

Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



REGISTERED CHARITY No 206719

BULLETIN No 151

OCTOBER 2004

THE FIFTY EIGHTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will take place on Friday 3 December at 1400 in the Wells Room, HMS EXCELLENT, PORTSMOUTH. After the meeting there will be a talk by Dr. Russell Wynn of the Southampton Oceanographic Centre www.soc.soton.ac.uk/soc concerning his research work. 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 £45.00 in UK, £51.00 overseas surface mail (see enclosed flyer).

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, 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

Owing to the absence of Gary Lewis, on operational duty in Iraq; the publication of Sea Swallow is slightly out of sync. The next edition is due for publication in November. It is hoped to return to an early Autumn publication next year.

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.

The Web Site will be online by December.

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 Stan or the Hon Sec. It can be provided in report or Graphical Format. This information, will, in due course be available on the Web Site.

REVIEW OF JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS

Scottish Bird News N0 72 Jun 2004 www.the-soc.org.uk

No Seabird content.

The Fulmar No 105 May 2004 www.abdn.ac.uk/nsbc

Fulmar Wreck In North Sea. Steve Baxton of the RSPCA Norfolk Wildlife Hospital is investigating the recent die-off of Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* along the east coast of England. He said there had been around 200 dead Fulmars washed ashore along the Norfolk coast in the first two weeks of March. Birds had also been reported in Kent, Cumbria, Northern France and Belgium. He noted that many birds were of the northern race. Some post mortems showed that it appeared that the wreck was simply a food shortage.

In April Kees Camphuysen, the well-known Dutch ornithologist was visiting Aberdeen and was asked him what he knew of this. He referred me to his colleague, Jan Andries van Franeker, and the Dutch Seabird Group website www.zeevogelgroep.nl

Jan had written an article on the preliminary finds, much of which was reproduced in British Birds 97 May 2004 p.247-249.

The wreck involving thousands of mortalities became apparent in the last week of February

Keith Hamer et al bgyemh@leeds.ac.uk Study into the diet and foraging behaviour of Northern Gannets breeding on the Bass Rock. Preliminary analysis of the gastric data has shown that Gannets are also feeding regularly without dives being recorded, which indicates that they are taking prey from or near the surface. This latter behaviour fits in with the observations at sea (Kees Camphuysen, pers.comm).

World Birdwatch Vol 26 No 3 Sep 04 www.birdlife.org

p5. Controversial Danube canal construction begins. www.utop.org.ua/eng/news23.htm
In May 2004, the construction of a 3 km deep-water channel through an internationally protected part of the Danube Delta on the Black Sea coast began amid a wave of protests from Birdlife and other conservation organisations, who are concerned for the future of one of Europe's most valuable natural coastal areas.

2004. A long term research project is being conducted in Texel on litter in the stomach contents of Fulmars and is part of the 'Save the North Sea' marine litter project. Their initial results of the wreck showed a high percentage of northern or 'blue phase' birds and also a high predominance of adult females. Also remarkable was the fact that an unusually high proportion of the wrecked birds had not finished moult of primaries and tail-feathers. Normally moult would have been completed by December. The 'arrested' moult is apparent in three-quarters of the wrecked birds analysed. It seems these birds had encountered serious energy problems four to five months before they died in the southern North Sea. Possibly the problems began at least in October 2003 or earlier. Feeding conditions around the breeding colonies are still poor and many of these females may have had to range further a field to forage. Persistent north-westerly storms in February may have caused them to accumulate in the southern North Sea but a combination of events e.g. low food abundance, persistent storms, pollutants and secondary diseases seem to have played a role in the process leading to the wreck. In conclusion Jan says that seabird wrecks often seem to follow 'Murphy's Law'; once something goes wrong, everything goes wrongMoult puts high-energy demands on all birds and when problems occur, moult will be slowed or stopped (arrested) and this may have been triggered by the problems of finding food last year. Any corpses found need not be fresh but the internal organs should be intact. For updates on numbers of beached birds and their regional spread consult <http://home.planet.nl/~camphuys/fulmarwreck.htm>.

