

# Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



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BULLETIN No. 149

OCTOBER 2003

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## **THE FIFTY SEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The AGM will take place on Friday 5 December at 1400 in the Marble Hall, Northumberland House, 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. Euan Dunn from the RSPB covering the work of Birdlife International and the RSPB in the Southern Oceans. 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 1 December.

## **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 £43.50 in UK, £48 overseas surface mail.

**Bird Watcher's Yearbook.** This is offered to UK members for £13.50 (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. (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), in MS Word or similar. 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.

#### **SEA SWALLOW**

Unfortunately Gary Lewis our Sea Swallow Editor was appointed to IRAQ in July. He is expecting to be there until December at the earliest. Regrettably it has been decided that in order to maintain its high standard, the publication of Sea Swallow will be postponed until February 2004.

#### **RNBWS WEB SITE**

The RNBWS has been established although still under construction. Our web address is <http://www.rnbws.org.uk>. The first three phases of development are:

- a. Aims, Committee contacts, Expeditions.
- b. Bulletins in PDF format.
- c. Access to Seabird database.

(Assistance would be welcome from any members with expertise in building websites).

#### **SEA BIRD DATABASE**

Stan Howe has, over many months painstakingly populated the Seabird database with all Seabird reports from Sea Swallow. Information from the database is available from the Hon Sec. It can be provided in report or Graphical Format.

#### **THE MOD BIRD COUNT**

The following has been compiled by John Plummer: To date Defence Estates Conservation has forwarded reports from 16 establishments across the country.

has ceased production owing to lack of funds. All MO bird reports will now be forwarded to the Hon Sec. Suitable reports will then be published in Sea Swallow.

A total of 126 species have been recorded so far with the Blackbird, Robin, Starling Greenfinch and Crow reported in all 16 establishments. Without listing all species, a snapshot of reports is below:

<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of establishments</u>
Song Thrush	15 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)
Wren	15
Chaffinch	15
Great Tit	15
Wood Pigeon	15
Magpie	14
Grey Heron	14 (of whom 3 reported outside the count)
Kestrel	14 (of whom 2 reported outside the count)
House Martin	14 (of whom 2 reported outside the count)
Blue Tit	14
Collared Dove	12 (of whom 2 reported outside the count)
House Sparrow	12 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)
Herring Gull	12
Lesser Black-Backed Gull	12 (of whom 4 reported outside the count)
Black Headed Gull	11 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)
Swift	11 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)
Oyster Catcher	10 (of whom 3 reported outside the count)
Goldfinch	10
Buzzard	10
Whitethroat	9
Mallard	9 (of whom 2 reported outside the count)
Mistle Thrush	7
Peregrine	7 (of whom 3 reported outside the count)
Great Black Backed Gull	7 (of whom 2 reported outside the count)
Sparrowhawk	8 (of whom 4 reported outside the count)
Dunlin	7 (of whom 5 reported outside the count)
Turnstone	6 (of whom 4 reported outside the count)
Redshank	6 (of whom 4 reported outside the count)
Curlew	6 (of whom 2 reported outside the count)
Sedge Warbler	5
Reed Bunting	5
Tawny Owl	5 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)
Ringed Plover	3 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)
Barn Owl	3 (of whom 2 reported outside the count)
Bullfinch	3
Black-Tailed Godwit	3 (of whom 2 reported outside the count)
Whimbrel	3 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)

Common Tern	2 (of whom 1 reported outside the count)
Merlin	1
Red Backed Shrike	1
Dartford Warbler	1

At Norton Manor Camp the new lakes are attracting a great deal of interest from species not previously recorded in the camp. Once the lakes are stocked with fish and the vegetation develops further, it is likely that many of the species will become established breeders. There will be an article in the 2004 issue of the Sanctuary magazine. At RNAS Predannack, most species show a small increase on the last count in 2000. For example Skylarks, Wrens doubling in numbers, and Robins. However there is exciting news about breeding Dartford Warblers. One of these birds was first seen at Predannack about four or five years ago, and that today there are at least four breeding pairs in the gorse at the southern end of the airfield. Also on the amusement front, aircraft do have their uses with a pair of Blue Tits breeding in the tail plane of a Canberra hulk!

#### NEWS FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS

##### **Alauda Vol 71 No 2, 2003. French Ornithological Society**

[www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof/](http://www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof/)

p97. Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* in France: Study of the Picardie population from 1997 to 2002.

