

Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



REGISTERED CHARITY No 206719

BULLETIN No 150

MAY 2004

The 57th AGM was held on Friday 5 December 2003 in the Marble Room, Northumberland House, London. Captain M K Barritt, RN was in the chair and opened proceedings at 1400. Nine Society members attended.

THE MINUTES

Item 1: Apologies. Apologies for absence were received from Col P Smith RM, S Howe, Dr W Bourne, Cdr M Casement OBE RN, Dr R Porter, Cdr J Plummer RN, LtCdr G Lewis RN. The Chairman noted with great sadness that Capt Sir Thomas Barlow DSC Bt. RN had passed away earlier in the year, a minutes silence was held in his memory.

‘Captain Sir Thomas Barlow was a founder member of the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society formed in 1946. His seaborne observations were mostly limited to what he could see through a submarine periscope, but he missed no opportunity to record what he saw on trips ashore, in many parts of the world. He actively pursued his interest in birds, as an amateur ornithologist, and he devoted much time and energy to encourage youngsters to follow his example. He regularly attended the annual general meetings of RNBWS, and he was an obvious choice to become *Vice-Chairman*, in 1968, he resigned two years ago after 34 years in this post. The RNBWS has lost its longest serving member of 58 years. For many years, Captain Barlow worked behind the scenes to promote the cause of RNBWS, and seeking support from other ornithological societies, notably the BTO, and he represented the RNBWS at meetings of ICBP, which was subsequently to become BirdLife International. He had even more admirers in the BOC, which he joined in 1951, and having qualified after 50 years of continuous membership proudly accepted the distinction of becoming an Honorary Life Member two years ago. He was a regular and familiar face at their dinner meetings at Imperial College, even when illness made travel difficult, and he managed to come to a meeting as recently as last March.’

A Memorial Service took place on the 23 Jan 04 at St Peter’s Church, London. The RNBWS was represented by Stephen Chapman and Michael Casement.

Item 2: Minutes of 56th AGM. The minutes of the 56th AGM, which had been circulated in Bulletin 148, were put to the meeting. Approval and adoption were proposed by Chris Peach, seconded by David Dobson, and carried unanimously.

Item 3: Matters arising.

Item 5. Reduction of Sea Swallow print run. It was agreed that Gary Lewis would aim at a production run of 300 copies, hoping to reduce print costs.

Item 13. Membership List. Distributed with Bulletin 149, and will be updated annually.

Item 4: Chairman's Report. In April I retired from a Service which, like its sisters, was operating at full pitch. All 3 Service ornithological societies have felt the impact, with key members of their committees being deployed at short notice. Our own Gary Lewis lands in UK tomorrow after 6 months in Iraq with the RN Training Team in Basra. In this context I would like to pay tribute to my counterparts on the Executive Committee for all that they have achieved this year and which they will report to this meeting.

Pressure and change are not unique to the Services. Some of you may be aware that during the year the Met Office ceased publication of their fine journal *The Marine Observer*, which has been a primary means of encouraging sea-borne observation of natural phenomena for almost 80 years. Whilst the Met Office is considering a web-based alternative, they have halted the handling of observations, and bird records are being forwarded to RNBWS. We must discuss the way ahead on this under Item 11. However, to my mind it only enhances the importance of *SS* and our emergent web-site.

Turning to other publications, when you read my Chairman's foreword to *SS52*, you will find a tribute to *Osprey*, which, in my opinion, has really established itself as the journal of record for land-based expeditionary work by the 3 services. My warmest congratulations go to both Editorial Team and authors. I do have here the proofs of *SS52*, and again, to my mind, our journal continues to be a fine product, clearly complementary to *Osprey*, with a firm focus on sea-going recording.

In this context I am delighted to report a most exciting development reported by the Chairman of RAFOS, whose letter I will read to you (*RAFOS have been in contact with MAERSK Shipping who have offered places for Seabird observations during routine transits. RNBWS have provided RAFOS with information on routes worthy of further data*). You will note that communications went awry with this approach, and I am keen to respond positively and authoritatively. This will be a priority for the Executive Committee in the weeks ahead, and your input would be valued. Obviously our data-base will be a tremendous tool here.

Finally, I continue to be encouraged by contact from active members afloat. This year Captain Thomas Johannsen, after 7 months Reserve Service in the German Destroyer Flotilla, has spent a further 7 months in command of a deep sea Ro-Ro on the run between the E Coast of the USA, Mexico and Brazil. His package includes photographs, 2 seabird forms and a land-bird form.

Let me high-light those issues which seem most important for discussion today: they are the promulgation of a programme of field work with which RNBWS members can engage, the launching of the web-site, and the response to the MAERSK offer. All offer greater visibility for RNBWS, and give us greater opportunity to build up an active and involved membership.

Item 5: Financial Statement. The Financial Statement for the year 2002 was offered for approval and adoption; proposed by Stephen Chapman and seconded by David Dobson.

World Birdwatch Vol 26 No 1 Mar 2004.

P3. Details a 6,000 mile steeplechase using 18 electronically tagged non breeding juvenile Tasmanian Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta*; in aid of charity of course!

P4. New Zealand Storm-petrel *Oceanites moorianus* rediscovered in waters off New Zealand in January and November 2003.

P9. Where are all the Ivory Gulls. *Science (301: 1830-1841)* finds an alarming decline in the number of Ivory Gulls *Pagophila eburnea* at previously known nesting colonies. Ivory Gull numbers in Canada have plummeted in the last 20 years by as much as 90%, from 5,000 to 500 – 700 birds.

The Hon Treasurer reported that the subscription was now £12 and signing up to Gift Aid was encouraged. Stephen Chapman was concerned that the print costs for Sea Swallow closely matched our income from subscriptions and if we were not careful we could run into deficit. This was noted, the increase in subscriptions and reduction in print run should alleviate the problem. Hon Sec stated that sources for contributions to funds (MoD, Trusts) were still being actively investigated. The unaudited statement for 2003 was presented for perusal. Both statements are enclosed.

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

	2002	2003
Ex officio	4	4
Honorary	6	5
Ordinary	165	154
Associate	26	30
Library*	48	47
Total	249	240

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

Item 7: Executive Committee and Honorary Appointments. Under the Terms of the Charities Acts 1960 and 1985 the Executive Committee, the UK members of which are the Trustees of RNBWS, offered themselves for re-election as detailed in the table below. Re-election of the members was proposed by Steven Chapman, seconded by Pete Carr and carried unanimously.

The Executive Committee and Trustees (*) are:

Chairman	Capt M K Barritt RN (Mike)
Vice Chairman (MN)	Capt N Cheshire MN (Neil)
Vice Chairman (RN)	Cdre C C Peach RN (Chris)
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 Field Work Member	Capt P Carr RM (Pete)

Item 8: Honorary Auditor. The Honorary Treasurer reported that DNPTS would advise an Auditor for next Year. (Action Hon Treasurer)

Item 9: Local Representatives' Reports. Following the disappointing response from last year the Hon Sec had written to each Area Representative, hence the positive response.

