

World Birdwatch Vol 24 No 3 (Sep 02). P6. Reports that planned developments in Christmas Island may have a severe effect on the critically endangered endemic Abbots Booby *P. abbotti*. P8. Reports that Steeple Jason and its large neighbour Grand Jason, in the Falkland Islands have been given to the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). Steeple Jason has the world's largest colony of Black-browed Albatross *T. melanophris* of around 157K breeding pairs, almost a third of the global population, a smaller colony of 52.7K pairs is found on Grand Jason. Both are also homes for large colonies of Rockhopper Penguins *E. chrysocome* and Southern Giant Petrels *M. giganteus*.

World Birdwatch Vol 24 No 4 (Dec 02). P3. reports that the Portuguese MoD plans to build a radar station at the summit of Pico do Areeiro, Madera; site of the only known breeding colonies of Zino's Petrel *P. Madeira* a critically endangered species with only 30-40 breeding pairs. The radar station is part of a wider NATO network. Birdlife International have written to relevant authorities expressing their concern. P16. Gives an interesting account of the rise and fall of the Bermuda Petrel (Cahow) *P. cahow*.

World Birdwatch Vol 25 No 1 (Mar 03). P6. Significant steps have been taken by the Taiwanese Government to address the Seabird bycatch from legally operated Taiwanese owned vessels. Taiwan is following the guidelines of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) International Plan of Action (IPOA) and is currently preparing a National Plan of Action (NPOA)

BACK NUMBERS OF SEA SWALLOW.

Hon Sec is always grateful for any back numbers of Sea Swallow that members no longer need. We do get requests for back numbers and our stock is limited.

Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



REGISTERED CHARITY No. 206719

BULLETIN No. 148

MAY 2003

The 56th AGM was held on Friday 6 December 2002 in the Lecture Theatre, Northumberland House, London. Captain M K Barritt, RN was in the chair and opened proceedings at 1400. Eleven Society members attended.

THE MINUTES

Item 1: Apologies. Apologies for absence were received from Col P Smith RM, A Louch, M Finn, S Howe, RAdm J S Ritchie, S Hales, Dr W Bourne. Regrettably Capt Sir T Barlow was unable to attend because he was in Whittingham Hospital, the Society wished him a speedy recovery. *PMN: Fortunately Sir Thomas was able to return home before Christmas.*

Item 2: Minutes of 55th AGM. The minutes of the 55th AGM, which had been circulated in Bulletin 146, were put to the meeting. Approval and adoption were proposed by Cdr John Plummer, seconded by Cdr Michael Casement, and carried unanimously.

Item 3: Matters arising.

Item 3. RNBWS on RN Intranet/Internet. The Hon Sec reported that after discussion with DNPTS he had discovered that nothing had happened with the RNBWS input, being due to a DNPTS administrative error. The matter is ongoing. (Action Hon Sec)

Item 13. AOB.

- b. Liaison with MoD Conservation, Marilyn Gill was ongoing.

Item 5. Financial Statement. The Hon Treasurer reported that Gift Aid replaces the Deed of Covenant. There was a large amount of work involved in changing over; this would be progressed over the next two years. Forms would be distributed to members.

Item 6. Membership Statement. Continued publicity was required and at an earlier stage in peoples career. Hon Secretary would liaise with establishments especially

HMS COLLINGWOOD's Freshers Fayre, and Richard Porter at BRNC. (Action Hon Sec)

Item 4: Chairman's Report. Capt Barritt reported that the active year for the RN and RM was reflected in *SS51*, especially reports from EDINBURGH and MONTROSE. Supporting agencies, not least UKHO MEIC, were also affected; hence, some follow up from last year's meeting with Dr Ben Maugham was not yet actioned. However, focus on natural phenomenon observations and records was sharpening, not least with requirements for Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), and Hydrographer of the Navy was busy stimulating co-operation and progress in the Fleet chain! Other inputs to Neil Cheshire have come from members enjoying those opportunities for cruising and seafaring which have survived the post 11 Sep 01 down-turn. The Chairman expressed thanks to Stan Howe for leads on a number of contacts with cruise companies or ardent sea observers, often spotted on the www. The Chairman remained convinced of the importance of focus on the core purpose for which RNBWS was founded. He noted the gracious response of AOS and RAFOS to decisions at the last AGM, and reported that the Executive Committee had agreed that a clause be included in *Osprey* stating "produced in association with RNBWS". They also welcomed RNBWS' commitment to encourage individual members to contribute and subscribe to *Osprey* (price c£3).