*Florent Violet and Bernard Cadiou*

Abstract. Fulmars have been recorded on the cliffs of Picardie since 1972 and breeding was first proven in 1979. With 72 "apparently occupied sites" (SAO) and 42 chicks recorded in 2002 the Picardie colony is one of the smallest in France. The study, started in 1997, has shown it has similar demographic characteristics to other larger and older colonies with, nonetheless, two notable points: a high population increase over a few years and a production rate apparently above the national average. The methodology for monitoring cliff-breeding Fulmar population is also discussed. Key periods in the breeding cycle, when it is possible to record the highest proportion of the population, have been identified or confirmed and important parameters are presented.

p139. Dispersal and recruitment in the Black-Headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*.

*Vladimir Grosbois, A.M.Reboulet, A.-C. Prevot-Julliard, L. Bottin & J.-D.Lebreton*

Abstract. We present a study of Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* dispersal carried out in the Forez (Loire "departement") since 1976 by monitoring of marked individuals. The total population has been slowly decreasing while concentrating itself on one colony, following dispersal linked to breeding failures at other sites. A capture-recapture approach confirms a marked dissymmetry with the main colony exporting juveniles while attracting adults. The adaptative value of leaving a site after breeding failure, the biological mechanisms involved in dispersal, and regional

efforts for Bermuda's recently proclaimed national bird (*Bermuda Audubon Society newsletter*)

p6. Seabird tracking to locate marine IBAs? The Birdlife Seabird Conservation Programme is using results from scientific research on seabird movements to identify areas of the ocean favoured by feeding seabirds. These data will be used to see if it is possible to identify marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs) for pelagic species and if so, where they should be located. Over the past decade, progressively smaller satellite transmitters have been attached to seabirds to study their movements at sea, but often the results have been published piecemeal and are species and colony specific. The Seabird Programme's aim is to collate the results into a single database. Initial studies confirm that seabirds do not scavenge randomly over the world's oceans, but concentrate predictably in particular areas.

#### LIST OF MEMBERS

The response to the questionnaire with the last Bulletin was poor, only 29 returns were received. A new Members List is enclosed, although not as up to date as the Society would have wished. This membership list is available in electronic format (Excel spreadsheet) on request from the Hon Sec.

#### CAPTAIN SIR THOMAS BARLOW Bt DSO RN

It is with much sadness that I report the death of Sir Thomas Barlow who passed away on 12 October. A founder member of RNBWS he has been an extremely active Birdwatcher throughout his life and an inspiration to Society members (full obituary in Sea Swallow).

#### COMMANDER H J A BROOKE RN

The Society was saddened to hear of the death of Henry Brooke earlier in 2003. Commander Brooke had been a member for many years.

#### RAFOS

The Secretary of RAFOS has changed and is now Maj Andrew Bray:

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#### THE MARINE OBSERVER

Unfortunately the Marine Observer, the quarterly Journal produced by the Met Office

**World Birdwatch (Birdlife International): Vol 25 No 2, Jun 03 [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)**

p3. reports that three species of seabird, Brown Booby *S. leucogaster*, Masked Booby *S. dactylatra* and White-tailed Tropicbird *P. lepturus*, have returned to nest successfully for the first time in more than 100 years on mainland Ascension Island, thanks to a feral cat eradication programme.

p3. Satellite tracking of Waved Albatrosses *P. irrorata* (Vulnerable) has found that the birds spend a significant period feeding within the specially created Galapagos Marine Reserve (where industrial longlining is banned), particularly during the chick brooding period.

p3. A Dutch Government report has concluded that analysing the stomach contents of beach washed Northern Fulmars *F. glacialis* is a reliable way of monitoring the levels of plastic litter in the marine environment. Birds, particularly young ones, ingest discarded plastic mistaking it for food items.

p6. Reports that in Mar 03, The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand was presented with a giant postcard from the America's Cup Teams pledging support for the Save the Albatross campaign, see [www.birdlife.org/news/pr/2003/03/nzalbatross\\_campaign.html](http://www.birdlife.org/news/pr/2003/03/nzalbatross_campaign.html).

p14. John O'Sullivan gives a detailed appraisal on the Bonn Convention 1979: Agreeing to save migratory species. The convention makes two main demands on signatory countries. The first that they must prohibit the killing or other taking of any endangered migratory species that occur in their territories. These species are listed in Appendix I of the convention. The second demand is that Parties endeavour to conclude Agreements with other states for the list of species appearing in Appendix II; these species are not necessarily endangered but are those where cooperation between states would be of benefit. There are now 12 Agreements in place. The Agreement on the conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) should hold its first meeting by 2004, and will be a key tool in addressing the deaths of seabirds in longline fisheries. The recent accession of Mongolia to the Convention has added a number of eastern Asian species to the Appendices including Chinese Crested Tern *S. bernsteini*.

p22. The continued work on Socotra is featured, and includes the continued monitoring of Seabird species. Spearheaded by Birdlife International, OSME are one of the main supporters for this work. For more information contact [richardporter@dialstart.net](mailto:richardporter@dialstart.net).

