

Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



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OCTOBER 2006

THE SIXTIETH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will take place on Friday 1 December at 1400 in Conference Room G2, HMS EXCELLENT, PORTSMOUTH. On completion of the AGM our guest speaker Dr Mike Pienkowski will talk about his work as the Chairman of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) www.ukotcf.org. On completion light refreshments will be provided. The RNBWS and other Service Ornithological Societies work in close collaboration with UKOTCF. Particularly the Royal Navy in the British Indian Ocean Territory – Diego Garcia, and the Army and in Ascension Island. All interested personnel are welcome to attend – For security, names of attendees should be forwarded to the Fleet Charities Officer (Gen Sec RNBWS), MP1.1 West Battery, Whale Island PO2 8DX – frank.ward860@mod.uk or Home e-mail francisward@btopenworld.com by 28 Nov 06.

NEW CHAIRMAN

At the July meeting of the Executive Committee our outgoing Chairman Capt Mike Barritt was presented with a silver wine coaster – suitably engraved, to mark his 17 years of devoted service



Our President VAdm Sir David Dobson making the presentation to our outgoing Chairman Capt Mike Barritt

And your illustrious Committee!



David Dobson, Mark Cutts, Chris Patrick, Steve Copsey, Mike Barritt, Pete Carr, Frank ward and Gary Lewis

To ensure that we continue to have significant Service representation Cdre Martin Alabaster the current Assistant Chief of Staff (Engineering) has kindly agreed to take on the mantle. Before joining Fleet Staff in may 05 he served for 3 years in the Defence Procurement Agency as the Procurement Development Group Leader and as the MoD's head of Profession for Project Management.

Martin is married to Moira, a professional violinist, and they live in Bradford-On-Avon with their two young children.



You will notice that the title of the Secretary has changed from that of Honorary to General. This is to indicate that the Secretary has taken on all the general day to day running of the Society on behalf of the Members, and can represent the chairman when required.

RNBWS MAKES ITS MARK

The RNBWS ongoing collaboration with the UKOTCF and RSPB has led to our involvement in the BirdLife International Stamp issue series featuring overseas territories. The Committee assisted with the selection of species and are honoured with the inclusion of our Logo on the Sheetlet. 100 FDCs have been ordered, these will be signed by our President and sold for a small profit; further details will be published on the website when the FDCs arrive.



2007 FIELD TRIPS AND EXPEDITIONS

The 2007 Field trips have yet to be finalised but the outline programme is:

February 4th 0900 (Sunday) Keyhaven and Pennington Marshes

A stroll along the sea wall that runs adjacent to the extensive wetlands. A large number of winter wader and wildfowl species are likely to be seen and there is the possibility of Merlin and Peregrine.

Meet at 'The Gun' public house beside Keyhaven Quay at SZ307915.

April 14th to 15th (Weekend) Dungeness

An opportunity to sight some early summer migrants and a good location for a session of sea watching. Last year Bittern, Slavonian Grebe, Smew and Scaup sighted on the various small water bodies in and around the RSPB Reserve.

Accommodation will be organised for those attending. Early confirmation of attendance required.

Spring (Weekend) Portland

A weekend of birding the peninsula and nearby reserves for seabirds and any reported rarities.

Accommodation will be organised for those attending at the Observatory. Early confirmation of attendance required.

May 18th to 20th (Weekend) Wales

The weekend will incorporate several locations in and around Aberystwyth in mid-Wales including Ynys-Hyr RSPB, Nant Yr Arain and Nant Yr Moch Reservoir. Target birds include Wood Warbler, Pied Flycatcher, Redstart, Red Kite, Chough, Dipper, Manx Shearwater, Whinchat, Wheatear and Ring Ouzel.

An information pack will be provided to all interested parties containing accommodation details and an itinerary. Partners welcome.

September 16th 0900 (Sunday) Thorney Island

A circular walk around the coastal path to view the waders and wildfowl of Chichester Harbour. Daily sightings of Red-backed Shrike and Osprey in September 2006. Meet at the shore car park in Prinsted at SU766051.

September Gibraltar Expedition

A trip to 'the rock' to participate in both raptor / stork migration watching and ringing activities at the Observatory.

Details (including costs) to be promulgated when known.

October 20th to 21st 0900 (Weekend) Portland

A weekend of birding the peninsula and nearby reserves for late migrants, seabirds and any reported rarities.

Accommodation will be organised for those attending at the Observatory. Early confirmation of attendance required.

November – Expedition to Diego Garcia

To continue and expand on work undertaken during previous visits. Details will be promulgated when known

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

A prize of £35 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 glewis15@netbreeze.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 30 June.

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.

RNBWS WEB SITE

The Website continues to be developed by the Webmaster (Gen Sec), any ideas to make it better or contributions would be welcome.

RNBWS BULLETIN

Members are encouraged to contribute to the Bulletin, which at the moment is populated with information provided solely by the Gen Sec. Items of any relevance to members can be included and need not be as technical as that which goes to the Sea Swallow.

SEA BIRD DATABASE

Work continues with getting the Database established on our website. At the July meeting of the executive meeting funds were agreed to get this underway with the assistance of 2Fish Productions Ltd.

REVIEW OF JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS

Alauda V74 (2) 2006 (French) www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof/ contents listing at www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof/accueil.htm

EFFECTIFS ET BIOLOGIE DE LA REPRODUCTION DU GOËLAND LEUCOPHÉE

Larus michahellis DANS LA RÉGION DE BÉJAÏA (ALGÉRIE)

Riadh MOULAI¹, Nicolas SADOUL² et Salahedine DOUMANDJI³

Population size and breeding biology of Yellow-legged Gull, *Larus michahellis* in Béjaïa area (Algeria). There have been no studies or surveys of breeding Yellow-legged Gull in Algeria since 1978. The present study, which took place in the area of Béjaïa, has shown that the population has increased by 8% each year, and that breeding numbers have increased seven fold. Several new breeding sites have been discovered, notably the first breeding in an urban area for the country. These results highlight the need of a new national the survey for the species. Several breeding parameters have been particularly studied in four main colonies: inter-nest distance, date of first laying, clutch size and breeding success. In addition of recording the earliest laying known in western Mediterranean for the species, the study has identified an inter-colony variability of breeding success in relation to the distance of human-induced food resources, such as refuse dumps and fishing harbour, and to human disturbances and vandalism. However, the chick productivity noted in the region, and the probable resulting recruitment, fit well the population increase since 1978.

