

# Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



REGISTERED CHARITY No. 206719

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BULLETIN No. 147

OCTOBER 2002

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## **THE FIFTY SIXTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The AGM will take place on Friday 6 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. After the meeting there will be a talk by Mr. Nigel Pepper on Gulls (tbc). 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 the Hon Sec know if they are attending and the names of any guests not later than 2 December.

## **CHANGE OF HONORARY SECRETARY**

Commander FS WARD RN took over the duties of Hon Sec with effect from 1 September. All correspondence for the Secretary and magazines should be sent to:  
16 Cutlers Close  
Stubbington  
FAREHAM  
Hants P014 2JN  
Tel: 01329 665931, Mobile: 07801 027502, e-mail: fsward@lineone.net  
(Members are encouraged to e-mail the Secretary to enable a list of e-mail addresses to be established)

## **SPECIAL REDUCED OFFERS TO RNBWS MEMBERS.**

**British Birds.** This includes behaviour, conservation, ecology and identification not to mention reports on migrants, breeding birds and rarities. Very good value for money. Subscription Rates are £43 in UK, £47 overseas surface mail.

**Bird Watcher's Yearbook.** This is offered to UK members for £11.50 (Normal price £15.00) and 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 includes Sunset and Tide Tables. I find it very useful(see enclosed flyer)

## **RNBWS TIES AND LOGOS.**

Navy blue ties with a multiple Sea Swallow motif are available from Hon Treasurer at £6.00 each including postage within UK, postage overseas will be additional. Shield-shaped logos suitable for windcheaters etc, are also available at 50p each, plus 19p postage in UK.

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

A prize of £20 is offered each year 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 2000 words long, typed double-spaced on A4 paper, and accompanied by appropriate maps and illustrations. It would be helpful, though not essential, if the article were e-mailed to the Editor at [glewis@saltash10.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:glewis@saltash10.freeserve.co.uk). Entries will be judged by a panel consisting of the Editor and 2 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. Entries must reach the Editor by 31 May.

## **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.

## **NEWS FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

**RAFOS Newsletter No. 74** includes 3 articles on birdwatching in Australia, an expedition to the Hebrides where they enjoyed good seabird watching from Portnahaven, plus expeditions to Gibraltar and Spain.

**The Interservice Journal "OSPREY" Issue 2** reviews progress on Ascension Island. Conservation activities have been funded for 2 years, which should complete the control of cats but not the eradication of rats or the fencing of livestock, which is needed to reduce the spread of invasive plants. Continued involvement by AOS is recommended, p.5. A report on the Sooty Shearwater, *S.fuscata*, colonies in Nov 2000 shows a continuing decline in numbers although only 5-6 cats were thought to be involved in predation. Common Mynas were responsible for destroying many eggs at the edge of colonies. Although the overall effect of current predation has not

been evaluated, there is the possibility that shortage of food may be a major factor p.6-8. Pages 11-17 describe a civilian expedition to Ny-Alesund, Svalbard in which RAFOS members took part. Seabirds were numerous and included Fulmar, *F.glacialis*, Arctic Skuas, *S.parasiticus*, Great Skua, *C.skua*, Glaucous Gull, *L.hyperboreus*, Ivory Gull, *P.eburnea* (endangered), Kittiwake, *R.tridactyla* (increasing), Arctic Tern, *S.paradisea*, Little Auk, *A.alle*, Brunnich's Guillemot, *U.lomvia* (increasing), Black Guillemot, *C.grylle*, and Puffin, *F.arctica*. The last article is on a RAFOS expedition to Varangersflord in July 2001 and lists all the species seen. Slight declines were noted in Kittiwake, Sandwich Tern, *S.sandvicensis*, Puffin and Brunnich's Guillemot. The expedition found a family of Little Gulls, *L.minutes*, a rare breeding record for Norway where the species is declining, p. 33-45.

**WORLD BIRDWATCH Vol. 24 No 2** mentions fund raising to eradicate rats on Gau Island, Fiji, in order to protect the remaining Fiji Petrels, *P.macgillivrayi*, p. 3. On page 5 there is a report of a Laysan Albatross, *P.immutabilis*, recaptured 51 years after being ringed as an adult. On page 7 it is reported that 25 chicks of the Bermuda Petrel, *P.cahow*, hatched from 65 nesting pairs, the most successful breeding season so far. Also on page 7 is a statement that the Cape Verde race of *C.diomedea*, is now considered a separate species, *C.edwardsii*, the Cape Verde Shearwater.

