

Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



REGISTERED CHARITY No 207619

BULLETIN No 155

JULY 2007

The 60th AGM was held on Friday 1 December 2006 in G2 Conference Rm, Henry Leach Bldg, CinC Fleet HQ, PORTSMOUTH. Cdr F S Ward, RN was in the chair and opened proceedings at 1400. 17 Society members and their guests attended, namely: M Alabaster, M Barritt, A Bray, P Carr, C Casement, M Casement, D Dobson, S Hales, J Hughes, G Lewis, C Patrick, C Peach, M Spencer, T Tindale, B Witts, F Ward, R Wynn.

THE MINUTES

Item 1: Welcome and Apologies. The Acting Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM, particularly Dr Mike Pienkowski our guest speaker from the UKOTCF and our friends from AOS. Apologies had received from Messrs Smith, Copsey, Cutts, Porter, Curtis, Howe, Richardson, Wolk, Chapman, Finn, Dickey and Plummer.

Message from Stephen Chapman. Apologies for this impersonal way of contact but time is short as I realise I set sail in less than 4 weeks and will spend some time in China with my daughter before. The plan is to crew with others the 3-masted barque Tenacious on a west bound four week voyage from the Canaries to the Leeward Islands, (Antigua) and get back home on 23 December. Tenacious is wooden hull and specially equipped to carry physically disabled people. TENACIOUS' many facilities enable disabled crew to perform their duties independently alongside their able-bodied shipmates. The ship has access for disabled crew, including wheelchair users. There is a speaking compass for the use of blind crew members and bright track radar for partially sighted crew. An induction loop and vibrator alarms have been installed for hard of hearing crew members. If you want to see more about the ship go to www.jst.org.uk from where you can track progress. Now my aim is to again raise money to support the work of the **Missions to Seafarers** in their 150th year. If you are able to sponsor me I would be happy, either at www.justgiving.com/tenacious or let me know how you can help. With thanks and kind regards, Stephen.



Item 2: Minutes of 59th AGM. The minutes of the 59th AGM, which had been circulated in Bulletin 153, were put to the meeting. Approval and adoption were proposed by Pete Carr, seconded by Mike Barritt, and carried unanimously.

Item 3: Matters arising. There were two matters arising, Database and Sea observing, both will be covered in the main agenda.

Item 4: Chairman's Report. The Chairman read the following report:

Overview. The maintenance of a high tempo of Royal Naval activities has moderated the number of events during the period. Take up of new members has been slow. Captain Mike Barritt, the Society's Chairman these past 17 years has tendered his resignation due to increased commitments in other areas. The General Secretary will fill this role until a new Chairman has been appointed.

Activities This Period. The cancellation of the 2006 trip to Diego Garcia was extremely frustrating and disappointing. A bid has been placed for 2007. The momentum of short UK outings was maintained but mainly attended by the same people. Portland Observatory continues to be a popular and extremely well run facility. The Society has continued to maintain a world wide database of seabird observations and largely by the use of the internet, has been able to supply detailed spreadsheets and graphical data, free of charge to all. An active exchange journal programme has been maintained with many similar societies around the world. Sea Swallow continues to be used and quoted with high regard in Ornithological research papers. The Simpson Scholarship has not really got underway, it requires better publicity. The MAERSK initiative has also not really materialised and the linkage between the two activities requires reworking. The Society Website – www.rnbws.org.uk has continued development. However because of software compatibility issues the adding of the Seabird database has been delayed. Following an agreement to pay for this item to be progressed, 2Fish Productions will start work in January.

Future Activities. The Society needs to build on existing initiatives and provide funding for more activities under the grant scheme. The Society's relations with the RSPB overseas department and the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme continue to flourish. Future expeditions will be planned in close collaboration with these organisations. Work continues to develop the Website. The establishment of the database is a high priority for the forthcoming period, as is making the society's Journals available via the member's only area. Publication abstracts will be available to all in the public area. The Society has voted to support the RSPB Save the Albatross campaign. A donation will be made at the end of 2006.

The Acting Chairman went on to outline the sequence of events for the afternoon and stated that at the Executive Committee meeting in the forenoon much routine business had been completed. Representatives' reports have been provided in printed format for review thereby negating the requirement for the Secretary to read them out.

Item 5: Financial Statement. On behalf of the Treasurer, the Acting Chairman reported the healthy state of the account as shown in the account examiners report¹ below. The EC had discussed the investment policy and were happy that it should continue as part of the Royal Naval Common investment Fund, showing a current growth of over 15%. The EC had decided that the National Savings account should be closed and monies transferred to the Schrodgers deposit account. The fund is now audited at the end of November thereby being up to date for the December AGM.

**ROYAL NAVAL BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY - INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION
– 30 NOV 06**

1. The examination of the RNBWS has been completed satisfactorily. The fund has changed its accounting year to finish on 30 November. This will allow the accounts to be presented at the AGM. Therefore this year is actually just eleven months.

2. The investment in the Charity Investment Fund with Schrodgers & Co has grown by £8K over the year to £10.7K. The trustees have decided that dividends will not be reinvested but will be paid into the Schrodgers deposit account. Therefore the Sep 06 dividend of £670 was added to the Deposit Fund as will future dividends. It is also intended to close the NSB account and move the money into this deposit account as the rate of interest is better.

3. The visit to Diego Garcia this year was cancelled on security grounds.

4. There have been no takers for the Captain Simpson Scholarship for young RN and MN birdwatchers.

5. Publication of Sea Swallow 06 is imminent and as 06 subscriptions pay for the publication the printing costs are shown as a liability in the accounts. The Trustees have also decided to donate £5K to “Save the Albatross”. As the majority of the RNBWS funds come from a large donation “to benefit birdwatchers”, this is felt to be appropriate. However the Trustees should check the wording of the objectives of the charity to ensure that this expenditure is within that remit.

6. The stock of ties is now considered to have no value as the style and material is unattractive to today’s membership.

7. Summary The fund is healthy with a balance of £112K, after allowing for commitments of £7.8K. It will continue to have no difficulty funding its activities.

P A Nicholls - Service Fund Examiner

¹ The Charities Act 2006 has decreed that those funds with an income below £500K do not need to be professionally audited therefore our Fund is examined.

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES 30 NOVEMBER 2006**ASSETS**

		<u>31-Dec-05</u>
<i>Fixed Assets</i>		
		£
<i>Schroder & Co Capital</i>	£106,966.00	98,918.00
		£
<i>Schroder & Co Deposit</i>	£ 1,176.30	496.51
		£
<i>Property</i>	£ 400.00	600.00
<i>Current Assets</i>		
		£
<i>NSB Account</i>	£ 7,836.63	7,836.63
		£
<i>Lloyds TSB</i>	£ 3,192.29	3,765.75
<i>Interest Accrued (Est)</i>	£ 250.00	£ -
<i>First Day Covers Prepaid</i>	£ 400.00	£ -
		£
<i>Stock (Ties for resale)</i>	£ -	131.52
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<i>Total Assets</i>	<u>£120,221.22</u>	<u>111,748.41</u>

LIABILITIES

		£
<i>Account Examination</i>	£ 50.00	75.00
<i>Sea Swallow 2005 (estimated)</i>	£ 2,800.00	£ -
PROVISIONS		
<i>"Save the Albatross"</i>	<hr/> £ 5,000.00	<hr/> £ -
		£
	£ 7,850.00	75.00
		£
<i>Net Assets</i>	<hr/> £112,371.22	<hr/> 111,673.41
		£
	<u>£120,221.22</u>	<u>111,748.41</u>

Item 6: Membership Statement. The figures for 2006 and 2005 are as follows:

	2006	2005
Honorary	2	3
Ordinary	168	156
Associate	31	28
Library*	41	41
Exchange	32	31
Total	274	259

Messrs Copsey and Cutts have done well to encourage new membership.

Item 7: Executive Committee and Honorary Appointments. The Hon Sec's search for a new Chairman had met with success and Cdre Martin Alabaster CinC FLEET ACOS(E), a keen birdwatcher, had agreed to be nominated for this appointment.

Re-election of the members was proposed by Mike Barritt, seconded by Chris Peach and carried unanimously.

The Executive Committee and Trustees (*) are:

Chairman	Cdre M Alabaster RN (Martin)
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	CPO S Copsey (Steve)
Editor <i>Sea Swallow</i>	Lt Cdr G D Lewis RN (Gary)*
Expeditions Officer	Maj P Carr RM (Pete)*
Field Trip Officer	CPO M Cutts (Mark)
Landbirds at Sea recorder	PO C Patrick (Chris)**
Seabird recorder	Capt N Cheshire (Neil)**
Webmaster and Db Manager	Cdr F S Ward RN (Frank)**

** Non Committee functions.

Capt Mike Barritt remains a Trustee.

Item 8: Local Representatives' Reports and MoD Bird Count.

Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC) – Dr Richard Porter. Life at BRNC continues to change, as it does throughout the Royal Navy and now with the six term entry firmly in place there is little time for the traditional leisure interests that the cadets enjoyed in the past. Recruitment is at an all time low and even for the permanent staff there is less time for watching birds. The Britannia Wood that was planted to celebrate the bi-centenary

of Trafalgar last year is now an established mix of year old young trees and as such has not changed the habitat of the College grounds. However it will be interesting to observe the change as the woodland becomes established over the next few years and to see if our species list shows a marked shift to more woodland species. With 16 acres planted representing some 14% of the College land it will be interesting to see if there is change in the species that nest in the grounds with more open mixed woodland species being attracted. Existing mature trees have been left and new trees not planted in the immediate vicinity to preserve nesting and roosting sites. Recent sightings in the area have included:

Long Tailed Skua at Hopes Nose, Torquay.

Grey Phalarope and Cory's at Shearwater at Berry Head.

Bittern at Slapton Ley, often only heard previously.

Black Tern and Wryneck at Slapton Ley.

Golden Oriole at Prawle Point.

Melodious Warbler at Start Point.

Osprey at Kingsbridge Estuary.

DEVONPORT Area. No report received.

HUMBER – Bill Curtis. Firstly apologies for absence from the AGM, also for lack of report covering the past year. Regret I had completely forgotten the date of the AGM and will be out of the UK from tomorrow (12th Nov) until the 30th (Ecuador and the Galapagos). In a nutshell nothing has happened in the Humber area (again) though whenever possible I have publicised the RNBWS but, as mentioned in previous years the ornithological fraternity here, as probably elsewhere, is not that interested in anything but scarce birds and what is happening today; younger people taking an interest in general natural history seem to be few and far between. Nothing to do with the meeting - Margery and myself had two runs with P&O from Portsmouth to Bilbao for the hales/seabirds. We both felt it one of the best holidays we have ever had - I would recommend that trip to anyone unreservedly. Regards to all - have a good meeting.

Portland – Martin Cade. A continuous update is provided at www.portlandbirdobs.btinternet.co.uk

Portsmouth Area – Brian Witts. Brian gave an update on activities within the harbour, HMS EXCELLENT and Horsea Island. Of note is the establishment of access slots in some of the brickwork within the upper walls of the Wardroom and other buildings in HMS EXCELLENT to encourage Swifts to nest within the cavity. Nest boxes are being well populated and a large number have been newly established at HMS COLLINGWOOD.