BRNC Annual Bird Report (Richard Porter). This year I have made an effort to encourage recruitment, by posters in the Divisions and aimed mainly at the new entry cadets. I back this up in lectures as I teach most of them, and it is not difficult to relate birds to meteorology and oceanography and I even highlight our 1995 expedition to the Falklands. All this has been to no avail with not new recruits at all. This is almost certainly due to their heavily loaded timetable to be able to even think of pastimes. I cannot foresee this situation changing in the near future and I will aim my recruitment efforts more at the staff and see what I can do in that area. The College continues to participate in the annual MOD bird count, this year recording 46 species. Although this number is up on that of last year (42), there has been a downward trend in numbers due almost certainly to losing several reliable observers over the years. Again we have lost a keen observer at Sandquay so our estuary records are fewer than in previous years. Our highlights are a Great Northern Diver (outside the count period) on the Dart and a Goldfinch and Yellow Wagtail this year. About two miles outside the College boundary a Barn Owl is frequently seen, and we continue to have Tawny Owls in the grounds, probably breeding. The population of Little Egrets on the Dart and other local estuaries continues to increase and this year for the first time we have had unconfirmed reports of their breeding. Locally we continue to have Bitterns at Slapton Ley but they remain elusive to this observer and many others too. Other highlights from the year include: Aquatic Warbler, Slapton ley. Melodious Warbler, Start Point. Red Necked Phalarope, South Huish. Marsh Harrier, Slapton Ley.

Devonport Area (Ken Partridge). A quiet period, due in part to the closure of HMS CAMBRIDGE and the completion of the Seabird 2000 fieldwork. Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* continue to increase along the South Coast in small numbers.

Portsmouth Area (Brian Witts). An interesting year, I am still active as the RNBWS representative on the Portsmouth Harbour Conservation Committee, guardians of the SSIs within the Harbour. Recent projects have been the curtailing of commercial bait digging, and now we are entering into discussion to prevent or control Wildfowling shooting within the harbour. The beginning of the year saw the final low water counts of Waders and Sea birds. This was interesting for my sector, which was the mud flats around Whale Island, and Tipner Range. Up to 10,000 Dunlin could be seen, plus increased flocks of Oystercatchers, and good numbers of Curlew, Redshank and White Egrets. Down were the number of Brent Geese usually seen at Tipner, however the counts throughout the harbour were good. Up to 30,000 Sea Birds were recorded on Tipner Lake.

The MoD bird count in May was interesting. The grass-cutting program at Tipner is working, allowing the Skylarks to nest successfully albeit the number of pairs slightly down. The Kingfisher was seen again at Horsea Island, along with 12 roosting Egrets in a bush, I thought I was back in the Caribbean. Up to 200 Rooks, Crows, and Jackdaws

short distances and were therefore able to visit most areas. The only *Procellariiform* able to co-exist with the rat is the Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris (d.) diomedea*. Further information adele001@udcf.gla.ac.uk.

P4. Predation on Tern eggs by European Starlings in the Azores. In 2003 a Glasgow University Exploration Society expedition visited the Azores. One aspect of the work was to collect data on the Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* population, as this is now one of the largest populations of the species remaining in Europe. The paper concludes that some form of control of the Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* is necessary if the Roseate tern population is to be maintained.

P6. Fair Isle – 2003 breeding season. The 2003 breeding season on Fair Isle was sadly the worst on record and generally unproductive. Once again it appears that there was an almost complete absence of (suitably sized) Sandeels in Fair Isle waters. As usual in years of poor food supply, it was Kittiwakes and Arctic Terns that appeared to suffer most but this year every species (apart from Gannet) had (almost) their lowest productivity on record. Derek Shaw fairisle.birdobs@zetnet.co.uk.

P8. Concerns at Tynemouth (Tyne and Wear, England) Fulmar colony. Concerning the effects of an advert to be erected on the cliff face promontory at Tynemouth Castle, thereby damaging the Seabird colony. Daniel M Turner Dan.M.Turner@btopenworld.com.

P10. A new Gannetry for the UK. Located at Sule Skerry. blackburns@suleska.freeserve.co.uk.

P11. Guillemot tick project 2003-2006: A summary so far. The Project will give a detailed understanding of the molecular evolution of a virus that infects seabirds in the natural environment and is of relevance to our understanding of other viruses with segmented genomes, such as influenza and the insect borne orbiviruses that are of veterinary significance. Linda Wilson ljwi@ceh.ac.uk.

P12. Seabird ringing on the Forth Islands. Report on the Lothian ringing group in the Firth of Forth. John Davies johncdavies@blueyonder.co.uk.

World Birdwatch Vol 25 No 4 Dec 2003.

P2. Bermudians rally to save national bird. Hurricane Fabian, the strongest storm to hit Bermuda since 1899 threatened the nesting sites of the Cahow or Bermudan Petrel *Pterodroma cahow*. The locals constructed artificial nesting burrows. Jeremy Madeiros cahowman@yahoo.com.

P7. Good news for Zino's Petrel. A new colony containing 19 burrows, 15 of them occupied has been discovered on Madeira, the sole breeding ground for Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma Madeira*.

P8. Seabird roundup. On 6 Nov 03 South Africa signed up to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrel (ACAP). John Ridgway has reached Capetown during his year long mission to raise awareness of the threat to Albatrosses, next stop, through the Southern Ocean Gough in South Georgia. Conservation status of six species of Albatross has worsened, they are: Atlantic yellow-nosed *T.chlororhynchos*, Black-browed *T.melanophrys*, Black-footed *Phoebastria nigripes*, Indian yellow-nosed *T.carteri*, Amsterdam *Diomedea amsterdamensis*, Sooty *Phoebastria fusca*.

result in a large avifauna, particularly of breeders. Large parts of both islands are in need of protected status.

Scottish Bird News No 70 Dec 2003

No Seabird content

Scottish Bird News No 71 Mar 2004

No Seabird content.

Seevögel Vol 24 No 3 Oct 2003

No Seabird content

Seevögel Vol 24 No 4 Dec 2003

No Seabird content

Seevögel Vol 25 No 1 Mar 2004.

P16. Some significant winter records of the Gannet *Morus bassanus* from Mediterranean and Atlantic Coasts.

Summary Winter records of the Gannet from 12 stations in Belgium, France, Morocco, Tunisia, Greece, Turkey, and Israel, with a total of ca 60 individuals, are communicated. They contribute to local avifaunas, some as cornerstone data. They are integrated into the general dynamics of the breeding and wintering area of this species.

Shetland Bird Report 2002.

An excellent report which, of course includes the breeding survey for 2002.

The Fulmar (NSBC) No 103 Autumn 2003

No Seabird content.

The Seabird Group Newsletter 95 Oct 2003.

P1. A breeding season round up of Isle of May, Linda Wilson ljwi@ceh.ac.uk, Canna, Bob Swann bob.swann@freeuk.com, Skomer, Juan Brown skomer@wtww.co.uk and Shetland by Martin Heubeck and David Okill martinheubeck@btinternet.com david.okill@sepa.org.uk

P5. Pelagics in the Bay of Biscay. Su Gough of the BTO outlines the benefits of a trip from Portsmouth to Santurtzi (Bilbao) on board the P&O Ferry *Pride of Bilbao*. She outlines the wide variety of Cetaceans and Birds that may be seen. Su.gough@bto.org .

P8. Pelagic birding off North Carolina May 2003. The best time of the year to see maximum species due to the upwellings resulting from the meeting of the warm Gulf Stream with the colder Labrador Current. Angus Murray birdlinescot@btconnect.com .

The Seabird Group Newsletter 96 Feb 2004 www.seabirdgroup.org.uk

Comprehensive articles on the following (reproduced on web site)

P1. Breeding ecology of Skuas on Handa 2003. Full report available from Trevor Jones at trevjones70@hotmail.com.

P3. Abundance and distribution of breeding *Procellariiformes* in the Azores Archipelago in relation to introduced and natural predators. In total information on the distribution of *Procellariiformes* and predators on 28 islands and inlets. Cats, Ferrets, Weasels and Hedgehogs are only found on the 9 main islands. Nevertheless rats are able to swim over

mainly juveniles take flight from the local tip, and roost in a number of the deciduous trees, on the Island which are now bare of all foliage. Many of the nest boxes were used but the fatality rate of the young Blue Tits and Great Tits seemed to be quite high due in part to a short supply of Aphids.