**NORTH SEA BIRD CLUB, FULMAR No.98.Spring 2002** reports on page 6 that second winter Iceland Gulls, *L.glaucoides*, were seen at ECOFISK CENTRE, BUCHAN A and MAERSK CURLEW and also 8 Glaucous, *L.hyperboreus*, at S/V GEOBAY all in February. Great Black-backed Gulls, *L.marinus*, were seen killing a Guillemot, *U.aalge*, at VIKING B on 18 Jan. Some 21 Little Auks, *A.alle*, were seen off UISGE GORM in Jan. No. 99 has an account of an enviable twitching holiday that included England's first Elegant Tern, *S.elegans*, at Dawlish Warren 18 May. Sightings from oil rigs showed an increase in Fulmar, *F.glacialis*, in the second quarter, and a maximum count of 70 Gannets, *M.bassana*, at BUCHAN A. A few Manx Shearwaters, *P.puffinus*, were seen at Morecambe 20 May. Skuas were represented by an Arctic, *S.parasiticus*, at MAERSK CURLEW on 27 April and 4 single Great Skuas, *S.skua*, at BUCHAN A on 1-8 May. Guillemots were reported in small numbers but there were only 8 reports of Razorbills, *A.torda*, mainly in March. A Little Auk, *A.alle*, was seen at MAERSK CURLEW and a Puffin, *F.arctica* at BUCHAN A on 27 March.

**ATLANTIC SEABIRDS Vol.4, No. 1** begins with a review of European Storm-petrels, *H.pelagicus*, and Manx Shearwater, *P.puffinus*, on the Isles of Scilly, which found an estimated 1475 pairs of the former and 200 of the latter. Limiting factors are likely to be cat, rat and gull predation, though some rat eradication has been carried out, p. 1-16. The population decline of Kittiwakes, *R.tridactyla*, on Fair Island is discussed on p. 17-28, the cause is thought to be falling numbers of new breeders. Over 21,000 Common Eider, *S.mollissima*, died in the Dutch Wadden Sea 1999/2000

due to shortage of food and the following breeding season was very poor. A critical evaluation of the industrial shell fishery seems called for, p.29-38.

**SEABIRD GROUP Newsletter No. 91** opens with an account of watching seabirds in New Zealand, p.1-2. There is a review of the first volume of a study of Common Guillemot in Western USA and Canada. When completed the study should serve as a baseline for the Guillemot population and as an indicator of the general state of seabirds. The Seaduck Specialist Group Meeting, p.5-10, paid special attention to Common Eiders, *S.mollissima*, which are under pressure in many parts of their range. The decline in their food supplies in the Wadden Sea has severely affected the wintering population. It was agreed that more work was needed to define the relative importance of the many factors involved and that an EV Management Plan should be called for and drafted as soon as possible. A note on page 10 comments that one of the Eynhollow Fulmars could be over 50 years old and that a Manx Shearwater, *P.puffinus*, had reached 45 breeding seasons making it about 50 years old. Pages 11-13 discuss the BTO migration atlas, which is due to be published shortly. Twenty-four seabird species are covered in depth showing that most of the British seabirds are either short or long distance migrants. Some changes in wintering areas are seen but more work needs to be done on this.

**DUTCH BIRDING Vol. 24, No. 2.** Unconfirmed reports include a Balearic Shearwater, *P.mauretanicus*, off Jaffa and a White-faced Storm-petrel, *P.marina*, Ma'agan Michael on 9 Jan could be the second and first records respectively for Israel if accepted. Eighty Leach's Storm-petrel, *O.leucorhoa*, were off Ma'agan Michael the same day. Large numbers of Balearic Shearwaters and Leach's Storm-petrel, were seen off the south and western coasts of Britain in January and especially 5-6 Feb. Further to remarks in our last bulletin about the spread of the Great Black-headed Gull, *L.ichthyaetus*, up to 5 wintered at Lentini Lake, Siracusa, Sicily Jan-Feb and Malta's fourth was recorded at St Elmo, Valetta 26 Jan. A record 1700 Mediterranean Gulls, *L.melanocephalus*, were seen on the North West coast of the Ile de Re, Charente-Maritime, France, 18 Feb. A Franklin's Gull, *L.pipixcan*, was seen at Banjul, Gambia, 13 Jan. A Bonaparte's Gull, *L.philadelphia*, was reported from Millbank, Cornwall and also from Paghham, Sussex in mid-March with another at Gijon, Asturias, Spain 17 Jan. The first Slender-billed Gull, *L.genei*, for Korea was reported from Kwong Yang Bay in January. Numerous Ring-billed Gulls, *L.delawarensis*, were reported.. 8 off France, 18 off Britain and Ireland and one from Belgium. Several American Herring Gulls, *L.smithsonianus*, were reported from France, Britain and Ireland. The first Lesser Black-backed Gull, *L.graellsii*, for Finland was seen at Tampere 23 Apr 2000, two Yellow-legged Gulls, *L.michahellis*, were also seen in August and September 2000. A Glaucous Gull, *L.hyperboreus*, and up to 2 Iceland Gulls, *L.glaucoides*, were seen in Horta Harbour, Azores 7-22 Jan. No less than 85 Iceland Gulls were at Killybegs, Donegal on 21 Feb and another was seen at Agadir, Morocco 21 Jan. Denmark's first Thayer's Gull, *L.g.thayeri*, was seen