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³ *Département de Zoologie Agricole et Forestière, Institut National Agronomique, El Harrach, 16200 Alger, Algérie.*

PREMIÈRES DONNÉES ISSUES DU BAGUAGE DE POUSSINS DE GUIFETTE

MOUSTAC *Chlidonias hybridus* EN BRENNE

Franck LATRAUBE², Stéphane MORTREUX¹ & Vincent BRETAGNOLLE¹

Early results from ringing Whiskered Tern chicks in the Brenne. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* is a poorly known migratory species. Between year variations in the number of breeding pairs in France seem to be linked to exchanges with other European breeding grounds. The present paper analyses two sets of ringing data. In Brenne, since 2002, over 500 adults have been marked through a colour-ringing scheme. This program aims to describe post breeding dispersal, migration and to quantify nest site fidelity. Analysis of early results indicates a level of nest site fidelity. Immatures are capable of returning to breed in their first year with and adult type plumage. In France, before this scheme, 544 chick had been marked using National natural history museum aluminium rings. Recoveries have enabled to identify to wintering quarters of the species in Western Africa mainly in Ghana and Senegal. The oldest known bird was 13 years old but colour ringing will certainly lead to a better knowledge of the species survival rates.

¹Centre d'Études Biologique de Chizé, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Carrefour de la Canauderie F-79360 Villiers-en-Bois.

²Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études, laboratoire de Biogéographie des Vertébrés, Université de Montpellier 11, Ptoce Eugène Bataillon, F-34095 Montpellier cedex 05.

Alauda V74 (3) 2006 (French)

AOS Newsletter 28 Jun 06 <http://armyos.tripod.com/>

ARDEOLA V53(1) Jun 06 (Spanish) <http://www.ardeola.org/index?lang=EN>

Subcolony Characteristics And Breeding Performance In The Chinstrap Penguin
Pygoscelis Antarctica

Liesbeth de Neve, Juan A fargallo, Vincente Polo, José Martín and Manuel Soler

SUMMARY. Subcolony characteristics and breeding performance in the chinstrap penguin *Pygoscelis antarctica*

Aims: Subcolonies of penguins differ markedly in physical characteristic and in breeding success. Subcolony size is the best studied subcolony characteristic and has been suggested to be an important factor explaining the variation in reproductive success. Small subcolonies generally have lower breeding success, probably because they suffer from worse environmental conditions. It is likely that lower quality individuals also occupy smaller subcolonies, which in turn affects breeding success. However, results are not always consistent, and other subcolony characteristics may mediate breeding success. In the present study, the relationship is investigated between physical subcolony characteristic (slope, isolation and size) and several variables indicative of individual quality and breeding success in the Chinstrap penguin *Pygoscelis antarctica*.

Location: The study was performed in the Vapour Col chinstrap penguin colony on Deception Island (South Shetlands Archipelago, 63°00' S, 60°40' W) during the austral 2002-03 breeding season.

Methods: The slope, the degree of isolation and the size (number of nests) of 22 randomly selected subcolonies were measured. Variables indicating individual quality were considered in 10 nests of each subcolony: parental body size (bill length, bill depth, flipper length), nest size and egg size. and variables indicating breeding success: hatching date and hatching success.

Results: Both isolated and sloped subcolonies were smaller in size, and were occupied by male parent with shorter bills and less bill depth respectively. Isolated subcolonies also showed a delayed hatching date and lower hatching success and females of more sloped subcolonies laid smaller eggs. Nest size was larger in isolated subcolonies and smaller in sloped subcolonies.

Conclusions: This study indicates that physical characteristics of sub colonies, such as the degree of isolation and slope, rather than just size, affect breeding success of chinstrap penguins. It is also suggested that nest size could be an indicator of individual quality only if it is compared within the same subcolony or if the effect of subcolony is taking into account.

Atlantic Seabirds V7 (2)

(2005) <http://www.zeevogelgroep.nl/AScontents/AScontents.html>

Camphuysen, C.J. 2006. Assessing age and breeding origin of wrecked Little Auks *Alle alle* : the use of biometrics and a variable underwing pattern (49-70)

Biometrics and plumage characteristics of Little Auks *Alle alle* were evaluated to assess possibilities for the external ageing of individual birds. Age is important when biometrical data are used to assess the subspecific identity or probable breeding origin of the birds. Standard biometrics included bill length (feathers to tip), distance from nostril to tip, bill depth, head, wing (maximum flattened chord), and tarsus length, and body mass. The presence or absence of white or white-tipped feathers was checked in seven feather groups of the (grey) underwing. Bill depth and wing length were the most useful measurements to separate adult and juvenile Little Auks (when combined, classification accuracy 83%). In combination with body mass (only emaciated birds were used), the age was assigned correctly in 88% of the examined birds. White or white-tipped feathers in the lesser primary coverts (LPC) occurred more frequently in juveniles than in adults, while the reverse was true for the greater secondary coverts (GPC). Only 74% of the Little Auks were properly aged on the basis of a combination of LPC and GPC pigmentation. With body mass being a ‘difficult’ measurement (an assessment of physical condition is required and incomplete corpses cannot be weighed), the combination of bill depth, wing length and white in LPC and GPC was evaluated (87% correctly assigned). A review of biometrics collected in breeding areas indicated that birds wrecked in The Netherlands were of the subspecies *A. alle alle*, with an overall size similar to for example birds of Bjørnøya (Bear Island) in the Barents Sea. It is recommended to use bill depth and wing length for ageing in combination with pigmentation patterns of LPC and GPC in future studies of wrecked birds. For comparisons with breeding populations, bill length and wing length are the most widely available and therefore useful measurements.

Bried J. & Bolton M. 2005. An initial estimate of age at first return and breeding in Madeiran Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma castro* (71-74)

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro* is classified as “Rare” in Europe; however, its population dynamics and its demographic parameters remain unknown. Here, we provide the first estimates of the age at first return to the colony and age at first breeding in this species, using our data from a five-year demographic study conducted in the Azores (subtropical northern Atlantic). On average, Madeiran Storm-petrels return to their birth colony during their third year. They can breed when two years old, and the reproductive performances of first-time breeders are similar to those of experienced individuals.

Sanders J.G. & Harris M.P. 2005. The Alderney Northern Gannetries – photographic counts of Ortac and Les Etacs, Channel Islands in 2005 (75-82)

Aerial surveys of Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* colonies on Ortac and Les Etacs, Channel Islands, in July 2005, found 2547 and 4862 Apparently Occupied Sites respectively. The total population increased at an average rate of 3.3% per annum over the last 55 years. There may now only be limited room for expansion on Ortac where the rate of increase has declined substantially in recent years.