Scottish Birds – Raptor Round Up 2002

No Seabird content

BTO News No 253 Jul – Aug 04

No Seabird content

BTO Bird Study Vol 51 Pt 2 Jul 04

No Seabird content

Ardeola Vol 51(1) Jun 04 (Spanish) www.seo.org

50th anniversary edition

Alauda Vol 72 No 2 2004 (French) www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof/

No Seabird content

Scottish Birds Vol 24 No 2 Jun 04

No Seabird content

Sanctuary No 33 2004 www.defence-estates.mod.uk

No Seabird content

British Birds Aug 04 Vol 97 No 8

p425. Shetland's seabird meltdown. Comment on breeding trends by Martin Heubeck and Deryk Shaw.

BOC Bulletin Vol 124 No 3 Sep 04

p202. First Palearctic record of the endangered Bermuda Petrel *Pterodroma cahow* by Joël Bried & Maria C. Magalhães. Our capture of a Bermuda Petrel on 17 November 2002 represents, to the best of our knowledge, the first proven record of this species for

the Palearctic. In addition, the recapture of this individual in the same burrow four days later suggests that it exhibited some level of site tenacity. The burrow was situated on a slope oriented eastwards, c.20 m above sea level.

When breeding, Bermuda Petrels return ashore at the onset of the pre-laying period in late October and November; most eggs are laid during the first fortnight of January and chicks fledged in late May and June (Palmer 1962, del Hoyo et al. 1992). The Azorean individual was thus occupying a burrow at the same period as its pre-laying conspecifics in Bermuda. This behaviour, together with its fat reserves, suggests that it was in pre-laying condition as well. In addition, its behaviour and its measurements (within the top 20% of the range) made it likely that it was a male (J. L. Madeiros & D. B. Wingate pers. comm.); however, this still needs confirmation through blood analyses. The scarcity of at-sea observations of Bermuda Petrel (Wingate et al. 1998) makes it impossible to know whether or not the Azores area is part of the normal range of this species.

La Garcilla No 119 Autumn 04 (Spanish) www.seo.org

p23. Obituary to Dr Frank Zino.

Aves Ichnusae Vol 5 (I-II) 2002 (Spanish)

No Seabird content

Aves Ichnusae Vol 6 (I-II) 2003 (Spanish)

No Seabird content

Seevögel Vol 25 No 2 Jul 04 (German)

p4. Compilation of breeding pairs for 2003 from 19 nature reserves looked after by Verein Jordsand.

Dutch Birding Vol 26 No 5 2004b (Dutch / English) www.dutchbirding.nl

p287. Bird counting in Iran in January 2004 – including some Seabirds.

p297. Laughing Gull in the Netherlands and Germany in 2000-02. Summary. In July-August 2000, late October 2001 and early April 2002, an adult Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* was observed at several inland sites in the eastern half of the Netherlands. The same bird was also present in a Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* colony c 1 km across the border in Germany at Zwillbrocker Venn, Nordrhein-Westfalen, during the breeding seasons of 2001 and 2002. Here, the bird was ringed in June 2001 (right leg; tarsus: white colour ring, tibia: aluminium ring). These rings confirmed that the Dutch record of October 2001 concerned the same bird. Moreover, because of the (relative) proximity in both space and time, the Dutch rarities committee (CDNA) considers all records to relate to the same bird, which constitutes the third record for both Germany and the Netherlands. The extreme rarity of the species in mainland Europe and the fact that all observations of this individual were well inland have also been taken into account.

A case can also be made for the hypothesis that most records of Laughing Gulls in the North Sea area can be attributed to a small number of 'wandering' birds. This is supported by the relatively high number of summer records of adult birds in north-western Europe. Now that the Dutch/German bird has been colour-ringed, repeat sightings may clarify this aspect of the species' occurrence in Europe. The first Italian record in January-February 2004 of an adult bird with a metal ring on its right tibia might have concerned the same

Fulmarus glacialis from North Sea regions, found during its pilot stage that many of those birds had plastic fragments in their stomachs.

p15. Overland migration of Kittiwakes in Lynn of Lorne – Stuart Gibson. The unusual behaviour of a group of 60 plus Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*, off the coast of Lismore in March 2003, brought to mind a similar observation involving this pelagic gull, at the same location, some 12 years before.