#### **Associate Members.**

Change of Address

Smith, N A, MDA, BSC(Hons) MILT, Sqn Ldr, RAF, Process 1, Room 24, D Block, DLO Copenacre, JSU Corsham, Chippenham., SN13 9NR.

Bennett, P. Lt Col, Delete and insert;

Ormerod, I S, Major, RLC, HEADQUARTERS DEFENCE LOGISTICS ORGANISATION, Room 406, Metropole Building, Northumberland Avenue, London, WC2N 5BP. (Secretary AOS)

#### **Honorary Member.**

Hon Sec regrets to announce the death of Professor Dr D Voous, the eminent ornithologist

#### **Library Members.**

Change of Address.

BOU, Alexander Library, Dept. of Zoology, Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, South Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PS.

Resigned.

Sprunt, A, Due to declining health.

Species	Number of establishments
Greenfinch	11
Great Tit	10
Song Thrush	10 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)
Goldfinch	10
Mistle Thrush	9
Buzzard	9 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)
House Martin	9
Redshank	9 (of whom 4 reported outside the count)
Sparrowhawk	8 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)
Curlew	8 (of whom 4 reported outside the count)
Oyster Catcher	8 (of whom 4 reported outside the count)
Swallow	7
Skylark	7 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)
Dunlin	6 (of whom 5 reported outside the count)
Turnstone	6 (of whom 5 reported outside the count)
Tawny Owl	4
Barn Owl	2 (both reported outside the count)

A Rose Coloured Starling was reported at Royal Marines Chivenor. The number of sightings reported outside the count period no doubt reflects the movement of waders, for example, to their winter-feeding grounds.

#### AMENDMENT No.5 TO LIST OF MEMBERS 1999.

##### Members.

##### New Members

Cdr N Jervis RN, 25 Smugglers Way, Rhu, HELENSBURGH.

##### Change of Address

Astley-Jones, F E, Esq. For No. 86 read No 84.

Ballance, D K, Dr, to read Mr and Bratton Lane

Barton, J J, Commodore RN, DNOA(S), Room 165, Victory Building, HMNB Portsmouth.

Howells, M J, Lt Cdr RN, officers Mess, Fort Blockhouse, Gosport, Hants, P012 2AB

Lost Touch.

Chipps, A, Mr

Pentreath, J, Mrs.

Deceased.

