material presumably from the rubbish disposal equipment on ships. An unusual Wedge-tailed Shearwater, *P.pacificus*, was found at a wreck at Ballina, NSW in Nov 97 (p14). Tail marking of the Northern Royal Albatross, *D.epomophora*, is discussed on pages 14-15. The Chatham Petrel, *P.axillaris*, is under threat due to competition from the Broad-billed Prion, *P.vittata*, which injure the formers chicks or evicts them from their burrows (p17). Pages 19-29 summarise the results of pelagic cruises. Off Sydney the highlights included White-necked Petrel, *P.cervicalis*, Bullers Albatross, *D.bulleri*, White-tailed Tropicbird, *P.lepturus*, and a Salvin's, *P.salvini*, Antarctic, *P.desolata*, type Prion. Off Wollongong, NSW, Manx Shearwater, *P.puffinus*, Black-bellied Storm petrel, *F.tropica*, and Buller's Albatross. Off Portland, SA, Buller's Albatross, Sooty Albatross, *P.fusca*, Antarctic Prion, Grey-backed Storm petrel, *G.nereis*, Common Diving Petrel, *P.urinatrix*, and Slender-billed Prion, *P.belcheri*. Newsletter No 34 mentions Bridled Terns, *S.anaethetus*, found nesting in small numbers on the Coringa Islets in the Coral Sea north-east of Australia (p2-7). John Cooper reviews progress in the fight to reduce the seabird losses from longline fishing (p8-10). Progress is being made with concerned countries but there remains a large fleet of unregulated or illegal fishing boats to bring under control. In 1995 over half the birds found by beach patrol were Little Penguins, the most unusual record was of a Fulmar Prion, *P.crassirostris*, the first record for Australia. Far fewer birds were washed up in 1996, the majority, as usual, were Short-tailed Shearwater. No oiled birds were picked up in the areas patrolled (p10-16). Pages 17-18 and 21-24 cover the highlights of pelagic cruises, good numbers of Buller's Albatross and Long-tailed Skuas, *S.longicaudus* were seen off Sydney. Efforts are being made to control predators on the Banks Peninsula which have severely reduced the Blue (Fairy) penguin, *E.minor* and Sooty Shearwater, *P.griseus*, (p10-11). On page 27 an item suggests that the Arctic Krill may be threatened by increased ultraviolet levels and increased krill fishing. Their decline would have a knock on effect on the whole food chain.

LANDLUBBERS CORNER

This year I have not seen the final report of the 1998 MOD Bird Count or any of the 1999 reports from establishments so there is no news on that front.

ALAUDA Vol. 67 No 2 looks at the probability of cat predation on Northern Storm petrels, *H.pelagicus*, breeding on the Molene archipelago and raises unanswered questions (p119-122).

ARDEOLA Vol. 46(1) Jun 99 has an article on the effects of fishing strategy, size of group and position within the group on the success of Cormorants, *P.carbo*, fishing in the winter (p13-21), English summary page 13. A piece on breeding success in Cory's Shearwater, *C.diomedea*, compares 2 neighbouring colonies, one nesting mainly in deep holes was quiet and successful. The neighbouring colony consisting mainly of less experienced birds was nervous and less successful (p45-51, in English). Highlights of 1997 (p129-148) include a Grey-headed Gull seen near Huelva, 30, 31 Jan, Jun and 15 Aug.

LA GARCILLA No 103 1998 reports a total count of around 44,000 Cormorants in Spain (p34-5). Another article on page 36 deals with the spread of Cormorants inland. On page 38 there is a brief item on the conservation plan for the Balearic Shearwater, *P.mauretanicus*, on the Balearic Islands. No 104 reports 2 pairs of Mediterranean Gulls, *L.melanocephalus*, breeding amongst Slender-billed, *L.genei*, which nest in the Parque Natural de las Salinas de Santa Pola. Black-headed gulls, *L.ridibundus*, and Common Tern, *S.hirundo*, also breed near by.