The end of 2003 and the beginning of 2004 monitoring of the Wader movement within the Harbour have begun mainly of Dunlin.

There still remains the now rarest species to be seen and to make contact with at Portsmouth, the young Sailor and Wren who might be interested in joining the RNBWS.

Portland (Martin Cade). No members have been in contact in recent months but are always welcome.

Southampton (Frank Vosey). This Representative is no longer active.

Scotland – Faslane and Rosyth. No Representative.

Humber Area (Bill Curtis). The year in question has been very quiet with no contacts from members visiting the area. During this period I have presented a talk *The Wildlife of the Falklands and South Georgia* to three local societies [Scarborough; Driffeld and Hornsea] at which I also gave a brief résumé of the RNBWS. I have also visited the RSPB Reserves of Blacktoft Sands and Bempton Cliffs where I have left old copies of *Sea Swallow* and a "poster" which I produced giving details of the Society. I have also left literature at Tophill Low NR [Yorkshire Water] where I am a volunteer warden as well as "spreading the word" there. I regret to say that interest in the RNBWS is not overwhelming; nor is interest in many of the local societies, all of which appear to be struggling, or at best, holding their own. The world of instant information [internet sites etc.] has taken over. We, in the YNU, are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain records for archives from the many ornithologists/Birdwatchers out there and, quite frankly, I am at a loss to see a way of reversing this trend. I will continue to preach the word in the forth-coming year.

South Wales (M Sullivan). Regrettably Mr Sullivan died earlier in the year. Therefore, currently there is no South Wales Rep.

Arabian Gulf (Colin Richardson). Colin and the Emirates Bird Committee continue to actively support the RNBWS. Recent Publications received include the Emirates Bird Report and the Oman Bird List.

Australia (Neil Cheshire and Alan Rogers). Neil Cheshire came to the UK in the Autumn and a number of members were able to meet up with him. Alan Rogers reports: Regrettably I have nothing to report having had no contact from any RNBWS members in the past year or in fact for a number of years. Perhaps of interest to members may be the fact that there are now pelagic trips going out off the shelf from no less than seven ports in South-eastern Australia with reasonable regularity. (Brisbane, Newcastle, Sydney, Wollongong, Bateman's Bay, Eden, and Port Fairy). I know this may sound a bit like a

busman's holiday to mariners but they do afford opportunities for closer observation. There are also other trips going out from Adelaide and the West of which Neil would be better placed for details.

Black Sea (Gabriel Banica). First of all, thank you for your letter. I am very sorry, this year I was very busy, and I have not too much time to work in the ornithological field. I have an excuse! Now I am a student at Constanta, Ovidius University, the Ecology Section, in the 4 year of study (the last one!). Of course, I am still working in the Constanta Harbour Master's Office; the University is in my free time. And at home I have also the family (wife and two children, a boy and a girl). For the moment my life is divided between the work, the study of ecology and the family. I have not too much free time. The next year, in the summer, if the teachers are nice, I shall finish the school and I shall have time to go in the field and study the birds. Now, you can say to our friends from the RNBWS that your representative from the Black Sea is learning about biology, including the biology of birds. I think it was a good idea, and really I have learned a lot about biology. I have good teachers; one of them is member of the Romanian Academy. In this summer I was attached to a project of the Constanta, Romanian Marine Research Institute, concerning the protection of some wetlands from the Romanian Black Sea Shore. One of these areas is a sea coast, a 5 Km cliff area, between Olimp summer resort and Costinesti summer resort, somewhere south of Constanta town. If everything goes to plan, this area will be protected, a good chance for the life of the Romanian sea birds. That's all for the moment! I hope the next year to have the e-mail at my home, a better way to communicate. All the best for the RNBWS members!

Bombay (J S Serreo). Unfortunately the Hon Sec has only just found out that Mr Serreo died a few years ago. Therefore, at present we have no Rep for this area, although we do have links with the Bombay Natural History Society.

Falkland Islands (Ian Strange). No response from correspondence but Hon Sec is still trying.

Gibraltar (Clive Finlayson). No response from correspondence. Hon Sec is checking address etc.

Madeira (Frank Zino). There has been a huge amount of work done on the Selvagem Islands and there are several projects running there. The Parque Natural da Madeira, which is in charge of the reserve, has been trying to eradicate the infestant plant *Nicotiana glauca* and is doing very well. Each plant produces millions of seeds and so it is hard work. After each bout of heavy rain there is a new flourish of young plants, which are rapidly dealt with. Though it will probably be some years before the island is completely free, the project is going very well.

On Selvagem Grande, the PNM have also run an eradication campaign, on the rabbits and mice. This seems to have been a success, but we eagerly await the final results. It should be remembered that mice take a significant toll on the eggs and young chicks of the small seabirds. With all this going on, the Selvagens are up for a World Heritage Site

Leopold M F, Van Damme C J G. Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* and polychaetes: can worms sometimes be a major prey of a piscivorous seabird? (83-87)
SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

Kessler C C. Grey-backed Tern *Sterna lunata* breeding on Anatahan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (89-90)

North Sea Bird Club, nineteenth annual report, 2001

NSBC report with regret that after 21 years BP Exploration Co PLC has decided to stop their support. The club reported a very healthy 6000 records received in 2001 making a total of 114,000 to date. The club's web site is at www.abdn.ac.uk.

Osprey Issue 2.

P5. The Restoration of Seabird Colonies on Ascension Island and the contribution of AOS towards the establishment of the Ascension Island Management Plan. LtCol Roger Dickey. Update on current status.

P6. The Breeding Population of Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* on Ascension Island, South Atlantic, November 2000. John Hughes. **Abstract.** For more than a decade the Army Ornithological Society has monitored the Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* breeding population on Ascension Island. This paper describes the latest survey and the findings of the first census of the Sooty Tern colony since a major cat eradication programme began. Three quarters of the island's feral cat population were culled prior to the re-survey in November 2000. The team adopted identical survey methods to those used in three previous censuses. The population size was calculated at 75,000 breeding pairs (bp). The Sooty Tern population is at the lowest level recorded and is less than half the population size of the previous low of 151,000 bp in 1997. The expedition gathered significant evidence to suggest that the introduced Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* had become a major predator of Sooty Tern eggs

Osprey Issue 3.

P32. Outer Hebrides 2000. The RAFOS Expedition to the Western Isles (Expedition SEABIRD 2000) 14 – 24 June 2000. The expedition aims were:

1. To assist the JNCC's Seabird Group in carrying out SEABIRD 2000 census work in the Outer Hebrides (as an arduous AT expedition).
2. To contribute to local ornithological records.
3. To carry out ringing of local Hebridean species.

Osprey Issue 4 2004.

No Seabird content.

Sandgrouse Volume 26(1) 2004.

P23. Bubian Island: a rich Kuwait avifauna. Essa Ramadan, Khalid Al-Nasrallah And George Gregory. The birds of Bubian Island, in north-west Kuwait, had not been studied since 1923 until the Bird Monitoring and Protection Team (BMPT) of the Kuwait Environment Protection Society surveyed the island's breeding birds in 2002. The birds of nearby Warba Island have not been studied since 1922, and the two islands must be among the ornithologically least-covered areas in the Western Palearctic. The waters around both islands are rich in marine life, which, together with the general lack of human disturbance,

P151. Identification of adult American Herring Gull. A significant article by Peter Adriaens and Bruce Mactavish concerning the identification of the American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* dealing particularly with adults.