Scottish Bird Report 2001 No 34 Jul 04

Alauda Vol 72 No 3 2004 (French) www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof/

p201. Breeding biology of Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* at the Sebkhia Zima (Marrakech area, Morocco) Mohamed Radi, Abdeljebbar Qninba, Hamid Rguibi Idrissi and Mohamed Dakki. This study, carried out at the Sebkhia Zima (Morocco), focussed on the breeding ecology of Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* in 1999. The study concentrated on breeding phenology, diet and growth of bill, tarsus, wing and weight of the chicks.

p227. Breeding cycle of Audouin's Gull, *Larus audouinii*, at an artificial nesting site in Corsica (France) – Segolene Travichon. The reproduction of the Audouin's Gull was studied on an artificial nesting site: the naval base of Aspretto (Corsica, France) in 2003. Data were compared with those obtained locally during previous years and those of a reference site: the Ebro Delta colony (Catalogna, Spain). The study highlighted strong interspecific competition with Yellow-legged Gull, *Larus michahellis*, inducing an important intraspecific competition. Indeed, competition for space led Audouin's Gull to concentrate on a jetty, compared to previous years patterns. It induced behaviours never recorded in Corsica such as chicks killing and adoption.

Interspecific competition with a sick Yellow-legged Gull caused chicks death. At least, the accommodation of the species to humans activities of the naval base was confirmed and quantified. This colony was at the time the most important and the most stable in France. Appropriated management since 1993 can explain this result.

The Fulmar No 106 Sep 04 www.abdn.ac.uk/nsbc

p4. Kittiwake success story. News from Shetland this year of another breeding failure for seabirds following on from last year's poor season is depressing news for all concerned. It is therefore heartening to report that the Kittiwakes on the Morecambe gas platform have had one of their best years ever since the first report in 1998. In 1998, 3 chicks were raised from two nests following the discovery of the first ever nest offshore containing one egg on 12 June. In 1999, by 31 July 11 chicks had been counted although the number of nests was not ascertained. No reports came in 2000 or 2001 as Grahame Brown had moved to another installation. On his return in 2002 at least 38 chicks were counted although it was not possible to see every nest. By 2003, the number had risen to 66 chicks at least and this year a minimum of 58 were seen.

Ornithologischer Anzeiger Vol 43 No 2 Aug 04. (German / English) www.og-bayern.de

No Seabird content

The Seabird group Newsletter 97 Jun 04

p6. Over-wintering foraging distribution of adult and juvenile shags – Francis Daunt farad@ceh.ac.uk Concerning the tracking of Shags fitted with RF loggers.

p8. Possible effects of the Sandeel fishing ban as shown in the Gannet – Liz Humphreys,

decommissioned oil platforms hold large populations, whereas peak numbers occur in winter and during migration in the Pirallahy-Alat area to Cape Pirsahat. Those areas that were studied were graded according to three levels of vulnerability or risk, taking into account overall numbers of birds at different seasons, as well as their proximity to sources of pollution. The sharp increase in Caspian Sea oil production represents an enlargement of the already severe risk of oil pollution to waterbirds in the region. It is therefore essential to conduct regular ornithological monitoring in the region.

p146. The first cape Gannet *Sula capensis* in Oman and the Middle East – Hanne Eriksen.

The State Of The UK's Birds 2003.

p14. Results from the Seabird 2000 survey. The Seabird 2000 project aimed to achieve a comprehensive census of all seabird colonies in Britain and Ireland, allowing re-assessment of population status and estimation of trends since the 1985-88 Seabird Colony Register Census.

Dutch Birding Vol 26 No 4 2004 www.dutchbirding.nl

p237. Audouin's Gull at Neeltje Jans in May 2003 – Pim A Wolf. Summary. On 1 May 2003, a second-summer Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* was discovered roosting amongst a group of c 110 large gulls on the storm surge barrier Neeltje fans, Zeeland, the Netherlands. Two hours after its discovery it flew off in southern direction, and much to the dismay of many gathered birders, did not return. On 5-7 May 2003, the same bird was seen at Dungeness, Kent, England. These records constitute the first for both the Netherlands and Britain. Records north of the Mediterranean region are very rare; in western and central Europe records are known from the Czech Republic (1), northern and western France (5), Germany (1+), Macedonia and Switzerland (4).

p240. Melanistic Common Tern Near Deventer in April 2001. Summary. In late April 2001, an unusually dark Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* was photographed among normally coloured Common Terns near Deventer, Overijssel, The Netherlands. Melanism in terns is rare and has only been recorded in Common Tern (including a similar bird in the Netherlands in June 1995) and Forster's Tern *S forsteri*. Melanistic Common terns may be confused with White-checked Tern *S repressa* and Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* but these have a grey rump and uppertail. Eastern Common Terns *S h longipennis/tibetana* are darker in plumage than European birds and show dark reddish-brown (*S h tibetana*) to all-dark bare parts (*S h longipennis*). The possible occurrence of such dark eastern birds in western Europe should not be excluded but may be hard to prove.

