

# Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



REGISTERED CHARITY No. 206719

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BULLETIN No. 142

MAY 2000

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The 53rd AGM was held in the MOD Theatre, Northumberland House, Whitehall, on Friday 3 December, commencing at 1400. Captain M K Barritt, RN was in the chair, and the President (Vice Admiral Sir David Dobson), Vice President (Captain Martin Pepper, Master of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners), Vice Chairman (Captain Sir Thomas Barlow RN) and 15 other members and guests, including the Chairmen of AOS and RAFOS, were present.

## **THE MINUTES**

**Item 1. Apologies.** Apologies for absence were received from Col P Smith RM, Capt Peach RN, Cdrs Morton and Plummer, WO1 Carr RM, Dr Bourne, W Curtis, S Hales, and K Partridge.

**Item 2. The Minutes of the 52nd AGM.** The Minutes of the 52nd AGM, which had been circulated in Bulletin No. 140, were put to the meeting. Approval and adoption were proposed by Captain Sir Thomas Barlow, seconded by Lt Cdr Witts, and carried unanimously.

## **Item 3. Matters Arising.**

**Item 3. Volunteers.** Volunteers were still needed for specific tasks, including point of contact for the Millenium Bird Count. PO Copsey agreed to consider administration of the Photo Library, and POA(METOC) Patrick will investigate establishment of an RNBWS site on RN Intranet / Internet.

**Item 5. Financial Statement.** The Constitution will be amended to contain a Winding-up Clause, noting the requirement to inform the Charity Commissioners.

**Item 4. Chairman's Report.** Captain Barritt drew attention to his remarks in the Foreword to *Sea Swallow* 48. The Executive Committee had met earlier in the day to consider a number of strategic matters which would be brought before the AGM under the appropriate Agenda Items. However, the Committee had decided that the wider membership should be canvassed by circular letter on their views on the way

ahead for RNBWS. This would be done as early as possible in the New Year. Meanwhile, he suggested that opportunities for members to make significant contributions in the field remained as good as at any time in the past, and he noted the specific events which were programmed with AOS and RAFOS in 2000. The value of alert and careful amateur observers, and the history of joint operations in this field, were underlined by Max Nicholson, who, in response to the chairman's invitation, described the WW2 experiences which inspired the Society's founder members.

**Item 5. Financial Statement.** The Honorary Treasurer put the 1998 Financial Statement, issued with Bulletin 140, to the meeting. Acceptance was proposed by PO Copey, seconded by Cdr Ward, and carried without dissent. An unaudited Balance Creditor of £8,069.34 was reported for 30 Nov 99. This reflected a grant from BOU towards IT support for the data-basing project, and reduced production costs for *Sea Swallow*.

**Item 6. Membership Statement.** The Chairman drew attention to the following table:

|           | <u>1998</u> | <u>1999</u> |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Exofficio | 4           | 4           |
| Honorary  | 7           | 7           |
| Ordinary  | 197         | 200         |
| Associate | 44          | 43          |
| Library   | <u>45</u>   | <u>45</u>   |
|           | <u>297</u>  | <u>299</u>  |

In addition to the Library Members, RNBWS exchanges *Sea Swallow* for the publications of 26 other Societies.

**Item 7. Executive Committee and Honorary Appointments.** Under the terms of the Charities Acts 1960 and 1985 the Executive Committee, the UK-based members of which are Trustees of the Society, offered themselves for re-election. This was proposed by Mr Nicholson and seconded by Captain Pepper.

**Item 8. Honorary Auditor.** Thanks were recorded to Cdr Winter, who had carried out the 1998 audit.

**Item 9. Local Representatives' Reports.** The following verbal and written reports were outlined.

Portsmouth Area. Lt Cdr Witts reported on opportunities for Service personnel to contribute to conservation activity in local establishments.

Plymouth Area. Ken Partridge sought RNBWS members' support for SEABIRD 2000 survey work on the coasts of Devon. He also supplied details of the work of the Port of Plymouth Marine Liaison Committee - Nature Conservation Group, and the HMS CAMBRIDGE Conservation Group.

Faslane Area. Cdr Morton reported that the Clyde Naval Base has been identified as one of the MoD's 3 top conservation sites. In an area of c74 sq km covered in a recent survey, 102 species were recorded, 86 of which were breeding.

Portland. Martin Cade invited contact by members visiting the area.

Romania. Gabriel Banica looked forward to early contact with the Danube Delta expedition planners.

New Zealand. Chris Jowett was preparing an article for the Journal on observations during voyages in New Zealand coastal waters and further afield in the SW Pacific.

Naples. Mark Walters was keen to receive more information on the MOD Bird Count and hoped to encourage participation in Naples.

North Carolina. Robert Wolk reported a new contact address for RNBWS members visiting North Carolina:  
6001 Clare Court, RALEIGH, North Carolina 27609.

The Chairman also drew attention to the Hon Sec's report of RN input to the 1999 MOD Bird Count. Whilst the number of participating establishments had again fallen, reports were excellent. Overall during the year, 179 species had been seen on the MOD(N) estate, including 8 which had not been reported previously. Amongst the highlights were a Mediterranean Gull at RNAD Gosport. Blackcaps were recorded at 13 sites - more than double the numbers a decade ago. The annual count each May showed that MOD(N) sites hold a significant number of threatened species, and members are encouraged to take part.

10. **Expedition/Fieldwork Member's Report.** The meeting had noted with pleasure Peter Carr's promotion to WO1, and his appointment as RSM of 45 Cdo Gp RM. Demands of this post would limit WO1 Carr's capacity for RNBWS work, and other members were urged to come forward to contribute to planning of field activity. In his written report, he identified the Millenium Bird Count and the Danube Delta expedition as the priorities for RNBWS support during 2000. Gp

Capt Harker reported that planning had identified an optimum window in late Nov - early Dec for the Danube Delta Tn-Service expedition. RNBWS volunteers should make themselves known to WO1 Carr as soon as possible.