Friends of Chichester Harbour Newsletter Winter 2003

No Seabird content

Kingfisher, Hampshire Ornithological Society Newsletter No 101 Winter 2003

No Seabird content

La Garcilla (SEO) No 116 2003

No Seabird content

La Garcilla (SEO) No 117 2003.

P12. En España invernan setenta mil ejemplares de Cormorán Grande. Article in Spanish concerning the Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax (c.) carbo*.

La Garcilla 50th Anniversary Edition.

No Seabird content.

Marine Ornithology Vol 31 No 1 2003. The full volume is available at www.marineornithology.org therefore only titles are reproduced herein:

SYMPOSIUM: OIL AND CALIFORNIA'S SEABIRDS

Carter H R. Oil and California's seabirds (1-7)

Carter H R, Lee V. A, Page G W, Parker M W, Ford R G, Swartzman G, Kress S W, Siskin, B R, Singer S W, Fry D M. The 1986 Apex Houston oil spill in Central California: seabird injury assessment and litigation process (9-19)

Roletto J, Mortenson J, Harrald I, Hall J, Grella L. Beached bird surveys and chronic oil pollution in Central California (21-28)

Hampton S, Kelly P R, Carter H R. Tank vessel operations. seabirds and chronic oil pollution in California (29-34)

Hampton S, Ford R G, Carter H R, Abraham C, Humple D. Chronic oiling and seabird mortality from the sunken vessel S.S. *Jacob Luckenbach* in Central California (35-41)

Mccrary M D, Panzer D E, Pierson M O. Oil and Gas Operations Offshore California: Status, Risks, and Safety (43-49)

Nevins H M, Carter H R. Age and sex of Common Murres *Uria aalge* recovered during the 1997-98 Point Reyes tarball incident in Central California (51-58)

Newman S H, Ziccardi M H, Berkner A B, Holcomb J, Clumpner C, Mazet J A K. A historical account of oiled wildlife care in California (59-64)

PAPERS

Wiese F K. Sinking rates of dead birds: improving estimates of seabird mortality due to oiling (65-70)

Martinez-Abraín A, Oro D, Izquierdo J, Ferris V, Belenguer R. A comparison of two methods to estimate breeding productivity in a colonial, ground-nesting gull *Larus cachinnans* (71-74)

Mcfarlane Tranquilla L, Bradley R, Parker N, Lank D, Cooke F. Replacement laying in Marbled Murrelets *Brachyramphus marmoratus* (75-81)

status. We are very hopeful that the local Government will be successful in their application, the result of which should be known by the middle of next year.

I am doing some work on satellite tracking on Cory's Shearwaters together with the Funchal Natural History Museum (MMF). The Max Planck Institute in Germany has given us the material and we are doing the fieldwork. At present we have four birds out in the Atlantic on migration and are getting some really interesting tracks and data. The Max Planck money runs out at the end of this month and so we are looking for sponsors as it costs about 11.5€/day/bird to download the data from Argos

When we talk of the Selvagens we must not forget the very important part that the Portuguese Navy play in getting us to and from the islands. Without them there would be no reserve. They are currently working with Patrol Boats used in the African rivers during the African Colonial war. These are now 28 years old (or more) and we hope that they get replacements soon, for everybody's comfort!

On Madeira, the work on Zino's Petrel, *Pterodroma Madeira*, continues. The Freira Conservation Project (FCP) was successful in an application to the Arcadia Fund for funds for purchase of the breeding area and based on this, the PNM have successfully applied for a massive LIFE project. Climbers from the PNM discovered a new breeding ledge with up to 10 active nests and so the total breeding population estimate has risen to 35-45 pairs. The FCP and MMF have been doing some interesting work on the frequency of changeovers and visits to the nest, in breeding pairs, during incubation and feeding, using PIT tags. The breeding success this year was an absolute record and we ended up with 21 chicks ringed and some more which were too deep in the burrows to get out.

The proposed NATO Radar station by the breeding area of Zino's Petrel is of course a tricky problem. The idea of a 28m high tower there with a mushroom on the top is not pleasing, but National Security has the final say. The Hotel, which they should never have allowed to be built up there, will come down and be replaced by the radar. From the bird's point of view I do not see any danger IF all building takes place out of the breeding season and so causes a minimum impact and that we are able to control the lights.

Sadly Madeira is no longer the port of call for the Navy that it used to be and visits are almost a rarity these days. We look forward to seeing a ship in soon.

Naples (Mark Walters). I would very much welcome any contact with RNBWS members posted to Naples, though in recent years no one has been in touch. As regards activities, I work with Italian ornithologists to census mainly Landbirds in southern Italy, but would welcome a shift in emphasis to seabirds. Any suggestions for Local activities would be welcome.

USA (Robert Wolk). In past years, I have enjoyed guiding overseas visitors in the field. I had no such requests this year. A matter of concern currently in coastal North Carolina may be of interest. It pits local environmentalists against the U. S. Navy. The Navy plans to build a landing strip in one of the eastern counties for the purpose of training pilots to land on aircraft carriers. This is a worthy intent, of course. Unfortunately, they have selected an area very close to a National Wildlife Refuge where 100,000 Tundra Swans, Snow Geese, and other waterfowl assemble from early fall to spring. The Navy predicts that the airstrip will be used for approximately 32,000

landings per year. This means that the strip will be used constantly for the entire year. Even allowing for no landings on holidays and on bad weather days, and assuming twenty-four-hour training sessions, the aircraft will make approximately four (or more) touch-and-go landings per hour. The disruption to the birds on their winter feeding grounds will be considerable. This is not to mention the very real hazard of hitting the birds in the air and the consequent serious damage to valuable equipment and of the possible loss of life of the pilots. Our Navy has so far not responded to the concerns of the citizens of the area which is rural, low income, high minority, and agricultural in nature. It is distressing to many of us that naval leadership has ignored the urging of local residents and state and federal legislators, including the governor of the state, to reconsider their decision and it appears that the North Carolina Audubon Society with other environmental organizations will be forced to take the U. S. Navy to court! Additionally, two well established air bases are located less than 150 km from the proposed site, not a major obstacle for F/A-18 Super Hornets. Perhaps the members of RNBWS will appreciate the incongruities of this situation.

Item 10: Expedition Member's Report. Following discussion between Pete Carr and Frank Ward the following Expeditions / Field Trips are planned:

8 – 24 Feb	Pete Carr to Ascension Island for Exercise Booby IX, Sooty Tern and other Seabirds breeding study.
6 Mar	Local Area - Titchfield Haven / Farlington
17 – 24 Apr	Gibraltar – Migration study of passage Seabirds, Passerines and Raptors at Gibraltar Observatory.
5 Jun	Local Area – Breeding Birds of the New Forest (possibly trapping Nightjars)
4 – 5 Sep	Portland Bird Observatory – Migration Watch
2 – 3 Oct	Dungeness Bird Observatory – Migration Watch
18 – 26 Jun 05	Lundy – Seabird Survey. Combined with AOS and RAFOS
TBC Aug 05	Diego Garcia – Exercise Diego Survey II

RAFOS programme:

4 Jan	WWT Slimbridge. Annual visit to see a wide variety of wildfowl and waders.	Bill Francis
4 Apr	Chew Valley. South of Bristol where we use the facilities of the ringing group hut for lunch etc.	Dave & Anne Bodley
16 - 19 Apr	Burnham Overy. Staying in the windmill, a chance for birding in Norfolk.	Mike Hayes

HRH The Prince of Wales.