Item 5: Financial Statement. The Financial Statement for the year 2001 was offered for approval and adoption; proposed by Gary Lewis and seconded by Steve Copsey. The Hon Treasurer reported that some changes were still required to weed out non-payers and payment anomalies. The number of copies of *Sea Swallow* could be reduced, 350 proposed. Gary Lewis will investigate if change is financially beneficial. (Action Editor *SS*). After lengthy discussion it was agreed that the Subscription should be increased to £12 to cover increased costs, Members are requested to make the necessary amendments to standing orders etc commencing 2004. This increase was proposed by Michael Casement, seconded by Steven Chapman and carried unanimously. (Action Hon Treasurer and Hon Sec). The status of the RNBWS affiliation with Birdlife International and BTO was queried i.e. paid subscription or exchange, the Hon Treasurer has no record of paying a subscription. See Item 13.

on:

- Fair Isle breeding Season by Derek Shaw www.fairisle.birdobs.zetnet.co.uk.
- Seabird ringing on Sule Skerry 1975 – 2002 by Adrian Blackburn, blackburns@suleska.freeserve.co.uk.
- Treshnish Isles ringing group (TIARG) by Robin Ward robin.ward@wwt.org.uk.
- Martin Heubeck martinheubeck@btinternet.com gives accounts of the effects of the PRESTIGE which sank 19 Nov 02 130Nm WSW off Cape Finisterre and the TRICOLOR which sank off Dunkerque 14 Dec 02. The next Seabird Conference with the theme 'North Atlantic Seabird Populations' will be held at Aberdeen University 2-4 Apr 04. The International Water Bird Conference takes place in Edinburgh 3-8 Apr 04.

Seevögel Vol 23 No 2 (Sep 02). ISSN 0722 2947 Includes an article discussing the feeding habits of Herring Gull *L. argentatus* and the Lesser black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*.

Seevögel Vol 23 No 3 (Nov 02). No Seabird reports.

Seevögel Vol 24 (Jan 03). P83 discusses the effect of wind farms on sea birds during migration in areas off the German North Sea. The erection of wind facilities off shore can have the following adverse effects on Birds:

- Risk of collision with wind turbines.
- Short-term habitat loss during construction.
- Long-term habitat loss due to disturbance by wind turbines including disturbance from sailing activities in connection with maintenance.
- Formation of barriers on migration routes.
- Disconnection of ecological units, such as roosting and feeding sites of local birds.

Environmental impact studies are underway and comprise three major research complexes:

- Transect studies to analyse distribution and density of seabirds.
- Radar investigations.
- Visual observations / flight call recordings to detect movements of passage migrants and foraging birds.

Note: The issue of wind farms is also discussed in RSPB BIRDS Summer 2003 P23 'a word from Simon Barnes'

Seevögel Vol 24 (Mar 03). No Seabird reports.

The Fulmar No 101 (Winter 2002). No significant Seabird Reports.

RSPB Fellows News (Spring 03). No Seabird reports.

Sandgrouse Vol 24(2) (2002). P105. The discovery of a breeding colony of Jouanin's Petrel *B. fallax* on Socotra, Yemen is reported. Nests have been located in small caves and holes on the high sea cliffs.

Sandgrouse Vol 25(1) (2003). P8. The Turkey Bird Report 1997-2001 includes the occurrence of Seabirds. P67. Reports the first record of a Grey-headed Gull *L. cirrocephalus* in Egypt on 7 Feb 99 south of the mangrove stands at Nabq Nature Reserve (on the east coast of Sinai c. 15Km north of Sharm el Sheik).

Seabird Group Newsletter 92 Oct 02. Includes the following articles:

- European Project on Fulmars and Marine litter – Looking for help to investigate the link between mortality in Seabirds and marine waste. North Sea countries have implemented a system of 'Ecological Quality Objectives for the North Sea (EcoQO's)', further research is funded from a recently approved EU-Intereg project called 'Save the North Sea (SNS)'. The Fulmar will be the symbol for this campaign. <http://www.alterra.nl/publ-prod/rapporten/download/AlterraRapport401.pdf>.
- Further work concerning Gulls with the surveying of the Gloucester Gull colony mamedurham@aol.com and the Forth Islands aerial Gull count johndavies@blueyonder.co.uk.
- The seabird breeding season for 2002 is summarised: Shetland – Martin Heubeck - martinheubeck@btinternet.com. Isle of May – Linda Wilson – ijwi@ceh.ac.uk. Skomer – Juan Brown – skomer@wtww.co.uk. Foula, a very poor season 'the worst documented since 1971 and the worst in living memory'. A severe shortage of Sandeel apparently affected almost every species with most severe effects on Arctic Tern, Arctic Skua, Red Throated Divers, Kittiwakes, Shags, Guillemots, Razorbills and Puffins. Richard Furness – r.furness@bio.gla.ac.uk.