**Item 11. Sea Swallow Editor's Report.** Lt Cdr Lewis reported on the good relationship which had been established with the new publishers, Forces Corporate Publishers, and explained the introduction of sympathetic advertising. He appealed for more material for Volume 49, for which the deadline would be the end of May 2000.

The Chairman then reported on the Executive Committee's discussion of the proposal that RNBWS should participate in production of a tri-service journal. They proposed that publication of *Sea Swallow* would continue in 2000 and 2001. Meanwhile members would be canvassed on their views on continuing publication of the RNBWS Journal, of including it as a distinct insert in the new tri-service journal, or of ceasing publication of a separate journal and committing fully to the tri-service publication. They also recommended that Lt Cdr Lewis should continue to contribute to the Working Group which was leading on the new journal. Comments from the floor echoed the range of written opinion received by the Chairman. In response to the Chairman's concern about the interests and views of the non-military seafarers who make such a significant contribution to RNBWS, Capt Pepper stated that he believed that they would see a Joint Service Journal as adding value to their membership. The Committee's proposals were put to the vote. Approval was proposed by the President, seconded by P0 Copsey, and carried with a majority. One member was unhappy with proceeding further with contribution to the joint service journal project until canvassing of the membership was complete.

**Item 12. Report of the Working Group on the Use of PCs for Data Analysis.** Stan Howe reported that the entry and checking of the 27,500 published records in the 48 volumes of the RNBWS Journal would be completed in 2000. He tabled a chartlet which illustrated the range and density of observations. Noting earlier BTO initiatives which have made data available electronically, he expressed the view that the Working Group's effort would facilitate the identification of errors and lacunae, and enable analysis and publication of further valuable scientific knowledge. He believed that the work was making some of the debate and anxiety over the way ahead for the journal rather irrelevant. There might be a case, for example, for making the data available on the Internet. He noted that an Index could be made available now on diskette. After discussion of the report, the Chairman called for a vote of thanks to Mr Howe, who had brought the data-basing project to this point almost single-handed.

**Item 13. Any other business.** In addition to routine reports of events and publications of general interest to members, the following items were covered:

Log(Ops/Ex), ACDS(L), Room 7261, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1 2HB  
Delete Shelds and substitute Smith, N A, Sqn Ldr RAF, MDA, BSc(Hons) Milt, 9  
Cordingley Close, Church Down Village, Gloucester, GL3 2EN.  
Bates, C M, Mr, 58 Church Rd, Bishopstoke, Eastleigh, Hants, SO50 6DL  
Donaghy, N, Mr, 1 Hensol Rd, Miskin, Pontyclun, CF72 8JJ  
Littlewood, R, Mr, 1 Birchwood Avenue, Lincoln, LN6 0HX  
Murray, D, Mr, 5 Cloffe Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 3RE  
Change of Address  
Walters, M, Mr, Via Ligorio Pirro 23, 80129 NAPOLI, Italy.  
Jowett, C R, C/O G. Pulham, Unit 2, 1 Parkhill Road, Birkenhead, Auckland, NZ.  
New Exchange  
Gruppo Ornitologico Sardo, Via Celia 79, 09045 Quartu Sant'Elena, Caligari, Italy.

## SEABIRDS

N Milius, North Sea, (2)  
B Watts, Round World Cruse, (34)  
D K Ballance, Round the World Merchantman, Dec 99-Feb 00, (15)  
M K Barritt, CWIP (2)

## LANDBIRDS

D K Ballance, Round the World merchantman, Dec 99 – Feb 00, (2)

## AMENDMENT No 2 to LIST OF MEMBERS 1999

### MEMBERS

#### New Members

Butler, M D, Mne Po47352J, 9 Assault Sqdn RM, HMS OCEAN, BFPO 350.

#### Change of Address

Barritt, M K, Captain RN, No 2, The Terrace, Morice Yard, Devonport, PL2 2BG  
Carr, P, R S M, RM, HQ 42 Cdo RM, RM CONDOR, Arbroath, Angus, DDII 3SJ  
Hamilton, C F B, Captain RN, Crimsham Manor, Lagness, Chichester, W. Sussex, PO20 6LN

Lucas, N W, Captain MN 54A Banbury Road, Brackley, Northants, NN13 6AT  
Simpson, J B, Captain RN, Backset Town Farm, Fumers Lane, Hensfield, W Sussex, BN5 9HS

#### Resigned

Claridge, J C R, Mr, resigns due to ill health

Kirk J Esq

Kirby, T E M, Cdr RN

Porter, J, Cdr RN

#### Deceased

The Honorary Secretary regrets to report the death of the following:

Howell-Davies, M D, Cdr RN

Rankin, M N, Dr

Simpson, D, Captain MN

#### Lost Touch

Bainbridge, P, Mr

Cowdery, A J, Lt Cdr RNR

Eppinger, Capt USNR

Hutchings, W, Capt MN

Jackson, P, Capt RN

Stockwell, A, LWEM

Young, M S, Mr

## ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

#### New Members

Delete Bond, Major and substitute Bennett, P S, Lt Col, SO1 Def

Sombrero Island. Following submission of comments based on observations of bird life on the island during a survey by HMS BEAGLE in 1976, the Chairman had received a copy of the Environmental Impact Statement related to a proposal to establish a rocket launch site on Sombrero Island. This is available for study by any interested members.

AOS and RAFOS. Both societies reported that they had established pages on the MOD Website.