“To me, the plight of the albatross is a symbol of the emptiness of the rhetoric surrounding so-called ‘sustainable development’. Will it take the complete dodo-like disappearance of this noble winged creature to bring us to our senses? Or are we to remain blind and deaf to the appalling tragedy unfolding, out of sight and out of mind, in the vast foam-flecked spaces of the Southern Ocean?”

Whatever the case, it would be a shameful travesty of our duty as stewards of this increasingly fragile globe if we couldn’t find a way of living our lives in such a manner that these magnificent birds can continue to share the same planet with us. Ratification of ACAP is an important step in that process, but the reality is that in the current dangerously critical situation the only effective actions will be those that are implemented immediately, and continued indefinitely.” The full speech can be found at http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/speeches/environment_07042004.html .

Dutch Birding Vol 25 No 6 2003

No Seabird content

Dutch Birding Vol 26 No 1 2004.

P1. Identification of American Herring Gull in a western European context. Pat Lonergan & Killian Mullarney. The aim of this extremely detailed paper is to describe and illustrate what the authors believe constitute ‘identifiable *smithsonianus*’ on the European side of the Atlantic and discuss a range of likely pitfalls. The research for the paper involved 5 winter visits to the East Coast of the USA (Massachusetts and New York, from mid-January to mid-February) as well as 2 autumn visits (New Jersey, in mid-September). Pat.lonergan@ucd.ie , kmullarney@eircom.net .

P36. Geelpootmeeuwcomplex van IJmuiden: in hoeverre zijn geelpootmeeuwen echte Geelpootmeeuwen? Yellow-legged Gulls and hybrids breeding at IJmuiden. **Summary.**

Since 1987, small numbers of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus michahellis* have been breeding in mixed colonies of European Herring Gull *L argentatus* and Lesser Black-backed Gull *L discos graellsii* at IJmuiden, Noord-Holland, the Netherlands. Almost all were paired with Lesser Black-backed Gulls, producing hybrid young. By trapping and colour-ringing birds, it was possible to follow them over the years. Some of the adult hybrids returned to the colonies and started to breed, always paired with Lesser Black-backed Gulls. In 2002 the number of breeding Yellow-legged Gulls and hybrids was at least seven. On 12 May 1997, a female that had been breeding and producing hybrids since 1991 was trapped and a blood sample was taken for DNA-analysis. This indicated that she was not a pure Yellow-legged Gull, although she looked like one, but that one of her female ancestors had been a European Herring Gull. With this in mind, and with a growing number of known hybrids and possible back-crosses in the colonies, it has become increasingly difficult to be sure of identification when seeing a yellow-legged gull.

Dutch Birding Volume 26 No 2 2004.

No Seabird content.

Dutch Birding Volume 26 No 3 2004.

conspecifics without the help of acoustic signals. Guillemots could differentiate neighbours from strangers without auditory cues.

Conclusion Calls are essential for the successful identification of mates by King Penguins but not by Guillemots.

P91. Extremely late laying by Guillemots *Uria aalge* can be successful

Michael P Harris* and Sarah Wanless

Capsule Even though most other pairs in the colony had finished breeding, late breeders that lost eggs and relaid were successful in rearing young.

British Birds, Jun 04 Vol 97 No 6

P264. From the Rarities Committee's files: Presumed hybrid gull resembling adult

Franklin's Gull *Gary Pullan and John Martin*

Abstract A small gull in the evening roost at Boddington Reservoir, Northamptonshire, on 17 March 2001, was initially identified as a Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*. Further observations on subsequent evenings revealed a number of anomalies that suggested it was of hybrid origin. Assisted by the cautious comments of the finders, BBRC concluded that it was indeed a hybrid, most probably between Mediterranean Gull *L. melanocephalus* and Common Gull *L. canus*. The fact that such a hybrid can closely resemble Franklin's Gull emphasises the requirement for careful and detailed notes when a suspected Franklin's Gull is found in Europe.

British Ornithologists' Club Vol 123 No 4 December 2003.

P212. New seabird records from Round Island, Mauritius. Four new species recorded by Don Merton and Mike Bell whilst undergoing conservation work.

BTO News No 249 Nov-Dec 2003

No Seabird content

BTO News No 250 Jan-Feb 2004

No Seabird content

BTO News No 251 Mar-Apr 2004.

P10. Variations in oil spill victims. Mark Grantham has analysed ring recoveries from the two catastrophic oil spills in the winters of 2002 and 2003 with some interesting results for Guillemots.

BTO News No 252 May-Jun 04

Page 8. 8th International Seabird Group Conference. Held in Aberdeen and focusing on North Atlantic Seabird populations, is reported by Mark Grantham. This was a 3 day conference with delegates from 19 countries. It also announces the release of '*Seabird Populations of Britain and Ireland*', (T & A D Poyser, London) the culmination of the work of over 1,000 fieldworkers, who surveyed 3,200 colonies along 40,000 km of coastline between 1999 and 2002 as part of Seabird 2000;

<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/marine/seabirds>

Page 9. Also reported is the Waterbirds around the World Conference held in Edinburgh in April 2004; <http://www.wetlands.org/GFC/Default.htm>. The Conference closed with an assessment of the problems posed by long-liners to Albatross populations, given by

9 May	Forest of Dean (RSPB Nagshead). Based on the new visitor centre at the RSPB reserve, a good chance of seeing woodland birds including Pied Flycatchers and Redstart.	Bill Francis
Sep	Australia (OzEx04) . The major expedition for 2004, carrying a out survey of a new Birds Australia reserve at Newhaven, four hours drive from Alice Springs, in the centre of the continent	Mike Blair & Dick Yates
1 - 3 Oct	Portland Weekend . Staying at the bird observatory in an old lighthouse.	Dave & Anne Bodley
Oct (dates to be confirmed)	CORNISH CHOUGH . A week birding near Lands End.	Jim Bryden & Martin Wightman
24 -30 Oct	Islay Mist 04 . A trip to Islay in May 2002 produced over 110 species in 7 days. The dates of this visit were chosen on the advice of the warden of the RSPB reserve at Loch Gruinart. The aim is to use self catering accommodation on Islay.	Bill Francis
7 Nov	Chew Valley . The autumn visit to Chew Valley Lake	Dave & Anne Bodley

AOS programme:

Dates	Expedition/Field Trip	Organizer
2004		
2-12 Aug	Danube Delta (Week Tour) Mountains, delta and coast	Tim Hallchurch 01865 358034 (Any)
24-26 Sep	Portland Bird Observatory (Field W/E) Migrants. Details later but to follow pattern of previous visits.	Hilary Nash 01252 863486 (D)
23/24 Oct*	The Wirral (Field W/E) (Provisional) Full day on the Dee Estuary. *May be 30/31 Oct.	Rodney Walker walkerrodneyc@yahoo.co.uk
21 Nov	Cotswold Water park (Field Day) Wildfowl and waders including the lakes around Neighbridge	Andrew Bray 01380 739211 (E)
2005		
02 Jan	North Norfolk Coast (Field Day) Winter visitors. To include Titchwell, to kick off the year lists.	Richard Seargent 01252 510318 (W/E)
30 Jan	Somerset Levels, Lakes & Marshes (Field Day) Ham Wall, Westhay, Cheddar and Chew Valley lakes.	Roger Dickey 01722 436446 (D)
13-27 Feb	Malaysia (Fortnight Tour) Langkawi, Penang and Mainland tours.	Tim Hallchurch 01865 358034(Any)
25-27 Feb	Fontainbleu, France (Field W/E) Woodpeckers, Cranes and Sea Eagles. B&B and minibus.	Richard Seargent 01252 510318 (W/E)