Seabird Group Newsletter 93 Feb 03. Records an account of the 2002 Little Auk expedition to Spitsbergen. The primary aim of the expedition was to follow up work done on the 2001 expedition which examined how the foraging behaviour of Little Auks *A. alle* is influenced by heterogeneous water masses surrounding the colony. Given that plankton populations closely track changes in ocean temperatures, plankton feeding Little Auk populations are likely to be affected by changing climate and ocean currents. The top priority for 2003 was to collect chick diet samples from breeding Little Auk adults during the early chick rearing period. Further study concerning behavioural work, focussing on sex differences in parental provisioning and time spent at the colony is planned. Tom Van Pelt – Thomas_van_pelt@usgs.gov. P5 gives a summary of Black Guillemot *c. grylle* breeding at Bangor, Northern Ireland in 2002. The Newsletter also includes articles

Item 6: Membership Statement. The Hon Treasurer, who is also the Membership Secretary, provided the following figures.

Membership	2001	2002
Ex officio	4	4
Honorary	6	6
Ordinary	167	165
Associate	39	26
Library	54	48*
Total	270	249

* In addition, we exchange *Sea Swallow* with 26 other Societies.

The Membership Sec continues to refine the List to ensure it is a true reflection of Membership.

Item 7: Executive Committee and Honorary Appointments. Under the Terms of the Charities Acts 1960 and 1985 the Executive Committee, the UK members of which are the Trustees of RNBWS, offered themselves for re-election as detailed in the table below.

Chairman	Capt M K Barritt RN (Mike)
Vice Chairman (RN)	Vacant <i>Capt C Peach RN (Chris)</i>
Vice Chairman (MN)	Capt N Cheshire MN (Neil)
Hon Secretary	Cdr F S Ward RN (Frank)
Hon Treasurer	Lt Cdr D A Griffiths RN (David)
Editor <i>Sea Swallow</i>	Cdr G D Lewis RN (Gary)
Expedition and Fieldwork Member	Sub Lt P Carr RM (Peter)

Re-election of the members was proposed by Steven Chapman, seconded by John Plummer and carried unanimously. With the retirement of Col Peter Smith from the role of Hon Sec, Capt Sir Thomas Barlow as Vice Chairman and the Chairman indicating that owing to his retirement from the RN he was keen to hand over to new blood, much had changed. The Chairman was happy to remain until a replacement was found. Since the AGM Capt Chris Peach RN has agreed to become Vice Chairman, to be endorsed at the 2003 AGM. It was noted that Stan Howe would continue to act as point of contact for species recorded in areas of special interest, making use of his database. Neil Cheshire has assumed responsibility for the compilation of records for seabird observations and Michael Casement will continue to coordinate observations of Land birds at Sea. The Society recognised the huge contribution made by Peter Smith, the outgoing Secretary; Michael Casement

proposed a vote of thanks, seconded by Chris Peach. The Chairman reported that a piece of engraved crystal had been commissioned from Capt Chester Read showing the Sea Swallow and an inscription recording Peter Smith's service as Hon Sec. As Peter Smith was unable to attend the AGM the Chairman will make arrangement for the presentation to be made at his home (*PMN: This action complete*).

Item 8: Honorary Auditor. The Honorary Treasurer reported that he would discuss with DNPTS the provision of an Auditor for next Year. (Action Hon Treasurer)

Item 9: Local Representatives' Reports. It was very disappointing to note that no reports were forwarded to the Secretary prior to the AGM. After the AGM the Secretary wrote to all UK area reps and the following was received:

Portsmouth. Brian Witts reports: 'No contact has been made with any member of the Portsmouth area RNBWS. The MoD bird count at was completed in May 02, and the Portsmouth harbour low water wader counts started in November 02 were complete in February 03. On the Wader and Seagull count, the results have suggested good data for a number of species, in particular, Brent Geese, Shelduck, Oystercatchers, Ringed and Grey Plovers, Lapwing, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwits, Curlew, and Little Egrets. Counts of 11000 Black-headed Gulls, 450 Common Gulls at Tipner Lake is encouraging. A great Northern Diver and Shag were also seen. So Portsmouth Harbour is still reasonably clean. The May bird count at Tipner, Horsea, and Whale Island, was again encouraging. The Skylarks still thrive at Tipner, Long-tailed Tits were also seen, possibly nesting in the old Round Tower. Of the 30 nest boxes around the area 25 were used, and the Kingfisher was seen again at Horsea.