**Item 14. Presentations.** The Executive Committee had approved the following awards:

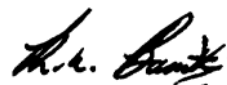
Best Journal Article from a New Contributor. The award to Gabriel Banica was applauded by the meeting.

AOS Trophy. The award would be shared by NP 1016, which had again provided the most extensive input to the MOD marine biological data-bases in UKHO, and by HMS YORK, in recognition of PO Copley's reports from recent deployments.

**Item 15. Date of the next meeting. Post Meeting Note:** To avoid a clash with the period of the Millennium expedition to the Danube Delta it is now proposed that his be held at 1400 on Friday 8 December 2000 in the MOD Theatre, Northumberland House.

### **Item 16. Presentation by Sarah Thornton, Deputy Editor MARINE**

**OBSERVER.** Members were briefed on the aim and purposes of the MARINE OBSERVER, which has been published quarterly since 1924, with a short break during WW2. Sarah Thornton described how the MARINE OBSERVER seeks to foster the huge potential of the World Meteorological Organisation's Voluntary Observation Fleet, including 450 selected UK vessels, by publishing reports from sea together with comment and advice from experts. RNBWS has assisted with interpretation of bird reports since the 1950s. Looking to the future, Sarah described familiar challenges which the Voluntary Observation section is facing. Ships are now using lap-tops and INMARSAT for weather reports. Decreasing use of the log-book is leading to a reduction in ancillary observations. Following on from the discussions of the Internet and data-analysis during the AGM, she saw great potential for interaction, and she and her colleagues were keen to maintain the close relationship with RNBWS. These sentiments were echoed by the Chairman in expressing the thanks of those members present.



M K Barritt  
Capt RN  
Chairman

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Replies are still coming in, but the Hon Sec would appreciate it if the member who asked “why is RNBWS a charity” could forward his name and address. Also the member who is an IT consultant.

## AUTUMN STRAITS OF GIBRALTAR WATCH

SEO are asking for volunteers, mid July to mid October, preferably for a minimum of 14 days. The charge is \$40US for accommodation and food. Details from Prgram Migres, Centro de Visitantes “Heurta Grand”, Ctra.N-340, El Palayo 11390 ALGECIRAS, CADIZ. (Phone +34 956 6791 58, e-mail P.MIGRES@TELELINE.ES) as soon as possible. More details are available from the Hon Sec.

## NEWS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

**AOS Newsletter No 1/99** has a series of regional reports from Norfolk, Acquitaine, Cyprus, Gambia, Canada, Belize, Queensland and SE Sulawesi. There are little on seabirds.

**RAFOS Newsletter No 68** is an interesting one with visits to Hawaii where the Laysan Albatross, *D.Immutabilis*, has been reintroduced, an Antarctic cruise, a visit to Ascension Island and one to Cape Wrath. No 69 includes two articles on the Gambia which could be useful if you were planning to go there.

**BTO NEWS No 225** has a tantalising article on the North Atlantic Gannet, *M.bassanus*, p 5. The East and West populations are morphologically distinct and BOT had no recent records of mixing. However it seems that 5 Canadian ringed birds have had no recent records of mixing. However it seems that 5 Canadian ringed birds have made it to Europe, one washed ashore oiled in Ireland and 2 in Portugal. An article on the SEA EMPRESS oil spill at Milford Haven, p 12-3, suggests that the effects of pollution within the estuary had largely disappeared after 3 years.

**BIRDLIFE UPDATE Sept '99**, p 4, reports that the FAC Council has endorsed the February '99 Committee on Fisheries meeting and so adopts the International Plan of Action for reducing the incidental catch of seabirds in Longline fishing. The onus is now on national bodies to produce their own plans. The February '00 issue reports that the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Southern Ocean Albatross and 7 Species from the Macronetes and Procellaria were added to Appendix 2. A draft regional agreement for their protection is in preparation.

**WORLD BIRDWATCH Vol 21 No 3** reviews Birdlife aims and progress. Amongst seabird projects Audouin's Gull, *L.audouinii*, has recovered from less than 1000 pairs in 1975 to around 18,500 pairs in 1997. Schemes at Philip Island, Australia, and Cousin's Island in the Seychelles have benefited both seabirds and tourism. No 4 continues the saga of the Gould's Petrel, *P.leucoptera* on Cabbage Tree Island, NSW, (RNBWS Bulletins 138 and 140). The rabbits seemed to be

*Waterways Breeding Bird Survey*. All birds seen and heard on selected stretches.  
*Waterways Bird Survey*. Mapping breeding territories, nine visits Mar-July.  
*WeBS River Survey*. Counting non-breeding water birds along selected stretches.  
*Upland Common Bird Census*. Counts of common birds on selected lapsed CBC plots.  
*Breeding Feral Goose Survey*. Survey random selected tetrads for geese and swans.  
*Breeding Birds Survey*. Transect methods on random plots.  
*Nest Record Scheme*. Logging information on nests found, number of eggs and nestlings.  
*Heronries Census*. Counting the number of active nests.  
*WeBS Low Tide Counts*. Waders and wildfowl on selected estuaries.  
*Garden Birds*. Record using weekly logs £10 entrance. Quarterly magazine.  
*Breeding Birds of Wet Meadows*. Repeat of 1982 survey.  
*Lowland Grassland Farms Survey*. Survey birds usage of grassland on selected farms (2 schemes).  
*Cover Crops and Songbirds*. Identify and count winter farmland birds.  
*Organic Farming*. Four visits to compare organic and conventional farms.  
*Winter Farmland Bird Survey*. Three visits to randomly selected 1 km squares, counting on a field by field basis.  
*Peregrine Survey*. 10 year survey of past and new potential breeding sites.  
If you are prepared to help with any of the above contact the BTO on 01842 750050 for further details.