London Bird Report 2000 No 65

RAFOS Newsletter No 78 Autumn 2004 www.rafos.org

No Seabird content.

Scottish Bird News N0 73 Sep 04 www.the-soc.org.uk

p12. International research findings show effects of marine litter on seabirds – Martin Heubeck. martinheubeck@btinternet.com, www.savethenorthsea.com/fulmars

A graphic demonstration of the effects of marine litter on North Sea seabirds can be found in the results of an international research project, funded by Save the North Sea. The research, which involves the studying of stomach contents of dead Fulmars

individual (assuming it had lost its colour ring, which happens occasionally in gulls). p301. Common Gull in Groningen more than 33 years old. Summary. Since 1988, a ringed Common Gull *Larus canus* has been regularly observed in and around the city of Groningen, the Netherlands. The first observation was on 26 December 1988, followed by sightings in the winters of 1995/96, 1996/97, 2000/01, 2002/03 and 2003/04. So far, the last observation was on 25 March 2004. The bird, presumably a female, was ringed as a nestling on 24 June 1970 on Amager, Sjælland, Denmark, 33 years, nine months and one day before the last sighting. This recovery constitutes the oldest Common Gull for Europe. Other records of old Common Gulls are summarized and a brief comparison is made with longevity in other European gull species.

World Birdwatch Vol 26 No 2 Jun 04 www.birdlife.org

p8. UK throws albatrosses a lifeline. The UK and three UL Overseas Territories – the Falkland islands, British Antarctic Territory and South Georgia/South Sandwich islands – has become the sixth nation to ratify the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) (see *World Birdwatch* 26(1): 6). The announcement was made by UK Environment Minister, Elliot Morley, during the *Waterbirds around the World* conference, which took place in Edinburgh, UK, this April.

Australasian Seabird Bulletin No 42 Apr 04.

p2. Bird Race Highlights Albatross Plight (Tas).

www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/s1095319.htm

p4. AMSA bid to destroy gannet colony at Margaret Brock Reef – a last minute reprieve!

P5. NPOA Seabirds – Seabird Interactions with Longline Fisheries in the Australian Fishing Zone. www.affa.gov.au

p5. The 'rediscovery' of the extinct New Zealand storm-petrel. www.wrybill-tours.com/idproblems/stormpet.htm

p6. Chick translocation as a method of establishing new surface-nesting seabird colonies: a review. www.doc.govt.nz

p13. Long life, no solution to the Long line problem. In 1958, an Albatross monitoring program began on Bird Island, South Georgia. Forty-three years on many of the individuals ringed in that first study season continue to return to the island, seeking out the same breeding colonies, pairing with the same partners, following their drive to reproduce. Astonishingly we have no idea how long Albatross live for. 43 years is an incredibly long lifespan for any creature, especially birds, and even though many species of Albatross breed only once in every two years such longevity should mean that many offspring can potentially result from one partnership. This is a story about the Bird Island Albatross populations, and a close up view of one individual which demonstrates why long-lines pose such a threat to long lived, slow reproducing seabirds.

British Birds Oct 04 Vol 97 No 10 www.britishbirds.co.uk

p492. Rare breeding birds in the UK 2002 – Gulls and Terns. The number of Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* breeding in England declined, largely because of a sharp decrease at the major Hampshire colony, for which no obvious reason is

known. The minimum number of young reared (30) was, however, the same as in 2001. A considerable increase in Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii*, due largely to the expansion of the colony at Coquet Island in Northumberland by 35%, was excellent news. As with several other species in this report, however, the national total is heavily dependent on one key breeding site, with all the other colonies being small and, consequently, vulnerable. After a particularly good year in 2001, numbers of Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* declined somewhat, but still remain 15% higher than in 1997, the first year in which the Panel collected breeding data.

p537. Audouin's Gull: new to Britain – David Walker. Abstract. A second-summer Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* was found at Dungeness, Kent, on 5th May 2003. It lingered in the area for the remainder of the day, commuting between the shore and nearby pools on the RSPB reserve. It was present again the following day, enabling several hundred observers to see it, and was also seen at roost on 7th May. This is the first record for Britain, and is almost certainly the same individual as that recorded in The Netherlands on 1st May 2003.

