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# Sea Swallow

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Grey-headed Albatross,  
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**Aims and Activities:**

The Society was formed in 1947 to provide a forum for the exchange of information on seabirds, and land birds at sea, by members for whom birdwatching is a spare time recreation and hobby. It also aims to coordinate the efforts of individual members using standardised recording methods so that observations can be of value to the professional ornithologist. In addition to the promotion of observations afloat, the RNBWS organises fieldwork and expeditions, usually in cooperation with the Army and RAF Ornithological Societies.

Membership of the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society is open to all those, regardless of nationality, who share a common interest in birds at sea. Instructions for joining can be found on the Society website [www.rnbws.org.uk](http://www.rnbws.org.uk) or by application to the Secretary.

**Subscription Rates:** Members: £12 per year, due 1 January. Subscriptions may be Gift Aided. Library rates: Cost of *Sea Swallow*, (£12) plus postage.

**RNBWS Record Forms:** These can be found on the website. Completed forms should be sent to the Secretary, or to the Editor of *Sea Swallow* (addresses at left).

**Material for publication** in *Sea Swallow* should be sent to the editor. Ideally submissions should be in MS Word or rtf format, but other formats are acceptable. Graphics should be jpeg or tiff. Accompanying photographs are welcome. Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition should reach the editor by 30 June.

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# Chairman's Foreword

There is no need to search for a theme for this year's magazine, for it is right before your eyes. I hope members will like the new *Sea Swallow* - a little larger in size, much more colour, and, I believe, more readable. This last point is important, for we have made these changes with one purpose in mind; to make our magazine more attractive to the casual reader - on the bridge of a ship; in a local library for instance - as a way to inform others about the Society, and hopefully to increase our membership.

However, although there are changes to the look of *Sea Swallow*, its style and content have not changed. We still have serious research pieces, together with more anecdotal reports, and together, it seems to me, the articles just about cover the globe. It is pleasing to see that the number of seabird reports is up, and long serving members who remember articles from the old Antarctic Patrol Ship HMS Protector will be pleased to see seabird reports from the new Protector, now as I write preparing for her second season down south.

Meanwhile, members will wish to be assured that RNBWS is in good financial health, and those of you who have Email addresses will have been kept up to date in the emailed newsletters. If you haven't done so already, I urge you to send us your Email address.

That is enough from me, except to emphasise that anyone who shares our interest in birds, especially seabirds, is eligible and welcome to join the RNBWS. I welcome your feedback on this year's *Sea Swallow*, and in the meantime thank all who have contributed to this ground breaking issue.

*Martin Alabaster*

# Webmaster's Report

The RNBWS Website was the creation of our late Secretary, Commander Frank Ward, and was set up shortly after the beginning of the new millennium. Since then the world database has come online and is maintained and updated by me. The homepage can be found at:

*[www.rnbws.org.uk](http://www.rnbws.org.uk)*

## **World Database**

The world database can be found by clicking on the 'Search' button on the homepage. This database contains over 35,000 land and seabird records received since the RNBWS was set up in 1947, and the vast majority of the data input was completed by Stan Howe in the late nineties. The central part of the database is a map of the world based around Google maps. The centre cross indicates the latitude and longitude of that position, which is shown above the map. A search radius can then be input and any sightings within this area will be displayed. The data can also be searched by 'Common bird name', 'Observer' or 'Ship', amongst others.

Once records have been received and scrutinised by our committee, they are put onto the database and subsequently appear online. However, all records are input by human hand so as you might expect some errors result. The most common is a transposition of latitude or longitude, and is easily put right - once we are aware of the error. Such spurious records are gradually being weeded out, but I encourage visitors to the database to let me know of any errors found, giving the ID number and nature of mistake, to the Email below.

Finally, any member who has any bright ideas for our website, please get in touch.