## MoD BIRD COUNT

The MoD bird count will be held from 20—28 May.

## INFORMATION IN THE LISLE LETTERS FROM CALAIS.

We are grateful to Dr Bourne for providing us with a window into the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and the development of the bird trade. At this time Gulls were apparently reared for the pot and thanks to a dispensation from the Pope Puffins were classed as fish and could be eaten on Fridays. The article illustrates the difficulties of identifying such species as Brewes and Puettes after so many years have elapsed.

## NEW BOOK

*In Search of ROSS'S Gull*. Martin Densley, Peregrine Books, £34.95. 300p. 80 colour plates. The book chronicles the discovery of Ross's Gull and its associations with Arctic explorers. The biology and distribution are discussed. Plates include many other arctic breeding species.

## REPORTS RECEIVED

The following Seabird and Landbird reports have been received since Bulletin 141.

**HONG KONG BIRD REPORT 1997.** This year's report adds Pacific Loon, *G.pacifica* and Little Tern, *S.albifrons* to the Hong Kong list, both seen in February. Great Black-headed Gulls were seen in Jan and Feb, also Black-tailed Gulls, *L.crasirrostris*, but the Brown-headed Gulls, *L.brunnicephalus* seen in Feb were the fewest recorded since 1980. On the other hand Salty-backed Gulls, *L.schistisagus* had a good year and it was the best ever for breeding Roseate Terns. Caspian Terns, *S.caspia* migration only lasted for 22 days the poorest since 1972. Greater Crested Terns, *S.bergii* were seen in April and on 14<sup>th</sup> an Aleutian Tern, *S.aleutica* the earliest record for this species. Other records include the 5<sup>th</sup> for Black-legged Kittiwake, *R.tridactyla* 14 Jan, up to 5 Ancient Murrelets, *S.antiquus* south of Hong Kong Island in Feb, a Lesser Frigatebird, *F.aerial* 23 Apr and the first of 3 Red-footed Boobies, *S.sula*, the 2<sup>nd</sup> for Hong Kong on 19 July.

**AUSTRALIAN SEABIRD GROUP NEWSLETTER No 35**, Oct 99 is very interesting and records a large and unexplained incursion of Antarctic species as far north as Queensland. There is even a rumour of a flock of Cape Petrels, *D.capense* being seen off the mouth of the River Fly in New Guinea! The first paper is on the use of neoprene flaps at the entrance of Chatham Petrels, *P.axillaris* breeding burrows. The Chatham Petrel is very faithful to its breeding site and the majority of birds force their way through. The Broad-billed Prion, *P.vittata* is more easily discouraged and almost 90% are deterred from entering and taking over from the Chatham p 2. Pages 3-6 discuss possible reasons for the small size of the Bridled Tern, *S.anaethetus* population in the Coral Sea. Pages 7-8 give abstracts from the combined meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Ecological Societies. One presentation examined the reasons for the loss of the second egg in several penguin species and another identified the feral pig as a major predator on Huttons Shearwater, *P.huttoni* as opposed to stoats, which had been thought to be the main problem. Birds seen by Capt. Cheshire from FRANKLIN between Darwin and Dampier are given on p 9-11, these include Cape Petrel and Soft-plumaged Petrel, *P.mollis* both unusually far north. Pages 12-3 record southern species which have been found on SE Queensland beaches including Black-bellied Storm-petrel, *F.tropica*, Blue Petrel, *H.caerulea*, Antarctic Prion, *P.desolata*, Grey-headed Albatross, *D.chrysostoma*, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, *P.palpebrata*, Wandering Albatross, *D.exulans*, Black-browed Albatross, *D.melanophrys*, southern Fulmar, *F.glacialis* and Cape Petrel. Major sightings from pelagic cruises are given on pages 14-21.

#### **LANDLUBBERS CORNER**

BTO NEWS No 224 arrived too late for inclusion in the last bulletin. However, a flyer was included introducing the Winter Farmland Survey which will run in 2000/1 and 2001/2 and which includes the choice of Random Square Surveys, regular winter walks over a 1 km course and casual records of flocks on farmland. Do try and take part in one.

#### **Forms from BTO - Current BTO Surveys**

winning and in an effort to save the Petrels a hundred fledglings and nestboxes have been transferred to nearby Boondelbah Island, which is rabbit free, p 5, (short item). Vol 22 No 1 has a more detailed report on the effects of the ERIKA oil spill off Brittany, p 6-7. In the margin is a brief note that hybridisation between the Fairy Tern, *S.nereis* and the Little Tern, *S.albifrons* is apparently increasing and could be a serious threat to the former.

**SCOTTISH BIRDS Issue 55** has a preliminary overview of the 1999 breeding season (seabirds see p.2) Shags, *P.aristotelis* are increasing in the Firth of Forth and together with Auks, *Alcidae*, and Kittiwakes, *R.tridactyla*, also increased in Easter Ross although breeding success was poor. Fulmars, *F.glacialis*, are declining in parts of NE Scotland. The number of Puffins, *F.arctica*, on the Shiant's may have overtaken the St Kilda colony. Mink continue to devastate the Arctic Tern, *S.paradisea* colonies in the Outer Hebrides. Unlike the trend in the Plymouth area, Herring Gulls, *L.argentatus*, in Inverness have fallen by half in the last 4 years. Changes in breeding numbers are given on p 3, but only for gulls. Issue No 56 records Scotland's first Royal Tern, *S.maxima*, in East Lothian 9-10 Aug, and also a group of 70 Great Shearwaters, *P.gravis*, seen 10 km north of Coll 3 Oct, p 7. **The NORTH SEA BIRD CLUB's FULMAR No 88** reports a Sabine's Gull, *L.sabini* off MAERSK CURLEW on 21 July. Kittiwake nested on 3 more drill platforms in the Morecambe Bay Gas Field this year rearing a total of 11 young. There was a single Pomarine Skua, *S.pomarinus*, off BUCHAN A 29 July, single Little Auks, *A.alle*, were seen here on 20 and 24 July, possibly the same bird. Great Skuas, *C.skua* were reported from all areas.