ANNUARI ORNITOLÓGIC de las BALEARS, Vol. 12 1997 starts with a case for treating the Balearic Shearwater as an endemic species *P.mauretanicus* (p3-16). Pages 17-28 review the aerodynamics and flight of Cory's Shearwater and the British Storm petrel, *H.pelagicus*. The movements of Audouin's Gull, *L.audouinii*, breeding in the Balearics are discussed on page 35. The majority of the birds move south to Morocco, Senegal and Mauritania though second and third year birds may go north to Spain. There appears to be no outside recruitment. Pages 67-94 give the details of a Swinhoe's Storm petrel, *O.momoris*, caught off Cabrera 13 Aug 1997, the third for the Mediterranean. Notes on the foraging behaviour of the Balearic Shearwater are at pages 125-8, a mixed flock with Levantine Shearwater, *P.yelkouan*, were observed diving up to 2 metres. Visitors to the islands included Great Skua, *C.skua*.

IL MERRIL Issue 29 discusses philopatry, the return to the place of birth. At least 12% of male Cory's Shearwater in Malta return to within 16 metres of, and females tend to make their initial landfall at, the natal site but disperse further away (p11-15). An article on their winter quarters suggests that local birds are found in the Sicilian Channel and off Tunisia, but that the majority leave the Mediterranean (p15-7). The first record of a Manx Shearwater, *P.puffinus*, comes from a bird picked up in Marsaxlokk Bay 6 Sep 95 (p18-20). Levantine Shearwater and British Storm petrel continue to breed on the offshore islands.

SANDGROUSE Vol. 21(1) 1999 has a useful article on 50 new species for Israel, recorded 1979-98 and how to identify them. The list includes several species of seabird (p45-105). Unconfirmed records include large numbers of Cory's Shearwater off Cyprus, 300 on 6 Oct and 2900 on the 25th, unusual for October. A Jouanin's Petrel, *B.fallax*, seen off Ras Shu'ab 29 Nov 97 suggests that they may

Whitehall, SW1 2HB. They plan to amalgamate their magazine, The Adjutant, with the RAFOS Journal. The new magazine will be called The Osprey.

RAFOS Newsletter No 67 has an article on a rain and storm-tossed visit to the Flannan Isles off the coast of the Outer Hebrides in 1998 (P6-16). A member's thoughts on a RAFOS website (p26-7), expedition plans (p44-47) and articles on Birdwatching in Europe. **Journal No 28** includes more detailed articles on their expedition to the Flannan Isles; Guillemot, *U.aalge* and Razorbill, *A.torda*, appear to have fallen in numbers since 1988 and a small population of Great Black-backed Gulls, *L.marinus*, and Herring Gulls, *L.argentatus*, has been established (p2-23). A Northwest of Scotland coastal survey was carried out in 1999 (p24-7) and there is a report on seabird movements off Cape St Vincent, Portugal, late 93 early 94 (p46-53).

RAFOS Newsletter No 67 Spring 99, pages 26-7 look at the value of a website for giving members news of enquiries, expeds etc which arise between bulletins, and offers other suggestions. This year's field meetings are posted on page 44. There is an outline of the census SEABIRD 2000, p44-46. Pages 6-17 carry a report of the 1998 expedition to the Flannan Isles. Leach's Storm-petrel, *O.eucorhoa*, Puffin, *F.arctica*, Razorbill, *A.torda*, and Kittiwake, *R.tridactyla*, were ringed. Bad weather made it very hard work.

World Birdwatch Vol. 21 No 2. A brief note on page 3 refers to satellite tracking of Magellanic, *S.magellanicus*, and Rockhopper Penguins, *E.chrysocome*, has shown that the former move 1800 miles to the coastal waters of South America whereas the latter stay put. On page 5 it reports that numbers of the Short-tailed Albatross, *D.albatrus*, on Toroshima in the Japanese Uzu Islands have exceeded 1000 for the first time. An article on Kazakhstan (p22-3) mentions breeding Relict Gulls, *L.relictus*, and Great Black-headed Gulls, *L.ichithyaetus*. Birdlife International Seabird Conservation Programme can be found on website <http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/stats/adu/seabirds>.