***CPO Mark Cutts***  
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Plate 1. Short-tailed Albatross/Stellers Albatross *Phoebastria albatrus*, Midway Atoll, Hawaii, 11 April 2010. © Otto Plantema

## Pacific albatrosses: Laysan, Short-tailed, Black-footed and Waved Albatross

*This article was first published in Dutch Birding in 2011.  
For more information, see [www.dutchbirding.nl](http://www.dutchbirding.nl)*

The albatrosses Diomedidae are divided into four genera: Pacific albatrosses (*Phoebastria*), great albatrosses (*Diomedea*), mollymawks (*Thalassarche*) and sooty albatrosses (*Phoebetria*). Within the family, the assignment of genera has been debated for over 100 years. Originally placed into a single genus, *Diomedea*, they were rearranged into four different genera in 1852, then lumped back together and subsequently split again several times, acquiring 12 different genus names in total (though never more than eight at any one time). In 1965, in an attempt to bring some order back to the classification of albatrosses, they were lumped into two genera, *Phoebetria* and *Diomedea*. However, more recent research on the mitochondrial DNA of all of the 14 accepted species found that there were four, not two, monophyletic groups within the albatrosses. These researchers then proposed the resurrection of two of the old genus names, *Phoebastria* for the North Pacific albatrosses and *Thalassarche* for the mollymawks, and these changes have in recent years been accepted and adopted by the majority of researchers and ornithological bodies (cf, eg, Nunn et al 1996, Robertson & Nunn 1998, Onley & Scofield 2007). Of the four genera, the North Pacific albatrosses are considered to be a sister taxon to the 'great albatrosses', while the 'sooty albatrosses' are considered to stand closer to the mollymawks.

The Pacific albatrosses comprise four species: Laysan *P immutabilis*, Short-tailed *P albatrus*, Black-footed *P nigripes* and Waved Albatross *P irrorata* (Onley & Scofield 2007). The first three are the only albatross species that range into the Northern Hemisphere; all other albatross species breed in the Southern Hemisphere or around the Equator, although some irregularly reach the Northern Atlantic as vagrants. The Pacific albatrosses are the most tropical of all albatrosses, with Waved nesting on the Equator and the other three on (sub)tropical islands south of Japan and in the Hawaiian Chain. Identification at sea is not a big issue (unlike the 'great albatrosses' and some of the mollymawks); also because only four species occur in the North Pacific. Juveniles return to the colony 2–3 years after fledging but do not mate until 7–8 years old. During these non-breeding years, they form bonds with the mate that they keep for life.

During 7–12 April 2010, I had the opportunity to visit the impressive breeding colonies of Laysan Albatross and Black-footed Albatross on Midway Atoll, Hawaii (the largest colonies of these species in the world), in the middle of the breeding season, and was lucky to observe a single near-adult Short-tailed Albatross here as well. Some years before, I visited a Waved Albatross colony on the Galápagos Islands during two birding trips in 1995 and 2006.

A selection of photographs of these four Pacific albatross species is presented here; more photographs taken during my visits can be viewed at [www.pbase.com/otto1/midway](http://www.pbase.com/otto1/midway) (Laysan, Short-tailed and Black-footed Albatross) and [www.pbase.com/otto1/am\\_waved\\_alba\\_gal](http://www.pbase.com/otto1/am_waved_alba_gal) (Waved Albatross).

## Midway Atoll

Midway Atoll, c 2250 km (1250 sea miles) WSW of Honolulu, Hawaii, was discovered by a Hawaiian ship in 1867 and soon became a stand-alone possession of the USA, which built a Navy Air Station there in 1938. In 1942, the USA ambushed the Japanese fleet north of Midway (the Battle of Midway), the major turning point in the Pacific War. In 1978, the Naval Air Facilities were dismantled and in 1988 Midway became a National Wildlife Refuge, administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Services. This organization did a good job (with the aid of volunteers), restoring the biological diversity. In 1997, the Atoll was opened for public visits but a few years later the visitor facilities closed again. However, since 2009 a limited number of small groups have been able to obtain a permit for a stay on the atoll.