**World Birdwatch Vol 25 No 3, September 2003. [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)**

p3. A record 40 Bermuda Petrels *Pterodroma cahow* (critically endangered) have fledged this year from a record 70 nesting pairs, thanks to intensive conservation

scale consequences are discussed.

**Ardeola (Spanish OS): Vol 50(1), Jun 03 [www.seo.org](http://www.seo.org)**

No Seabird reports

**Army Ornithological Society Newsletter No 21, July 2003**

<http://armyOS.tripod.com>

No seabird reports.

**Atlantic Seabirds Vol 5 No 1, 2003**

p1. Offshore Foraging of Mediterranean Gulls *Larus Melanocephalus* in Portugal during the winter.

*Martin Poot [mjmpoot@hetnet.nl](mailto:mjmpoot@hetnet.nl)*

Abstract. Movements and behaviour of Mediterranean Gulls *Larus Melanocephalus* were observed along the Atlantic coast of central Portugal in December 2001. The observations suggest that at least part of the Mediterranean Gull population wintering in central Portugal feeds extensively at sea and possibly during the night. In the morning, Mediterranean Gulls flew in straight lines towards the coast, where they settled on water to roost in flocks of several tens of birds. Because there were no gulls near the coast at sunrise, it is assumed that these arrivals were Mediterranean Gulls that had spent the night out at sea. With an estimated 'ground speed' corrected for wind speed, it was estimated that the birds could have covered several tens of kilometres offshore between sunrise and the peak of coastal arrivals. One late afternoon, there were no roosting birds at the coast, but foraging birds were observed which were apparently successful. The question is raised whether the foraging activity is solely restricted to the hours around sunrise and sunset, or whether it is truly nocturnal. Changes in prey availability resulting from vertical migrations in the water column may have influenced diurnal patterns in foraging activity of the gulls. Alternatively, the possible utilisation of discards cannot be ruled out, since night-active purse seine vessels normally discharge discards early morning. However, outside the breeding season, the Mediterranean Gull is so far only known to attend trawlers during the day.

p13. Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* winter diet at the Western Baltic Sea Coast: does ice cover make a difference?

*Stefan Garthe, Katja Wienck & Insa Cassens*

*Research and Technology Centre (FTZ). University of Kiel, Hafentörn, D25761*

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*Institute of Marine Research, Dept. Marine Ecology, Düsternbrooker Weg 20, D-24105 Kiel, Germany*

Abstract. The diet of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* at Kiel Fjord, Baltic Sea, was assessed from pellets collected in a very cold winter (1995-96), in a very mild winter (1997-95) and in spring 1996 for comparison. Bivalves (mainly *Mytilus edulis*) were

the most frequently occurring food item in all three periods. Gastropods (chiefly *Littorina spec.*) and crustaceans (mainly *Carcinus maenas*) were following next. Stones and different types of plant material were also quite frequently present in the pellets. Differences between the three periods were not very marked. Crustaceans, algae, grass and stones were most abundantly found in the cold winter. Oligochaetes occurred only in spring. Stones were quite common in the pellets both by frequency and by mass. In the cold winter 1996, mean stone mass comprised 47% of total pellet mass. It is concluded that Herring Gulls did not alter their diet in the cold winter to a major extent.

p21. Characteristics of Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica* wrecked in the Netherlands, January - February 2003.

*kees (c.j.) camphuysen*<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research, P.O. Box 59, 1790 AB Den Burg, The Netherlands, [kees.camphuysen@wx.nl](mailto:kees.camphuysen@wx.nl)

<sup>2</sup>Nederlandse Zeevogelgroep, werkgroep Nederlands Stookolieslachtoffer Onderzoek (NZG/NSO), Ankrstraat 20, 1794 BJ Oosterend, Texel, The Netherlands.