The first issue of **Atlantic Seabirds**, which combines the former Seabird and Sula, starts with a paper on pre-laying attendance by Northern Fulmar, *F.glacialis*, (p3-16). It is suggested that females may use this period to make additional relationships to cover the possibility of losing a mate, whilst males do their best to guard the female from extra-pair copulation and increase their own as an additional defence of their paternity. An article on Manx Shearwater, *P.puffinus*, records a significant difference in the calls of neighbouring colonies, (p17-26). A paper on feeding by the Herring Gulls discusses the possibility that the availability of fish may limit inland colonisation (p27-40). A short note on the effect of a freak wave on a Guillemot colony notes that 25% of the eggs were washed away. Relaying followed in 13-20 days and the eggs hatched. However no chicks were fledged, presumably because the reduced size of the colony made it more vulnerable to predators (p43-47).

Seabird Group Newsletter No 82 announces the start of Seabird 2000, the third attempt to count all of Britain and Ireland's seabirds. The Groups 7th

Conference will be held at Wilhelmshaven, 17-19 March 2000, the main subject will be seabird reproduction. Page 4 reports the reduction in breeding success of Newell's Shearwater, *P.newelli*, which only breeds in Hawaii. If the US Wildlife and Fisheries Service does not react sufficiently a petition may be filed to declare Newell's an endangered species. Also confirmation that the US Army Corps of Engineers is to relocate the largest colony of Caspian Terns, *S.caspia*, in the world from Red Island in the Columbia River to East Island with the aim of reducing the predation on salmon smolt. The 2nd International Conference on the Biology and Conservation of Albatrosses and other Petrels will be held on Honolulu 8-12 May 2000 (p5). Page 6 announces a workshop on the incidental take of seabirds in Arctic fisheries which is being held by the Circumpolar Working Party at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Page 7 reports a new method of removing oil from seabirds by dusting them with fine iron powder and using a magnetic comb to remove it. This removes the oil without affecting the waterproofing of the plumage. The RSPB comment that severely oiled birds are often coated with a hard tar-like residue which may not respond. An item on page 8 notes that South Africa's "Marine Ornithology" may be combined with the Pacific Seabird magazine. Finally a report from Penguin Conservation Vol. 12 No 1 mentions poor breeding success of seabirds in the Falklands and of Little Penguins, *E.minor*, in New South Wales.

The North Sea Bird Club's Fulmar No 86 reports the first successful breeding of a species on an offshore platform. Two pairs of Kittiwake, *R.tridactyla*, fledged young from the Morecambe control Gas Platform. Herring Gulls also attempted to breed but were unsuccessful. Single Icelandic Gulls, *L.glaucoides*, were present at BUCHAN 24 Jan-1 Feb and a Glaucous Gull, *L.hyperboreus*, was seen 29 Jan. Little Auks, *A.alle*, were present off UISGE GORM in December and off MAERSKE CURLEW mid Jan and early April. No 87 discusses some of the difficulties of SEABIRD 2000 including counting Storm-petrels and the mobility of Tern colonies. Unsubstantiated records include Glaucous Gull, *L.hyperboreus*, 8 Feb and 8 Arctic Terns, *S.paradisaea*, 11 May at SCHIEHALLION. The latter the only North Sea record for Terns up to June. Alcids were scarce.

Dutch Birding Vol. 21 No 1 starts with an article on the identification of the Temminck's Cormorant, *P.capillatus*, the safest feature appears to be the extended yellow facial skin behind the eye. In winter adults appear dark apart from the white on the cheeks and the upper two thirds of the throat, more details on p1-8. The reasons for accepting the Netherlands first Baltic Gull, *L.fuscus*, are summarised (p25-6). On page 49 reasons are given for rejecting an alleged juvenile Pontic Gull, *L.c.cachinnuns*. Page 41 has an appeal for any unpublished records of Great Black-headed Gulls, *L.ichthyæetus*, in Cyprus from R Frost, Yelkouan, 14 Chaucer Way, St Ives, Huntingdonshire, PE17 4TY. Unconfirmed reports include the first Pygmy Cormorant, *M.pygmeus*, for Holland seen near Utrecht 23-24 Jan. A Magnificent Frigatebird, *F.magnificens*, found exhausted on the Isle of Man on 22 Dec and taken into care. During January and February Laughing Gulls, *L.atricilla*, were reported from Blanes near Tordera, Spain, the Alvor Estuary, Portugal, Brest, Finisterre and