**ATLANTIC SEABIRDS, Vol 1, No 1**, the new combined quarterly of the SEABIRD GROUP and the DUTCH SEABIRD GROUP begins with an article on pre-breeding site attendance by the Northern Fulmar, site defence is not a factor, though extra pair copulation by females is a possibility, p 3-16. Pages 17-26 look at the variation in calls between two populations of Manx Shearwater, *P.puffinus*, on Bardsey Island. The possibility of the supply of fish limiting the inland colonisation of breeding Herring Gulls on the Lower Elbe is considered likely, p 27-42. No 2 examines temperature variation in the stomach of a Cape Gannet, *M.capensis* as an index of foraging activity and feeding rates, p 49-57, the bird is fed with the recorder hidden in a fish! The diet of Common Gulls, *L.canus* feeding off the North Sea coast of Germany is reported in p 57-71. Counting Manx Shearwaters on Bardsey was carried out using tape-recorded calls and the results compared with those obtained by visual examination of burrows, the difference was less than 10%. Cormorants, *C.sinensis* have recently been observed following immediately behind the trawls of small beam trawlers, apparently catching fish, which have been disturbed but not netted, p 85-90. No 3 reviews the Iberian population of the Shag, *P.aristotelis*, which appears to be increasing. The majority of breeding birds are concentrated on the Cites and Onos Islands off Galicia, p 97-106. A study of Cormorants, *P.carbo*, p 107-20, finds that while early nesting and being the centre of a colony contribute to successful breeding other factors must also be involved. An interesting article

compares the breeding of Common Guillemot, *U.aalge*, Brunnich's Guillemot, *U.lomvia* and Razorbill, *A.torda*, at the same site on the Gannet Islands off Labrador, p 121-34. Razorbill and Brunnich's Guillemot tend to leave the nest with longer wings, possibly because they need to go further before they reach the sea. Late nestlings of all 3 species have a condensed period of growth so that they can leave the colony as close as possible to the main departure reducing the individual risk. Brunnich's had the lowest success rate. A review of the Arctic Tern, *S.paradisea*, in Orkney and Shetland suggests that this is a single population, which fluctuates mainly with the supply of Sand eels, but that losses due to adult mortality are currently greater than the breeding success, p 135-43.

**SEABIRD GROUP NEWSLETTER 84** reports on the oil spill from the ERIKA, 12 Dec 99, which is known to have killed at least 50,000 seabirds, mainly Guillemot (75%) and Razorbill (15%), a further 10,000 were washed ashore alive but only a small proportion are expected to survive. Most of the birds are thought to have come from the west and Southwest of Ireland and the UK, and from small local colonies, which were struggling to survive. On a happier note of 4000 Penguins cleaned, tagged and released after the APOLLO SEA oil spill off South Africa, about 73% survived and a third are still alive after 5 years. Also on page 9 Crazy Ants have invaded Christmas Island, killing the Land crabs which kept tree regeneration under control and farming insects which threaten the tree canopy in which Abbot's Booby, *P.abotti*, breeds.

**DUTCH BIRDING Vol 21, No 4** just missed the last bulletin. Pages 207-18 look at a new relationship between gulls based on a study by Philip Chu who carried out the largest detailed analysis of phylogenetic relationships between species of gulls to date. The paper comes up with a number of unexpected relationships which I will not confuse you with as the paper will obviously be a subject of debate for some time to come and more evidence will be required before some of the proposals can be accepted. In the unconfirmed reports Jouanin's Petrel, *B.fallax*, was found breeding in 2 colonies on Socotra, Yemen. A Wilson's Storm-petrel, *O.oceanicus* was photographed off Dyfed, the 4<sup>th</sup> record for Wales. A Ring-billed Gull, *L.delawarensis*, returned to Goes, Zeeland for the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year and 5 Pontic Gulls, *L.C.cachinnans* juveniles were at Groningen and Wigster from 16-28 July, unusually early, another reached Southwold, Sussex 24 Aug. A first summer Heuglin's Gull, *L.heuglini* was photographed and Groningen 14-5 Jun. A Royal Tern, *S.maxima* was seen off Cape Clear, Cork 17 Jul. A Lesser-Crested Tern, *S.bengalensis* with hybrid young was found on Oleron, 8 Aug an Elegant Tern, *S.elegans*, appeared at Ladies Island, Lake Wexford, 8-19 Jul. Cape Verde had their first Roseate Tern, *S.dougalli*, 14 April 98. Sweden's first Bridled Tern *S.anaethetus*, was seen at Soskar, Bohuslan in July and the second for Denmark appeared at Langli and Herting Lob, Vestjylland 25 Jul-14 Aug. Vol 21 No 5 has an account of a White-tailed Tropicbird, *P.lepturus*, seen off Boavista, Cape Verde Island Feb 99, p 54-5. The unconfirmed reports include a Black-browed Albatross, *D.melanophris*, off Galley Head, Cork, 9-10 Sept and a possible off Galicia, Spain, 10 Oct. A Yellow-