Midway Atoll has a diameter of 8 km and consists of three islands (combined surface area 7 km<sup>2</sup>): Eastern Island, Sand Island and tiny Spit Island. The navy activities mainly changed Sand Island, resulting in 95 buildings and a large runway. The original plant life was completely altered, and ironwood and coconuts were introduced. Efforts are underway to restore the indigenous vegetation but most of the abandoned navy facilities, including the runway, are still there. Introduced rats and rabbits have been exterminated. Lead poisoning has been a big issue, caused by lead-based paint on the navy buildings from World War II, and Laysan Albatross chicks were found to be especially vulnerable.

The albatrosses are literally everywhere on Midway from late October and eggs are laid in December. In early summer, the adults leave the fledglings, which stay another month on the atoll before their own departure, not returning to Midway for three years.

A total of 18 seabird species breed on Midway, including Christmas Shearwater *Puffinus nativitatis* and Wedge-tailed Shearwater *P pacificus*, Bonin Petrel *Pterodroma*

*hypoleuca*, Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda* and White-tailed Tropicbird *P lepturus*, Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* and Masked Booby *S dactylatra*, Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* and Common Fairy-Tern *Gygis alba*. The rare Laysan Duck *Anas laysanensis* has been (re)introduced. Migrants include Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* and the elusive Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitiensis*. The waters around the atoll also abound with wildlife, with, for example, many Spinner Dolphins *Stenella longirostris*, Green Sea Turtles *Chelonia mydas* and c 60 individuals of the endemic and endangered Hawaiian Monk Seal *Monachus schauinslandi*; to protect the last, a stretch of 4 km beach is closed area.

## Laysan Albatross

Laysan Albatross is one of the smaller albatross species with a wingspan of 'only' c 2.10 m. The population is recovering from a period of severe hunting in the early 1900s, when feather hunters killed many hundreds of thousands of birds, a slaughter which eventually led to the bird's protection on the north-western Hawaiian Islands. On Midway, airport activities and communications antennas also took a heavy toll in bird strikes in the 1940s and 1950s. Perhaps the most significant ecological catastrophe took place during the Battle of Midway, when rats from ships first gained access to Sand Island with dire consequences for nesting birds. The rats are now long gone and large obstacles have been removed from Midway, and since those years the Laysan Albatross population has grown steadily, and now seems to have stabilised. Counts in 2010 on Midway indicated 420 000 breeding pairs, about three quarters of the total world breeding population. Laysan Island, Hawaii, has the second largest colony, with more than 100 000 pairs. Smaller numbers breed on islands off Japan and, since the 1980s, in Mexico (BirdLife International 2010a). The main threat to these birds today is longline fishing. Laysan is also vulnerable to ingestion of floating plastics which have contaminated major parts of the Pacific Ocean. The American art photographer Chris Jordan photographed a series of carcasses of Laysan, literally filled with plastic



Plate 2. Laysan Albatrosses/Laysanalbatrossen *Phoebastria immutabilis*, Midway Atoll, Hawaii, 8 April 2010. © Otto Plantema

debris ([www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/midway](http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/midway)). During my visit, I looked for dead adults with traces of plastic but did not find any, probably because of the instructions for the staff of the US Fish and Wildlife Service to remove all dead animals. Because of these threats, the conservation status is 'Near Threatened'. Laysan can grow very old and Midway individuals older than 50 years are known to exist.

When I visited the colony, chicks dotted the landscape and thousands of (sub)adults were in full courtship display as they sought a mate. The courtship consists of dances with a number of ritual movements.