An unprecedented 114 Atlantic Puffins were found dead in The Netherlands in a few weeks, mostly early February 2003. The wreck coincided, but had no relation with the Tricolor oil incident in The Channel and numerous dead Puffins were found in Belgium and Northern France as well. The stranding may have involved between 180 and 200 Atlantic Puffins and 51.1% were identified as first winter birds. The birds were clearly starved to death and a mass-stranding of unoiled, severely emaciated Little Auks and Razorbills occurred at the same time. Biometrics (wing length) pointed at British (North Sea?) colonies as a source; none of the casualties was ringed. The wreck coincided with an influx of birds, but the event lasted no more than a few days. Following this wreck mass mortality of auks has been witnessed in the northern North Sea (Orkney, Shetland, and Norway), these events may have been related. The event in 2003 was the largest influx and wreck of Puffins in 75 years in The Netherlands.

**Bird Study (BTO): Vol 50 Pt 2, Jul 03 [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)**

No Seabird reports

**British Birds: Vol 96, No 7, July 2003**

Notes – p347 relates an episode of 2 Fulmars *F. glacialis* fighting to the death off N. Haven, Fair Isle, Shetland in Sep 02. Described once before in Apr 82 no certain reason for such behaviour has been determined.

**British Birds Vol 96 No 8, August 2003**

p367. Numbers of wintering Gulls in the UK, Channel Is and Isle of Man: review of 1993 and previous Winter Gull Roost Surveys. *Niall H K Burton, Andy J Musgrove, Mark M Rehfishch, Anna Sutcliffe and Ray Waters.*

Caithness colonies and of productivity at those where the birds can be observed reasonably easily.

Only four species (Cormorant, Shag, Herring Gull and Great Black-backed Gull) can be ringed in sufficient numbers to make (a) a realistic objective (Guillemots are covered by a separate project by Mick Canham). Small numbers of Fulmars, Black Guillemots, Razorbills and Kittiwakes are also ringed. The Cormorant receives attention because its numbers are decreasing, possibly due to shooting or food shortages in its winter quarters. For the next few seasons activities will concentrate on the Great Black-backed Gull. [sellers@craghouse7.freerve.co.uk](mailto:sellers@craghouse7.freerve.co.uk)

p4. Island Seabird colonies of Northumberland. A review of the excellent birding available on the Farne Islands. The RSPB Reserve at Coquet Island is home to thousands of Puffins, Sandwich, Arctic and Common Terns, Black headed Gulls, Eiders, assorted large Gulls and up to 40 pairs of Roseate Terns. Although ringing has occurred since 1910 most of the work was co-ordinated by Grace Hickling in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, stopping when she died in 1986. At this time it was thought that ringing may have a detrimental effect on breeding success. Limited ringing recommenced in 1996 and a number of initiatives are now underway, particularly the BTO 'Retrapping Adults for Survival' (RAS) project.

[chris.refern@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:chris.refern@ncl.ac.uk)

p5. The Farne Islands Marine Environment – integrating seabirds and sandeels.

Detailed investigations include:

- Sampling sandeels at sea. Their presence in the water column with relation to their distribution in the sediment, and how this is affected by environmental factors.
- Studies to determine the foraging areas and activities of seabirds in relation to tide, time, weather and seasonal and yearly factors.
- Radio tracking and data-logging.
- Visual observations.
- Presence of other Sandeel predators.

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**SEEVÖGEL Vol 24 No 2. June 2003. German Ornithological Society (in German)**

No Seabird reports

**The Fulmar (North Sea Bird Club). No 102, Spring 2003 [www.abdn.ac.uk/nsbc](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/nsbc)**

p5. Reports on the longevity of a Fulmar – caught in a fishing net, 4 Mar 02 in the N Atlantic (6225N 0505E); ringed as a nestling 7 Aug 66 in S Ronaldsay, Orkney.

p6. Details Seabird reports from Jan – May 2003.

p8. Biochemistry and Bird Migration. *Mike Blair* provides a useful article explaining in layman's terms some of more detailed aspects of the subject. He recommends, Bird Migration: a General Survey, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn. By Peter Bertold (OUP) for the more interested reader.

OzEx04 is the RAFOS expedition in Sep 04 to Newhaven, Northern Territories, Australia. The purpose of the expedition is to survey as much of the Newhaven Reserve's 4000km<sup>2</sup>, visit [www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au) for details. Anyone interested should contact [mikeblair@dialstart.net](mailto:mikeblair@dialstart.net).

#### **Sanctuary No 32, 2003. The MoD Conservation Magazine.**

p70. Gibraltar: more than just a rock. A detailed account of the RAFOS expedition to Gibraltar in 2002 and includes some seabird notes.