British Birds Jun 04 Vol 97 No 6 www.britishbirds.co.uk

p264. 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 17th 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 Birds Jul 04 Vol 97 No 7 www.britishbirds.co.uk

p323. Seabird distribution and oceanic upwellings off Northwest Africa – Russell B. Wynn and Britta Knefelkamp. Abstract. Large numbers of seabirds from northern Europe, including the UK, winter in a major zone of upwelling off northwest Africa. This area also attracts seabirds on migration to and from wintering areas farther south, as well as immature seabirds which are too young to breed. In spring 2003, the research ship RV Meteor visited this upwelling zone off Mauritania. The factors affecting seabird distribution in the region were assessed by comparing observational data on seabirds with a unique combination of other data from the study area. Fish, zooplankton and phytoplankton are concentrated along the shelf edge and upper slope where relatively cool, nutrient-rich, upwelled waters are brought to the surface, and the highest concentrations of seabirds are also found here. Although upwelling, and the associated concentration of food, appears to be the key control on seabird distribution, this pattern is complicated by human fishing activities, which are also concentrated around the shelf edge.

p348. English names for Western Palearctic birds – Dr Bill Bourne.

British Birds Sep 04 Vol 97 No 9 www.britishbirds.co.uk

p448. Little Gulls at sea off Yorkshire in autumn 2003 – Clive Hartley. Abstract. During

autumn 2003, record numbers of Little Gulls *Larus minutes* were present on the Yorkshire coast. This paper estimates the extent of this gathering and describes the birds' behaviour, based on observations from both sea and land. The context of these sightings, with respect to previous Yorkshire records, is discussed. This analysis suggests that the western North Sea is becoming an increasingly important 'stop over' area for adult and second-year Little Gulls in late summer and autumn, when a significant proportion of the Baltic breeding population can be found in the North Sea basin, undergoing their complete post-breeding moult before dispersing to wintering grounds.

p471. Manx Shearwaters hanging themselves when scaling vertical walls – James Brown.

Sandgrouse Vol 26(2) 2004 www.osme.org

p87. A checklist of bird species held in seven important collections in Tehran. Details are presented of the holdings (in species) of seven ornithological collections in Tehran province, Iran. Specimens relating to a total of 238 species known from Iran are held by these institutions, with three holding more than 100 species and arguably the most important, the Natural History and Wildlife Museum of Iran, Dar-Abad Collection, possessing specimens of more than 100 species.

p94. The Syrian Wetland Expedition 2004: a summary – David Murdoch, Ian Andrews and Remco Hofland. During January-February 2004 three teams of observers conducted a survey of Syrian wetlands, many of which had never before been systematically counted. The survey emphasised the importance of several sites, notably Sabkhat al-Jabbul and Lake Tishreen, and revealed internationally significant wintering populations of several species, including Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, and possibly Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* and Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*. A number of significant range extensions were made, notably for Iraq Babbler *Turdoides altirostris*, and seven species previously unrecorded from Syria were seen. No Slender-billed Curlews *Numenius tenuirostris* were found, despite specific searches, but there were three sightings of the Critically Endangered Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria*. Regular censuses of the key sites identified would be valuable. A comprehensive survey of Sabkhat al-Jabbul is urgently required as it faces the threat of industrial development.

p112. An ornithological study of the Azerbaijani Caspian coast, islands and regions of oil production – Elchin Sultanov. In order to assess the current importance to waterbirds of coastal areas of Azerbaijan, more than 200 field work days were conducted along the Caspian shore, and on larger lakes and lagoons close to that coast, in all months except August, in the period 1993-2000, the greatest effort (including helicopter counts) being made in 1995-1997. Helicopter counts are most efficient for short-time censuses to estimate total site populations. Overall, bird populations fluctuated at the study sites from a low of 70,000 (April) to a high of 700,000 (winter). Offshore, Caspian waterbird populations reach their maximum in December-January. Outside that period, around 50% of the maximum is present in November and February; in March-April and September-October only 10-30% of the maximum may be present. In May-June, the proportion is 30-40%. Year-round, the Kyzylgach State Reserve, the Kura Delta, Lake Agzybir, the Yashma Islands and the Shakhdili-Tava area hold the highest numbers of birds, all of them being important wintering and breeding sites. During the breeding season (April-July), the Tava Islands and