### **Short-tailed Albatross**

Short-tailed Albatross is the largest of the genus with a wingspan of up to c 2.30 m. The adults are striking with their white head, golden wash on crown and nape and heavy pink bill (on Midway the species is called 'Golden Gooney'). In the 19th century, Short-tailed were very common but feather hunters killed probably 10 million birds and then, in 1939, the colony on the Japanese island of Torishima was covered with 10–30 m of lava. During a survey after World War II on Torishima, no adults were found and at this point the species was assumed to be extinct. However, an estimated 50 individuals (mainly juveniles) survived at sea, and in 1954 the first egg was found on Torishima. The population then grew steadily to about 2400 individuals, breeding on isolated Torishima (c 80%) and Minami-kojima (c 20%; BirdLife International 2010b). Both islands are completely closed to the public and only a few pelagic trips are allowed, and then only to circle the islands. Threats for Short-tailed are longline fishing and volcanic eruptions on Torishima, and the species is classified as 'Vulnerable' (BirdLife International 2010b). Many measures are underway to protect this species: improved fishing techniques, a ban on fishing around the colonies and improvement of the habitat on Torishima by planting grass to stabilize the soil. On the other hand, a dispute between China and Japan over the ownership of Minami-kojima (holding more than 400 pairs) obstructs conservation there.

The first Short-tailed Albatross in Hawaii was observed on Midway between 1936 and 1941. Since then, between one and three individuals have been observed within the Laysan Albatross colony each year. A female Short-tailed that returned from 1989 to 2003 laid infertile eggs in November 1993, 1995, 1997 and 2001. In 1995, it incubated the egg constantly for 62 days before giving up and returning to sea, perhaps a record for a bird known to go without food (Pyle & Pyle 2009). In recent years, two subadult birds have been observed on Sand Island and Eastern Island (both raised and banded in Japan in the 1980s). Disputable reports have indicated possible successful nesting in 1961 and 1962 (Pyle & Pyle 2009, [www.fws.gov/midway/stal.html](http://www.fws.gov/midway/stal.html)).

In the breeding season 2010–11, an adult Short-tailed Albatross was observed incubating a freshly laid egg on 16 November 2010 and the first-ever Short-tailed chick to hatch at Midway Atoll survived a strong storm in February 2011 and the destructive tsunami that hit Midway on 10 March following the strong earthquake off Japan. During the tsunami, the chick was washed some 40 yards from its nest site but was returned by refuge biologist Pete Leary. The nest site was located among a cluster of Short-tailed decoys which played recorded Short-tailed calls to act as a nest site attraction and provide a substitute for the colonial stimulation that many seabirds need to breed successfully. This technique was pioneered by Stephen Kress of the National Audubon Society with Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica* over 30 years ago ([www.fws.gov/pacific/news/news.cfm?id=2144374679](http://www.fws.gov/pacific/news/news.cfm?id=2144374679), [www.photosafaris.com/blog/2011/midway-atolls-short-tailed-albatross-chick-thrives-despite-tsunamiby-joe-van-os](http://www.photosafaris.com/blog/2011/midway-atolls-short-tailed-albatross-chick-thrives-despite-tsunamiby-joe-van-os)).

## Black-footed Albatross

With a wingspan of 1.90 to 2.10 m, Black-footed Albatross is one of the smaller albatrosses. The plumage is a dark greyish brown, although some adults show whitish undertail-coverts and all adults have white markings around the bill base, increasing with age, and below the eye. The world population is estimated at 129 000 adult birds, and breeding colonies are mainly in the Hawaiian Chain. Midway holds the largest colony with 24 000 pairs in 2010 (about 35% of the world population), but showing a slow decline. The second-largest colony, on Laysan Island, holds 21 000 pairs. Torishima off Japan had 1219 pairs in 1998 (up from 20 in 1964), the Bonin Islands 23 pairs and about 400 pairs breed on offshore Mexican islands, of which 337 were on Islas Guadalupe, in 2005 (BirdLife International 2010c). On Midway, every year hybrids of Black-footed and Laysan Albatross are present (cf [www.scholtz.org/bill/nature/Midway/index.html](http://www.scholtz.org/bill/nature/Midway/index.html)).

Black-footed Albatross is strongly threatened by longline fishing. Estimates put numbers of 4000–8000 victims per year, mainly from Japanese and Taiwanese fishing fleets. These high numbers are a tragic loss, and even more so when one realises they are unnecessary: in November 2010, a government officer at King Edward Point, South Georgia, told me that strict longline fishing regulations within the territorial zones around South Georgia had resulted in a tremendous reduction in albatross losses. Black-footed is also vulnerable to ingestion of floating debris. The species is classified as 'Endangered'.