6-8 May	AGM, Leek, West Midlands Upland birds and migrants on the Pennines.	Hon Sec 0117 9131501
14-28 May	Canada (Fortnight Tour) Calgary through Rockies to Vancouver I. Non-stop birding	Tim Cowley / Roger Dickey
17-19 Jun	Minsmere and Sizewell (Field W/E) Bitterns to Redstarts from Minsmere and Sizewell Belt	Carl Powell 01728 831841 (E)
Early Sep	Ethiopia (Week Tour) East African birding. Details later.	Tim Hallchurch 01865 358034 (Any)
24-25 Sep	Portland Bird Observatory (Field W/E) Details later but to follow pattern of previous visits.	Hilary Nash 01252 863486 (D)
15-26 Oct	Ex BOOBY 10 (Fortnight Survey) Survey + ringing on Ascension Island for currently serving.	Andrew Bray 01380 739211 (E)
2006		
08 Jan	North Norfolk Coast (Field Day) Winter visitors. To include Titchwell, to kick off the year lists.	Richard Seargent 01252 510318 (W/E)
Early Jun	Pembroke Coast and Islands (Field W/E) Seabirds and overnight stay on Skomer for Shearwaters	Mark Easterbrook
TBC	Ethiopia (Fortnight Tour) Details later.	Tim Hallchurch 01865 358034 (Any)
TBC	Diego Garcia (Fortnight Survey) Joint survey to Chagos Islands. Possibly Serving personnel only	Pete Carr / Roger Dickey

RNBWS members are welcome to attend RAFOS and AOS events.

Item 11: Sea Swallow – Editor's Report. It had been agreed that because Gary Lewis had been sent to Iraq for 6 months, Sea Swallow's publication would be delayed, thereby ensuring the standard was maintained. Publication is planned for Mar 04.

Item 12: Data-base Working Group Report. Word of the Data Base is getting round and Hon Sec and Stan Howe have been able to provide data to a numbers of Ornithologists to help with their Projects. The placement of the Data Base onto the RNBWS Web Site is still under discussion. The production of the remainder of the Web Site is underway and Hon Sec hopes to go live by the end of July.

Item 13: Any Other Business.

- The Chairman drew attention to the forthcoming BOC meeting on 20 Jan. Frank Zino is hoping to attend.

Item 14: Presentations.

Best Article for Sea Swallow. No articles were eligible for the award this year.

suggesting that the functions reported here may apply throughout the North American breeding population.

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²Canadian Wildlife Service, P.O. 6227, Sackville, NB E4L 1G6, Canada.

P85. Dark-Rumped *Oceanodroma* Storm Petrels In The Central Atlantic Ocean Steve Hales¹ and Jim Vaughan². On 15 April 2003, two Dark-rumped *Oceanodroma* Storm-petrels were observed in a mixed feeding flock of seabirds, at 04°13'N, 19°10'W. It is argued that both appear to be Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*.

¹17 Weatherbury Way, Dorchester, DT1 2ED Dorset, U.K. ²36 Prospect Road, Sevenoaks, TN 13 3UA Kent, UK

Australasian Seabird Bulletin No 41 December 2003.

P15. Seabird research at Bird Island. Isaac Forster, British Antarctic Survey. An explanation of research to whet the appetite. More information at www.antarctica.ac.uk.
P19. A contribution to the discussion re the separation of White-bellied Storm-Petrel, the white-bellied 'morph' of Black-bellied Storm-Petrel and NZ Storm-Petrel. Mike Carter 17 November 2003. A detailed comparison of the 3 birds.

P22. Trophic ecology of Little Penguin using stable isotope analyses. André Chiaradia, Philip Island Nature Park. A short article outlining a forthcoming study.

Bird Study (BTO) Vol 50 Pt 3 Nov 2003

No Seabird content

Bird Study Volume 51 Pt 1 March 2004.

P25. Finding your mate in a seabird colony: contrasting strategies of the Guillemot *Uria aalge* and King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus*

Thierry Lengagnei *, Mike P. Harris², Sarah Wanless² And Peter J. B. Slaters³

¹Centre de Recherches et de Formation en Eco-Ethologie, 09350 Boulton aux Bois, France,

²Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Banchory Research Station, Hill of Brathens, Banchory, Kincardineshire AB31 dBW, UK and

³School of Biology, University of St Andrews, Fife KY16 9TS, UK.

Capsule King Penguins recognize their mates by voice, but Guillemots do not need acoustic cues even though their calls show individual variation.

Aims To determine whether the structure of Guillemot calls could allow individual recognition, as with King Penguin, and whether acoustic cues are used to locate mates among a dense mass of conspecifics at a colony.

Methods Observations were made on breeding Guillemots and King Penguins. Calls made by birds returning to their mates were recorded, the signals digitized and the calls analysed. Calls were later played back to the mates of the birds concerned and the effects noted on both them and their neighbours.

Results Both Guillemots and King Penguins emitted calls on return to the breeding site which contained individual signatures and were therefore potentially usable for mate recognition. In King Penguins, auditory recognition was essential for finding a mate, whereas in Guillemots most of the arriving birds located their mate in a dense crowd of

Atlantic Seabirds Vol 5 No 2 (2003).

P41. Status and distribution of breeding seabirds in the northern islets of Lanzarote, Canary Islands 2003. Beneharo Rodriguez, Leandro De Leon, Aurelio Martin, Jesus Alonso & Manuel Nogales. We describe the results of a survey of breeding seabirds carried out between 2000 and 2002 in the northern islets of Lanzarote, Canary Islands, with particular emphasis on their status and distribution. For White faced Storm petrel *Pelagodroma marina*, Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus [fuscus] graellsii* and Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans atlantis*, some near colonies were discovered on different islets. All species have maintained their numbers over the last 15 Years, with the exception of the Yellow-legged Gull, which has undergone a well documented increase, in 1987, about 400 breeding pairs were estimated but during the present study, almost 1000 pairs were counted. In addition, some comments on threats to these seabird populations are presented. On La Graciosa feral cats are a major predator of the European Storm-petrel population, killing more than 50 birds during this study alone. Departamento de Biología Animal (Zoología), Universidad de La Laguna, 38206 Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain. islot.es.

P57. Mass Mortality of Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica* off Central Norway, Spring 2002: Causes And Consequences Tycho Anker-Nilssen¹, Tomas Aarvak¹ & Georg Bangjord². In late March and early April 2002, at least 300 dead or dying Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica* were reported beached on the coast of Central Norway, between 62°30' and 65°00'N. Post-mortem examinations of 30 individuals, 93% of which were adult birds, revealed that they had starved. No signs of injuries, parasites, diseases or external contamination were found, bill levels of accumulated contaminants were not measured. The most likely origin of these birds were breeding sites at or in the vicinity of Røst (c. 450,000 pairs in 2001) 400-600 km further north. Based on a large difference between expected and observed adult survival rate for Atlantic Puffins at Røst between 2001 and 2002, it is possible that as many as 100,000 puffins died in this unusual but seemingly minor incident.