Devonport. Ken Partridge reports: 'Seabird 2000 completed during summer breeding 2001 with an offshore survey of breeding Auks and Gulls, etc. Little egrets continue to increase numbers on most S. Devon estuaries and can be seen at low tide. A Bittern was sited at West Charleton marsh during Feb. 2003. HMS CAMBRIDGE Conservation Group has folded due to cutbacks at this establishment. I understand that Major Nick Benson-Greer, R.M., Turnchapel, Plymouth may be re-organising MOD Conservation Groups in S.W. area (unconfirmed). Disappointingly no RNBWS members have made any contact during 2002/3'.

Dartmouth, BRNC. Richard Porter reports: 'The College continues to participate in the annual MOD bird count, although it did not do so in 2001 due to the Foot and Mouth crisis. This year we recorded 42 species but there has been a steady decline in the numbers of species reported over the last ten years, i.e. 46 in 2000, 47 in 1998/9, 54 in 1995 and 1993. This is almost certainly due to a reduction in the number of observers and the time each can devote to the observations, I am sure that we are not alone in apparently having more to do with fewer staff to do it. In particular we lost a very active 1st Lt. and two Hall Porters who were about very early and late on the count days, their observations were particularly valuable. Our estuary records are fewer than in previous years due to the loss of an active observer at Sandquay, where our boats are moored. Highlights are that Little Egret continue to increase on the

dominicanus in the Antarctic Peninsula? Atlantic Krill may represent a substantial resource and an aid to very high reproductive success in the study area.

- Pelagic distribution, moult and (sub-) specific status of Cory's Shearwater *C. d. diomedea/borealis* wintering off Southern Africa.

Marine Ornithology Vol 30(1) 2002. contains the following papers:

- Colour aberrations and physical deformities in the King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus* at the Crozet Islands.
- Flying Seabirds observed offshore from Possession Island, Crozet Islands, during Winter 1996 and 1997.
- Inter – annual variations in breeding participation at four Western Australian colonies of the Wedge-tailed Shearwater *P. Pacificus*.
- Spectrometry validates sub specialisation in the Kerguelen Tern *S. Virgata*.
- Aspects of the breeding biology of the Neotropic Cormorant *P. olivaceus* at Golfo San Jorge, Argentina.

Other notes concern – Giant Petrels *M. halli*, Rock Shags *Sictocarbo magellanicus*, Imperial Cormorants *Leucocarbo atriceps*, Red-footed Booby *S. sula*, Brown Booby *S. leucogaster*, Rockhopper *Eudyptes c. chrysocome*, and Macaroni *E. c. chrysolophus* Penguins, Grey-headed Albatross *D. chrysostoma*, Sooty Tern *S. fuscata*, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche carteri*), Cape Gannet *M. capensis*.

RAFOS Newsletter No 74 (Autumn 02). Events for 2003 (including AOS):

AOS AGM, Bovington	Jun 03
AOS East Anglia W/E	Jun 03
AOS Otmoor (Day Visit)	Oct 03
AOS North Africa (Package Tour)	Late 2003
RAFOS Portland	Oct 03
RAFOS Chew Valley Lake	Nov 03
AOS Texas	Spring or Autumn 2004
RAFOS OZEX 04 to Australia	Sep 04

RAFOS Newsletter No 75 (Spring 03). As always an interesting Newsletter, covering wide ranging expeditions and visits to Cyprus, South Africa, Oman, Algarve, and Portland.

nesting sites were carried out from a colony located on the NE side of Malta in August – October, estimated at about 500 pairs (Sultana & Gauci 1982). Land based observations were carried out from the headlands while boat trips contributed to a considerable increase in the number of birds observed off-shore between August – October. Ringing recoveries have shown that post fledging birds as well as an unknown number of adults disperse into the Black and Aegean Seas, but some adult birds have been found to remain in the vicinity of the nesting colonies throughout the whole year. Single birds handled during the month of September were found to be in heavy wing and body moult. At the end of the moult cycle birds start to make occasional visits to the nests.

La Garcilla No 112 (2002). No Seabird reports.

La Garcilla No 113 (2002). ISSN 0212 923 X. No Seabird reports.