Essex. No fewer than 9 Ring-billed Gulls, *L.delawarensis*, were seen at Arcachon, Gironde, France 11 Jan, and 8 at Nimmo's Pier Galway 20 Feb. Twelve Glaucous Gulls, *L.hyperboreus*, and a Pontic were at Derry City Dump 12-18 Feb. Two first winter American Herring Gulls, *L.smithsonian*, were seen at Newport, Co Mayo; also a Thayer's, *L.g.thayeri*, 29 Dec-20 Feb plus an Ivory Gull, *P.fburnae* on 31 Dec. Tenerife's first Glaucous Gull was seen at Porta de la Cruz in Feb. Finally the second record for the USA for a Kelp Gull, *L.dominicanus*, was seen at St Mary's County Maryland in Feb. There is a new book out on rare birds of the Netherlands by Arnoud van den Berg and C Bosman, which lists 468 species recorded from 1800 to 1998. The introductory chapter is summarised in English and the main text is both Dutch and English. **Dutch Birding Vol. 21 No 2** has an interesting article on possible new species of seabird arising from the discovery of cold and hot season breeding by Madeiran Storm-petrels, *O.castro*, and seasonal breeding by Leach's Storm-petrel, *O.leucorhoa*, on Guadeloupe. Researchers are looking at the possibility of running a colour ringing programme to see if the different groups can be distinguished in the field (p101-106). The article also mentions that two subspecies of Albatross have recently been given species rating, the Antipodes, *D.antipodensis* and Gibson's, *D.gibsoni*, and that a further species of Albatross from the Chatham Islands is awaiting formal description, no details are given. Unconfirmed records include a Great Black-headed Gull at Gullegem, Belgium 18 Mar, a Grey-headed Gull, *L.cirrocephalus*, the first for Egypt seen in the Southern Sinai 7 Feb and an Armenian Gull, *L.armenicus*, at Syracuse, Sicily 2 Mar. **Vol. 21 No 3** begins with a lavishly illustrated article on the identification of juvenile and immature Baltic Gulls, *L.fuscus.fuscus*, especially from the Lesser Black-backed, *L.f.graellsii*, (p129-147). This is a difficult problem since no single characteristic can be taken as diagnostic. A note on page 160 queries a statement that South Polar Skuas, *S.maccormicki*, seen off Senegal appear to have larger bills than birds seen in the Antarctic and especially the suggestion that the head feathers are sleeked down in hot weather making the bill look larger. Unconfirmed records include the second Pygmy Cormorant, *C.pygmeus*, for Holland and a second Lesser Frigatebird, *F.ariel*, at Eilat, Israel 6 May. In Iceland over 2400 Pomarine Skuas, *S.pomarinus*, appeared between Stokkseyri and Selfoss during fog and disappeared with it. The sixth Slender-billed Gull, *L.genei*, was seen at Sandwich, Kent 5-8 May. The first Ring-billed Gull, *L.delawarensis*, for Denmark was seen at Margarethe Kog, Tronder, Sunderjylland 15-30 May. If accepted a Heuglin's Gull, *L.heuglini*, photographed at Groningen, will be the first for the Netherlands.

Seevogel, March 99 has a round up of breeding on the North Sea Coast in 1997 (p9-16). The June edition reviews oiling casualties 1994-8 (p43-48), coastal breeding in Mecklenberg-Vorpommern in 1997 (p49-51). Pages 52-7 review the feeding habits of Lesser Black-backed Herring and Common Gulls, *L.canus*. Each appears to have a preferred niche though the Lesser Black-backed are more aggressive and as they feed on tidal flats and the sea they have an advantage. This may account for their recent increase (p52-7).