BLACK SEA, ROMANIA - Gabriel Banica. Now, in Dobrogea (land between the Black Sea and the Danube River) some Company are planning to install Wind Farms (Wind Turbines). For the moment only two Wind Turbines are working in Dobrogea. The ornithologists are saying that these constructions are killing the birds! But we need

energy! And here the wind is blowing all the time. This is a big problem now in this area. I am waiting for advices. In the south of the Romanian littoral, near the coast, is the only marine reserve from Romania (2 May-Vama Veche area, near the border with Bulgaria). We hope that will be a good beginning for the protection of the sea birds, dolphins and fish. This year, the Romanian Ornithological Society made a lot of proposals for new protected areas, a lot of them in Dobrogea. The next year we shall have a new list with the protected areas from Romania. About me, I started to work on my Ph. D. Thesis at Constanta "Ovidius" University, about the water birds from the south Romanian littoral. A lot of work! Best wishes for all the members of the RNBWS!

EASTERN ARABIA – Colin Richardson. Eastern Arabia is an excellent place for watching pelagic seabirds and is one of the best places in the world to watch them pass close to the coast, especially during the summer monsoon. Seabird activity always reaches a peak during the summer months. This is caused by the southwest monsoon in the Indian Ocean which attracts thousands of seabirds to the rich feeding grounds off the east coast of Oman and the UAE. 2006 was no exception and unusual birds started appearing in late spring, with the report of 6 Sooty Shearwaters and over 400 Persian Shearwaters off Fujairah, in the United Arab Emirates, on 22nd April. This was followed on the 3rd May by a Masked Booby and a Long-tailed Skua seen from the same lengthy Al Gurfa breakwater at Fujairah, where highlights over the next few weeks included another Sooty Shearwater, a Masked Booby and a Common Noddy on the 11th May, two more Long-tailed Skuas on the 25th May and two Wilson's Storm-petrels on the 15th July. All of these species were virtually unknown in these waters 15 years ago, but no doubt greater interest in seabirds by local birdwatchers has helped to increase the number of observations. This excitement reached a peak in mid-summer when daytime temperatures of 45°C are normal and few passerines are on view. On the 21st July a group of local expatriates organised a boat at Khor Fakkan port, and headed 20km offshore for several hours. A number of very interesting birds were found, including a Red-billed Tropicbird, 2 Wilson's Storm-petrels, 2 Common Noddy and dozens of Persian Shearwaters and Bridled Terns. On the 15th September, off Ra's Dibba, 40 miles north of Fujairah, a record eight Common Noddy were seen. Meanwhile at Ras al Khabbah in Oman, the most easterly point of Arabia, even more interesting seabirds were found flying along the coast. On 30th May an afternoon seawatch logged over 400 Jouanin's Petrels, 12 Masked Booby, 5 Persian Shearwaters, a Pale-footed Shearwater and a Wilson's Storm-petrel. During a pelagic boat trip from Muscat on 6th June a raft of 50 Wilson's Storm-petrels, a Flesh-footed Shearwater and a Red-billed Tropicbird were seen 5 miles offshore. This was eclipsed by the season's best find when another group took a boat from Muscat on 16th June. At a point around 10 miles east of Muscat they found 4 Jouanin's Petrel, 8 Pale-footed Shearwaters, 1000 (!) Wilson's Storm-petrels, at least 5 Swinhoe's Storm-petrels, a Red-billed Tropicbird, about 4 South Polar Skuas and a Common Noddy. One of the last interesting seabird records of the season was off Ras al Khabbah, where one Jouanin's Petrel, one Red-billed Tropicbird, one Masked Booby and four Common Noddies were seen on 14th September.

FALKLANDS, The South Atlantic Branch of the RNBWS – Mark Cutts and Steve Copsey. As anyone who has visited the Falklands will tell you, the weather is extremely changeable and it may appear that four seasons can come in a single day. At the moment it is heavy rain, yesterday was wind that you couldn't stand up in and the day before shirt sleeves. However, despite the weather we have both been getting out on a regular basis with some creditable results. Prior to joining the theatre we had been in regular correspondence with Robin Woods, the author of the first field guide to the islands and co-ordinator of the breeding bird census. He had allocated us the 6 tetrads encompassing Mount Pleasant Complex to survey during the breeding season. A rather large task with some parts being practically inaccessible, due to poor access and the odd minefield. Still we have amassed a large amount of data and indeed we find new breeding birds on every trip we do, our latest being a nesting Red-backed Hawk in a local quarry and a Silver Teal with five young on our local pond. We have also helped with Falklands Conservation, assisting in a count of nesting Gentoo Penguins, with future projects including a weekend on Middle island, surveying the breeding birds and native flowering plants and a hopeful trip to Lively Island, not visited since 1995, where we hope to find evidence of breeding White-winged Coot. If found this would only be the second breeding record for the islands. Ornithological issues aside we have enjoyed a great deal of good old fashioned birdwatching and we must say, with a great deal of success. On our first day out in the field, with Robin Woods, we located a Pectoral Sandpiper, a less than annual migrant. We have also found the first and only Baird's Sandpipers of the year, seven at Bertha's Beach, but our real top birds, being two American Golden Plovers at York bay, probably only the 8th and 9th records for the Islands. We also managed to increase our society membership by one, as we bumped into Nigel Marvin, the presenter of "Prehistoric Park" He is in the area doing a programme on South Georgia. A few hours and coffees later, he expressed his love of seabirds and quickly handed over his membership fee for the RNBWS. So, think of us this Christmas. Whilst you are tucking into your Christmas Dinners we will be stuck on the end of Cape Pembroke, watching large numbers of Black-browed Albatross and Sooty Shearwaters stream passed. Trying to distinguish Northern from Southern Giant Petrel and hoping that the odd Cape Petrel or Royal Albatross will fly into view.

GIBRALTAR – Charlie Perez. I was delighted to be approached by Expedition leader Pete Carr to become your representative in Gibraltar. Already in 2005 RNBWS members visited Gibraltar and assisted with monitoring the raptor migration and passerine ringing activities and plans are underfoot to mount another expedition in the autumn of 2007. The autumn raptor migration is much more concentrated than in spring and given the right weather conditions thousands of birds may be observed at relatively close quarters gaining height on the thermals over the Rock. Alternatively seabird passage is also extremely good at this time of the year as many of the breeding gulls and terns in the Mediterranean move out into the Atlantic, and ideal watching opportunities can be had from our Marine Observatory overlooking the Straits. Ringers can also engage the passerines in the early morning before the weather gets too hot; so all in all there will be opportunities for everyone and I hope that we can build on a fruitful and rewarding relationship between the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society

and yourselves the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society. For more information on visiting opportunities and what to see visit our website <http://www.gonhs.org>

INDIA - Aasheesh Pittie.

- Profession. Managing Director, Pittie Alcast Private Limited, manufacturers of aluminium pressure die-cast rotors and electrical stampings.
- Avocation. Ornithology.
- Societies.
- Bombay Natural History Society (elected 1979; now life member).
- Birdwatcher's Field Club of India (1979-).
- Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh (1980; now life member).
- The Asiatic Society of Bombay (elected 2002, non-resident life member).
- Madras Naturalists' Society (elected 1987; now life member).
- Wildlife Preservation Society of India (1984-).
- World Pheasant Association-India (1993-).
- World Wide Fund for Nature-India (1978; now life subscriber).
- Oriental Bird Club (1986-).
- Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (1999, member).
- Coorg Wildlife Society (2000, life member).
- Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka (2002, non-resident life member).
- Goethals Indian Library & Research Society, St. Xavier's College, Kolkata (20.ii.2003, life member).
- Ceylon Bird Club (2005-).

Participation And Activities.

- Elected Member of the International Ornithological Committee (2006-).
- Nominated Member of Executive Committee, Bombay Natural History Society (2006-2008).
- Member of Advisory Committee, Bombay Natural History Society (2004-2006).
- Member of Library Subcommittee, Bombay Natural History Society (2004-).
- Member of Board of Governors, Environmental Protection & Training Research Institute, Hyderabad [EPTRI] (2002-2004).
- Member of the World Wide Fund for Nature-India, Andhra Pradesh State Committee.
- Honorary Secretary of Hyderabad Nature Club (1979-1981).
- Honorary Secretary Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh (1997-2004).
- Volunteer for WWF-I's Nature Clubs of India movement in Hyderabad.
- Participated in WWF-I's Nature Education Camp at Khadakwasla, Pune (1981).
- Have taken part in various field camps at Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, Warangal district, Chilkur Deer Park, Hyderabad, and Pulicat and Nelapattu Bird Sanctuaries, Nellore district.
- Regular participant in the Midwinter Asian Waterfowl Census conducted by the Asian Wetlands Bureau, Malaysia.

Future Plans.

- Updating *A CHECKLIST OF BIRDS OF ANDHRA PRADESH* (with Siraj Taher) and converting it into an Annotated Checklist.
- Preparing a distribution and/or breeding atlas of the birds of Andhra Pradesh.

Editing, Refereeing And Publishing.

- *Black Buck*: Newsletter of the Hyderabad Nature Club (1980—81; Editor).
- *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* (2004—; member of Editorial board).
- *Mayura*: Bi-annual journal of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh (1983—; Editor).
- Newsletter for Ornithologists (2004; *Founder editor*).
- *Indian Birds* (2005—; *Founder editor*).
- *Pitta: Monthly bulletin of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh* (1987—2002; *Editor*).
- *Zoos' Print Journal* (2000—2003; Referee for Ornithological papers).
- **Editor** for the chapters entitled: "India up to 1947," "India post 1947," "Bangladesh" and "Pakistan" in *A History of Asian Ornithology* (eds. Edward C. Dickinson & Frank D. Steinheimer). A work in the conceptualisation and planning stage.

Books, CD-ROM.

- *A checklist of birds of Andhra Pradesh* (1989): (co-authored and co-published with Siraj A. Taher).
- *Nomenclature of birds of the Indian Sub-continent. A Review of Some Changes Taking Place.* (1993): (with Andrew Robertson and published by Ornithological Society of India.)
- *A bibliographic index to the ornithology of the Indian region - Part I.* (1995): publications covered: *Stray Feathers* (1873—1881) vols. 1—10 & *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* (1886—1993) vols. 1—90.
- *A bibliographic index to the ornithology of the Indian Subcontinent.* (2001): CD-ROM based database. Published by author.
- *A bibliographic index to the birds of south Asia.* 2005. CD-ROM, DOS. 3rd ed. Published by the author. Hyderabad, India. (Earlier editions entitled, "*A bibliographic index to the ornithology of the Indian subcontinent*".)

MADEIRA – Dr Francis Zino. Maybe because it is possible to see two Pterodromas as well as an endemic Laurel Pigeon, there appears to have been an increase of ornithological interest amongst our tourists, and as a result some very interesting observations; a Crane, *Grus grus*, having been observed at Ponta do Pargo, in October of this year. In addition SPEA, a Portuguese ornithological society, helped by the RSPB has a branch in Madeira and is doing a great job in developing interest amongst the locals.