Marine Ornithology Vol 29(1) Jan 01. ISSN 1018 3337. Papers include:

- Thoughts on the latest Birdlife International Listing for Seabirds tony.gaston@ec.gc.ca
- Line transect estimates of short-tailed Shearwaters *P. tenuirostris* mortality in the South Eastern Bering Sea 1997-1999. During 1997 hundreds of thousands of Short-tailed Shearwaters starved to death in the Bering Sea. It was estimated that 95K carcasses were afloat within 3 survey grids covering approx, 52,400 km².

Note: The reporting of Seabird carcasses by our members may be able to provide important support to such work.

- Courtship behaviour of the Wandering Albatross at Bird Island, South Georgia. All articles from Marine Ornithology are available for download at www.marineornithology.org.

Marine Ornithology Vol 29(2) Jun 01. Papers include:

- Aspects of the breeding biology of the red-legged Cormorant *P. gaimardi* on the Atlantic Coast of South America. Avian predation on eggs seems to be an important mortality factor for this species and wind has also an important effect on breeding success, possibly exacerbating avian predation.
- Diet of the Snow Petrel *P. nivea* at Laurie Island, Antarctica, during the 1997/98 breeding season. Stomach contents and regurgitates of adults were sampled during the chick rearing period. Fish followed by Atlantic Krill *Euphausia superba*, were the main prey throughout the sampling period.
- Successful conservation measures and new breeding records for Damara Terns *S. balaenarum* in Namibia. Measures in the breeding area resulted in a doubling of the number of chicks hatched in the study area.
- Does access to high-quality prey increase the breeding success of Kelp Gulls *L.*

Dart, as they do on all S Devon estuaries. The population of breeding blackbirds appear to have significantly increased over recent years, and chaffinches decreased. This may only be apparent, as we have not done an actual count over several seasons to prove this. We had a young buzzard in the grounds for almost a fortnight about 12 months ago. Rooks and Jackdaws continue to nest in large numbers, Rooks in three rookeries and Jackdaws in the buildings. Jackdaws nesting in the roof space of the Senior Gunroom have proved troublesome in the past but the blocking off of the entrances to the roof over the winter appears to have cured the problem. We had real birds nest soup on the menu for a while. If we can entice the Cornish sighting of the Chough to Dartmouth we will be able to boast a full complement of Corvids. Locally we have had some exciting sightings: Short-eared owls near Salcombe, Nightjar at Start Point, Goshawk near Brixham, Red Kite locally earlier in the year. A Ferruginous Duck at Totnes on Easter Saturday, seen previously and is thought to be an escapee.

Item 10: Expedition Member's Report. Congratulations to WO Peter Carr, being selected for Officer training, and currently at BRNC. He has been invited by AOS to join one of their Booby Exercises in Ascension in Feb 04, and has been asked to lead a RAFOS exercise to Gibraltar Autumn 03, ringing birds at the Observatory. Owing to his service commitments nothing has been planned for RNBWS until he is appointed in June 03, then, hopefully, a return to the Chagos Archipelago. Chris Peach, being responsible for Naval Attaches around the world would be happy to invite them to become involved in RNBWS overseas activities. It was agreed that an RNBWS activity should be planned to coincide with the 2005 200th Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. A Birdwatching activity was suggested for the Dartmouth Area to encourage Officers at BRNC and Ratings at HMS RALEIGH. RAFOS activities are reported later in the Bulletin. (Action Expedition Member)

Item 11: Sea Swallow – Editor's Report. Gary Lewis was congratulated on the high standard of Sea Swallow, but pointed out the increased difficulty of maintaining the standard of content owing to the lack of contributions. Chris Peach stated that he was concerned at the ability to maintain this 'critical mass' and believes that *Sea Swallow* should have amalgamated with *Osprey*. Numbers of reports received had also reduced.

Item 12: Data-base Working Group Report. A copy of the Database and Mapping Tool has been purchased. As the Database has now reached a considerable size Stan Howe had been unable to pass a copy to Frank Ward until he had a CD copying facility. This is now in place and will be actioned in the near future. It was agreed that the Database should form the basis of a Web Site. The Web Site will be progressed by Frank Ward but there is concern that for it to be a worthwhile Project it should have valid content. A full report will be presented at the 2003 AGM. Steven Chapman offered to help with the Web Site. (Action Frank Ward)

Item 13: Any Other Business.