## Waved Albatross

Waved Albatross breed almost exclusively on the lava fields of Española Island in the Galapagos Archipelago (though some may still breed on Isla de la Plata off Manabí



Plate 3. Black-footed Albatrosses/Zwartvoetalbatrossen *Phoebastria nigripes*, Midway Atoll, Hawaii, 11 April 2010.

© Otto Plantema



**Plate 4.** Waved Albatrosses / Galápagosalbatrossen *Phoebastria irrorata*, Galápagos Islands, 7 June 2006. © Otto Plantema

province, Ecuador, where three non-breeding adults were seen in 2001). This sole tropical albatross is distinguished by its very long, bright yellow bill, which looks disproportionately large. During the breeding season, birds forage almost exclusively along the coasts of Ecuador and Peru. The courtship is very spectacular, with rapid bill circling and raised bills, creating a howling sound. The species has difficulties with taking off, so many birds first walk from the nests to high cliffs for an easier launch. Threats are longline fishing (which disrupts the balance of the sexes, because males are killed more frequently than females) and overall numbers are decreasing. On Española, birds are protected by National Park personnel and this island is also a Unesco World Heritage Site. Only a very small part of the colony is open to the public and visitors have to follow strict rules. However, during two visits to Española, I had the impression that tourism is not a threat to these birds. Waved is classified as 'Critically endangered', with an estimated world population of 37, 400 adults in 2001 and presumed to be in decline ever since, although no new full census has been carried out since then (BirdLife International 2010d).

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# Birdwatching in war - Italy 1945

*Major Woolner was a Naval Provost Marshal in Italy, and was sent with his team to Sardinia in February 1945 for two months to deal with problems there before returning to the mainland at Migliarino, near Pisa. The extracts below are taken, with permission, from an unpublished book of his wartime experiences, written in 1974.*

By the end of the first week things were running fairly smoothly in Cagliari, and it was apparent that the presence of an efficient and smartly-turned-out Patrol in the town was having some effect. Meanwhile, I had been casting covetous eyes on the lagoons and salt-beds southwest of the town, which I could see from the terraced gardens of the villa where I was billeted, high on a hill at the back of the town. The gardens were really charming, and there were many birds - in particular Serin Finches which kept up their tinkling song and peculiar fluttering flight from dawn to dusk.

My 'Handbook of Italian Birds', acquired in Florence a few months before, mentioned the Fenicotteri (Phoenicians), or Flamingos, which winter in Sardinia, particularly in the stagni (salt-lakes) of Cagliari, and so one afternoon, with heavy boots, stick and binoculars, I tramped off to the salt lakes in search of them. The tide was out and Curlew, Redshank and other waders as well as a number of Little Egrets were feeding on the sand-spits. Turning off along one of the dykes which separate the enormous lagoons I soon came across a number of Shelduck and further on large flocks of Gadwall, Shoveller and Garganey, with a sprinkling of Teal and Pintail. Finally, at the far end of the area, about five miles from the town, I made out with the glasses a



Plate 5. Little Egret. © Chris Patrick

number of large white birds standing in the middle of one of the lagoons. Surely they were too large to be anything but Flamingos?

Yes, as I moved closer, although against a lowering sun, I made out the pinkish glow of some of the birds, and presently I was standing within 200 yards of the flock. There were twenty-nine birds of various sizes, but only a few of them showed the characteristic pink as they stood. These were Greater Flamingos, not nearly as colourful as the Lesser Flamingos of the Rift Valley Lakes in Africa. As I approached closer suddenly they rose, and circling low, gave me a perfect view. What astonishing birds they are. With legs and neck extended as they fly, and their peculiar 'parrot' beak, they present a wonderful picture in ink-red, black and white. The Sardinians call them 'la Gente Rubia,' (the Red People) and welcome them as they return in the late autumn each year. As March passed their numbers grew, and by the middle of the month there were exactly fifty birds in the flock.