Hjernquist M.B., Hjernquist, M., Hjernquist B. & Thuman Hjernquist, K.A. 2005. Common Guillemots *Uria aalge* differentiate their niche to coexist with colonizing Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo*. (83-89)

Colonization of new species into an established community generally results in interspecific competition over resources between the colonist and existing members of the community. Interspecific competition has been suggested to influence extinction rates, population dynamics, community structure, niche differentiation and evolution. In this study, we observe possible interspecific competition over breeding sites resulting in niche differentiation and coexistence of Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* and Common Guillemots *Uria aalge* in a seabird cliff community. In Sweden, Great Cormorants have naturally increased and expanded during the last two decades. Here, we show that most Common Guillemots previously bred on cliff ledges with high roof heights before the study-island was colonized by Great Cormorants, but are now mainly found breeding on cliff ledges with lower roof heights. A temporary decline in the Common Guillemot population coincided with the colonization event and we discuss the potential for this decline to be caused by increased nest-site competition combined with high nest-site fidelity.

Australasian Seabird Bulletin Number 45/46 May 2006

New Zealand Storm Petrel *Oceanites maorianus* – IN THE HAND
www.nzseabirds.com

Seabirds in hot water. Great Barrier Reef-dwelling seabirds are in hot water because of a dramatic rise in sea temperatures along the Queensland coast, Australia, a new study has found.

Little Penguin Takes deepest Dive www.penguins.org.au

Victorian Tern band recoveries 2004/2005

Bird Study V53 (2) Jul 06 <http://www.bto.org/membership/birdstudy.htm>

Effects of individual life-history traits and weather on reproductive output of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* breeding in the Wadden Sea, 1991-97
STEFA THYE * and PETER H. BECKER

Insitut fuer Vogelforschung 'Vogelwarte Helgoland', An der Vogelwarte 21, 26386 Wilhelmshaven, Germany.

Capsule Annual breeding success was relatively constant and is shown to be related to clutch size and growth rate and to be positively affected by rain during egg-laying and advanced chick-rearing phase.

Aims To provide the first long-term data on breeding success of Black-headed Gulls in the Wadden Sea, to analyse its intrinsic and environmental co-variables, and to re-assess the significance of the severe winter 1995/96 on reproduction.

Methods In a relatively small colony at the Wadden Sea coast, clutches were selected randomly and enclosed to determine clutch size, egg biometrics, hatching and breeding success, and chick development in 1991 and from 1994 to 1997. Weather data (temperature, rain, wind) were related to life-history traits (clutch size, egg volume, chick development) and reproductive success.

Results Mean annual breeding success was 0.7 Fledglings per pair. In 1996, breeding success tended to be lower and chick growth rate was significantly lower. Hatching success was lower in small clutches, chick mortality increased with decreasing chick growth rate. Rain during the egg-laying phase increased clutch size and decreased clutch predation. Rain during the early post-natal phase impaired chick growth. Rain during the phase of linear growth affected chick growth and fledging success positively and brood predation negatively.

Conclusions Breeding success of Black-headed Gulls breeding in the Wadden Sea is relatively constant between years, probably due to the use of terrestrial and marine feeding habitats. Rain may increase the availability of intertidal and terrestrial prey and thus may affect time budgets and food provisioning of parents positively. Lower breeding success in 1996 might have been caused by a relatively dry breeding season and possibly by the preceding severe winter.

Bird Study V53 (3) Nov 06

Dramatic changes in the return date of Guillemots *Uria aalge* to colonies in Shetland, 1962-2005

MICHAEL P. HARRIS¹*, MARTIN HEULBECK², DERYK N. SHAW³ and DAVID OKILL⁴

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Capsule Changes in return date coincided with marked changes in population size that probably resulted in fluctuating competition for nest-sites.

Aims To document the changes in return dates over a 44 year period and to identify the factors associated with these changes.

Methods We compared changes in return date at Shetland Colonies with those for the Isle of May, southeast Scotland, and with the available information on population size, the abundance of some fish species eaten by Common Guillemots and large-scale changes in the oceanography and climate of the eastern Atlantic as reflected by the winter index of the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO).

Results Common Guillemots normally return to colonies in Shetland in late winter. However, during the 1960s return dates became gradually earlier with birds present from early October. Autumn return remained the norm for about ten years after which return dates gradually reverted back to late winter. In contrast, Common Guillemots on the Isle of May, 400 km south of Shetland showed no marked shift, returning in October each year. There was a strong negative correlation between date of return of Shetland birds and population size, whereas on the Isle of May birds came back earlier when there was a large positive winter NAO index. There was no convincing evidence that changes in wintering

areas or fish abundance influenced when birds returned to the colonies, although the fish data may not have been collected on the correct spatial scale.

Conclusion Competition for high quality nest-sites is the most likely reason for Common Guillemots returning to the colonies during the autumn and winter.

British Birds V99 (1) Jan 06 <http://www.britishbirds.co.uk/index.htm>

Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom

Helen Baker, David A Stroud, Nicholas J Aebischer, Peter A Cranswick Richard D Gregory, Claire A McSorley, David G Noble and, Mark M Rehfisch

ABSTRACT. In 1997, the Avian Population Estimates Panel (APEP) published its first collation of British and UK bird population estimates (Stone et al. 1997). This paper provides the first review of those estimates, drawing on information available prior to 2002 for most species. Several major surveys have reported estimates in the intervening period, including for breeding seabirds, wintering gulls, and wintering waterbirds. A new method of deriving estimates for many common species has been adopted, which relies on adjusting former estimates according to published trends. In recognition of the value of a single source of definitive population estimates, the estimates presented in this paper will be the primary reference for statutory conservation purposes until publication of the next review.

Changes to the British Birds list of birds of the Western Palearctic

The policy of *British Birds* regarding the implementation of taxonomic changes has been to adopt all new recommendations made by the BOURC's Taxonomic Sub-committee (TSC). For taxa that are outside the remit of the TSC, *British Birds* usually adopts taxonomic recommendations made in the reports of the Association of European Rarities Committees (AERC). During 2005, the TSC proposed a series of recommendations, which *British Birds* will embrace from 1st January 2006. These recommendations include some changes at the species level, brought about by taxonomic splits (listed in Appendix I), and changes to generic and scientific names (listed in Appendix 2). Further details surrounding the justification and background to these decisions can be found in *Ibis* 147:

821-826, or online at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1474-919X.2005.00483.x>

Introduced at the same time were a number of recommendations regarding species currently held in Category C of the British List, i.e. species that, although introduced, now derive from the resulting self-sustaining populations. An explanation of these changes can be found in *Ibis* 147: 803-820, or online at

<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1474-919X.2005.00470.x>

British Birds maintains a list of the birds recorded within the boundaries of the Western Palearctic, which can be downloaded from the *BB* website

(<http://www.britishbirds.co.uk/bblist.htm>); this list is now fully updated to take account of all the latest changes proposed by the BOU.