- The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to Bill Bailey for producing envelope labels. This task has been streamlined and is now undertaken by the Membership Secretary.
- The Committee will endeavour to update the Membership List with telephone and e-mail information and produce a new membership by the end of 2003. A form is enclosed and members are encouraged to provide information.
- Peter Smith (during previous discussion) queried the status of the RNBWS affiliation with BTO and also Birdlife International. (Action Hon Sec)
PMN: Hon Sec has been unable to find in the archives any direct correspondence regarding our affiliation with BTO. Notes from 1946 state that affiliation will be sought and then Sea Swallow states that we are affiliated. Discussion with BTO indicates that affiliations do not exist and they are unaware what formal arrangement may have been agreed. Therefore the standard exchange of journals will continue (no cost). The note in Sea Swallow concerning affiliations should be removed. A similar situation exists with Birdlife International, Journals will be exchanged plus an additional copy for the Editor Sea Swallow, and reference to affiliations should be removed from Sea Swallow.
- PMN: The Society would like to record their sadness at the recent deaths of three stalwarts of Ornithology, Chris Mead, Guy Mountford and particularly Max Nicholson who was involved with the start of the RNBWS. Max Nicholson was one of the Society's advisors from its establishment in 1947 and it was only 2 years ago that he attended the AGM. Responsible for many of the conservation advances of the 20th Century particularly the BTO in 1932, 1952-66 DG of Nature Conservancy during which time National Reserves and SSSIs were introduced, the Wildlife Trust in 1958, WWF in 1961. He published his last book, Birds of London, as recently as 1995. His studies of House Sparrows in London have become a benchmark illustration of our selfish destruction of the environment; he counted 2603 House Sparrows in Kensington Gardens in 1925 but only 12 in 2000. He managed to put in his long life what would be well thought of for 10 people – an almost impossible act to follow.

Item 14: Presentations.

- Best Article for Sea Swallow. No articles were eligible for the award this year.
- AOS Trophy. Although contributions have been fairly limited it has been decided that the award should be shared between RFA FORT AUSTIN and HMS MONTROSE. (Action Chairman)

rep or mike.armitage@bto.org. P24 summarises the ringing success of Dave Budworth and Adrian Blackburn who have made 20 visits in the last 30 years to Sule Skerry, West of Orkney 57°04'N 4°24'W at a height above sea level of 20m. Particular birds ringed have been Puffins *F. arctica*, Guillemots *U. aalge*, Kittiwake *R. tridactla*, Shag *Sictocarbo aristotelis*, all of which nest on the Island. Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* and Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* are also recorded.

Dutch Birding Vol 24 No 5 (2002) ISSN 0167 2878. P269. reports the sighting of a Black-browed Albatross *D. melanophris* off La Spezia, Italy in July 2000. This represents the first sighting for Italy and only the second for the Mediterranean (Chafarinas Islands, Spain, close to the Moroccan Coast in 1997). P271. 'Trends in systematics' is a detailed investigation into the problem of the nomenclature and classification of the large white-headed Gulls. After a summarised presentation of the group and debates on its systematics, the article focuses on the taxa of the *Larus argentatus - cachinnans - fuscus* complex, and proposes a re-appraisal of their classification making best use of the most significant recent contributions in the available literature. The article includes some excellent coloured photographs and has used one of Bill Bourne's articles in *Sea Swallow* (45:86-91) as a reference.

Dutch Birding Vol 24 No 6 (2002). P350. The Paper 'Herring, Yellow-legged and Pontic Gulls wintering in inland Poland' presents a detailed overview of the numbers of these taxa during the winter of 2000/01.

Dutch Birding Vol 25 No 1 (2003). P55. WP reports, lists rare and interesting birds seen in NW Europe Nov 02 – Jan 03.

Dutch Birding Vol 25 No 2 (2003). No Seabird Reports

Dutch Seabird Group Newsletter 4(3). No Seabird reports.

Fulmar 100 (Autumn 2002). No significant Seabird reports.

II – Merrill No 30 (2002). P10 has an article concerning the status and distribution of the breeding *Procellariiformes* (Shearwaters) in Malta. The article concluded that information for determining changes in status is less than satisfactory, particularly for the cliff breeding Shearwaters. The presence of mammalian predators such as feral cats and rats is highly detrimental to the health and stability of the colony. Disturbance by human visitors is also an ever-increasing problem. Carefully designed and continuous studies of Seabirds at specific locations may reveal long-term trends in environmental conditions. Further data collection should be actively encouraged as this provides a continuous assessment of the relative abundance of these *Procellariiformes*. P20 has an article entitled 'Pre-breeding movements and early nest visits by the Levantine Shearwater *P. yelkouan* in Malta'. Observations at

BTO Bird Study Vol 50 Pt 1 (Mar 03). Papers include:

- Reproductive measures and chick provisioning of Cory's Shearwater *C. diomedea borealis* in the Azores. The aim was to investigate chick growth, temporal patterns of chick food provisioning and the importance of indices of parental condition or quality, egg size and hatching date, to predict nestling body mass and wing-length at fledging, and compare breeding and chick feeding characteristics between colonies in the northeast Atlantic. The paper concluded that variation in food availability did not seem sufficient to override the overall importance of indices of parental quality in determining reproductive measures and chick provisioning. Breeding and feeding characteristics were similar between colonies in the northeast Atlantic, with variability in chick provisioning higher further south.
- Opportunistic feeding responses of the Yellow-legged Gull *L. michahellis* to accessibility of refuse dumps. The aim of this paper was to examine the influence of the accessibility of open-air refuse dumps on the pre-laying diet of the adult Yellow-legged Gull. The results showed the species' opportunistic feeders and highly adaptable, two parameters which need to be known to foresee the consequences on population dynamics, feeding and predatory behaviour of a sudden and severe food shortage, for example due to the closure of open-air refuse dumps.
- Sexing Terns using biometrics: the advantage of within-pair comparisons. Aims were to examine the extent at which statistical limitations of sexing birds from biometrics using sample-level analysis could be overcome by sexing Common and Arctic Terns using measurements obtained from breeding pairs. The paper concluded that by comparing birds within pairs improves accuracy and can eliminate the need to calculate cut points or discriminant functions from a sample of birds of known sex from each particular study. Such comparisons are strongly advocated wherever possible to increase accuracy and simplify computational procedures for predicting sex, thus reducing associated sources of error.

Note: Articles from March 1996 to date are available online through www.ingenta.com.

BTO News No 244 (Jan 03) ISSN 0005 3392. No Seabird reports.

BTO News No 245 (Mar 03). No Seabird reports.

BTO News No 246 (May 03). P4. Explains the history of the Winter Gull Roost Survey (WinGS). The BTO has organised surveys of winter Gull roosts in each decade since 1953. The last in 1993 counted over 2.5 million Gulls. The rise in population is thought to be the result of an increase in food availability from, for example rubbish tips and fishery waste, and also reduced human persecution. The next survey will be in January 2004. Volunteers are required – contact BTO regional

Item 15: Date of next meeting. Friday 5 December 2003 at the Lecture Theatre, Northumberland Hse, LONDON.

Item 16: Presentation by Mr Nigel Pepper. Unfortunately Nigel Pepper was unable to attend.



M K Barritt
Capt RN
Chairman

REVIEW OF JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS

Alauda Vol 70 No 3 (2002) ISSN 0002 4619. No Seabird Reports.

Alauda Vol 70 No 4 (2002). P483. An article concerning the management to maintain Audouin's Gull *L. audouinii* on a man made site at Aspretto – Ajaccio, Corsica.

Alauda Vol 71 No 1 (2003). P1. Provides a synthesis of all records of non-breeding Procellariiformes in the western Mediterranean until 2000.

Anuari Ornitológic de Les Balears Vol 16 (2001). No Seabird reports.

Ardeola Vol 49(2) Dec (2002). ISSN 0570 7358. No Seabird reports.

Atlantic Seabirds Vol 4 (2) (2002). Papers include:

- Plumage polymorphism and kleptoparasitism in the Arctic Skua *S. parasiticus*. It has been suggested – but never confirmed – that the maintenance of the Skuas polymorphism may be related to their role as specialist kleptoparasites of other birds, through either predator apostatic selection, or selection for cryptic advantage. The southern breeding population of Handa Island, Scotland, was studied during the summer of 2000. Various aspects of 1421 attacks on Common Guillemots *U. aalge* were recorded, and tested for differences in behaviour and outcome between the morphs. No differences were found in relation to chase success rates, methods of attack, or the response of their victims. It is concluded that the polymorphism of this species is unrelated to its kleptoparasitic behaviour. Some other possible explanations for the plumage variation are discussed. revjones@hotmail.com.
- Foraging behaviour of non-breeding Pomarine Skuas *S. pomarinus* in the North

- Sea in summer. Volker-ifv@t-online.de.
- The time of first returns to land by Cory's Shearwater *C. diomedea/borealis* on Selvagem Grande during the breeding period. The time of first return to land within each attendance cycle is negatively correlated with the number of birds that will come to land in the evening. However, the mean time of first returns for each attendance cycle shows no significant variation from May to September. These birds are partly diurnal for at least part of their breeding cycle, in contrast to their conspecifics at other Mediterranean and Atlantic breeding localities. This behaviour may originate from when the size of the breeding population was very large.
 - Pomarine Skuas wintering off Brazil. The paper concludes that these birds are more regular off Brazil than suggested by current literature. guara@nethall.com.br.
 - At sea records of Cape Verde Shearwaters *C. edwardsii* in Brazil.