needed to find the source of the pollution. Crested Auklets, *A.cristatella* females do most of the hunting while males brood the eggs and defend the young p 35. A study of the effects of high winds on Kittiwake breeding shows that the young of both species made slower progress on exposed sites p 38. A review of oil affected American Coot, *F. Americana* showed that rehabilitated birds that survived 3-5 months could not be separated from normal birds by haematology p 41-2. Migration routes of Sooty Shearwater, *P. griseus* across the Pacific are discussed on p 45, non-breeders are thought to fly a figure of 8 covering 14,500 km while breeders probably take a more direct route of 28,000 km. Studies of stress in Magellanic Penguins suggest that for short periods anyway birds rapidly tolerate tourists p 47. Pacific Seabirds have established a data bank covering 26 species breeding north of 20 N providing a yearly estimation of the population of a given species in a given location p 46. Tufted Puffins, *L.cirrhata* on Nizki-alaid Island, Alaska have responded to the removal of Arctic Foxes with an increase of nesting burrows from 600 to nearly 12,000 p 55. Vol 26, No 2. Pages 62 and 82/3 discuss the attempt to move the Caspian Tern, *S.caspia* colony on Rice Island to East Sand Island. In spite of a reduction in the area available for breeding on Rice Island roughly the same number of terns managed to breed, providing half of their young's food supply from salmonids. Some 1400 pairs were attracted to East Sand Island where only a quarter of the food given to their young was from salmonids. This year Rice Island is to be shut down on the grounds that the terns are taking over 5% of the young salmon and pressure to close East Sand Island is growing although it is far from clear whether the terns are a major cause of poor salmon runs. Page 64 reports that Steller's Eider, *P. stelleri* only breeds near Barrow, Alaska in good lemming years when they nest close to Pomarine Skuas. The Skua's preferred food is lemming and they drive off most predators from their territory. In Alaska many species nested late and had little success, probably due to a shortage of prey early in the season p 70-1. An estimate of longlining casualties between 1993 and 1997 off the Aleutians and the Gulf of Alaska gave a figure of 14,000 birds of which 9% were albatross p 71. Razorbills, *A. torda* and Common Mures, *U.aalge* are increasing in the St Lawrence Gulf p 76. Work on Dark-rumped Petrels, *P.phaeopygia* and Newell's Shearwater, *P.newelli* on Kanai shows that the latter are decreasing rapidly p 76. Laysan, *D.immutabilis* and Black-footed Albatross, *D.nigripes* have been tracked from Tern Island, French Frigate Shoals and from Kanai for a second season details are at [www.wfu.edu/albatross](http://www.wfu.edu/albatross). A Christmas Shearwater, *P.nativitatis* was seen at Wake Atoll for the first time in 60 years, could be the cat control programme is paying off p 77. A GPS Unit has been developed in Japan for tracking large birds, the snag is that the unit must be recovered to download the data p 78. Roseate Terns, *S.dougalli* have had record breeding success at Great Gull Islands, NY and Buzzards Bay, MA p 78. A Seaduck Joint Venture is to be launched to look into the worrying decline of Scaup, *A.marila* and Black Scoter, *O.nigra* possibly due to the warming of the boreal forest p 79. An item on p 81 reports that the rate of preening by gulls is greater after returning from a disturbance than after a normal return.

for Leach's Storm-petrel on King George Island, South Shetlands occurred 21 Feb 96 p 80. The impact of a Kelp Gull colony on neighbouring Imperial Cormorants was studied and suggests that the peripheral Cormorant's nests will suffer but that the main colony may actually gain from bordering gulls defending their territories – 84-5. Finally on Bird Island, Algoa Bay, South Africa it was observed that Kelp Gulls could successfully steal eggs from sitting African Penguins, but if both penguins were present and intruding gull may well be killed p 86.

**SANDGROUSE, Supplement No 1** consists of a checklist of the birds of Turkey and Vol 21 (2) has an updated checklist of the birds of Lebanon p132-70. Cory's Shearwater was found in large number's upwards of 4000, off the North coast of Cyprus, Oct-Nov 98, birds were observed thro a telescope on high ground p 176-7. A report of a Grey-headed Gull, *I.cirrocephalus* from South Sinai could be the first record for Egypt. In the UAE the first Herring Gull, *L.argentatus* was at Khor Ajaman, 8 Jan. The second and third records of Herring Gulls for Cyprus have been confirmed, both were at Larnaca where the first and second records of Heglin's Gull, *L.heuglini* were also reported Nov 98 – Mar 99. Yemen's first Little Tern, *S.albifrons* was seen with Saunder's Terns, *S.saundersi* at Al Fazzah on the SW coast 31 Mar 98. These records for gulls are all on p 189.

**PACIFIC SEABIRDS Vol 26 No 1** begins with a paper by J. Warham on the role of olfaction in locating nesting burrows and goes on to the effect of rhythmic sounds in attracting many species. DNA studies are also reviewed p 1-2. John Warham was presented with PSG's highest honour "The Lifetime Achievement Award" for his work on Petrels and other seabirds. Pages 3-7 examines the results of a major attempt to forecast nesting density in an ideal Marbled Murrelet, *B.marmoratus* environment. After establishing major activity in the area and doing all the environmental assessment no nests could be found! Page 8 reports a successful attempt to protect Great Frigatebirds, *F.minor* during the demolition of a tower on Johnson Island. Eggs and checks were replaced by chicken eggs during the actual demolition period of about 2 hours and then replaced. There were no apparent losses although two out of four Brown Booby, *S.leucogaster* similarly treated subsequently deserted. The Russian Fleet has used several islands in the Primorye State Marine Reserve for target practice p 12. Page 21 discusses some of the options involved with an electronic journal, which would include South Africa's "Marine Ornithology". Abstracts cover papers and oral presentations at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual PSG Meeting Feb 99. Climatic papers included many on the disastrous effects of the 1997-8 El Nino p 22. Mismatch in the peak availability of food and the hatching of young Auklets and Puffins in Canada is noted on p 23, but there were no apparent effects in the Atlantic p 24. Longline trials of a bird-scaring line combined with underwater setting through a funnel gave a high degree of success, and the combination of a bird-scaring line and increased weighting of the longline gave F/V MASONIC complete success p28. Magellanic Penguins, *S.magellanicus* are thought to ingest seashells as an additional source of calcium for their eggs p 32. On page 24 it is reported that the MARPOL Convention has had little or no effect on plastic ingestion by albatross, more study is