Appendix I. Changes to the existing list: new names resulting from taxonomic splits.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* is now treated as two separate species: Greater Canada Goose *B. canadensis* (polytypic, with races *canadensis*, *fulva*, *interior*, *maxima*, *moffitti*, *occidentalis* and *parvipes*) and Lesser Canada Goose *B. hutchinsii* (polytypic, with races

hutchinsii, *leucopareia*, *minima* and *taverneri*).

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* is now treated as two separate species: Common Scoter *M. nigra* (monotypic) and Black Scoter *M. americana* (monotypic).

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca* is now treated as two separate species: Velvet Scoter *M. fusca* (monotypic) and White-winged Scoter *M. deglandi* (polytypic, with subspecies *deglandi* and *stejnegen*).

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* - North Atlantic taxa are now treated as specifically distinct from Little Shearwaters of the southern hemisphere. The newly recognised species is North Atlantic Little Shearwater *P. baroli* (polytypic, with subspecies *baroli* and *boydi*).

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* is now treated as three separate species: Herring Gull *L. argentatus* (polytypic, including the races *argentatus*, *argentous* and, for the time being at least, *smithsonianus* and *cachinnans*), Yellow-legged Gull *L. michahellis* (polytypic, including the races *michahellis* and *atlantis*) and Armenian Gull *L. armenicus* (monotypic). Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* is now treated as two separate species: Firecrest *R. ignicapilla* (polytypic, with subspecies *ignicapilla* and *balearicus*) and Madeira Firecrest *R. madeirensis* (monotypic).

Appendix 2. Changes to the existing list: new generic or scientific names proposed by the BOU.

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata* (formerly *Hieraaetus pennatus*)

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata* (formerly *Hieraaetus fasciatus*)

Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalbertii* (formerly *A. adalbertii*)

Aleutian Tern *Onychoprion aleutica* (formerly *Sterna aleutica*)

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscata* (formerly *Sterna fuscata*)

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* (formerly *Sterna anaethetus*)

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* (formerly *Sterna albifrons*)

Saunders's Tern *Sternula saundersi* (formerly *Sterna saundersi*)

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (formerly *Sterna nilotica*)

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (formerly *Sterna caspia*)

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* (formerly *Hirundo daurica*)

Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* (formerly *Hirundo pyrrhonota*)

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* now a monotypic species (formerly *A. novaeseelandiae*, polytypic)

Azure Tit *Cyanistes cyanus* (formerly *Parus cyanus*)

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* (formerly *Parus caeruleus*)

Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus* (formerly *Parus cristatus*)

Coal Tit *Periparus ater* (formerly *Parus ater*)

Sombre Tit *Poecile lugubris* (formerly *Parus lugubris*)

Willow Tit *Poecile montana* (formerly *Parus montanus*)

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris* (formerly *Parus palustris*)

Siberian Tit *Poecile cinctus* (formerly *Parus cinctus*)

British Birds V99 (11) Nov 06

Important Bird Areas of the United Arab Emirates

Simon Aspinall and Peter Hellyer

ABSTRACT This paper reviews the status of 20 important Bird Areas in the UAE which were first defined in the early 1990s. Ornithologically, the country is notable for important populations of seabirds, waterbirds and a number of restricted-range landbird species. The IBA programme was an important step forward in drawing attention to key sites, but progress in safeguarding these core areas has been patchy. Given the speed of development in many parts of the UAE, the need to identify conservation priorities is now vital.

British Birds V99 (2) Feb 06

Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2003 - Part I: American Widgeon to Wryneck

Peter A Fraser and Michael J Rogers

ABSTRACT This report documents the changing fortunes of those scarce migrants recorded in Britain in 2003. Favourable conditions brought record numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers *Calidris melanotos* and the largest influx of Yellow-browed *Phylloscopus inornatus* and Pallas's Leaf Warblers *Ph. Proregulus* yet reported. Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* continued to enjoy a series of good years, the years spanning 2001-03 having produced the three highest annual totals. Impressive arrivals of Nearctic waterfowl, including Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* and Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*, suggest that common factors are influencing their appearances here, while, conversely, Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* experienced one of its poorer years. Although 2003 was a good year for Oortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* and Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, with their third- and fourth-highest totals respectively, many species originating from northern and eastern Europe reached Britain in disappointingly low numbers, with totals for Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* and Little Bunting *E. pusilla* all below average. Arrivals from southern Europe were also disappointing, and 2003 was the worst year on record for Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*. Totals of the scarcer herons, including Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* and Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, were well below average, and numbers of Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* and Melodious Warbler *Hippolais Polyglotta* are well below those occurring in recent years. Although the factors influencing the arrival of these scarcer migrants in Britain are uncertain, it is only by the long-term monitoring of the scarcer migrants, where the identification is assessed at the local or county level and established by records panels, that possible changes in status and populations can be determined.

Effects of climate change on North Atlantic Seabirds

Several recent papers show that increasing sea surface temperatures SST in the North Atlantic are influencing seabird demography. Frederiksen *et al.* (2004) found that survival rates and productivity of Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* in southeast Scotland were negatively related to SST, and also that the presence of industrial fisheries reduced survival and productivity further. Grosbois & Thompson (2005) found that the overwinter survival rates

of adult Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* breeding in Orkney were negatively related to SST, complementing their earlier work that found similar trends in productivity. Harris *et al.* (2005) found that Puffin *Fratercula arctica* survival rates at three colonies in the UK were negatively related to SST. In contrast, studies at Hørnoy, in Norway, reveal that survival of Kittiwakes and four species of auks *increased* with SST, while survival (Harris *et al.* 2005) and productivity (Durant *et al.* 2003) of Puffins at Røst in Norway increased with SST. These contrasting observations can be explained by differences in seabird diet between the UK and Norway. In the UK, seabirds feed on sandeels *Ammodytes*, which are adversely affected by increased sea temperatures, whereas seabirds in Norway feed predominantly on juvenile herring *Clupea*, which benefit from increased sea temperatures. These studies show that the effects of climate on seabirds are primarily indirect, via the food chain, and that these effects can vary regionally depending on the key prey species and how these respond to climate variation. Furthermore, Gaston *et al.* (2005) found that productivity of Brünnich's Guillemots *Uria lomvia* in the Canadian Arctic was negatively affected by increasing temperatures in the south of their range but positively related in the north of their range. This was due to ice cover becoming insufficient to support their Arctic Cod *Boreogadus saida* prey in the south of the range, whereas the earlier break-up of ice permitted earlier and more successful breeding in the north. The effects of climate change on seabirds can thus vary with latitude, independently of prey species targeted.