The Parque Natural da Madeira (P.N.M.) have done a good job in the breeding area of Zino's Petrel, having removed all goats and sheep, with the help of the Forestry and as a result the flora, much of which has been difficult to see in the past, has made a remarkable comeback. The rat poisoning and cat trapping, started by the Freira Conservation Project in the mid-80's has shown great returns on effort and the breeding success of Zino's Petrel has increased significantly over the years. In the original group

of nests, 23 juveniles were ringed this year. The PNM had great difficulty in getting to the recently discovered LIFE breeding ledges, due to rock falls that obstructed the already precipitous and dangerous path. They did get there late in the season, after fledging, and all the indications were that breeding had been successful. The P.N.M. have been granted a LIFE project to work on Bugio, Deserta Islands and it is hoped that Fea's Petrel, *Pterodroma feae*, will be studied in greater depth and offered better protection. The Freira Conservation Project has 2 PTTs provided by the Max Planck Institute, to place on Fea's Petrel before the end of the current breeding season. It is hoped that we will learn something about the migration routes and this may come to help decide the origin of the birds sighted off the American coast as well as in Northern Europe. On Selvagem Grande, the situation continues to improve since the amazing success of total eradication of rabbits and mice by the P.N.M. For reasons still under study the breeding success of the seabird colony has benefited enormously. There are now regular sea-watching trips made to the islands, setting out from Madeira, which have proved a big success and with excellent views of all the breeding birds. Selvagem Pequena is warded during the summer, but the station is shut down in winter. Sadly some unscrupulous amateur fishermen from Canaries take advantage of this situation and raid the island whenever the sea is calm. Whilst they are there mostly to fish, they walk about the island and destroy the nests of White-faced Storm Petrels, which are winter breeders. The FCP, together with the Natural History Museum of Funchal has requested permission to work with geolocators on both Zino's and Fea's Petrels and hopefully there will be a lot of useful information available by 2008.

USA - Dr Bob Wolk. I regret that I have no significant material for an overseas representative report for the AGM next month. Nevertheless, may I take this opportunity to say how much I enjoyed the latest edition of the RNBWS Bulletin (No. 154)? I especially appreciated the excellent summary of recent seabird literature. Also, I was pleased to see the increased use of photographs. It was a particular pleasure to see photos of people whose names have become familiar over the years and, of course, those of former visitors to our shore, Chris Patrick and Mark Cutts, with whom I spent delightful hours in the field.

NAPLES – Mark Walters. No report received.

Résumé of status of the MoD Bird Count – Lt Col Roger Dickey. I briefed the Chairmen of Conservation Groups forum last week and continued to get a pretty good response. I am very conscious of the preparatory work being done by BTO for the bird atlas but equally, we still do not share a methodology. The principal difference is that the winter and summer counts will be within 10 km tetrads and include at least 8 x 2 km x 2 km counts for summer and for the winter. These 2 x 2 counts are determined by the surveyor.

This will mean that we must break the training estate into these tetrads to ensure that within each conservation area and establishment, we have a good coverage. The problem comes when you have been used to counting in your 1 sq km establishment site. BTO are saying that we can continue to count within the wire but for completeness

(birds don't understand fences), we should try to include our 1 sq km site within a 2 x 2 km count. I can understand the logic in that but once again it may upset the 'only within the wire' purists. We already aim off though by asking the percentage of the square that is MOD land. We do not have to start the atlas work until next winter 2007 and so I am running a workshop with DE (Stuart Otway) at Longmoor for bird surveyors on 1 Apr 07 to help people to understand the developing methodology. I will put out a lot of explanatory info to Societies and within the Conservation network, once I have had another session with Stuart O and we go through the existing data for 2005 and 2006 over this December and January. I am conscious that we owe a return to our customers. The forum was less confrontational this year but it is apparent that there is a general lack of resources all round and in DE's case, a lack of manpower to make sense of much of the data that we send them. An investment in a common database that records all information from birds to butterflies would be very welcome.

Item 9: Expedition Member's Report.

The year started with the appearance that it would be fulfilling the RNBWS aspiration of undertaking annual monitoring in the UK Overseas Territories as part of a sponsored long-term programme. On behalf of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) the UK partners for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Navy Society was to return to one of the ten newly created Important Bird Areas of the Chagos, Barton Point, to complete the seabird survey commenced in 2005. (The Expedition Report from this trip being published in *Sea Swallow* 55). As in 2005, the Barton Point survey was to be funded by a generous grant from the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP), part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. However military affairs on Diego Garcia taking precedence meant that the expedition planned for November 2006 had to be postponed and because it could not be rescheduled before the end of the Financial Year (April 2007) the OTEP grant was lost. In October 2006 the Expedition Member attended as a guest of the RSPB a UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF)/RSPB sponsored Workshop in Jersey, covering ornithological conservation in the Overseas Territories (OT). The Workshop proved an excellent vehicle to promote the Society and its' stated goal of being involved in a long term OT monitoring programme and this subject was discussed extensively with the International Department of the RSPB. It was agreed by all present that a structured long term monitoring programme throughout the Overseas Territories is required and no where more so, due to the lack of data on this area gathered to date, than the Chagos. It was also tentatively agreed that for the foreseeable future in the Chagos, RNBWS in conjunction with the RSPB/IUCN would pioneer the establishment of this monitoring programme. To bolster the prospects of RNBWS leading the Chagos ornithological monitoring programme, independent of IUCN, the Society has been asked by the Environmental Advisor to the BIOT Commissioner to undertake the monitoring of Eagle Island post having rats removed. This is amongst the most important ornithological monitoring programmes throughout the entire OT's. An application for an OTEP grant has been submitted by RNBWS to the RSPB for agreement and peer review and will be passed to the FCO by 30 Nov 06 for assessment. This application is for two years worth of funding for expeditions in 2007 to finish the Barton Point survey

and in both 2007 and 2008 to undertake surveys of Eagle Island. Out with the Chagos, following the mid Summer RNBWS Executive Committee meeting, discussions were opened by e-mail with the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society (GONHS) to explore what contribution the Navy Society could make to their aims in 2007 in the countries they have Projects running in (Gibraltar, Southern Spain and Morocco). These discussions were furthered in person at the UKOTCF Workshop and recommendations from GONHS for RNBWS to consider are expected in the near future.

Additional note from Gibraltar. Having discussed this with Council and we would be very pleased to have you either in spring or autumn. If you could give us some provisional dates we will work around this and see the availability for Jews Gate or Bruce's Farm; obviously the ringers would be housed at Jews gate for ease of ringing. Other possibilities would be support on our raptor monitoring throughout the spring or autumn, and checking key sites for passerine migrants, and seabird passage counts from Europa Point. If ringers require numbers of birds then end of September and October is great for this plus there is still good raptor passage and plenty of seabirds. Even early November is good for ringing only. We already have some bookings for the Spring so we will have to see when you can come over.

Item 10: Field Trip Report. Tony Tindale briefed on the 2007 programme:

- 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 21st to 22nd (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.
- May 25th to 27th (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.
- 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 (tbc): Pete Carr is hoping to organise a trip to 'the rock' to participate in raptor / stork migration watching and ringing activities at the Observatory. Details (including costs) to be promulgated when known.
- October 13th to 14th 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.

To confirm attendance for the February outing to Keyhaven contact Tony Tindale via e-mail at tonytindale@ntlworld.com or the Gen Sec.

To confirm attendance on any of the other outings contact Mark Cutts or the Gen Sec.

Item 11: Sea Swallow – Editor's Report. Gary Lewis reported that SS55 had been distributed. SS56 (2007) will concentrate on the Falklands to coincide with the 25th Anniversary of the conflict and the reports of the 6 month detachments by Steve Copesey and Mark Cutts.

Item 12: RNBWS Web site and Database. The EC agreed the way ahead for the Seabird database. 2Fish productions had been awarded the work, which will include:

- Database to be built with full search facilities.
- Hon Sec to provide list of fields for inclusion and seek consensus. *PMN – Complete.*
- Mapping will utilise Google Map.
- Will utilise Avibase for taxonomic data.
- The final database will be available to members as a standalone facility.

Item 13: Other Business.

1. David Simpson Scholarship. Detailed on the website. The first award has been made to the SW Seawatch Project.

2. MAERSK. Only one member has shown an interest. Hon Sec to check status with RAFOS.

3. Publicity. The EC agreed that further publicity was required to advertise the Society. Chris Patrick offered to produce a flyer for distribution. Hon Sec would investigate advertising opportunities.

4. AOS Trophy. The AOS trophy is still missing. Mike Barritt agreed to look for a photograph of it so that a 'Have you seen this Bird' campaign can be launched.

5. Save the Albatross. The presentation of £5000 to the 'Save the Albatross' campaign was agreed. This would take place in January.

6. Darwin initiative. In collaboration with Geoff Hilton, Senior Research Biologist at the RSPB, It was agreed that the RNBWS should involve themselves as much as possible with future projects but must be wary not to over commit. Pete Carr will continue to liaise with the RSPB to move the programme forward. *PMN: The RSPB bid for money for BIOT research for 2007 has failed.*

7. HMS ENDURANCE. The Ship has maintained links during its recent trip South and I hope these will be enhanced when it next deploys. It has an excellent website at www.visitandlearn.co.uk/.



Imperial Shag, *Phalacrocorax atriceps*



Southern Giant Petrel, *Macronektes giganteus*

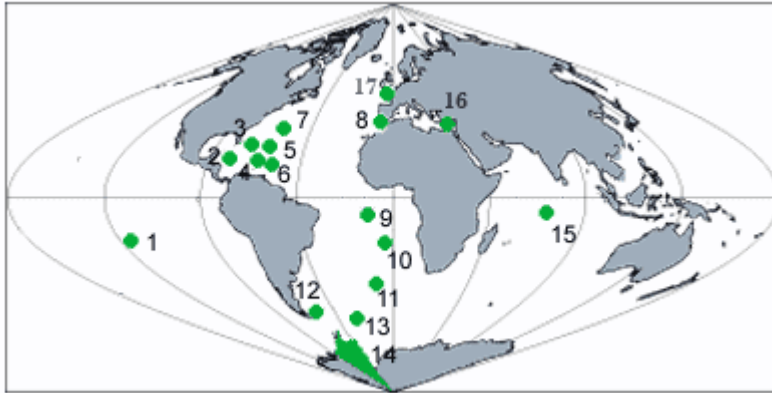
Item 15: Awards.

Best Article for Sea Swallow. This would be awarded to Beau Rowlands for ‘Birds on the Tristan Da Cunha Quincentenary Voyage, between Cape Town, The Tristan group and Gough Island 30 Jan – 17 Feb 06’ and ‘Seabird Observations between Cape Town, Tristan Da Cunha and Gough Island, 5 – 12 Jan 97’.

AOS Trophy. This would be held in abeyance this year until the outcome of investigations to locate the trophy. It was also agreed that the methodology for awarding the trophy should be reviewed.

Item 16: Presentations.