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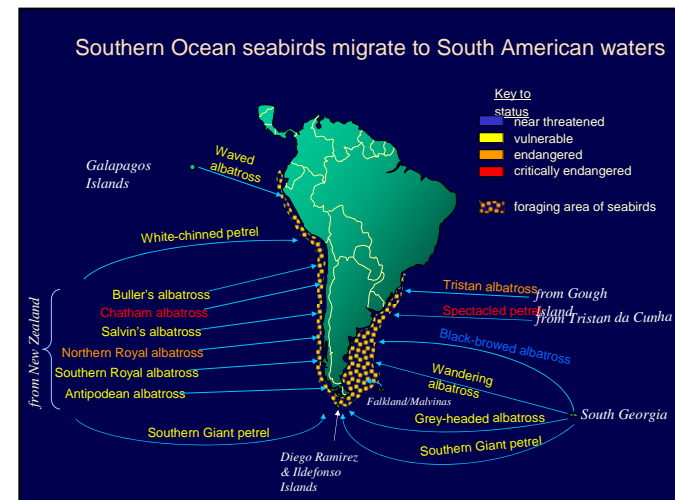
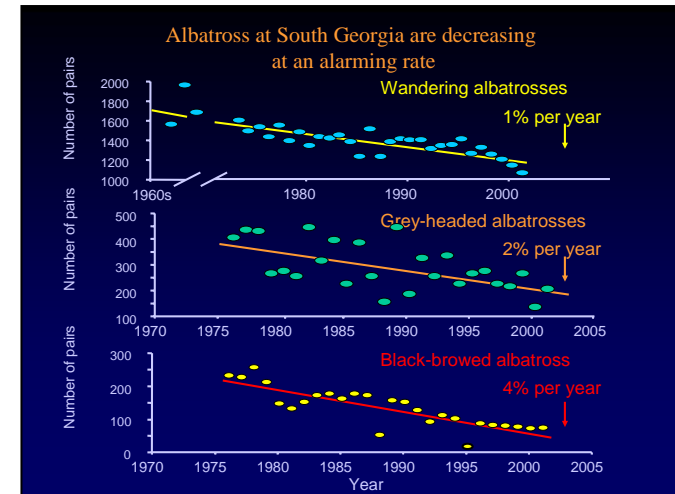
P73. Sexing Razorbills *Alca Torda* breeding at Machias Seal Island, New Brunswick, Canada, Using Discriminant Function Analysis. V D Grecian¹, A W Diamond¹ and J W Chardine². In 2000 and 2001, we determined the sex of 80 adult Razorbills *Alca torda* caught on Machias Seal Island, New Brunswick, Canada, 71 birds in 2000 and 9 in 2001. Sex was determined for the 2000 birds using DNA from feathers, and, for the 2001 captures using behavioural observations. Males averaged significantly larger than females in head+bill (3% larger), culmen (3%) and bill depth (4%). Discriminant Function Analysis (DFA) was used to classify, birds that were not sexed. The function correctly classified 78% of birds using the linear measurements (head+bill, bill depth, wing chord, and tarsus) and 79% when a stepwise procedure was used. The highest classification success rate (80%) resulted, from using only head+bill and bill depth. Bill size of Razorbills from Quebec and Labrador is very similar to those from Machias Seal Island,

AOS Trophy. Due to his busy schedule the Chairman was unable to recommend a winner, he will consult with UKHO MEIC and report to the Committee.

Item 15: Date of next meeting. Friday 3 December 2004 in the Wells Room at HMS EXCELLENT, Portsmouth.

Item 16: Presentation by Dr Euan Dunn – How to get the Albatross off the Hook.

Although to a regrettably small audience Dr Euan Dunn from the RSPB gave a most interesting Lecture on the plight of Albatross, suffering from longlining techniques in the Southern Oceans.



Euan first described the plight of the Albatross and described the dramatic population decrease during recent years. The migration routes coincide with the pelagic fishing areas of the Southern Oceans. Twenty-two species of Seabird, including 17 species of albatross are in grave danger of extinction because of the large numbers being drowned on longlines. Three species are listed as critically endangered by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) – Amsterdam Albatross, Chatham Albatross and Spectacled Petrel -

Tried and tested solutions exist to reduce by-catch (and improve fishing efficiency)

- Streamer line – scare birds away from longline
- Weighted line – line sinks too fast for birds to reach
- Underwater setting – line inaccessible to birds
- No offal discharge – avoid attracting birds
- Night setting – albatrosses feed by day
- Closed seasons – protect birds when breeding
- Closed areas – protect birds rearing chicks

Campaign Targets

- **Political**
 - international legislation (ACAP, FAO)
- **Fishermen and their managers**
 - raise awareness, improve fishing methods, benefits to fish catch, observers, enforcement
- **Public and consumers**
 - raise awareness, support campaign and albatross-friendly fish
- **BirdLife partners**
 - build capacity

While another three albatross species are listed as endangered – Tristan Antipodean and Northern Royal Albatross.

Turning to local rarities, by UAE standards, it is difficult to know where to begin. For starters the report details first records of Sooty Shearwater (1 in 1995), Little Gull (1 in 1996) and Common Noddy (1 in 1995); and others including Sabine's Gull, Common Gull (not so here!), Mediterranean Gull, Brown Booby, Artic Tern, Long-tailed Skua and Black Tern. In subsequent years the report details additional sightings to follow those of the 3 firsts and shows how dedicated sea watching and examining flocks of 'sea gulls' pays off. March and April are evidently the most rewarding months before the heat of the Arabian summer.
(Stephen Chapman)

Oman Bird List Edition 6

Eriksen, Sargeant and Victor in collaboration with the Oman Bird Records Committee 2003, p176

An absolute must for any Oman birding trip with birds illustrated by excellent photographs by Hanne & Jens Erikson. All 482 bird species accepted by the OBRC are listed and is based on the Oman Bird Record database of 270,000 entries. Being extremely well laid out, the book, in most cases shows a photograph, sighting histogram and breeding distribution map, all entries have a short description of each bird.
(Frank Ward)

REVIEW OF JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS

Alauda (SEOF) Vol 72 No 1 2004 www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof

P53. Reproduction of Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* and Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* on the Al Massira reservoir (central Morocco). Mohamed Radi, Abdeljebbar Qninba, Mohamed Dakki and Michel Thévenot. During monitoring waterbird breeding populations at the Al Massira Reservoir, established in 1979 in central Morocco, in the spring of 2002 a large colony of Gull-billed Terns (420 nests recorded) with a few Black-headed Gulls (28 pairs) was located on small islands away from shore. Breeding of a few pairs of Ruddy Shelduck, Black-winged Stilt, Collared Pratincoles and Kentish Plover was also proven. The Gull-billed Tern colony is the largest known in Morocco whereas the Black-headed Gull one is the first for the country and Africa.

Alauda (SEOF) Vol 71 No 3 2003 www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof

No Seabird content.

Alauda (SEOF) Vol 71 No 4 2003 www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof

No Seabird content

Anuari Ornitològic de Les Balears Vol 17 2002

No Seabird content

AOS Bulletin 2003

No Seabird content

Ardeola (SEO) Vol 50(2) Dec 2003

No Seabird content.

BOOK REVIEWS

A Guide to the Birds of St Helena and Ascension Island.

by Neil McCulloch, published by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds 2004, 92pp., art work by Dan Powell.

RNBWS members will have experienced more than the majority of other ornithological organisations the frustrations of trying to fathom what species will occur on the oceanic island they are to visit. Generally this will entail a trawl through at least three different guides, checking distribution maps and often the text as well or pouring through the scientific end of birding journals hoping a BOU expedition had visited the area and published their results! For those fortunate enough to visit either St Helena or more likely for the serving RN, Ascension Island, Neil McCulloch has solved this problem. The book commences with a short chapter giving a historic perspective of the island's environments and follows on with a synopsis of the island's environments in the present day; a comprehensive guide of the best birding areas on the islands follows this. The bulk of the book is then made up of the species accounts each accompanied by an illustration by Dan Powell. The illustration accompanied by the text in the species accounts is enough for most visitors to the islands to identify most species in adult plumage. The appendices are a testimony to the research Mr McCulloch undertook when preparing the book; they are checklists of extinct species, accidental visitors and failed introductions. The final pages covering Further Reading and Useful Addresses are a short cut for those wishing more detailed information on the islands.