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News and Comments

Seabirds hammered in Scotland.

And seabirds hammered in Greenland.

Puffins face new threat.

British Birds V99 (3) Mar 06

Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2003

Part 2: Short-toed lark to Little Bunting

Peter A Fraser and Michael J Rogers.

Seabirds and Pipefish

In 2004 and 2005 observers noticed an increase in the number of Pipefish *Syngnathidae*

being taken by seabirds. Prof. Mike Harris, Centre of Ecology & Hydrology, Hill of Brathens, Banchory AB31 4BW. mph@ceh.ac.uk would welcome reports of sightings.

Notes

Common Tern incubating an empty nest

British Birds V99 (4) Apr 06

Notes

The 1885 Greenland breeding record of Ross's Gull

British Birds V99 (5) May 06

Laying a big egg on a little ledge: does it help a female Common Guillemot if Dad's there?

Michael P Harris and Sarah Wanless

ABSTRACT Female Common Guillemots *Uria aalge* face the challenge of laying a large egg on a cliff ledge. Often surrounded by tetchy neighbours. We documented the laying of 754 eggs, during 82% of which the male was present. The presence of the male had no effect on either the short-term survival of the egg or the chances of a chick successfully leaving the colony. Male attendance at laying may be largely fortuitous, resulting from the long periods that he is present for other purposes.

British Birds V99 (8) Aug 06

Fea's Petrel off Scilly: new to Britain

Ashley Fisher and Bob Flood

ABSTRACT A Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma feae* was seen from a boat approximately 10Km south of Scilly on 8th July 2001. Although there had been several previous sightings of Fea's / Zino's Petrels *P. feae* / *Madeira* in British waters, this sighting constitutes the first accepted record of Fea's Petrel for Britain. The total duration of the event lasted about 12 minutes, during which time the Fea's Petrel flew past the boat on four or five occasions at a distance of no more than 20m. Close views enabled detailed scrutiny of many key structural and plumage features, and these field observations were supported by a high quality video sequence. The elimination of Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis* and Zino's Petrel is discussed.

Fea's Petrel in the Western Approaches

James S Lees

ABSTRACT A Fea's Petrel gave prolonged views to several hundred birders from the MV *Scillonian III* on an annual pelagic trip in August 2001. This well-documented record was for a short time the first accepted record of this species in Britain. However an individual preceding it by 35 days was subsequently accepted as the first British record. The following article describes the circumstances surrounding this exciting find and explains the features which allowed the bird to be identified as a Fea's Petrel.

From the Rarities Committee's files:

Do we know what British 'soft-plumaged petrels' are?

Jimmy Steele

ABSTRACT Sightings of ' soft-plum aged petrels' *Pterodroma mollis/madeira/feae* in British waters have increased significantly in the last 20 years, and there has been a growing realisation that all the British birds show a suite of characters associated with Fea's Petrel *P. feae*. Fea's Petrel has recently been accepted onto the British List, and there are now three accepted records for Britain, all seen in the Southwest Approaches, in July 200 I ,August 200 I and September 2004 (see pp. 394-403). The steady accumulation of records

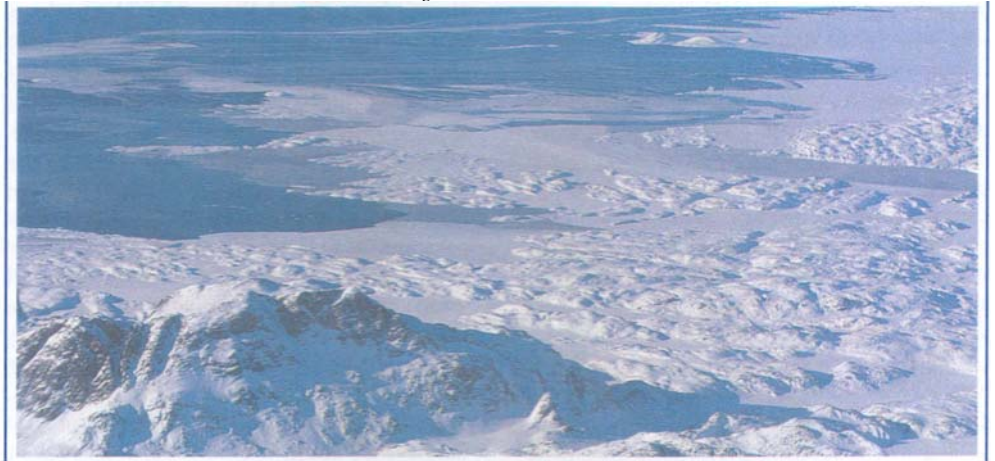
has focused attention on the criteria necessary to assess claims of this species.

This paper summarises the current situation, reviews the identification of Fea's Petrel in comparison with Zino's *P. madeira* and Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis*, and attempts to establish those characters which are required for records to be accepted, either at the species level or as being of the 'soft-plumaged petrel' complex.

British Birds V99 Jun 06

The importance of Southwest Greenland for wintering seabirds

David Boertmann, Anders Mosbech and Flemming Ravn Merkel



The coast south of Sisimiut, West Greenland, at 67 °N, in mid March 1999, a time of year when the ice cover usually is most extensive. Note that although the land is completely covered with snow, the waters are practically free of ice, except for the innermost bays and inlets, where new ice had formed not long before this photo was taken. David Boertmann

ABSTRACT The coastal and offshore waters of Southwest Greenland are internationally important winter quarters for seabirds. Estimates of the total number of wintering seabirds are in the region of 3.5-5.5 million individuals (not including an unknown but probably extremely large number of Little Auks *Alle alle*). These seabirds originate mainly from Arctic Canada, Greenland and Svalbard, but also, to a lesser extent, from Alaska, Iceland, mainland Norway and Russia. The most numerous species are Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*, King Eider *S. spectabilis*, Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* and Little Auk.

Some key areas have been designated as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) by BirdLife International, and recent data indicate that more areas qualify as IBAs. The most immediate threat to the seabirds in Southwest Greenland is hunting, and current harvest levels of the Greenland breeding populations of Brünnich's Guillemot and Common Eider are considered unsustainable. Bird hunting is prohibited in spring and summer; however, there are no sanctuary areas in Southwest Greenland, and a degree of spatial regulation of winter hunting is urgently required.

British Birds V99 (9) Sep 06

American Black tern at Weston-super-Mare: new to Britain

R M Andrews, R J Higgins and J P Martin

ABSTRACT A juvenile Black tern *Chidonias niger* of the American race *surinamensis* was found at Weston-super-Mare Water Treatment Works on 3 October 1999, where it remained until 11 October. This represents the first record of this distinctive form in Britain. The identification of *surinamensis* is discussed in the context of separation from the nominate race of Black Tern.