UKOTCF. Despite his busy schedule, Dr Mike Pienkowski was able to talk to the Society on the work of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF). Mike gave a most interesting talk, outlining the structure of the UKOTCF and a whistle stop tour of the work underway, and some of the difficulties encountered in the various overseas territories.



- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Pitcairn Is. | 9. Ascension |
| 2. Cayman Is. | 10. St. Helena |
| 3. Turks & Caicos Is. | 11. Tristan da Cunha |
| 4. British Virgin Is. | 12. Falkland Is. |
| 5. Anguilla | 13. South Georgia & South Sandwich Is. |
| 6. Montserrat | 14. British Antarctic Territory (BAT) |
| 7. Bermuda | 15. British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) |
| 8. Gibraltar | 16. Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas |
| | 17. Channel Islands & The Isle of Man |

Sea Watch SW. An update by Dr Russ Wynn on the Seawatch South West Project.

The Sea Watch SW Project is an exciting new initiative designed to collect important information about some of the UK's most threatened marine animals, including Basking Sharks, Ocean Sunfish and the critically endangered Balearic Shearwater. The results will provide new insights into the occurrence and behaviour of these species around our coasts, and how we can protect them while they visit our waters. The project is entirely volunteer-based, and is being supported by a number of major conservation and scientific organisations, including the [National Oceanography Centre, Southampton](#) (NOCS), the [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#) (RSPB) and the [Marine Conservation Society](#) (MCS).

The survey phase of the project will be based at the Lands End peninsula in Cornwall from mid-July to mid-October. During that period, we need volunteer observers of any ability to assist with observation and recording of target species. Further details about how to get involved, latest sightings, and the conservation and scientific background can

be found on the seawatch website www.seawatch-sw.org



Item 17: Date of next meeting. At 1400 **Thursday 6 December 2007** in conference room G2 (room available from 1200), Leach Building, CinC Fleet HQ, Whale Island, Portsmouth. There will be an EC Meeting in the forenoon at 1000 in meeting room G3 and an opportunity for those who wish to meet together for lunch in the Bistro on the 4th floor of Leach Building.

Please note that the AGM has been moved from Friday to Thursday to try and encourage more attendees.

‘At The AGM’



Stephen Hales, Brian Wits, Andrew Bray from AOS and our Speaker Dr Mike Pienkowski



Mike Barritt congratulating his relief Martin Alabaster



Christina Casement and Maureen Spencer

DUNGENESS TRIP REPORT – TONY TINDALE

The target to spot a 100 species over the entire weekend was comfortably achieved. The final tally of 106 included some top birds and certainly exceeded my expectations. Not only were a good number of summer migrants seen but most species showed really well and often comprised more than just a single bird. The weather throughout the entire weekend was ideal - hot, dry and sunny.

For Steve Copsey, Frank Ward and I the birding began on Friday morning at 0840 on the South Downs at the Seven Sisters Country Park in East Sussex. Initially, things were rather quiet, however, once the footpath began to rise up towards the sea cliffs several (Northern) Wheatears came into view flitting between the wire fence and the short sward grass. Further up the ascending path, amongst large clumps of gorse and bramble, came the distinctive call of Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*. Whilst trying to spot the bird a pair

of Ring Ouzel darted out of the scrub to settle on bushes further up the hill. The birds were now a little distant but through the scope both the male and female showed very well perched in full view at the top of the bushes.

On closer inspection the clumps of scrub turned out to be effective migrant traps. They contained singing Willow Warblers, a male Blackcap, a single (Common) Redstart and at least one Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* and flitting over the tops of the scrub there was an intermittent stream of Barn Swallow making landfall in twos and threes. One Lesser Whitethroat proved to be very accommodating perching in full view and singing continuously and only disappeared whenever Steve trained his camera in its general direction.

Two other species worthy of note from this locality and not seen throughout the rest of the weekend were a couple of (Northern) Fulmar along the chalk cliffs and a Peregrine Falcon in flight overhead. After a cuppa and slice of cake from the tea rooms it was back to reality and the rat race as we got back on the road and headed for the next port of call with 52 species in the bag.

The afternoon at Rye Harbour comprised of a loop around the reserve that added another 31 species to the day list. The first bird of note was a calling (Common) Cuckoo spotted across the river perched in a tree. Around the 'Wader Pool' there were 6 Whimbrel, a single Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* and a lone Golden Plover. At the beach adjacent to the River Rother outflow several Little Terns were feeding close inshore whilst 6 Sanderling and 11 Bar-tailed Godwit fed along the shoreline.

In and around the aptly named 'Ternary Pool' there were Common, Little *Sterna albifrons* and at least 150 Sandwich Terns. In addition, a spell in each of the hides added several more species to the list. These included a pair of (Pied) Avocet that flew in, three 'grey' (Red) Knot that stood together on a narrow spit of mud and c20 full summer plumaged Mediterranean Gulls that dominating the end of one island.

The return leg via the 'Long Pit' and 'Narrow Pit' turned out to be very fruitful with a further 9 species seen including Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler and several close views of 2 flighty Grey Partridge. Once back at the car it was off to our accommodation at The Ship Inn in the town of Rye with a respectable final tally of 83 species.

On Saturday morning at Dungeness, Kent we met up with two other members of the society – Mark Cutts recently returned from a tour of duty in the Falklands with his Dad and brother in tow and Rob Stephens. An initial spell of sea watching started with several Little Gulls *Larus minutus* and scores of Common Scoter heading East offshore. Around the turbulent, warm outflow from the nuclear power station amongst several Harbour Porpoise and a mass of gull activity there were several more Little Gull and an impressive Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* that eventually flew East not far offshore in front of the sea-watchers.

After a brew from the café, a stroll around the scrub surrounding the power station added (Common) Whitethroat to the list. Further sightings of Ring Ouzel (a pair), Willow Warbler, (Northern) Wheatear, Blackcap and (Common) Redstart were also seen.

The second venue for the day was at the RSPB's Dungeness Reserve and on our arrival a Brown Hare stood at the side of the long gravel drive that led to the centre. Highlights from the circular stroll around the reserve and from the various hides on route included a swimming Grass Snake at the first pond, a single Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

feeding in the shallows on one of the many bodies of water, several Sand Martin and the graceful display of a pair of Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus* over a large body of reeds.

Due to Scotney Water turning up some good sightings the year before it was one of two locations that we stopped at on the way back to The Ship Inn. On this occasion we were treated to four more Yellow Wagtails and a summer plumaged Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* – a top bird for the hundredth species of the weekend. The bird was initially picked up in flight over our heads and it landed on the opposite bank in full view before being forced to move further along the bank due to a couple of (Common) Redshank taking offence at its presence. The second port of call was at a lay-by next to a property called ‘Outlands House’ to photograph four Whimbrel standing in a recently ploughed field. It proved to be well worth the stop due to the jangling song of a Corn Bunting being heard. The bird was sat on the top of a fence post and it sang throughout our brief stop.

Sunday’s birding started with a second spell of sea watching at Dungeness. Additional species seen on this occasion were two (Northern) Gannet and five Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* that flew in a line eastwards relatively close in with their spoon like tail projections showing clearly. The ‘Poms’ were a ‘lifer’ species for myself and I had the personal satisfaction of knowing that I was the one that first spotted them despite the array of optics pointing seaward. That morning’s walk through the extensive scrub did not lead to a sighting of the (Eurasian) Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* seen shortly after dawn, however, further sightings of Ring Ouzel were recorded.

After a well deserved pit stop at the local café it was decided to finish off the birding my visiting the ARC Pit to try for the juvenile Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* that had been seen in the vicinity the day before. At the car park we were informed by a couple of other birders that the Diver had been seen on the nearby Long Pit earlier. Unfortunately there was no off road parking beside the large body of water and the parked vehicles on the roadside verge swayed with the passing traffic. Thankfully, we didn’t have to hang around long due to Steve spotting the bird straight away to our left where it was diving for food. After somewhat hurried farewells due to our pretty dodgy situation we headed for home. However, one final species was added to the list shortly after setting off for Portsmouth when two Red-legged Partridge were spotted running across an arable field near Lydd.

The sighting of the Red-legged Partridge made the final number of species seen for the weekend a very respectable 106. The splendid weather combined with the timely landfall and passage of summer migrants once again made the RNBWS weekend to Dungeness a great success.

Species list weekend 20-22 Apr 07

Friday 20 Apr 07 - Seven Sisters Country Park		
Blue Tit	Rook	Greenfinch
Goldfinch	Chaffinch	Robin
Canada Goose	Grey Heron	Jackdaw
Carrion Crow	Shelduck	Heron

Magpie	Common Gull	Black-headed Gull
Little Egret - 6	Skylark	Mallard
Oystercatcher	Cormorant	Meadow Pipit
Dunlin - 12	Mute Swan	Wheatear 2 ♂, 3 ♀
Ring Ouzel - pair	Willow Warbler - 1	Blackcap male
Swallow	Dunnock	Linnet
Fulmar	Great Black-backed Gull	Herring Gull
Brent Goose - 3	Lesser Whitethroat - 2	Redstart
Stonechat	Sandwich Tern - 3; c150	Common Scoter
Great Tit	Song Thrush	Blackbird
Starling	Peregrine Falcon - 1	Reed Bunting
Pied Wagtail	Wood Pigeon	Wren
Goldcrest	Long-tailed Tit	Chiffchaff
Pheasant		

Rye Harbour		
Feral Pigeon	Collared Dove	Mistle thrush
Redshank	Cuckoo - 1+	Tufted Duck
Turnstone	Whimbrel - 6	Lapwing
Ringed Plover - 6+	Yellow Wagtail - 1	Golden Plover - 1
Little Tern - 4	Sanderling - 6	Bar-tailed Godwit - 11
Grey Plover	Mediterranean Gull - 20+	Common Tern
Coot	Knot - 3	Lesser Black-backed Gull
Avocet - 2	Kestrel	Greylag Goose
Gadwall	Snipe - 3	Sedge Warbler
Great Crested Grebe	Cetti's Warbler call only	Grey Partridge - 2
Reed Warbler		

Saturday 21 Apr 07 - Dungeness		
Black Tern - 1 (E)	Whitethroat	House Sparrow
Little Gull - 4 (E); 1; 7(E)		

Dungeness RSPB		
Shoveler	Green Sandpiper	Marsh Harrier - pair
Ruddy Duck	Little Grebe	Greenshank - 2
Sand Martin	Tree Sparrow - 2	Curlew
Pochard	Teal	

Scotney water		
Wigeon	Spotted Redshank - 1 (summer)	

Outlands House		
Corn Bunting - 1 (singing)		

Sunday 22 Apr 07 - Dungeness		
Pomarine Skua - 5	Gannet - 2	

ARC Pit car park		
Stock Dove - 1		

Long Pit		
Great Northern Diver - juvenile		

Dungeness roadside		
Red-legged Partridge - 2		

MONEY COMING IN FOR ALBATROSSES –RSPB BIRDS May 2007



The fortunes of albatrosses have been boosted by the Royal Navy Birdwatching Society, which donated £5,000 to the RSPB. Commodore Martin Alabaster, Chairman of the Society, said, 'Albatrosses are totemic birds to all seafarers and our members are therefore particularly alarmed by the extent to which they are being threatened by longline fishing.' This donation, which was received by the RSPB's Grahame Madge, was made possible following a bequest from Captain David Simpson, Merchant Navy, a long-time member of the RNBWS.