#### **Sandgrouse Vol 25(2) 2003**

p144. On the large gulls of the southern coast of Iran. An update by Philippe J Dubois on a previous 2001 article. He quotes Martin Reid's site <http://www.martinreid.com/gullinx.htm> as a good source of gull information

#### **Scottish Bird News (Scottish Ornithological Club) No 69, Sep 03.**

[www.the-soc.org.uk](http://www.the-soc.org.uk)

p1. An account of a voyage to St Kilda by Arthur Grosset includes useful details of the Seabirds that can be observed.

#### **Scottish Bird News No 68, June 2003 [www.the-soc.org.uk](http://www.the-soc.org.uk)**

No Seabird reports but does mention good seabird watching to be had by a trip on the SS Waverley in the Firth of Clyde, sailings from Ayr and Glasgow.

#### **Scottish Birds Vol 24 No 1, June 2003**

No Seabird reports.

#### **Seabird Group Newsletter 94, June 2003**

p1. Seabird studies in Caithness. This article covers Seabird ringing activities in the area. The national seabird survey of 1985-87 reported that Caithness held 5-10% of the British and Irish total breeding population for Fulmar, Shag, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Kittiwake, Razorbill and Black Guillemot, and 1-5% for Cormorant and Guillemot. Despite this wealth Caithness is not frequently visited. Current studies commenced in the early 1990s, the aims of which are:

- a. To generate a set of ringing recoveries for Caithness seabirds to find out where they spent the winter months (very few of any species remain in Caithness) and to establish a reservoir of recoveries to aid the interpretation of population changes should any future rapid changes in breeding numbers take place.
- b. To undertake annual monitoring of numbers of breeding Cormorants at all

This paper summarises the January 1993 Winter Gull Roost Survey and evaluates the results of this and the four previous surveys of wintering gulls, carried out in 1953, 1963, 1973 and 1983. In total, 2,594,491 gulls were counted in Great Britain during the 1993 survey: 1,263,208 at inland sites and 1,331,283 on the coast, comprising an estimated 1,682,385 Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, 429,331 Common Gulls *L. canus*, 60,830 Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*, 376,775 Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*, 43,108 Great Black-backed Gulls *L. marinus* and 2,062 gulls of other species. A further 19,030 gulls were counted in Northern Ireland, 3,853 in the Isle of Man and 8,477 in the Channel Islands. Using thresholds of 1% of the respective minimum British populations, 22 sites of potential national importance were identified for Black-headed Gull, 28 for Common Gull, 19 for Lesser Black-backed Gull, 19 for Herring Gull and 20 for Great Black-backed Gull. Areas in which gulls were counted varied between surveys, but gulls at inland sites in England were counted in all five surveys. All five 'key' species increased at inland sites in England between 1953 and 1993, in particular Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The increase in wintering gull numbers in Great Britain has probably led to greater numbers of gulls using individual roosts and more roost sites being occupied. More recently, however, there have been some declines, notably of Herring Gulls.

Anyone interested in taking part in the next survey should contact their BTO regional representative or Mike Armitage / Steve Holloway at BTO HQ or e-mail [mike.armitage@bto.org](mailto:mike.armitage@bto.org) or [steve.holloway@bto.org](mailto:steve.holloway@bto.org)

p403. Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*. Sandwich Bay, Kent, 28th-29th July 1965. Under review. A long-dead bird found near Dublin, Co. Dublin, on 24th March 1954 was the first record for Britain & Ireland (Brit. Birds 48: 116-117). This was followed by the record of an orange-billed large tern at Sandwich Bay, Kent, on 28th / 29th July 1965 (Davenport & Hollyer 1968), which was accepted at the time by BBRC (Brit. Birds 61: 361) as a Royal Tern. The description of this individual contains several slightly odd features for this species, however, in particular its size. At the time of the original assessment, BBRC consulted with Californian ornithologists regarding the possibility of this being an Elegant Tern *S. elegans*. The subsequent judgement was made partly on the perceived improbability of Elegant Tern ever venturing to Europe. Now that Elegant Tern has occurred in Europe, a full re-evaluation of the record is called for. This review is being undertaken as part of a more detailed assessment of all the recent records of orange-billed large terns and will, undoubtedly, take a considerable time to accomplish, as current information for this group is incomplete and in some cases contradictory. Royal Tern has remained a major rarity in Britain with only four subsequent accepted records.

#### **British Birds Vol 96 No 9, September 2003**

No Seabird reports.