DUTCH BIRDING V28 (3) 2006 (Dutch) www.dutchbirding.nl

Moult and plumage variation in immature Lesser Black-backed Gulls in the Netherlands

Rik Winters

Identification of 'large white-headed gulls' in general, and of 'lesser black-backed gulls' in particular, has long been the subject of debate. Extensive variation in plumage and structure within and between populations and in patterns of moult and ageing, has resulted in slow advances in field identification of this group of taxa. Jonsson (1998) described the identification of 'Baltic Gull' *Larus fuscus fuscus* (hereafter *fuscus*) in a western European context, Gruber (1999) discussed the identification of juvenile - and to a lesser extent older immature - Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Rauste (1999) dealt with 'Baltic Gull' and 'Tundra Gull' (Heuglin's Gull) *L heuglini* (hereafter *heuglini*) from a Finnish perspective. The emphasis in these papers is on describing the variation and identification of the north-eastern taxa *fuscus* and *heuglini*. Generally, variation in (western) Lesser Black-backed Gull was believed to be rather well known; eg, as emphasized by the most recent publication by Olsen & Larsson (2004). The general picture was that the taxa *L f graellsii* (hereafter *graellsii*) and *L f intermedius* (hereafter *intermedius*) differ only slightly in upperpart coloration as adults, while *fuscus* is rather distinct at all ages, except perhaps for juveniles. From recent observations, many of them made in the Netherlands, it has become clear that much of the plumage variation observed does not fit in with the generally accepted picture and that especially continental western European birds deviate strongly from what has been described so far. Some of these and similar findings have been dealt with or mentioned elsewhere (Adriaens 2002, AERC TAC 2003, Gibbins 2005, Muusse et al 2005). Here, some aspects of the moult and plumage variation of Lesser Black-backed Gulls are reviewed in the light of these observations in order to evaluate their use as an identification feature. Subsequently the identifiability of *fuscus* is evaluated.

Dutch Birding V28 (4) 2006

Dutch Birding V28 (5) 2006

Bulwer's Petrels in the Mediterranean and risk of confusion with Nightjars (P297)

La Garcilla 126 2006 (Spanish) <http://www.seo.org/index.cfm>

La Garcilla 127 2006 (Spanish)

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NORTH SEA BIRD CLUB 21st Annual Report 2003 <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/nsbc/>

ORNITHOLOGISCHER Anzeiger V45 (1) Aug 06 (German) <http://www.pfeil-verlag.de/04biol/d3256.html>

PACIFIC SEABIRDS V33 (1) Spring 06

Journal download available

from http://www.pacificseabirdgroup.org/index.php?f=pub_pacificseabirds&t=Pacific%20Seabirds&s=1

RAFOS Newsletter No 82 Autumn 06 <http://www.rafos.org.uk/>

SANDGROUSE 28(1) 2006 www.osme.org

SANDGROUSE 28(2) 2006

Scottish Bird News No 80 Jun 06 www.the-soc.org.uk

Scottish Bird News No 81 Sep 06

Scottish Birds V26 (6) June 2006

The status of the Northern Gannet in Scotland in 2003-04

S MURRAY, S WANLESS & M P HARRIS

A census of the Northern Gannet colonies in Britain and Ireland was carried out in 2003-04. Scotland had 14 colonies with a total of 182,511 apparently occupied sites, representing 58% of the east Atlantic population. Numbers were divided unevenly between the colonies with St Kilda, the Bass Rock and Ailsa Craig together holding 74% of the Scottish population and 43% of the east Atlantic population. Two new colonies have been founded since the last major census in 1994-95, at Sule Skerry (2003) and Westray (2003).

Comparison of colony totals with previous estimates indicate that numbers at St Kilda and Sule Stack were stable whereas Ailsa Craig and Sula Sgeir had decreased. Rates of increase varied considerably, but in general were highest at the most recently founded and smallest colonies. Although overall numbers continued to increase, the sustained period of

population growth throughout the 20th century has slowed over the last 10 years.

SEEVÖGEL 27 (1) Mar 06 (German) www.jordsand.de/ziele/geschichte.htm

SEEVÖGEL 27 (2) Jul 06 (German)

SEEVÖGEL 27 (3) Jul 06 (German)

The Fulmar No 111 May 06 www.abdn.ac.uk/nsbc

THE OSPREY Issue 6 2006 <http://www.rafos.org.uk/>

Gulls in Gibraltar. Mike Blair. Introduction. This, the third in the series of counts at approximately 18-month intervals of Yellow-legged Gull *Lams michahellis* at Gibraltar, took place at the beginning of the breeding season. This count used the same map sectors as did the previous two counts (Blair & Candelin 2003, Blair 2004) and followed the same basic methodology, counting from the same positions, or where vegetation had obscured sightlines, from positions that were close to the originals. Any differences are detailed below. For almost the entire period, the prevailing wind from the east, the *Levanter*, was often gale-force and brought not only frequent rain-showers, but also persistent low cloud sufficient to obscure visibility across the Strait of Gibraltar during daylight. Consequently, apart from a few short breaks of good visibility, diurnal migration was almost non-existent, the main surge occurring on 22 March, but at Tarifa on the Spanish mainland, when the rate of the larger passage migrants approximated to 30,000 per hour. Although there was little migration through Gibraltar proper, what ringing activity there was, under the auspices of the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society (GONHS) found some interesting species. The poor visibility also prevented much meaningful seabird observation being undertaken. Such was the impact of low cloud on gull counts that it was not possible to count each area twice. The gull work was done by Simon Dennis and myself.

The Seabird Group Newsletter 102 Jun 06

The Seabird Group Newsletter 103 Oct 06

9th International Seabird Conference, Aberdeen, 1-3 Sep 06 – Extracts can be found at http://www.seabirdgroup.org.uk/files/conference_2006_abstracts.pdf

UKOTCF – Forum News 27

UKOTCF – Forum News 28 <http://www.ukotcf.org/ukotcf/index.htm>

UKOTCF – Forum News 29

UKOTCF – Promoting Biodiversity Conservation in the UK's Overseas Territories

World Birdwatch (3) Mar 06 www.birdlife.org

Hunting further decimates Greenland's seabirds

A study published by the Danish Ornithological Society (DOF, BirdLife in Denmark) documents the severe decline in birds in west Greenland over the last 100 years. One formerly common breeding species no longer nests. The survey was carried out in the 12,000 km² Uummannaq area of Greenland which is bordered by the Greenland Ice Cap to the east and Baffin Bay to the west. A team from the Peregrine Fund visited more than 207 sites to count birds and compare their findings with those of Danish doctor and ornithologist Alfred Bertelsen, who visited the area almost 100 years earlier. Eight species that were formerly common have undergone major declines. Brünnich's Guillemot



Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* has been exterminated as a breeding bird - 100 years ago there were half-a-million pairs

from human settlements can now be easily reached in a few hours. Hjorth continues: "International pressure meant the Greenland Home Rule tightened regulations, but policing and law-abidance is generally poor. The result is seabird colonies in most of Greenland are declining, or have been exterminated as in Uummannaq."