nosed Albatross, *D.chlororynchos* was seen off Maine and a Shy Albatross, *D.cauta*, was seen off California late Aug-early Oct. At least 7 Fea's Petrel, *P.fea* were seen off SW England and Southern Eire in late Aug, and one off Bishop Rock, Scilly 1 Sept. A Great Shearwater, *P.gravis* was seen at Perleneset, Uttsira, Rogoland, the first off Norway for 10 years and another was recorded in the White Sea. Little Shearwater, *P.assimilis*, were seen off Porthgwarra, Cornwall 13 Aug, off St Mary's Scilly in Sept, also of West-Vlaanderen at 3 places along the coast on 3 Oct and off Cap Gris Nez, France 4 Oct. A Gannet, *M.bassanus* found dead in Zeeland was just over 34 years old. A Laughing Gull, *L.atricilla* was seen at Rennes, Ile-et-Vilaine 24 Oct into Nov. A Franklin's Gull, *L.pipixcan* was seen off Sussex 3 Oct, singles were also seen at Meath 5 Sept and 3-7 Oct, Dublin 22 Sept, Louth 17 Oct and one was also seen at St Pierre-des-Corps, Indre-et-Loire 6 Oct. A Black-tailed Gull, *L.crassirostris* stayed at Indian Park Head, Nova Scotia 21-6 Oct. The first Baltic Gull, *L.fuscus* for Belgium stayed at the Izer mouth near Nieuwpoort 10-16 Oct. Iceland's second Gull-billed Tern, *G.nilotica* was at Sandgerdi 25 Sept and their second Common Tern, *S.hirundo* occurred at Husavik 25-6 Sept. An American Black Tern, *C.niger*. Surinamensis was seen for the first time in Ireland at Sandymount, Dublin and for the first time in England at Weston-Super-Mare 3-11 Oct. Vol 21 No 6 has the usual list of unconfirmed reports including a very late Feae's Petrel off the Farnes on 19 Nov. Storms brought in huge numbers of seabirds to Cabo Carvoeiro, Peniche, Portugal, Cory's Shearwater, *C.borealis* and Scopoli's, *C.diomedea* totalled 12,000 and 1800 on 19 Sep and 24 Oct respectively. Together with Sooty Shearwater, *P.griseus*, 510 and 1800, Balearic Shearwater, *P.mauretanicus*, 3450 and 500, Manx Shearwater, *P.puffinus*, 1250 and 3, and Pomarine Skua 215 and 721. 455 Pomarine Skuas were counted off Dunkerque-Nord on 17 Nov and an unprecedented 1350 Arctic Skua, *S.parasiticus* were seen here on 19 Sep. The first Leach's Storm petrel, *O.leucorhoa* for Eilat was recorded on 6 Sep. An American Herring Gull, *L.a.smithsonianus* at Kiberg on 22 Nov could be the first for Norway if accepted. An Iceland Gull, *L.glaucoides* spent November off Tenerife. Sandwich Terns, *S.sandvicensis* were present at Brouwersdam, Zeeland in December, they have wintered here before, and a late Arctic Tern, *S.paradisea* was at Kristiinankaupunki, Finland until 2 Dec. A Foster's Tern, *S.fosteri* was present off Friesland 13-14 Nov, possibly the same bird that was seen at Tollesbury Creek, Essex until at least 31 Dec.

**SULA, Vol 12 No 4**, a special issue, reviews the big increase in gulls during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and their recent decline. The decline is thought to have been caused by a reduction of the food supply in Holland and in Belgium by predation from other gulls. ALAUDA, Vol 67 No 3 deals with the difficulties of getting accurate breeding counts in a region due to movement between colonies; repeated counts of pair numbers is required, p 73-8. Vol 67 NO 4 discusses the decline of the Great Auk, *P.impennis* and suggests that the distribution of other species found with it is archaeological digs may also have been affected by man as early as prehistoric times, 273-279. An item on page 341 notes that the larger subspecies of the Snow Petrel,

*P. nivea*. Major is selectively predated by MacCormick's Skua, *C. macormicki* probably because its nests are more exposed than the smaller subspecies *P. n. minor*. The second Sabine's Gull, *L. sabini* for Corsica, a juvenile, was seen 18-9 Nov 99 after a period of strong westerly winds.

**ANNUARI ORNITOLOGIC de las BALEARES**, 98 have an interesting article on seabirds off Catalonia showing the distribution by time of year and distance off shore, p 13-19. The Balearic Shearwater numbers peak some 2 months before Cory's Shearwater. Interesting reports include Pomarine Skua seen off Mallorca 29 Mar. A list of ringing recoveries is included, p 152—65.

**ARDEOLA**, December 99 has an article on the use of thermal cameras to census winter roosts. Whilst it seems effective for ducks results with gulls were disappointing. It is suggested that the poor results may have been associated with high humidity. P 171-8 (English summary).