Atlantic Seabirds Vol 4 (3) (2002). Papers include:

- Distinguishing Black-legged Kittiwake mates at the nest site using wing tip patterns. John.chardine@ec.gc.ca.
- Movements of Yellow-legged Gulls *L. c. michahellis* from two small western Mediterranean colonies. Results show that birds follow the same migratory routes as birds of other colonies of the western Mediterranean. Gulls move to the Atlantic coast of France and Iberia after fledging, where they summer and winter, although equally important numbers probably remain close to their natal colonies. a.abrain@uib.es.
- Nesting cavity choice by black Guillemots *C. grylle*. The study examined the characteristics of nesting cavities at a pier in the harbour of Bangor Co. Down, Northern Ireland during the period 1995-2001. Black Guillemots chose the least exposed and least disturbed cavities in the pier. J.greenwood@stran.ac.uk.
- Common Guillemots successfully rear a Razorbill *A. torda* chick. This unusual event was recorded in 2002 on the Isle of May apparently following fighting for nest sites. mph@ceh.ac.uk.
- First pure pairs of Yellow-legged Gull along the North Sea Coasts. In 2002 two pairs were found breeding in the outer harbour of Zeebrugge (51°21'N, 3°11'W). Both pairs fledged two chicks.

Australasian Seabird Bulletin 39 (Oct 02). The conservation updates comment that the Victorian Scientific Advisory Committee has made final recommendation to list 7 Albatross species recorded from Victorian Waters and a potentially threatening process (PTP) that effects these taxa under the Flora and Fauna Guarantees Act. Should the PTP be added to the list of PTPs Victoria will be the first state or territory in Australia to recognise entanglement in marine debris as a threatening process in Australia. The PTPs are:

- 584 *D. Cauta* Shy Albatross
- 559 *D. epomophora* Southern Royal Albatross
- 544 *D. exulans* Wandering Albatross
- 551 *P. palpebrata* Light-mantled Albatross
- 556 *T. bulleri* Buller's Albatross
- 545 *T. carteri* Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross
- 546 *T. chrysostoma* Grey-headed Albatross
- 549 The discharge of human-generated marine debris into Victorian marine or estuarine waters

Martin.O'Brien@nre.vic.gov.au.

The bulletin also includes a review of the first symposium devoted to the biology and management of Australian Gulls, held on 17 Aug 02 on Philip Island, Victoria.

Australasian Seabird Bulletin 40 (Apr 03). P3. Gives an update on Southern Seabird Solutions, the aim of which is to help reduce the number of Seabirds in the Southern Oceans killed by fishing. Its formation was mentioned at the recent meeting of the International Coalition of Fisheries Associations <http://www.icfa.net/>. P4 discusses the problems of the incidental catch of Seabirds in long line fisheries. A national plan of action for Seabirds is being produced. The South African Plan can be found at www.environment.gov.za. P8 reports the destruction of the Humbolt Penguin National Reserves on Damas Island to enable the building of a Hotel. Breeding colonies of Peruvian diving Petrel *P. garnoti* and Humbolt Penguin *S. humboldti* are at risk, see <http://arenaph.penguinpage.net> (Spanish only). P9 reports on a number of unexplained Seabird deaths in the Falklands Gentoo *P. papua* and Magellanic *S. Magellanicus* Penguins are being found on beaches partially paralysed and dying. So far the red tide bloom of dinoflagellates seem to be the cause. Ship board observations forwarded can be found at <http://users.bigpond.net.au/palliser/>. The long awaited Seabird Atlas of South Eastern Australian waters is about to be published. Further details at www.birdsaustralia.com.au/projects/seabird.html.

Aves Ichnusae Vol 4 (1-11) 2001. ISSN 1591 6901. Contains a checklist of the Birds of Sardinia updated to December 2001.

BOC Bulletin Vol 123 No 1 Mar 03. No Seabird reports.

British Birds Vol 96 No 2 Feb 03. ISSN 0007 0335. No Seabird reports.

British Birds Vol 96 No 3 Mar 03. No Seabird reports.

British Birds Vol 96 No 4 Apr 03. No Seabird reports.

British Birds Vol 96 No 5 May 03. No Seabird reports.