Uria lomvia numbers have fallen from 500,000 pairs in eight colonies to zero. Summer hunting of this traditional quarry was abolished in 1988, but illegal hunting continues. Blacklegged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, Razorbill *Alca torda*, Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* and Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus* have also suffered severe losses. Surviving birds colonies are all distant from human settlements. "We are facing a biological collapse," says Christian Hjorth, Chairman of DOF. "The Eider is traditionally an important quarry species in Greenland, but regulations on hunting and egg collecting are not generally observed." There is also a threat from the introduction of free ranging sledge dogs to islands, which prevent both Eiders and Arctic Terns (*Sterna paradisaea*) from nesting. The increased hunting pressure stems from the use of non-traditional equipment, such as speedboats. Seabird colonies previously at a safe distance

Secrets of Christmas island revealed

Scientists have gained a unique insight into the life of one of the world's rarest sea birds, the Christmas Island Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi*, a Critically Endangered species. Researchers from Parks Australia attached satellite transmitters to Christmas Island Frigatebirds at their Indian Ocean nesting site to find out more about the birds' movements. They were amazed to discover that one individual, nicknamed "Lydia", undertook a non-stop, 26-day, 4,000 km return flight from Christmas Island via Sumatra and Borneo, including an overland crossing of Java's mountains and volcanoes. Lydia is unlikely to have landed during the journey and probably slept and fed on the wing. "We

suspect the frigatebirds use these seas because of the huge freshwater input from the tropical rivers of the region. However, deforestation is now silting these rivers, and gold mining activities are poisoning the waterways and fish with mercury. It is tragically ironic, that while Lydia nests on one the world's most remote and pristine islands, she makes her living in some of the most degraded seas on the planet," said David James, Coordinator of Biodiversity Monitoring for Christmas Island National Park. Parks Australia was awarded four satellite-transmitting devices by the American Bird Conservancy following an international grant competition in 2005. The devices (worth



about US\$3,000 each) were donated by North Star Science and Technology, the manufacturers of the devices and founders of the grant programme

From pristine island to degraded seas: one Christmas Island Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi* flew non-stop to Indonesia and back (Tony Palliser)

World Birdwatch (9) Sep 06

Fiji joins rat eradication race

Two of Fiji's offshore islands are to be cleared of rats. A BirdLife Fiji programme will see introduced predatory rats removed from Vatuira Island, home to vast seabird colonies, and a team led by Joape Kuruyawa and Dr Craig Morley from the University of the South Pacific (USP) will de-rat Viwa Island, Tailevu. The tiny island of Vatuira off the north coast of Viti Levu has at least eight species of nesting sea bird including Red-footed Boobies *Sula sula*, Great Crested-terns *Sterna bergii*, Black-naped Terns *Sterna sumatrana* and up to 30,000 pairs of Black Noddies *Anous minutus*. "We visited the huge seabird colonies on Vatuira in 2004," explains Vilikesa Masibalavu, BirdLife International's Fiji Programme Co-ordinator. "However the island was infested with Pacific rats and these were clearly having an impact on the birds: eating eggs and chicks. The landowners were aware of the problem and wanted to work together to do something about it."

Rats are a serious threat to the native wildlife on Pacific islands, with a devastating impact on biodiversity leading to the extinction of numerous species. "Rat eradication may sound a bit grisly, but it is a simple and safe operation and the rats die quietly within a few days," says Rob Chappell, a specialist consultant who visited both Viwa and Vatuira islands.

"Hopefully these will be the first of many to be de-ratted. They will serve as demonstration projects-to prove that rats can be removed from tropical Pacific islands, and to train local people in the necessary techniques so we can achieve similar results elsewhere." Both the Vatuira and Viwa projects have been supported by the Australian government's Regional Natural Heritage Program through the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), with technical support from the Pacific Invasive Initiative (PII) based at Auckland University, New Zealand. BirdLife Pacific Partners are involved in other PII-CEPF funded rat eradication projects in Palau and French Polynesia, and a feasibility study on Common

Myna *Acridotheres tristis* eradication from the Cook Islands. Vatuira was listed in the publication Important Bird Areas in Fiji, launched at a ceremony at the British High Commission in Suva in June 2006, where Director of Environment Epeli Nasome, speaking on behalf of Minister of Environment, the Honourable Poseci Bune, commented: "... the resources used by BirdLife International to get our country to this stage have been tremendous and I thank all those who have assisted BirdLife Fiji one way or another, especially the Darwin Initiative and the UK Government. "The next few years my Ministry will work closely with other stakeholders in government and outside government, to consolidate the actual areas that need to be protected legally, after those areas have been scientifically justified to be protected by various means. This is similar to what BirdLife Fiji has come up with and contained within this publication."

Predator control key to Chatham seabird successes

In early June 2006, the first Chatham Petrel *Pterodroma axillaris* chick for more than a century fledged on Pitt Island, New Zealand. Previously this Critically Endangered species, numbering fewer than 1,000 birds, was confined to Rangatira Island, a small island off Pitt Island, but efforts began in 2002 to create a second "insurance" breeding population. Over four years, 200 chicks were transferred to the 40 ha Ellen Elizabeth Preece Conservation Covenant (Caravan Bush) predator-free enclosure on Pitt. Four birds have returned so far, and this year a pair successfully reared a single chick.

"It's the first time this has been achieved with *Pterodroma* petrels in New Zealand," said Dave Houston, technical support officer for the Chatham Islands from New Zealand's Department of Conservation (DOC). "DOC staff, volunteers and Pitt Islanders are rapt." It follows hot on the heels of a record 11 Chatham Islands Taiko *Pterodroma magentae* fledging, thanks to sustained predator control in the Taiko's breeding area on Chatham Island. The world population of this Critically Endangered species now numbers between 120 and 150 individuals. "It is the highest number of chicks to fledge since this formerly presumed extinct species was rediscovered by ornithologist David Crockett in 1978," said Houston. "A lot of people have put in a lot of hard work to achieve these successes." Although fledging of the chicks is a milestone in the recovery of both species, there is still a long way to go. The Chatham Petrel chick is likely to return to breed when around three to five years of age, but the Taiko are unlikely to breed until six to nine years old.