The Secretary regrets to report the death of Captain James W Waldie MN

at Hirtshalshavn, Nord-jylland, 15-16 Jan and at Hanstholm harbour 100 km SW on 19 Feb. A Ross's Gull, *R.rosea*, was on the Plym Estuary, Devon from 23 Jan into March and another was at Killybegs 1-2 March also at Blackpill beach, Swansea in the second week of March. Ivory Gulls, *P.eburnea*, were at Skogvoll, Andoya, Norway, 31 Mar, Gwynned, Wales, 9 Feb and Lytham St Annes, Lancashire 13-15 Feb. Vol. 24, No. 3. Unconfirmed reports include a Black-capped Petrel, *P.hasitata*, seen from the Portsmouth- Azores ferry in late May. Twenty two Scopoli's Shearwater, *C.diomedea*, were counted off Ma'agan Michael 18 Apr and 2 more off Ain Sukhna, Egypt on 16 Apr. 211 Cory's/Scopoli's Shearwaters were off Haifa on 14 May, Israel's highest ever count. A Sooty Shearwater, *P.griseus*, was off Nuweiba, Egypt on 8 Apr. Red-billed Tropicbirds *P.aethereus*, were seen 7 km east of St Mary's, Scilly Isles 29 Mar and 11 km off Falmouth, Cornwall 21 Apr. The last known colony of Great Cormorants, *P.carbo*, on rocky shores north of Oristano, Sardinia has been wiped out by persecution. A number of Shags, *S.aristotelis*, ringed on Fair Island have been seen in the Netherlands. No less than 8316 Pomarine Skuas, *S.pomarinus*, were on eastward passage off Slettnes lighthouse, Gamvik on the northern tip of Norway 22 Apr. Last year's Laughing Gull, *L.atricilla*, returned to the Black-headed Gull, *L.ridibundus* colony at Zwillbrocker Venn, Germany. A Bonaparte's Gull, *L.Philadelphia*, first seen at Millbrook, Cornwall appeared at Pagham, Sussex 16-25 Mar another was found on South Uist, Hebrides on 28 Apr. The first Audouin's Gull, *L.audouinii*, for Cantabria, Spain was in Santander Bay on 5 May. Up to 4000 Slender-billed Gulls, *L.genei*, were counted at Molentargius, Sardinia, 14 Apr. American Herring Gulls, *L.smithsonianus*, were seen at Lagoa Rasa, Azores, 16 Apr, Ouessant and Molene, 27 Feb-22 Apr, and at Corfe Mullen and Lytchett Bay, Dorset, 4-13 Apr. Ross's Gulls, *R.rosea*, were recorded from Peterhead, Scotland, 9-11 Mar, off Shetland from 10 May onwards and also in Devon, Cornwall and Yorkshire. A party of 7 Lesser Crested Terns, *S.bengalensis*, seen off Tarila 7 May is probably the largest flock ever recorded from Spain. Vol 24 No. 4 has an article on migration in the Caribbean, p. 202-209, which briefly mentions Cory's and Manx Shearwaters, Little Gull, *L.minutes*, Black-headed Gull and Lesser Black-backed, *L.graellsii*. Unconfirmed records include a Black-browed Albatross, *D.melanophris*, seen off St Kilda, Scotland, 12 June, and a sub adult off Heigvaer, Nordland, Norway 24 June. A Black-capped Petrel was seen 330km NW of Cabo Finisterre, Spain on 30 April. White-faced Storm-petrels, *P.marina*, were seen from the Fuerteventura - Gran Canaria ferry 3 July. Five unoccupied nests of the Red-billed Tropicbird were found on Red Sea islands in the Wadi Gamal - Hamatta area of Egypt 29 June, one appeared to have been in use recently. A Red-billed Tropicbird was seen from the La Gomera- Tenerife ferry, 17 July. A South Polar Skua, *C.maccormickii*, the first for the Canaries (if accepted) was also seen the same day. A Great Black headed Gull was reported from Helgoland 8 June. Laughing Gulls, *L.atridilla*, were recorded at lie de Re, 12-24 May, at Latrajbjerg, Iceland, 1

July and at Ardmore Point, Lough Neath, Armagh 15 July. Franklin's Gulls, *L.pipixcan*, were reported from South Africa and from Dunedin, New Zealand, the latter July 1. A Grey-headed Gull, *L.cirrocephalus*, was seen at Hurghada, Red Sea, 11 April and will be Egypt's first if accepted. At least 3000 pairs of Slender-billed Gulls were reported breeding at Lake Qarun, El Fayoum, Egypt. In Ireland a pair of Sabine Gulls, *L.sabini*, were seen off Cape Clear, Cork twice on 8 July. A Ring-billed Gull, *L.delawarensis* returned to Goes, Zeeland on 17 July, earlier than usual, for its sixth consecutive "winter". The second breeding record of Audouin's Gull, *L.audouinii*, for Portugal occurred at Ria Formosa in June. A pair of Lesser Crested Terns, *S.bengalensis* were discovered nesting in a Sandwich Tern, *S.sandvicensis*, colony recently established in the Ebro delta. Reports of an "Orange-billed tern" initially seen off Holland and later off the East coast of England have tentatively been assessed as a Lesser Crested! Sandwich hybrid.

**ALAUDA No. 1, 2002** has no seabird articles. No.2 has a study of the main colony of Little Tern, *S.albifrons*, in France, at Beniguet, Finisterre. Results are comparable with UK colonies but it was noticed that predation on chicks increased with bad weather and human disturbance, p.285-292. Pages 327-339 have a summary of sightings of rare gulls in the Mediterranean.