#### **British Birds Vol 96 No 10, October 2003**

Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2001. The number of Mediterranean Gulls *L. melanocephalus* breeding in England was similar to the record numbers found in 2000. Although confirmation of successful breeding was difficult to establish in several localities, at least 30 young are known to have fledged. No less than three pairs of Yellow-legged Gulls *L. (cachinnans) michahellis* attempted to breed, two of which reared young. Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* showed some signs of recovery from the low figures in 2000, although numbers in Scotland fell to an all-time low. In contrast, the number of breeding Little Terns was the highest ever in these reports. The following Seabirds are listed:

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* (111 young)

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica* (12 fledglings)

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* (7 fledglings)

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* (31 fledglings)

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus (cachinnans) michahellis* (2 fledglings)

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* (66 fledglings)

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* (1,842 pairs)

#### **British Ornithologists' Club Vol 123 No 2, June 2003**

No Seabird reports

#### **British Ornithologists' Club (BOC) Vol 123 No 3, September 2003**

No Seabird reports.

#### **BTO News Number 247, July-August 2003**

p14. Mark Grantham reports on the ringed birds recovered after the tragedy of the MV Prestige oil spill off the coast of Galicia in November 2002 (see La Garcilla No 114). When it sank 77k tonnes of oil went with it, 200,000 birds have been affected, and to date 23,500 birds have been found on beaches either dead or dying.

#### **BTO News No 248, September – October 2003**

No seabird reports

#### **Dutch Birding Vol 25 No 3, 2003**

No Seabird reports.

#### **Dutch Birding Vol 25 No 4, 2003**

p235. Three American Herring Gulls at Port, Portugal, in March – April 2001.  
*w (Ted) Hoogendoorn, Peter Adriaens, Christian Cederroth, Gunter De Smet and Antero Lindholm.* The report details observations of American Herring Gulls in the vicinity of Matoshinos, 3 km north of the mouth of the Douro river by ornithologists attending the 5<sup>th</sup> International Gull Meeting (IGM).

#### **Dutch Birding Vol 25 No 5, 2003**

No Seabird entries.

Harris and several offshore islands on the Atlantic seaboard of the Outer Hebrides. All these areas were JNCC priorities for survey work during the SEABIRD 2000 census. Twelve of the 24 target species of seabirds regularly breeding in Britain and Ireland were encountered breeding and surveyed in our allotted census areas. A grand total of 94 bird species was recorded on and around the islands of North Uist, Benbecula and South Uist, with an additional 11 species seen during the transit. Of these, 13 species were ringed. In total 34 birds. All survey and census data were passed to Mr Paul Boyer, the local JNCC representative in the Outer Hebrides, and copied to Dr Carl Mitchell. The Scottish JNCC SEABIRD 2000 Coordinator in Aberdeen.

Conclusion. Despite a disrupted planning phase, the aims of the expedition were met in full. A comprehensive report of the survey work and other ornithological data being sent to both the local JNCC representative, and the local Bird Recorder. Participation in Ex SEABIRD 2000 was thoroughly worthwhile, both from RAFOS' perspective and that of the JNCC's Seabird Group (co-ordinators of the SEABIRD 2000 census). The survey work undertaken should contribute significantly in filling 'gaps' in previously existing JNCC coverage of the area.

#### **Future Events 2004: AOS**

3 Jan North Norfolk Coast day – Titchwell

(Richard Seargent – 01252 510318)

25 Jan Somerset / Devon levels and marshes (Day visit)

(Roger Dickey – 01722 436446)

3 Feb Ex BOOBY 9 (Ascension)

(Andrew Bray – 01380 739211)

Apr Texas

(Tim Hallchurch – 01865 358815)

Sep Morocco

(Tim Hallchurch)

Sep / Oct Portland Observatory (weekend)

(Hilary Nash – 01252 863486)

#### **Future Events 2004: RAFOS**

Jan Slimbridge (Day visit)

(Martin Godfrey – [martinandrosie@aol.com](mailto:martinandrosie@aol.com))

Mar Chew Lake (Day visit)

(Martin Godfrey)

Mar / Apr Burnham over Strai the Windmill (weekend)

(Martin Godfrey)

Sep (tbc) Australia: Survey of New Haven Reserve NT

(Martin Godfrey)

#### **RAFOS Newsletter No 76, Autumn 2003**

composition. This analysis revealed four distinct stages: (1) the incubation period (November-December), characterised by the absence of white-rumped (breeding age) individuals; (2) the chick-brooding period (February - March), characterized by the numerical dominance of juvenile birds; (3) the chick-rearing (April-June) and post breeding (August-October) period, characterised by the presence of all three age classes with mature birds being numerically dominant; and (4) the period of dispersal from breeding colonies (July), characterised by the absence of juvenile birds and the numerical dominance of mature individuals. These observations are in agreement with previous studies of Black-footed Albatross distributions off the west coast of North America. Despite substantial individual variability in moulting and bursa involution patterns, this study suggests that plumage characteristics can be effectively used to discriminate between different albatross age classes at sea.