Peru's marine life losing out to fishfarms

"The Galapagos would be nothing compared to the coast of Peru as it was in the 1950s," says Patricia Majluf, who has been studying the impact of fisheries on Peru's seabirds and mammals for 27 years. Instrumental in setting up the 54 ha Punta San Juan reserve, where 75% of Peru's Humboldt Penguins *Spheniscus humboldti* breed, Majluf received the £60,000 (US\$1 09,000) Whitley Gold Award in May this year. "We hope the award will help Dr Majluf in her fight to bring an end to unsustainable fishing practices along this

globally important coastline,' said Edward Whitley, founder and chairman of the Whitley Fund for Nature. "As El Nino events become stronger as a result of climate change, it is feared that Peru's marine wildlife will decline even further:' Peruvian coastal waters have the highest level of productivity of any ecosystem on the planet. But they are also the world epicentre for El Nino events. Populations of sea mammals and birds have always crashed following El Ninos, when the huge shoals of anchovies on which they feed head for deeper, cooler water. But until the 1970s, the populations always bounced back within around five years. Those populations included up to 30 million 'guano birds'; including Guanay Cormorants *Phalacrocorax bougainvillii*, Peruvian Boobies *Sula variegata* and Humboldt's Penguins, the source of the phosphate-rich crust of bird droppings which formed another of Peru's harvestable resources, until over-exploitation exhausted the reserves and threatened the birds which produced it. After the 1997-8 El Nino, the longest and most severe of the 20th century, the guano birds, already reduced to 8 million before the event, dropped to just 1.2 million. The Humboldt's Penguins at Punta San Juan fell from 5,000 to just 50 in May 1998; there are currently around 2,000. Fur seals September 2006 and sea lions fell to 10-20% of pre El Nino populations; eight years on, they have barely doubled these historic low numbers. "It's taking them much longer to recover-and the guano birds will never reach 30 million again;' she says. The reason, she believes, is over-fishing of the anchovy shoals which sea mammals, seabirds and carnivorous fish like bass and grouper depend on. Peru has the largest fishery on the planet, equivalent to 10% of the entire world's catch. But the anchovies are not for human consumption: they are processed into fish meal, which goes to the developed world, and increasingly China, where it is used as fish food. "So we're using 10% of the world's fisheries catch to feed farmed fish;' Majluf says. The fishery takes up to 85% of the anchovies in Peru's waters. Although it generates around US\$1.7 billion a year for the Peruvian economy, the fishery brings few other benefits, and is doing real social and environmental harm. More and bigger boats join the fleet every year, so the annual quota is met in less and less time. "They can now catch their quota in less than a month, and the factories will work just 60 days this year, down from 200 just five years ago:' Recent recruits to the anchovy fleet include artisanal fishermen, who traditionally depended on bass, grouper and other large fish no longer found in sufficient numbers to provide a livelihood. Exempt from the regulations governing the industrial fleet, they can take anchovy within the 5 km coastal limit; alternatively, they fish farther out, but lacking refrigeration equipment, bring rotting cargoes home. As stocks fall, fisherman have gone after juvenile fish; and during the El Nino event itself, they pursued the shoals that took refuge in the deeper and cooler waters round Punta San Juan, which another marine ecologist has likened to "eating the seed corn': Effluent from the fish processing factories is discharged into the bays which form the main breeding grounds for fish and marine invertebrates, turning the water anoxic and causing "red tides" of toxic algae. Sulphur and other pollutants damage the health of human communities. "The industry pays less than one percent in taxes, so all these costs are externalised;' Majluf says. Studies have shown that halving the quotas to 4-5 million tonnes, which would still put Peru among the world's largest fisheries, would provide a sustainable future for industrial processors, artisanal fishermen, seals, guano birds and penguins. The World Bank, which once helped fund the expansion of Peru's fishing fleet, is now looking into stronger protection measures for the

fishery and the wildlife, and Majluf is working with them. She remains extremely hopeful. "Peruvian marine wildlife is adapted to living in an unpredictable environment, fluctuating between El Ninos and the richest marine system in the world. Once the right measures are in place, the Peruvian coastal zone is so rich that it will quickly recover".

Beck's is back

Beck's Petrel *Pseudobulweria becki*, unrecorded since 1929, has been seen and photographed in the Coral Sea, east of Australia's Great Barrier Reef. The observer, birding tour guide Richard Baxter, was able to compare it directly with Tahiti Petrel *P. rostrata*, the bird with which it is most likely to be confused (and with which it may be conspecific). Despite the 77-year gap in the record, BirdLife had categorised Beck's Petrel as Critically Endangered rather than extinct. "It probably remains extant, because there have been a number of recent records of up to 250 individuals of the very similar Tahiti Petrel in the Bismarck Archipelago and Solomon Islands which may refer to this species," wrote the authors of BirdLife's species account. "Furthermore, petrels that are nocturnal at the nesting grounds are notoriously difficult to detect, and there are numerous possible breeding sites on isolated atolls and islands that require surveying." However, they added: "Any remaining population may be tiny". Baxter had been crossing the Coral Sea for two



Possible Beck's Petrel *Pseudobulweria becki*, showing light underwing and pale throat (Richard Baxter)

days, en route from Noumea to Australia. "Tahiti Petrels were abundant the entire time we were in suitably deep water and I had seen several hundred: he reported. "The Beck's was the size of a *cookilaria*" (a small *Pterodroma*) "petrel, significantly smaller than a Tahiti Petrel, and comparable to both Black-winged (*Pterodroma nigripennis*) and Gould's Petrel (*P. leucoptera*), which were also seen that morning." Baxter's description continued: "When looking at the Beck's it was very obviously not a Tahiti Petrel on size alone. I also think the wings are shorter and broader than Tahiti and it does not have the same large billed appearance. The underwings also appear lighter. Photos of Tahiti petrel taken the same morning show they had darker underwing plumage. The specimen also has a pale chin/throat, no one I know has ever seen a Tahiti with a pale throat!" Rollo Beck, an ornithologist and collector of museum specimens, took part in the Whitney expedition to Oceania in the 1920s. The petrel which bears his name is known only from two specimens: a female taken at sea east of New Ireland and north of Buka, Papua New Guinea, on 6 January 1928; and a male taken north-east of Rendova, Solomon Islands, on 18 May 1929. BirdLife's proposed conservation measures for the species include scrutinising and photographing all *P. rostrata*-type petrels seen within the region; and surveying far-flung atolls and reefs north of New Ireland and the Solomons, and high-altitude forest on Bougainville, where Beck's Petrel may breed. Also recommended is biochemical analysis, to determine whether it is a species in its own right, or a subspecies of Tahiti Petrel.