**ARDEOLA Vol. 48(1)** had no seabird content. Vol. 49(1), June 2002 discusses fossils found on El Hierro (Canary Islands), in particular an extinct petrel. Two other extinct Shearwater species were also discovered, p. 39-49. Klepto-parasitism by Black-headed Gulls, *L.ridibundus*, on Black-tailed Godwits, *Limosa limosa*, is discussed on pages 87-90. The report of the Spanish Rarities Commission for the year 2000 accepts the Bulwers Petrel, *B.bulweri*, seen at Huelva in June and a second Spanish sighting of the Magnificent Frigatebird, *F.magnificens*, at Torremolinos, Malaga in October.

**LA GARCILLA No.110, 2001** announced that SEO/BIRDLIFE had declared 2001 "The Year of the Balearic Shearwater" and outlined a conservation directive after a recent survey had shown a significant drop in breeding pairs of *P.p.mauretanicus*, p. 15-17. Pages 18-21 discuss accidental mortalities of seabirds due to fishing activities. No. 111 lists recent sightings which include a possible Bulwer's Petrel, *B.bulwerii*, off Huelva 7 June 2000 (subject to confirmation). On page 31 it discusses the problems involved in getting funds to protect the Balearic Shearwater from cats and rats, all articles are in Spanish.

**SEEVOGEL, May 2202**, has an article on Arctic Terns, *S.paradisea*, p.8 and on the need for a reserve on the Olpenitz Peninsula at the mouth of the Schlei Fiord which has become a breeding ground for Common Gull, *L.canus*, Arctic Terns and Little Terns, *S.albifrons*.

**SANDGROUSE Vol. 24(1)** page 24 gives sightings of the Great Black-headed Gull, *L.ichthyaetus*, in Lebanon during '98 and '99. On pages 76-9 unconfirmed reports include a Gannet, *M.bassanus*, seen off Mandria, Cyprus 5 Dec '01. There

was a late report of 2 Great Black-headed Gulls at the mouth of the Chorokhi river, West Georgia on 11 April. Two Sooty Gulls, *L.hemprichii*, were seen at Eilat 13 Oct. In Lebanon a Pomarine Skua, *S.pomarinus*, was at EL Mina, Tripoli 14 Jan 2000 and also on the 20 Feb a Great Black-headed Gull. Three Red-billed Tropicbirds, *P.aethereus*, were at the Daynaiyat Islands, Oman on 1 Nov and 5000 Socotra Cormorants, *P.nigrogularis*, were seen on 19 Dec at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

#### LANDLUBBER'S CORNER.

Hampshire Ornithological Society reports the first occasion of Avocets breeding in Hampshire, two pairs nested in the Solent area and successfully hatched. Judging by similar events in Dorset they are unlikely to return next year.

**BTO News No 240** reports the publication of 'The Migration Atlas'. The accounts of 261 species covers all the bird species that regularly use Britain and Ireland during the course of the year, from Chaffinches and Swallows through to Sooty Shearwaters and Aquatic Warblers. Available from BTO at £55. Newly published are the 'Video guide to the Gulls of Europe, Asia and North America (£27.95 from Bird Images) and 'The Atlantic Gannet' (£24.50 from Fenix Books ISBN 0-95411-910-X)

#### NEW FALKLANDS GUIDE.

A new guide book, "A Visitors Guide to the Falkland Islands" shows the best areas and what you might expect to find. Price £9.00 plus p and p from Falklands Conservation, 1 Princes Aye, Finchley, London N3 2DA.

#### MOD BIRD COUNT

John Plummer (johnplummer@lineone.net) reports: As at September 2002 Defence Estates Conservation has forwarded reports from 18 establishments across the country. A total of 129 species are recorded so far with only the Blackbird reported in all 18 establishments. In 17 were Wood Pigeon, Magpie, and Pied Wagtail, 16 had Chaffinches, and 15 reported Starlings, Blue Tits and Robins. The RSPB 2002 Big Garden Birdwatch states that once again the Starling topped the poll as the most numerous garden bird, but the Blackbird was found in the most gardens. Other reports include:

<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of establishments</u>
Mallard	14 (of whom 2 reported outside the count)
Kestrel	14 (of whom 2 reported outside the count)
Crow	14
Herring Gull	13 (of whom 2 reported outside the count)
Black Headed Gull	11
Swift	11
Jackdaw	11