**Nieuwsbrief NZG 5(1), September 2003. Dutch Seabird Group. (in Dutch)**

p1. Comment in line with other Journals concerning the MV Prestige oil spill.

Other articles included notes on Storm Petrel, Gannet and Razorbill.

**North Sea Bird Club Annual Report 2000 [www.abdn.ac.uk/nsbc](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/nsbc)**

Contains observations from 33 Bases and Vessels in the North Sea.

**Osprey Issue 3, 2003 (Armed Forces Birdwatching Journal)**

p5. RAFOS on the Rock. Details the 2002 RAFOS Expedition to Gibraltar. Seabird work included the survey of the breeding and roosting population of Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*. Over 5 habitat types three sets of counts were taken:

- Nesting or roosting Gulls.
- Gulls entering or leaving the area.
- Airborne Gulls

The actual count of Yellow-legged Gull was c1850bp and the compensated count exceeded 3650bp. Assuming that only 10% bred in areas not counted (50% of the upper rock area, mostly dense maquis); the estimated total was slightly more than 4000bp.

p32. RAFOS Expedition to the Western Isles (SEABIRD 2000) in June 2000. The aims of the expedition were:

- To assist the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Seabird Group in carrying out SEABIRD 2000 census work in the Outer Hebrides (as an arduous Adventurous Training expedition).
- To contribute to local ornithological records.
- To carry out ringing of local Hebridean species.

Summary. The team successfully surveyed a significant stretch of the northern coastline of North Uist. A large swathe of islands, islets and inlets in the Sound of

**La Garcilla No 114, 2003 (Spanish Ornithological Society) in Spanish**

p6. Details the work undertaken to clean oiled birds. Coastal areas affected range from Islas Cíes, Galicia to Estuario del Bidasoa (Txingudi) País Vasco.

**La Garcilla No 115, 2003**

No Seabird reports.

**Marine Ornithology Vol 30 (2), 2002 [www.marineornithology.org](http://www.marineornithology.org)**

P55. The Ross Sea, Antarctica, Where All Ecosystem Processes Still Remain For Study, But Maybe Not For Long.

*D.G. Ainley ([dainley@penguinscience.com](mailto:dainley@penguinscience.com))*

Abstract. The Ross Sea is a well-defined embayment of Antarctica about the size of southern Europe, bounded by Victoria Land to the west, King Edward VII Peninsula, Marie Byrd Land to the east, the Ross Ice Shelf to the south, and the Pacific Sector of the Southern Ocean to the north. Its waters are composed of two related biotic systems: the Ross Sea Shelf Ecosystem (RSShelfE) and the Ross Sea Slope Ecosystem (RSSlopeE). The Ross Sea is off limits to mineral extraction, but pressures on its biological resources are growing. The economic value of the resources should be weighed against the value of the system as a unique scientific resource. The Ross Sea represents an unparalleled natural laboratory in which the results of different fishery management strategies could be modelled in the context of short-term and decadal variation in biological populations, with these models applied throughout the Southern Ocean and elsewhere. The RSShelfE is the last Large Marine Ecosystem on Earth (except the Weddell Sea and, perhaps, Hudson Bay in the north of Canada) that has escaped direct anthropogenic alteration; the RSSlopeE, similar to all of Earth's other marine ecosystems, has lost its large baleen whales but otherwise is intact. A huge multidisciplinary, international scientific effort has been invested in studies of the geology, physics and biology of the Ross Sea over the past 45 years. In particular the activities of the United States, New Zealand and Italian Antarctic programmes have been models of international scientific cooperation and collaboration. The successful result is an incredible wealth of knowledge, including long-term biological data sets, not available anywhere else in the Antarctic, which have documented clear signals of climate forcing, as well as top-down influences not confused by human exploitation or activity. Ironically, much remains unknown about how these ecosystems function.