OUR NEW CHAIRMAN



Commodore Martin Alabaster Royal Navy

Having spent his early years in Devon, Pembrokeshire and Hampshire, Martin Alabaster was brought up largely in South London where he was educated at Dulwich College. He joined the Royal Navy and entered Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth as a Midshipman in January 1977. After Naval General Training, he read Engineering at Queens' College, Cambridge, completed the Weapon Engineers' Application Course and took up his first sea appointment as the weapons Section Officer in HMS Bristol. Subsequent appointments included an MSc in Electronics at Southampton University, Project Manager for Seawolf missile development in the MoD PE, Staff College and BRNC Dartmouth as a Senior Divisional Officer. As a Commander, he served as the Weapon Engineering Officer in HMS London, as Naval Assistant to the Chief of Fleet Support and as Project Manager for the Combat Management System, in the Joint Project Office of the tri-national Horizon frigate project. On promotion to Captain he was appointed to the Ministry of

Defence Directorate of Operational Requirements (Sea Systems) as Assistant Director for Combat Systems, Communications and Electronic Warfare. With the introduction of Smart Procurement in 1999 he became the first Director of Equipment Capability (Deploy, Sustain and Recover) responsible for patrol craft, sealift, amphibious and support shipping as well as strategic and tactical airlift. In 2001 he was a member of the Royal College of Defence Studies and in early 2002 he worked in the MoD on the New Chapter to the Strategic Defence Review (Countering International Terrorism). As a Commodore he spent three years in the Defence Procurement Agency in Abbey Wood as the MoD's Head of Project Management. Subsequently, he spent two years in the Fleet Headquarters as Assistant Chief of Staff (Engineering), responsible for all aspects of engineering and safety in the ships, submarines, aircraft and establishments of the Fleet Command. He took up his current post in command of Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth in April 2007. He is married to Moira, a professional violinist, and they live in Bradford-on-Avon with their two children Hugh (11) and Maddy (9).

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. The Society does not have original copies of editions 1,5 and 6.

REVIEW OF JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS

Alauda Vol 74.4 2006 (in French) www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof/.

No Seabird content

Alauda Vol 75.1 2007 (in French) www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof/.

No Seabird content

Alauda Vol 75.2 2007 (in French) www.mnhn.fr/assoc/seof/

Second Complement A La Liste Des Oiseaux De Nouvelle-Caledonie.

Nicolas BARRE, Julien BAUDAT-FRANCESCHI, Jerone SPAGGIARI, Vivien CHARTENDRAULT, Pierre BACHY, Frederic DESMOULINS et Jean GUHRING.

Second complement to the list of the birds of New Caledonia. Over the past 3 years, nine species and one sub-species of birds not previously known on the island have been recorded, increasing the number of species/ subspecies recorded in New Caledonia to 204 taxa. Among sea birds, Hall's Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli* is a new confirmed vagrant. Migrant shore birds form the bulk of these new records, most of them being waders: Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, "black-tailed" Godwit *Limosa sp.*, Little Curlew *Numenius minutus*, Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*, Hudsonian Curlew *Numenius p. hudsonicus*, Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus*, Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*, Australian Pratincole *Stiltia isabella*. Among land birds, European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* is a new vagrant in New Caledonia (Ouvea).

This note reports also the confirmation that White-eyed Duck *Aythya australis* is a breeding resident in New Caledonia, and gives complementary data on the status of some rare, occasional or introduced birds. With these new records, the list of New

Caledonian birds reaches 204 taxa, 89 land birds and 25 sea birds breeding, 50 terrestrial and 26 marine migrants or vagrants and 14 feral species.

Anuari Ornitològic de Les Balears Vol 20 2005 (various languages) www.gobmallorca.com. No Seabird content.

AOS Bulletin 2006 www.aos.org.uk

Reports of a mini cruise from Portsmouth to Bilbao and an outing to Portland include some Seabird reports.

Ardeola Vol 53.2 Dec 06 (in Spanish and English) www.seo.org

Habitat Use And Foraging Success Of Roseate And Common Terns Feeding In Flocks In The Azores David MONTICELU* I, Jaime A. RAMOS** and Jose PEREIRA ***

Summary.-Habitat use and foraging success of roseate and common terns feeding in flocks in the Azores.

Aims: To study the foraging ecology of roseate terns and common terns in the Azores sub-tropical waters where the former species is relatively abundant compared to congeners. In particular, we asked whether foraging behaviour differed between both species, which factors determined individual success at foraging-flocks, and how did our findings compare with previous studies of Atlantic populations in North America (temperate), and Caribbean (tropical).

Location: Ponta das Contendas (38°39'N, 27°05'W), Terceira Island, Azores.

Methods: Foraging-flocks were characterized and compared in terms of species (single- or mixed species), size (no. of individuals), type of habitat (inshore, exposed coast, deep blue water), and presence-absence of biotic effects. We used a generalized linear model (GLM) approach to study the effect of selected factors (species, habitat, biotic effect, cloud cover, wind speed, and their interactions) on individual foraging parameters at these flocks (number of dives min⁻¹, number of aborted dives min⁻¹, number of prey caught min⁻¹).

Results: Both tern species were most often observed in mixed-flocks in the exposed coast habitat, but roseate terns were also prone to feed in mono-specific flocks over blue water. Only one quarter of the total number of flocks recorded was in the presence of biotic effects, a situation where common terns, but not roseate terns, were twice more numerous. The GLM results suggested that species and habitat alone were good predictors of prey caught min⁻¹: common terns achieved the highest success in inshore bays (1.2 fish min⁻¹) while roseate terns maximized their success on exposed coasts (0.8 fish min⁻¹). In the presence of biotic effects, both species dove at a higher frequency, and aborted fewer dives per min, but there was no marked effect on capture rates. Increasing wind speed negatively affected the rate at which both species aborted dives, but again, there was no effect on capture success.

Conclusions: Foraging success did not increase in the presence of biotic associations that should normally facilitate prey capture. This suggests that interspecies competition may arise at mixed-flocks, as found in North American studies. Overall, our results paralleled previous findings that the common tern is adapted to feed in calm, inshore bays. Because this latter habitat was scarce in the study area, we hypothesized that this contributes towards explaining why common terns do not breed in high numbers at this colony site

(ten percent of the Azores population). Conversely, the large area occupied by the marine coastal (exposed coast) and oceanic (blue water) environments in the study area may, at least in part, justify the large number of roseate terns found there (one quarter of the Azores population) in 2001.

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*** Direccao Regional do Ambiente, Direccao de Services de Conservacao da Natureza, 9930-210 Lajes do Pico, Azores, Portugal.

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Bird Study Vol 54.1 Mar 07 www.bto.org

No Seabird content.

Bird Study Vol 54.2 Jul 07 www.bto.org

No Seabird content.

British Birds Vol 99 545-600 Nov 06 www.britishbirds.co.uk

Northern Gannets soaring. Reports of Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus* thermalling have been published recently in BB (see Brit. Birds 96: 252; 97: 249-250). The following observations of adult Gannets were made on Alderney, Channel Islands, overlooking the gannetry on the nearby islets of Les Etacs. Gannets regularly soar in thermals over the sea here when there is an offshore wind on a hot day, sometimes reaching 150 m above sea level; up to 200 Gannets have been observed in a single thermal close to the gannetry, with smaller numbers up to 6 km from it. Gannets also soar on orographic uplift, particularly on wind deflected upwards from the 35° slope of the north face of the gannetry's main islet.

Late in the breeding season, after many young have fledged, a different type of soaring is practised. Using orographic uplift, Gannets will soar to some height over the north face of the main islet, then dive northwards away from the islet, turn back towards it, and come in fast and low over the islet before soaring once more and repeating the cycle. This sequence of repeated soaring and diving is employed by many Gannets, so many that it can be difficult to keep track of the same bird. On the morning of 2nd October 2004, I counted a maximum of seven full cycles by one individual before I lost track of it. The behaviour occurs with a stiff wind, especially against the inclined north face. On days without orographic uplift, this behaviour is uncommon. The total soaring climb, with no wing flaps, is generally about 40-50 m from start to finish (heights reached by the Gannets are easy to estimate when watching from the adjacent 70-m cliff). The fastest of 14 soaring climbs timed on 3rd October 2004 was 10 seconds to climb c. 50 m, and the slowest was 27 seconds to climb c. 40 m. Soaring is also used by commuting Gannets.

On 7th June 2004, a flock of nine returning past Alderney towards the colony glided along on orographic uplift for some hundreds of metres close to and just above the edge

of a 70-m cliff top. On 11th August 2006, a returning flock of eight Gannets thermalled upwards close to and above the same cliff top, then glided onwards to continue their journey.

Jeremy G. Sanders 4 La Vallee Clos, Alderney GY9 3AP; e-mail jerry.sanders@cwgsy.net

British Birds Vol 99 601-662 Dec 06 www.britishbirds.co.uk

No Seabird content.

British Birds Vol 100 1-70 Jan 07 www.britishbirds.co.uk

A history of British Birds – A celebration of the centenary year.

Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005 Pt 1: non-passerines.

British Birds Vol 100 71-136 Feb 07 www.britishbirds.co.uk

No Seabird content.

British Birds Vol 100 137-192 Mar 07 www.britishbirds.co.uk

Foraging behaviour of Pomarine Skuas off the Suffolk coast in winter 1999/2000.

Peter j. Dare and Paul Read

ABSTRACT. Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus* occur regularly in small numbers in the southern North Sea during the winter months. During winter 1999/2000, exceptional numbers, up to 25, were present along the coast of Suffolk between December 1999 and April 2000. Studies of their feeding behaviour established that Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* formed the primary target species between early December and late January, when flocks followed shoals of sprats *Sprattus sprattus* into inshore waters. Numbers of Kittiwakes declined from mid January onwards, associated with the departure of the sprats, and Common Gull *Larus canus* then became the favoured target species. In comparison, attacks on larger gulls were less frequently noted, and no attacks were recorded on Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*. It is suggested that the change from active pursuit of feeding Kittiwakes to a more passive strategy, waiting and ambushing passing gulls, in late winter and early spring was an energy-efficient strategy to obtain food in situations where many potential victims were commuting between estuarine and terrestrial feeding areas and inshore resting areas.

British Birds Vol 100 193-264 Apr 07 www.britishbirds.co.uk

No Seabird content, although it does contain a very interesting article entitled – One hundred years of notable events in *British Birds*.

British Birds Vol 100 265-318 May 07 www.britishbirds.co.uk

The breeding birds of Sule Skerry and Stack Skerry.

Estimated numbers of breeding pairs of seabirds on Sule Skerry recorded during visits by the Sule Skerry Ringing Group in 1975. 1986. 1993 and 2005. Note that Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* experienced a significant failure in 2005. and only six pairs were located .