The book is clearly aimed at the ship borne eco-tourist market that the two islands are hoping to attract in the near future. Indeed, in his forward Mr McCulloch describes the book as not so much for the serious birder as to help those with a casual interest. This may have been his intent, however, any serious birder visiting the area wishing to maximise their time on the islands would do well to have this book in their possession prior to landing.

(Pete Carr)

Emirates Bird Report No. 20

Compiled and edited by Colin Richardson 2003, p324

For the eagle-eyed going to sea to enjoy good seabirds is clearly not imperative for those fortunate enough to live in the UAE. The waters of the Arabian Sea and east Indian Ocean are long known to be rich in pelagics since the publication of extensive observations from *RRS Discovery* in 1966 and documented by Roger Bailey in *Ibis* 108: 224-264. The latest reports from the Emirates Bird Records Committee in Emirates Bird Report No 20 contain a wealth of new seabird and other records that clearly demonstrate the height of activity by many observers. The current volume contains bird sightings for the years 1995-2000 and as the editorial states, it is the largest and most comprehensive scientific record ever published of birds on the Arabian Peninsula. As such it is a must for even the casual visitor, and at Dh70 (about £10) from PO Box 50394, Dubai is a snip.

If it is gulls and terns you want to see (Caspian Gull, Slender-billed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, for example) in numbers the places to be are around Ra's Al Khaimah, Dibba and Fujairah.

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.

MOD BIRD COUNT

John Plummer has forwarded the following update to those notes published in Bulletin 149, a copy of the Bird Count is available on request:

COMMENTS ON MOD(N) SITE REPORTS 2003

ATTURM, Instow, N Devon

The number of species recorded and breeding shows an increase on last year's report. Although there were some gains, there were apparently some losses; however could the latter be due to incorrect identification?

DM Beith, Ayrshire

Increases in Spotted Flycatchers breeding compared with a sighting outside the count last year are encouraging, as are the continuing large number of species breeding.

Royal Marines, Bickleigh

The number of species identified is double last year's figure although it was reported then that some species were observed or heard but not identified. Reports include Buzzard, Kestrel, Peregrine, Skylark and Song Thrush.

Royal Marines, Chivenor, Barnstaple

Down on the number of species reported, due to no input outside the count when last year large numbers of waders were reported. On a positive note, Skylark population remains healthy with an increase in numbers reported.

Royal Marines, Condor

A small increase in the number of species recorded and breeding along with a reduction in the number of Rookeries to two, the figure for three years ago. An encouraging highlight was the discovery of breeding Stock Doves and a new site for breeding House Martins, but House Sparrows are still hard to find.

RNAS Culdrose, Helston

Another interesting report received after a 3 year gap, although down slightly on the number of species reported. However outside the count period, a variety of species were recorded.

HM Naval Base, Devonport

A similar number of species recorded as last year. The Peregrine, an irregular visitor last year, is now a regular visitor often feeding on the Feral Pigeons in the Base.

HMS Dryad, Southwick

Another impressive report with an increase in the number of species seen and breeding. Following on from last year's report, it is encouraging to note that many species populations are being maintained. Gains include Willow Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Linnet and Yellowhammer.

Whale Island.

A very small increase in the number of species recorded and breeding compared with last year. The return suggests that success is limited attracting Owls and Kestrels to nesting

boxes, although there has been success with both Blue and Great Tits. Although no House Sparrows or a Bullfinch this year, on the plus side Tree Sparrows have been present. Other gains from last year include House Martin, Wren, Goldcrest and outside the count, Black-Tailed Godwit.

Horsea Island.

A small increase in the number of species recorded, however the note about a large Council refuse tip provides useful information. For the benefit of readers, this tip is on the mainland north of Horsea Island. On a regular basis a large flock (150-200) of Crows, Jackdaws and Rooks, many of them juvenile take flight from the tip and roost in a number of deciduous trees north of the island. These trees have been stripped of all foliage, and a large area of ground is now deep with their droppings. It is noticeable that smaller birds keep well clear.

Tipner Range.

Although down on the number of Skylarks hoped for, it appeared as though they were nesting.

HMS Forest Moor

An impressive count despite poor weather conditions.

Oil Fuel Depot Gosport

Very slightly down on the number of species reported last year. Losses Little Egret, Kestrel, Jay and Long-Tailed Tit. Gains Swallow, Whitethroat. Blue Tits reported breeding but not Moorhens as was the case last year.

Royal Marines, Norton Manor Camp, Near Taunton

Survey on 3 June will be considered inside the prescribed count period. Return shows an increase in the number of species with a similar number breeding as last year. There is no doubt that the lakes are attracting a great deal of interest from species not previously recorded in the camp. Furthermore, once the lakes are stocked with fish and the vegetation develops further, it is likely that many of the species will become established breeders.

We look forward to reading the article on the development of the lakes in the 2004 issue of the Sanctuary magazine.

Defence Munitions, Plymouth

An impressive number of species reported and breeding, however breeding species were not identified.

RNAS Predannack

Most species show a small increase on the last count in 2000. For example Skylarks, Wrens doubling in numbers, and Robins. Exciting news about breeding Dartford Warblers. One of these birds was first seen at Predannack about four or five years ago, and that today at least four breeding pairs exist in the gorse at the southern end of the airfield. Two gains outside the count are Hen and Marsh Harriers. Aircraft do have their uses with a pair of Blue Tits breeding in the tail plane of a Canberra hulk!

HMS Raleigh (Trevol Range)

An overall increase in the number of species reported despite some losses. It is encouraging this year that the Song Thrush is one of the species breeding. Furthermore an increase in the number of Tree Sparrows is reported.

HMS Sultan

A much improved picture on last year when the effect of tree felling and other activity during the breeding season was reported. Numbers have almost returned to the 2000 figure of 46 species seen and 20 species breeding. The unusual birds noted during the count were mostly due to the water in the moat, bringing visitors such as Cormorants and Canada Geese, and that the majority of birds seen were of woodland and grassland species including Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Green Woodpecker. It was pleasing to note that both Song and Mistle Thrushes were listed, as well as the Tree Sparrow, one of this years gains. Other gains include Turtle Dove, Great Tit, and Bullfinch. Many Crows and Rooks are breeding, and it is hoped that small birds will not suffer the same fate as reported at Horsea Island.

CAPTAIN SIMPSON BEQUEST

The Hon Sec was contacted earlier in the year and informed that the Society had been left a significant sum of money from the estate of the late Captain D M Simpson MN. The Committee has decided that the bulk of the monies would be invested and that a Capt Simpson Scholarship would be established to encourage young RN and MN birdwatchers; the mechanics of this will be reported at the AGM.

SEA BIRD DATABASE

The Sea Bird database is being well utilised and requests for information is increasing as it becomes better known. It is intended that the database will be accessible from our website (whether to members only is yet to be decided). Its format will be based on MS Access.

WEBSITE

We are currently establishing our website at www.rnbws.co.uk (not www.rnbws.org as previously reported). The site will contain a variety of information including copies of our Bulletin in PDF format. As the Met Office publication *The Marine Observer* has been discontinued the website will carry items of interest that it would have published.

MEMBERSHIP

All Royal Naval and Royal Fleet Auxiliary Commanding Officers have received a letter, Flyer for the Ships Company notice board and copy of Sea Swallow encouraging membership. An article is to be submitted to the Navy News and Globe and Laurel.

LIAISON WITH THE ARMY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY (AOS)

The Hon Sec attended to AOS AGM weekend at Lydd 14-16 May. The weekend was well supported and most interesting. The AOS Chairman, Brigadier Rodney Walker has extended an invitation to all RNBWS members to take part in their Field Trips.