P63. Population Size And Trends Of The Waved Albatross *Phoebastria Irrorata*. David J. Anderson<sup>1</sup>, Kathryn P. Huyvaert<sup>2</sup>, Victor Apanius<sup>3</sup>, Howard Townsend<sup>1</sup>, Cynthia L. Gillikin<sup>1</sup>, Lori D. Hill<sup>4</sup>, Frans Juola<sup>1</sup>, Elaine T. Porter<sup>1</sup>, Dana R. Wood<sup>1</sup>, Cecilia Loughheed<sup>5</sup> & Hernan Vargas<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Department of Biology, University of Missouri-St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4499, USA

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<sup>4</sup>Department of Biology, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061, USA

<sup>5</sup>Charles Darwin Research Station, Isla Santa Cruz, Galapagos, Ecuador

Summary. Albatross populations world-wide face a variety of anthropogenic threats, including fishery bycatch and contaminant ingestion. Colony-based assessments of population size provide a necessary complement to studies of risks at sea to understand and minimize declines in albatross populations. We estimated the size of three components of the world population size of the Waved Albatross *Phoebastria irrorata* of the eastern Pacific Ocean in 2001. Adults that bred in 2000, but not in 2001, constituted 17.3% of the population present at the main breeding site, Isla Espanola in the Galapagos Islands, while breeders and non-breeders constituted 22.3% and 60.4%, respectively. The minimum estimate of the sum of these components ranged from 31,818 to 34,694 adults. An additional three adults were found on Isla de La Plata, and up to 11 adults were found as non-breeders on Isla Genovesa, Galapagos. In comparison with a 1970 count on Espanola the overall population has changed little, but the breeding distribution has changed, apparently due in part to regrowth of vegetation after the eradication of feral goats *Caprus hircus* in 1978.

P71. Publications And Theses On Antarctic And Sub-Antarctic Birds, 2000

C.M. Phillips

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Summary. A total of 183 scientific publications and theses on Antarctic and sub-Antarctic birds for 2000 is listed by author. This annual list is produced on behalf of the Group of Experts on Birds of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) Life Sciences Standing Scientific Group (formerly the Bird Biology Subcommittee of the SCAR Working Group on Biology) as a service to marine ornithologists.

Introduction. In 1986, the then Bird Biology Subcommittee of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) Working Group on Biology recommended that a list of recent publications on Antarctic and sub-Antarctic seabirds species from 1986 be prepared. The 2000 list, the fifteenth to be produced and published in *Marine Ornithology*, has been compiled by scanning the relevant literature and abstracting services, and by correspondence with members of the subcommittee. Readers are requested to send reprints of their recent relevant literature, including ones missing from this or previous lists, to the author for inclusion in subsequent lists.

P77. The Diet Of Markham's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma Markhami* on the Central Coast of Peru

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Summary. We studied the diet of Markham's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma markhami* on Paracas Peninsula and La Vieja Island, central Peru, in 1996, 1999 and 2000. A total of 95 samples were collected from adults captured in mist nets at breeding colonies, using the water-offloading technique. The diet was composed of fish (54% by mass), cephalopods (36%) and crustaceans (10%). Among the fish, Peruvian Anchovy *Engraulis ringens* was the main prey (27.2% of the total mass), followed by fish of unknown identity (16.7%). The Pelagic Squat Lobster *Pleuroncodes monodon* was the main crustacean prey (9.4%); the oceanic octopus *Japetella* sp. was the most frequent cephalopod eaten. Prey composition varied among years, before and after El Niño 1997/98. Fish was the main prey in samples during 1999, when anchovy was first observed in the diet (43% by mass). Cephalopods were the main prey in 1996 (44%) and 2000 (84%). Fish prey suggests both inshore and offshore feeding, while cephalopods suggest offshore feeding only. The observed pattern of the diet of the Markham's Storm Petrel indicates opportunistic feeding.

P85. Plumage-Based Ageing Criteria For The Black-Footed Albatross *Phoebastria nigripes*

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Summary. I describe plumage-based ageing criteria for the Black-footed Albatross *Phoebastria nigripes* and assess the utility of this technique using known-age museum specimens and at-sea observations. First, I quantify the repeatability of the plumage assessments and document that 95%, 95%, and 100% of the inspected specimens were reliably scored into one of three standardised plumage classes. Next, I assess the correspondence between the three plumage classes described here and three age groups: juvenile (0.5 years), immature (0.5-4.5 years), and mature (>4.5 years) birds. Overall, 82%, 68%, and 100% of age class 1, 2, and 3 specimens inspected were juvenile, immature, and mature birds, respectively. Finally, to illustrate the applicability of the ageing criteria, I characterise the monthly age-class composition of the Black-footed Albatross population off southern California (29-35° N, 117-124° W) from February through to December. I surveyed albatross population structure during 19 cruises between August 1996 and April 2000. Overall, 97% of the 294 birds sighted during surveys were aged using the plumage-based criteria. I used hierarchical clustering to identify time periods with similar age-class population