	1975	1986	1993	2005
Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	43	173	346	314
European Storm-petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	<1000 ^a	200-500 ^b	400 ^b	450 ^c
Northern Gannet <i>Morus bassanus</i>	0	0	0	77
Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	430	874	701	6 ^d
Great Skua <i>Stercorarius skua</i>	0	0	1	2
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	48	30	30	20-25
Greater Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	14	22	22	15-20
Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	1,163	973	710	c. 500
Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	175	100+	<100	0
Common Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>		3,462	7,178	
Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>		40	75	<50
Black Guillemot <i>Cepphus grylle</i>	3	1	0	0
Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>	44,289	42,456		34,348

Key: ^a using observations
^b using ringing activity
^c using echolocation
^d possibly due to poor winter weather conditions

British Birds Vol 100 319-390 Jun 07 www.britishbirds.co.uk
Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2003 and 2004.

British Birds Vol 100 391-454 Jul 07 www.britishbirds.co.uk
The changing status of Balearic Shearwater in northwest European waters
Russell B. Wynn and Pierre Yesou

ABSTRACT. Sightings data collated from the European Atlantic coastline reveal a recent change in the post-breeding distribution of the Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*, and provide evidence for a progressive northwards shift in dispersal patterns. Numbers recorded in the traditional post-breeding quarters, centred on the French Biscay coast, have declined since the mid 1990s and now show marked inter-annual variability. In contrast, numbers recorded from northwest European coastlines have increased since the mid 1990s, the majority being seen along the coasts of northern France and southwest Britain, with smaller numbers north to southern Scandinavia. Although variability in observer effort may have contributed to the observed increase in northwest

Europe, the spatial and temporal consistency of the data suggests that the trend is real. Large numbers of this Critically Endangered seabird are now spending part of the year in

British and Irish waters; this paper highlights the need for future effort-based surveys across the species' non-breeding range, and will provide a baseline for conservation measures in northwest European coastal regions, where large concentrations now occur regularly.

Identification of 'black-and-white' storm-petrels of the North Atlantic

Robert L. Flood and Bryan Thomas

ABSTRACT. This review article consolidates identification criteria for the six species of 'black-and-white' storm-petrel recorded or claimed in the North Atlantic: European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, Madeiran Storm-petrel *O. castro*, Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregatta tropica* and White-bellied Storm-petrel *F. grallaria*. Established knowledge is updated with fresh insights and illustrated with instructive digital images.

We have two aims:

- (a) to support County Recorders in Britain now responsible for evaluating Wilson's Storm-petrel submissions; and
- (b) to bring to a wider international audience current understanding about identification of North Atlantic 'black-and-white' storm-petrels.

The article has two main sections:

- (a) a general discussion about identification of the storm-petrels under review; and
- (b) detailed species accounts, and information on how each species can be distinguished from the other five species (though white-bellied *Fregatta* storm-petrels remain problematic). A template that outlines our view of what constitutes a sound submission of a reportable 'black-and-white' storm-petrel is proposed. The main text is supported by ten appendices covering size illusion and exaggeration, factors of scale, angle of view, descriptive terminology for flight behaviour, chum and chumming, and wear, moult and bleaching. We focus on vessel-based observation since, realistically, this is the optimal means of getting to grips with storm-petrels in the field and is the main source of our experience. Land-based observation rarely affords the views essential to apply the finer points of this presentation.

34,000 seabirds killed annually in South Atlantic.

For the first time, all accurate assessment has been made of the annual 'bycatch' of seabirds in the longline-fishing industry off South Africa. The BirdLife SA/WWF SA report estimates that as many as 34,000 seabirds, 4,200 sea turtles (*Chelonioides*) and over seven million demersal and pelagic sharks (*Selachimorpha*), rays and Skates (*Batoidea*) are killed annually as they forage in the cool Benguela Current off the coasts of western South Africa, Namibia and Angola.

The five migrant pelagic seabird species occurring in the Benguela Current that are most susceptible to the impacts of fishing operations are Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*, Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *T. chlororhynchos* and Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross *T. carteri* (all Endangered), Shy Albatross *T. cauta* (Near Threatened) and White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, (Vulnerable). Also seriously affected is the Cape Gannet *Morus capensis*, a Benguela endemic now listed as vulnerable.

This report provides a platform from which informed decisions can be made that will reduce the impact on these threatened species in the region,' said Samantha Petersen,

manager of Birdlife South Africa's Seabird Programme and the WWF Responsible Fisheries Programme, and author of papers in the report covering the impact on seabirds, and on measures to mitigate seabird mortality.

The report also provides practical recommendations, such as the use of *tori* or bird-scaring lines with attached streamers, which scare birds away from the baited hooks until they are under the water. Other measures which are simple to implement include the use of thawed rather than frozen bait and sufficiently weighted lines, - both of which increase the sink rate of the main line; and setting the lines over the side of the boat, so that the hooks and bait are fully submerged by the time they reach the stern, where the birds congregate.

The report makes specific recommendations for the three countries involved, In South Africa , a critical concern is the low level of compliance with fisheries permit conditions, which require fishermen to use bird-scaring lines, although in an encouraging development a South African vessel was recently fined R2,500 (£175) for failing to use them. In Namibia, bycatch mitigation needs to be included in fishing regulations. In Angola, where artisanal fishermen deliberately catch Cape Gannets and White-chinned Petrels for food, efforts should be focused on developing sustainable alternative livelihoods for coastal communities.

British Ornithologists' Club (BOU) V126.4 Dec 06 www.boc-online.org

No seabird content

British Ornithologists' Club (BOU) V127.1 Mar 07 www.boc-online.org

No seabird content

BTO News 267 Nov-Dec 06 www.bto.org

Urban gulls in Scotland - how many are there?

To some people, gulls are amazing aerial pirates - opportunists that have adapted admirably from their traditional coastal haunts to life in a number of towns and cities across the UK. To some urban-dwellers, however, they are perceived as a nuisance or even a threat to human health and safety. Chris Wernham, Kirsty Park (Stirling University) and John Calladine report on a recent project to review information on urban gulls in a Scottish context.



Photograph by Derek Belsey

BTO News 268 Jan-Feb 07 www.bto.org

No Seabird content.

BTO News 269 Mar-Apr 07 www.bto.org

Quantifying wintering gull numbers in the UK. Alex Banks and Niall Burton report on the results from the 2003/04 – 2005/06 Winter Gull Roost Survey.

BTO News 271 Jul - Aug 07 www.bto.org

New Director. Andy Clements takes over from Jeremy Greenwood this summer.

Dutch Birding V28.6 2006 www.dutchbirding.nl

Rare birds in the Netherlands in 2005. Including some Seabirds.

Dutch Birding V29.1 2007 www.dutchbirding.nl

No Seabird content.

Dutch Birding V29.2 2007 www.dutchbirding.nl

Flock of 14 Relict Gulls in southern Russia and north-western Kazakhstan in May 2000 (p94). On 7 May 2000, V piskunov and A Antonchikov were counting birds along the Maly Uzen' river at the border between Kazakhstan and Russia in Saratov province, southern Russia. Near the village of Dryamsky (50:19.54 N, 47:49.04 E), they discovered a flock of 14 gulls *Larus*, initially flying high but soon descending upon ploughed fields. Two gulls settled at a fairly close distance of c 40 m, the others at c 70 m, and all were easy to observe using binoculars. They were accompanied by other gulls, including Pallas's *L. ichthyaetus*, Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* and Little Gulls *L. minutus*, which allowed the observers to accurately judge their size (piskunov et al 2001). When the observers tried to get closer to the gulls, they took off, regrouped and flew away, in a quick and determined flight, and crossed the Maly Uzen' river into Kazakhstan. The calls of the birds suggested this was a flock of

migrants. It was noted twice, when the flock was descending from high in the sky. It was this unfamiliar sound that attracted our attention to the birds in the first place. When leaving, the birds showed, for a moment, similar vocal activity.

Moult sequence in second calendar year Baltic Gull at Amsterdam in May 2006 (p95). From 25 to 27 May 2006, a second calendar-year Baltic Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus* was present at Erasmusgracht, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. It had been colour-ringed ('red CJC9') on 28 June 2006 as a 'young out of the nest' at Pori, Finland (61:39 N 21:23 E), a location within the breeding range of Baltic Gull (cf Olsen & Larsson 2004). Prior to being recorded in Amsterdam, it had been observed in Anza, Agadir, Morocco, on 23 February 2006 (Seppo Niiranen in litt). If accepted by the Dutch rarities committee (CDNA), CJC9 will become the sixth Baltic Gull for the Netherlands. Altenburg et al (2006) provided an overview of the previous records (only birds colour-ringed as pullus from known provenance are considered acceptable, on current view). This paper presents a description, discusses the identification and puts CJC9's moult pattern into a wider perspective. Hereafter, *L. f. fuscus* is referred to as *fuscus*; the western Lesser Black-backed Gull taxa *L. f. graellsii* and *L. f. intermedius* are referred to as *graellsii* and *intermedius*, respectively. The description is based on field notes by Ruud Altenburg and photographs by RA, Arnaud van den Berg, Ronald van Dijk, Jan den Hertog, Jan van der Laan and Theo Muusse.

Dutch Birding Vol 29.3 2007. www.dutchbirding.nl

No Seabird content

Ibis Vol 149.3 Jul 07

No Seabird content

La Garcilla 128 03.06 Autumn (in Spanish) www.seo.org

No Seabird content.

La Garcilla 130 01.07 Spring (in Spanish) www.seo.org

The Storm-petrel, bird of storms. The European Storm-petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*), is a small marine bird of that raises in small islands and small barren islands of the European coasts. It is fed in the sea and it only visits mainland at night with the purpose of looking for pair and reproducing. The considered world-wide population oscillates between 430,000 and 510,000 pairs, Spanish population being between 5,000 and 10,000 reproductive pairs. The important factors of threat but in places where it raises young are the invasion of terrestrial predators and the luminance contamination that can increase the depredation that is exerted by gulls during the night.

Exploring the Sea. But of ten thousand kilometres crossed, eleven oceanographic areas, seven hundred hours of censuses, forty observed species, twelve thousands localized zones via satellite... Is the great numbers of the project of identification of IBA marine in Spanish waters that SEO/BirdLife for two anuses has been developing. An initiative financed by the European commission, through Life program, and by the Environment Ministry, that touches its equator and that already begins to glimpse Interesting proposals. The accumulated data to date and the development of new methodologies allow already to begin to approach the inventory of itself IBA marine, that 'estara' ready for 'otono' of 2008.

Embarked in Great Sun. SEO/BirdLife studies the mortality of marine birds that causes the fishing with trawl lines in waters from Great Sun with the purpose of promoting directed measures to correct this impact. In twenty-three day of boarding, and after analyzing 180,000 hooks, a total of 203 captured birds of accidental death have been entered. Greater Shearwater is one of those affected, together with Northern Fulmar, the Black-legged Kittiwake, Sooty Shearwater and the Great black-backed Gull. Throughout the summer they continued the observation passages.

The Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* of Tenerife. An appraisal.

La Garcilla 129 04.06 Winter (in Spanish) www.seo.org

No Seabird content.

London Bird Report No 67, 68 2002-03 www.lnhs.org.uk

Numerous Seabird entries.