**LA GARCILLA**, no 105, 99 has an article on the problems of bird losses and fishing by John Cooper, p 18-21. No 106 has the first outline report on progress with the SEO/Birdline Plan for the Balearic Shearwater, work has concentrated on the problems faced by this species, p 41. Both articles are in Spanish.

**SEEVOGEL**, Sept 99 describes the results of the surface mining in Brandenburg and Saxony where gulls and terns have taken advantage of the flooded pits for breeding. Unfortunately the breeding sites are likely to be submerged soon, p 71-9. Beached bird recoveries in the North Sea coast in 98 are discussed, p 79-84. The figures are distorted by the effects of the wreck of the PALLAS, and the resulting oil spill but the underlying rate is still undesirably high. Bird movements off the coast of Almeira, Spain are tabled and discussed on pages 86-7. Most gulls and terns tended to be moving west during the late spring migration. The December 99 issue includes an article on the daily routine of Gannets, *M. bassanus* on the nest, p 123-7.

**MARINE ORNITHOLOGY Vol 24** looks at the status of the Short-tailed Shearwater, *P. tenuirostris* in Tasmania and concludes that although here are threats to the species it is sufficiently numerous to survive, p 1-13. Nearly 8% of Bulwer's Petrel, *B. bulwerii* at Silvagem Grande are faithful to their mates and nest sites, p 15-8. A report on debris picked up by Wandering Albatross, *D. exulans* on Bird Island found fishing hooks in 5 out of 25 pellets regurgitated by chicks, p 19-22. Bill length and depth were found over 90% reliable for sexing adult Royal, *E. schlegeli* and Rockhopper, *E. chrysocome*, Penguins, p23-7. Pages 29-34 give an overview of coastal parks and reserves along the Black Sea coast, over 24 species of seabird are known to breed but many areas have not been fully explored. Thirty-eight Sub Antarctic Skua, *C. Antarctica* were found dead at Hope/Esperanza Bay post-mortems failed to establish the cause, p37-40. Amongst smaller articles are the sightings of a Leach's Storm-petrel near the Antarctic polar front, p 41, and of Cattle Egrets, *B. ibis* nearly as far south as the Orkneys, p 57. Notes on species found at Cape Geddes, Laurie Island, South Orkneys are at p 43-4, and on Scott Island, Ross Sea at p 51-2. Also noted are a Fur Seal taking a Cape Gannet, *M. capensis* on its nest and a Black-browed Albatross, *D. melanophris* plunge diving from about 3m to catch a live fish

from just below the surface, p 45. Vol 25 (1997) looks at the diets of the Imperial Cormorant, *P. atriceps* p 1-4, of the Atlantic Petrel, *P. incerta* p 13-6, and of the Yellow-eyed Penguin, *M. antipodes* p 17-29. Pages 9-12 discuss predation by Fur Seals on seabirds at Dyer Island showing that a significant number are killed, some just for sport. Radio and satellite tracking of the Westland Petrel, *P. westlandica* showed that the radio tracking had insufficient range and that satellite tracking only gave intermittent readings however these were enough to get a general picture p 31-6. Sixteen longline fishing operations off Australia are described, two using a birdline produced no casualties, distraction by throwing bait alongside during laying and recovery was not considered a desirable long-term practice and attempts to scare off birds by shooting were ineffective p 37-42. Pages 43-66 present the 3<sup>rd</sup> Status and Trends Report for Antarctic and Sub-Antarctic Seabirds. Albatross and Penguins have both been decreasing although there have been isolated increases in a few colonies, the decrease appears to be linked to longline fishing, there is insufficient data to comment on other species. A White-faced Storm-petrel, *P. marina* was observed off Terra del Fuego 4 June 95, the furthest south for this area, p 67. On page 70 there is the first record of a young Gentoo Penguin, *P. papua* inducing its elder sibling to regurgitate food. Twenty six Gould's Petrel, *P. leucopetra* were sighted off SW Australia in 1994 and it is suggested that these may have been birds from the Cabbage Tree Island colony, New South Wales p 70-1. Pages 72-3 illustrate a method for restraining penguins during examination and which is thought to cause minimum stress. An infrared device suitable for finding occupied Wilson's Storm-petrel nests, and presumably other burrow nesting species, is described on p 75-6. Vol 26 (1998) reviews breeding on the Porter Peninsula, King George Island 1965-98. Skua *Catharacta* sp and Wilson's Storm-petrel populations are larger than thought and the breeding of Black-bellied Storm-petrel, *F. tropica* and Pintado Petrel, *D. capense* are confirmed. Imperial Cormorants are at least occasional breeders, p 1-6 Dietary studies of Adele Penguin, *P. adeliae*, p 7-10 and Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, *P. palpebrata*, and Imperial Cormorant p 59-61 are examined. Problems with the increase in the Kelp Gull, *L. dominicanus*, both for other species of birds and for humans are reviewed p11-8. The effect of the feather trade on seabird populations in the Pacific between 1897 and 1914 which wiped out man colonies also led to many changes in distribution. Seabirds were beginning to recover in some areas when World War II brought rats to many islands and airfield construction and fighting brought further problems p 49-57. Southern Giant Petrels, *M. giganteus* fledglings disperse in an easterly direction from King George Island and may circumnavigate the Southern Ocean many times before returning to their natal colonies p 63-8. Counts of Heard Island Cormorant, *P. nivalis* show a marked decrease, a proper investigation of this species is vital to its survival p 69-74. Breeding birds at Harmony Point, Nelson Island 95/96 are compared with earlier surveys showing a reduction in Gentoo and Chinstrap Penguins, *P. antarctica* and an increase in the Southern Giant Petrel, Pintado Petrel and Arctic Tern, *S. paradisea*. The last three may have profited from an absence of tourists p 75-8. The first record