Marine Ornithology Vol 34.1 2006 www.marineornithology.org

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels: rationale, history,

progress and the way forward. COOPER J, BAKER G B, DOUBLE M C, GALES R, PAPWORTH W, TASKER M.L & WAUGH S M.

Influences of morphology and behaviour on wing-moult strategies in seabirds. BRIDGE E S.

Morphometric similarities between central and peripheral populations of the European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*. MARTÍNEZ-ABRAÍN A, ORO D, VELANDO A, GENOVART M, GERIQUE C, BARTOLOMÉ MA, SARZO B & VILLUENDAS E.

Influence of migratory behaviour on the morphology and breeding biology of *Puffinus* shearwaters. BULL L S.

Diet of Peruvian Diving Petrels *Pelecanoides garnotii* on La Vieja Island, central Peru, between 1997 and 2000, potential fishery interactions and conservation implications GARCÍA-GODOS I & GOYA E.

An urban success story: breeding seabirds on Alcatraz Island, California, 1990–2002. SAENZ B L, THAYER J A, SYDEMAN W J & HATCH D A.

Plumage and sexual maturation in the Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* in the Galapagos Islands. VALLE C A, DE VRIES T & HERNÁNDEZ C.

Southern Giant Petrels *Macronectes giganteus* diving on submerged carrion. VAN DEN HOFF J & NEWBERY K.

Pelagic seabird surveys in the Tuamotu and Gambier Archipelagos, French Polynesia. VANDERWERF E A, PIERCE R J, GILL V A, WRAGG G, RAUST P & TIBBITTS T L.

An exceptionally deep dive by a Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor*. ROPERT-COUDERT Y, CHIARADIA A & KATO A.

First record of the endangered Peruvian Diving Petrel *Pelecanoides garnotii* breeding on Corcovado Island, Peru. VALVERDE ROMERO M B.

Seabirds sighted in the waters off Angola, 1966–1988. LAMBERT K.

Apparent hybridization between Blue-footed *Sula nebouxii* and Peruvian *S. variegata* boobies on Lobos de Tierra Island, Peru. AYALA L.

Additions to the breeding seabirds of Malpelo Island, Colombia. LÓPEZ-VICTORIA M & ESTELA F A.

Marine Ornithology Vol 34.2 2006 www.marineornithology.org

SYMPOSIUM: BEACHED BIRDS

Beach surveys past, present and future: toward a global surveillance network for stranded seabirds. NEWMAN S H, HARRIS R J & TSENG F S.

Using beached bird monitoring data for seabird damage assessment: the importance of search interval. FORD R G.

The *Oil Pollution Act* of 1990 and natural resource damage assessment. HELM R C, FORD R G & CARTER H R.

Factors influencing beached bird collection during the *Luckenbach* 2001–2002 oil spill. HAMPTON S. & ZAFONTE M.

Beached bird surveys in Massachusetts: the seabird ecological assessment network (SEANET). HARRIS R J, TSENG F S, POKRAS M A, SUEDEMEYER B A, BOGART J S H, PRESCOTT R L & NEWMAN S H.

The Shetland beached bird survey, 1979–2004. HEUBECK M.

A review of beached bird surveys within the Wadden Sea Trilateral Monitoring and Assessment

Program (TMAP) 129–132. FLEET D M.

Do low rates of oiled carcass recovery in beached bird surveys indicate low rates of ship-source oil spills? O'HARA P D & MORGAN K H.

Composition of beached marine birds from an oiling event in south eastern Newfoundland. ROBERTSON G J, RYAN P C, DUSSUREAULT J, TURNER B C, WILHELM S I & POWER K.

Produced water from offshore oil and gas installations on the Grand Banks, Newfoundland: are the potential effects to seabirds sufficiently known? FRASER G S, RUSSELL J & VON ZHAREN W M.

Under use and misuse of data from beached bird surveys. WIESE F K & ELMSLIE K.

Beached bird surveys in Lithuania reflect oil pollution and bird mortality in fishing nets. ŽYDELIS R, DAGYS M & VAITKUS G.

A Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophrys* consumes a tern *Sterna* sp. COLABUONO F I, FEDRIZZI C E & CARLOS C J.

Nieuwsbrief NZG (Dutch Seabird Group) 7.3 jaargang 05 (in Dutch)

North Sea Bird Club 22nd Annual Report 2004 www.abdn.ac.uk/nsbc

Numerous Seabird entries.

Ornithologischer Anzeiger Vol 45.2/3 (in German and English) www.og-bayern.de

No Seabird content.

Pacific Seabirds Vol 33.2 Fall 06 www.pacificseabirdgroup.org/ Past journal are available for download.

Estimation of the ecological condition of the Gulf of Tauiskaya (northern Okhotsk, Russia), based on the population dynamics of seabird colonies. By L Zelenskaya.

Colony size, nestinh succrss, and predation on salmon smolts by Caspian Terns and Couble-crested Cormorants in the lower Columbia River. By Dan Roby, Ken Collis, Jessica Adkins, Yasuko Suzuki, Don Lyons and Anne-Mary Myers.

Pheonix Number 23 Jan 07

Some Seabird additions to the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia.

RAFOS Society Newsletter No 83 Spring 07 www.rafos.org.uk

Some Seabird content, particularly in the account of the society's trip to New Zealand.

RSPB Fellows' News Winter 2007 www.rspb.org.uk



Saving Malta's' Yelkouan Shearwaters.

David Agombar describes an exciting new project to protect these rare and threatened seabirds. Those of you who spend time sea-watching will know shearwaters to be among the most exhilarating of seabirds and it is always exciting when they are seen, often in a roaring gale, effortlessly skimming the wave tops. They have long narrow wings and can glide at high speed for hours over the sea with hardly a wingbeat.

Sandgrouse Vol 29.1 2007 www.osme.org

No Seabird content

Scottish Bird News No 82 Dec 06 www.the-soc.org.uk

A number of Seabird references in articles of general interest.

Scottish Bird News No 83 Mar 07 www.the-soc.org.uk

A number of Seabird references in articles of general interest.

Scottish Bird News No 84 Jun 07

No Seabird content

Scottish Birds Vol 27 Jun 07 www.the-soc.org.uk

Amendments to the Scottish List: species and subspecies includes changes to Seabird status.

Autumn skua migration at Hound Point, Lothian. C J MCINERNY & M GRIFFIN

The autumn migration of 4 species of Skua was studied at Hound Point, Lothian. Systematic observations over a 20 year period from 1986-2005 revealed regular passage of a large number of birds at this site. Arctic Skua was the most frequently observed species, largely in September and October, usually seen in small groups, with day totals rarely exceeding 100. Long-tailed Skua was seen more irregularly in smaller numbers during August and September. In most years only a few immatures and adults were recorded; very rarely, day totals of 100-200 adults in flocks of up to 20 were recorded. A similar, irregular pattern was observed for Pomarine Skua, although with larger numbers and flocks of up to 50, and a broader seasonal occurrence from August to November. Great Skua was seen every year, usually as singles or in small groups of up to 10, mostly in September and October. Many birds of all 4 species were observed passing west, apparently moving overland to the west coast of Scotland and the Atlantic Ocean.

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Seabird Group Newsletter 104 Feb 07 www.seabirdgroup.org.uk

Status And Conservation Of Albatrosses And Petrels In The South Atlantic Many

albatrosses and petrel populations worldwide have undergone long-term declines in the last few decades predominantly as the result of unsustainably high levels of incidental mortality in long-line and trawl fisheries. The most recent multi-species review found that of the 53 albatross populations of known status, 42% were decreasing, with no reliable long-term trend data available for the remainder (Gales, 1998). Some of the worst affected are those in the UK Overseas Territories (OTs) in the South Atlantic - The Falklands, Tristan da Cunha and South Georgia.

New Report On How The UK Can Save Albatrosses. A newly published report calls for urgent action to prevent further declines in albatross and petrel populations in the South Atlantic - for which the UK has a leading responsibility (Editor's comments: see previous article for further information). An international workshop organised by Falklands Conservation, held in the Falkland Islands in March 2006, brought together 35 experts and key players to discuss what steps and resources are necessary to implement an effective rescue plan. The meeting formed part of the Falkland Islands Albatross and Petrel Programme and focused on the responsibilities and obligations of Parties to the Agreement for the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP).

Rum's Manx Shearwaters. Rum is designated an SPA for its Manx shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) colony. The most recent survey, by Murray et al in 2001, estimated the number of breeding pairs as 76,000 and 120,000, through visual assessment and tape-playback methodologies respectively. The colony is of huge international importance, comprising up to 30% of the world population.

Monitoring The Storm Petrel Colony At Priest Island. Priest Island RSPB nature reserve, part of the Summer Isles group off the west coast of Scotland, supports the third largest Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* colony in Britain. It is an SPA and SSSI and at time of designation the Storm Petrel colony was thought to be c. 10,000 pairs. However, our monitoring programme using the methods recommended in Gilbert et al. (1998) has shown this to be an over-estimate. Recent work has concentrated on trying to work out reliable methods for estimating and subsequent monitoring of the breeding populations.

Caithness Great Black-Backed Gull Colour Ringing Project. Small numbers of Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus* breed around the coast of Caithness with individual colonies rarely exceeding about 50 pairs. Many of these colonies are in inaccessible places such as the tops of stacks and over the past fifteen years or so it has proved difficult to ring more than about 100 chicks per annum even under the most favourable circumstances. As a result there are currently too few recoveries relating to Caithness alone to allow any detailed analysis of the species' movements or survival. To try and increase the return from the comparatively limited number of birds that can be ringed we began in 2002 a project to colour-ring Great Black-backed Gulls in Caithness. We summarise here progress over the first five years of the project (a more detailed description of the project and its aims can be found in Ringing in Scotland, vol.1, 2006, pp.23-29).

High Numbers Of European Storm- Petrels In The English Channel Driven By Prolonged Spring Gales. Most climate change models appear to predict increasing instability in weather patterns, with more extreme and unseasonable events. The second half of May 2006, was unseasonably stormy in southern Britain and northern

France. From the 15-31st May, a succession of seven low pressure systems swept across the British Isles, driving frontal systems eastwards across southern Britain and Ireland and northern France. This caused unseasonably wet and windy weather, with westerly/south westerly gales on the coasts. Notable gusts during this period included 55 knots at Mumbles (Swansea) on the 18th of May and 58 knots at Lee-on-Solent (Hampshire). Associated with these gales unusual numbers of European Storm-petrels were recorded by sea watchers, especially along the southern coasts of Wales and England, and the following two weeks became one of the notable birding events of 2006.

Population Status And Diet Of Yellow-Legged Gull In The Azores. During the last decades the Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* has increased in numbers throughout the western range of its distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998). In the Mediterranean, the increase has also been noticeable over the past few decades mostly owing to the availability of abundant and predictable food sources from rubbish dumps and from commercial fisheries discards (Arcos et al. 2001). In the Azores, subtropical north-eastern Atlantic, Yellow-legged Gulls numbers are also thought to be increasing in the archipelago raising conservation concerns such as possible displacement of Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* colonies and predation other seabird chicks and adults. Recently gulls have been observed establishing at two of the main Roseate Tern colonies in the Azores: Ilhéu das Contendas, Terceira island and Ilhéu da Vila, Santa Maria island (V. Neves, personal observation), and on Ilhéu da Vila gulls have been observed taking tern chicks (J. M. Soares personal communication). This study examines changes in distribution and numbers of Yellow-legged Gulls in the Azores archipelago in the last 20 years. Data on gull diet were also collected on six of the nine islands of the archipelago.

Seabird Group Newsletter 105 Jun 07 www.seabirdgroup.org.uk

The Newsletter draws attention to the Seabird monitoring programme at www.jncc.gov.uk/smp.

SOS Puffin Project. The Scottish Seabird Centre at North Berwick announced it has received £235,000 of landfill tax funding from Viridor Credits for SOS (Save our Seabirds). SOS Puffin is a community inspired partnership to save the puffins on two Firth of Forth islands (Craigleith and Fidra) and protect the precious kittiwake colony at Dunbar Harbour. The Viridor selection committee was so impressed by the Scottish Seabird Centre's project that they decided to make it their flagship volunteering project for 2007.

Seabirds Make The Agenda At The U.N. Fisheries Meeting. The plight of the world's seabirds was a key agenda item at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Committee on Fisheries, held in Rome between the 5th-9th March. At the meeting, BirdLife - with backing from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, New Zealand and the USA - secured the Committee's support for the development of 'best-practice guidelines' for National Plans of Action to help reduce seabird by-catch.

Change In Role For The Marine Fisheries Agency. The Marine Fisheries Agency has been renamed as the Marine and Fisheries Agency (MFA) in order to reflect new marine environmental responsibilities. The Agency will take on responsibility for the administration of statutory licences and consents for marine works together with marine pollution response, marine renewables and marine aggregates, previously the

responsibility of the Marine Consents and Environment Unit (MCEU). The main aim of this merger is to bring together within the MFA all Government's delivery functions covering the control of coastal and marine developments, including coast defences, wind farms, wave and tidal power, disposal of marine dredgings at sea, contingency planning for oil spills and other marine pollution, and marine sand and gravel extraction.

Protect A Puffin Scheme. The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales is co-ordinating a 'Protect a Puffin' scheme where people can adopt a colour-ringed bird on Skomer for £15. For this they receive information on whether it returned to breed, an annual report on the Puffin season, and a cuddly toy. The money goes to the Trust and helps support Puffin work on Skomer, which includes annual census and productivity and adult survival studies. To 'Protect a Puffin' contact Wendy Barnes-Jones at the Trust on 01239621212 or e-mail her on w.barnes-jones@welshwildlife.org

Wintering Gulls In The UK - Initial results from the 2003/04-2005/06 Winter Gull Roost Survey (WinGS). Once a decade for the last 50 years, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) has organised a national survey of wintering gulls, based on counts made by volunteers at inland and coastal roosts. The principle aim of the latest survey, run between 2003/04 and 2005/06, was to generate population estimates for the five most abundant species wintering in the UK - Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, Common Gull *L. canus*, Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, Lesser *L. fuscus* and Great Black-backed Gulls *L. marinus*. In addition, the survey also provided the data needed to analyse changes in wintering gull numbers over the past few decades, and to identify sites holding nationally or internationally important numbers of gulls. The following summary is based on the final report of the survey (Banks *et al.* 2007) and a recent article in BTO News (Banks & Burton 2007).

NW Gull Project. The NW Gull Project, which involves ringing and colour marking juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gulls at the three large colonies in England, as well as a smaller number of adult and Herring gulls has now been running each year since 1997 with the exception of 2001. A smaller number of gulls have also been ringed at roost or feeding sites. The project's aim is to look at the level of movement between colour and the interaction between gulls feeding/roosting sites as well as on migration. davidsowter@freenet.co.uk

Seevögel Vol 28 Booklet 1,2 Jul 07 (in German) www.jordsand.de/seevoegel/index.htm
Pipefish. A number of articles discussing pipefish as a diet for seabirds in the North Sea.

Seevögel Vol 27 Booklet 4 Dec 06 (in German)
No Seabird content.

UK Seabirds in 2006 (ISBN-13: 978 1 86107 593 2)

A very useful leaflet discussing the results of the UK Seabird Monitoring programme.

Summary. Throughout most of the UK, breeding seabirds were only slightly more successful in 2006 than they were in 2004 and 2005, which were the worst seasons on record. Guillemots suffered from widespread poor breeding success, although those in the Northern Isles fared better than in 2004 and 2005. Fulmars in SE Scotland were again relatively unsuccessful, though more successful than in 2004-5. Kittiwake breeding

numbers in the UK reached a new record low and breeding success was generally poor. In contrast, shag numbers started to recover from the effects of a mortality event in 2005 and their breeding was relatively successful. The previously scarce snake pipefish appeared in the diets of many species in some regions in 2006 (Harris 2006). This fish is thought to be much less nutritious than the seabirds' normal diet and causes some chicks to choke to death; despite this, seabirds repeatedly but unsuccessfully fed them to their chicks. The reasons for the appearance of snake pipefish in UK waters and the implications for the marine ecosystem are unknown, but seem not to be related to increases in sea temperature. Brown rats were successfully eradicated from the Isle of Canna (NW Scotland) in 2006; it is hoped that this will lead to a recovery of Manx shearwaters, which formerly bred there in large numbers.

www.jncc.gov.uk/seabirds

World Birdwatch 12.06 Dec www.birdlife.org

No Seabird content.

World Birdwatch 03.07 Mar www.birdlife.org

Pacific seabird measures 'a step in the right direction'. A meeting of Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), one of the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) controlling fishing in international waters, has passed tough new measures to prevent the accidental slaughter of seabirds by longline fishing vessels in the Pacific. Dr Cleo Small, who represented Bird Life at the meeting in Apia, Samoa, as an observer, described the measures as 'a step in the right direction'.



The fall in Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche impavida* numbers began with the rise of longline fishing (Phil Hansbro)

We're delighted the WCPFC has become the first RFMO to make the use of at least two mitigation measures to prevent seabird bycatch obligatory for all vessels fishing in its waters. However, we're rather dismayed at the timeline to introduce the regulations: The new rules apply to all vessels

fishing in 'albatross waters' - those above 23°N or below 30°S - but introduction of the new rules will be staggered, depending on the size of the vessels operating, with the first coming into force for large vessels (those over 24 metres) operating below 30°S on 1 January 2008. 'We're particularly concerned that small vessels in the South Pacific don't have to follow the new rules until 1 January 2009. Taiwan operates up to 1,000 small vessels in these waters, and unless they adopt the measures sooner, countless thousands of albatrosses and others seabirds will have died a needless, painful death,' said Small.

Hold the anchovies - Magellanic Penguins need them.

Rapid expansion of Argentina's new anchovy fishery may threaten the world's largest

colony of Near Threatened Magellanic Penguins *Spheniscus magellanicus* at Punta Tombo, Patagonia. Anchovies make up more than 50% of the Magellanic Penguin's diet. A paper in the 5 January 2007 issue of Science reveals that the country's plan to develop a small scale trawler fishery for the "under-exploited" anchovy includes no mechanism to quantify the impact on wildlife. The anchovies are turned into fish meal, much of which goes to fish farms in China and Europe. Ten pounds of anchovy may be required to produce one pound of farmed fish. The value of the fishery is a fraction of the ecotourism revenues generated by the penguins and other charismatic megafauna which depend on the anchovies and the larger fish that feed on them. 'Rising global demand for fish meal could fuel unsustainable anchovy fishery expansion on the Patagonian coast'; the paper's authors warn. They say anchovy populations are naturally variable and long-lived predators like penguins, sea-elephants and sea-lions can ride over the scarce years as long as good years follow bad. But when bad years follow bad years, populations may be unable to bounce back. Nearly ten years after the severe El Nino of 1997-8, the Humboldt's Penguin *Spheniscus humboldti* colony at Punta San Juan, Peru, previously 5,000 strong, has reached just 2,000 birds. Research into the causes of this failure to recover points to over fishing: Peru's long established anchovy fishery takes up to 85% of the anchovies in Peru's waters, and studies by the World Bank and others indicate that the catch needs to be halved to provide a sustainable future for fisherman and wildlife (see: World Birdwatch 28(3): 7). Before any further expansion and investment takes place in Patagonia, the authors of the Science paper assert that the costs to other fisheries, risks to wildlife and ecotourism, and food web interactions need to be determined. They add that to make informed decisions about the future management of the fishery, research into ecosystems and indicator species like the penguins is needed.

World Birdwatch 06.07 Jun. www.birdlife.org

Seabirds make the agenda at UN fisheries meeting. The plight of the world's sea birds was a key agenda item at the week-long meeting of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Committee on Fisheries, March 2007. At the meeting, BirdLife with



Tristan Albatross *Diomedea dabbenena* (listed as Endangered by BirdLife) alongside Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata* (Vulnerable) (Fabio Olmos)

backing of delegates from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, New Zealand and the USA secured the Committee's support for the development of 'best practice guidelines' for National Plans of Action to help reduce sea bird bycatch. Of the 22 albatross species, nineteen are now threatened with extinction. Sea bird bycatch in longline fisheries, where sea birds swallow baited hooks and drown, is a major threat to many of these species. At the meeting, the FAO announced their support for a consultation of Member States that will become the first step toward definitive 'best-practice guidelines' for reducing sea bird bycatch and halting

the decline of many albatross and petrel populations. "It's a genuinely good result that the world's fishing nations have recognised the importance of developing best practices to assist them in reducing the impact of their fisheries on sea birds," said Dr Ben Sullivan, BirdLife International's Global Seabird Programme Coordinator. Once agreed, the guidelines will be a valuable tool for implementing the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, helping Member States create more robust National Plans of Action that promote the use of mandatory and voluntary mitigation measures to reduce seabird bycatch. They will also give guidance to Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), the bodies responsible for the management of high seas fisheries and highly migratory fish stocks, on more effective measures to reduce seabird bycatch in their fisheries. "It's crucial that these mitigation measures are stringent, with clearly defined timelines and realistic bycatch targets," Sullivan said. "The result? A greater number of environmentally-savvy fisheries with clear focus on reducing sea bird deaths; a better deal for seabirds."

New Zealand action on longlining. Forest & Bird (Bird Life in New Zealand) have applauded the New Zealand government's decision to impose new restrictions on longline fishing in New Zealand waters. The decision is thought to have been prompted by Ministry observations of sea bird bycatches in late 2006. Onboard a fishing vessel in the Kermadec Islands, observers saw 50 albatrosses caught as bycatch along with seven petrels and two Leatherback Turtles. Most of the albatrosses caught were Antipodean Albatross *Diomedea antipodensis*, endemic to New Zealand and listed as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. "We are pleased that as an initial measure all surface longlining within the New Zealand EEZ [Exclusive Economic Zone] will now be confined to night setting and that all vessels must use approved bird scaring devices," commented Kirstie Knowles, Forest and Bird Conservation Advocate. "It's a positive step forward, and a good example of what we're working to promote with fisheries and governments," said Dr Ben Sullivan, BirdLife's Global Seabird Coordinator.