Back in Cagliari everything was now well under control, and I was able to take the patrol for several expeditions into the interior of the island, including a climb in fighting order to the highest peak of the Sette Fratelli. Unfortunately, I was never able to work in a trip to the heart of Sardinia - the 5000 ft mountains of the Gennargentu which are the haunts of Eagle, Vulture and Mouflon. That had to wait until after the war, when I thoroughly explored Sardinia in the course of many holidays, never failing to recapture the extraordinary attraction of that first short visit.

## **Migliarino**

The summons, as usual, came abruptly. We were to rejoin the Main Party, near Pisa, immediately. I was to fly, while the Patrol travelled by sea. I phoned for a seat on the next plane and drove out to Elmas. The pilot regretfully said he couldn't take Sardo (my pet hound), so back he went, to come by sea with the rest of the Patrol. There was the usual long wait at the airport before the Naples plane came in. Then we were up and swinging wide out to sea. As we passed over the salt-lagoons I looked down. There, in the middle of their favourite salt-bed, stood the Red People.

In Naples I found I was to leave next morning in the Admiral's private plane, a Baltimore fighter-bomber. This was a splendid trip. The plane had a perspex dome from which I had a grand all-round view. First up the Liri Valley with a glimpse of Cassino. Then, flying very low, along the edge of the Alban Hills past our old campsite at Nemi. We were too far east to get more than a glimpse of Rome as we crossed the upper waters of the Tiber. Then came Lakes Bolsano and Trasimeno before we were down at Rosignano airport.

Within a week we were under canvas just north of the Arno at Migliarino - firm turf in a lovely pine-wood setting.

In between my liaison tours I got in a fair bit of bird-watching and walks with Sardo, though he suffered with distemper for three weeks and was not at all fit. Frequently I saw the beautiful, crested Hoopoes and heard the soft, triple whooping call from which they get their name. Also nesting in the woods were black-and-gold Golden Orioles, whose boat-like nests were cleverly suspended from the crotch of a branch. In the brambles and scrub between the pines were many species of warbler, while Nightingales were so numerous and sang so loudly at night that a deputation of our ratings begged me to move camp elsewhere as they were quite unable to get any sleep!

*Major LR Woolner, Royal Marines, 1974*

*Below is a list of birds seen during Major Woolner's two months in Sardinia and his short time in Migliarino.*

### **Sardinia February–March 1945**

**Birds seen near the lagoons and saltings:** Peregrine, Osprey, Grey Heron, Little Egret, Flamingo, Squacco Heron, Shelduck, Mallard, Teal, Wigeon, Pintail, Shoveller, Garganey, Cormorant, Great Crested Grebe, Kentish Plover, Green Plover, Sandpiper, Redshank, Snipe, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-back Gull

**Birds seen in the countryside around the villa:** Starling, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Serin, Chaffinch, House Sparrow, Corn Bunting, Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Lesser Whitethroat, Sardinian Warbler, Cetti's Warbler, Fantailed Warbler, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Stonechat, Black Redstart, Robin, Swallow, Hoopoe, Kestrel, Raven, Hooded Crow, Starling, Buzzard, Bonelli's Eagle.

### **Migliarino April 1945**

**7 April:** Found Blackcap's nest near my tent; one egg. Nuthatches entering hole in pine tree, and very noisy.

**8 April:** 3 Hoopoes seen feeding. The crest is temporarily raised as the bird alights after flight. 2 more Blackcap nests now found, one with 5 eggs, the other with 4 (with the cock sitting). 3 Blackbirds sighted. Much song, especially from Nightingales. Kestrels at nest in pine.

**10 April:** Golden Oriole's nest - unmistakable - hanging from 2 branches, 20 feet up. Moorhen seen. An Osprey and several Rooks passed over the camp. 'My' Blackcap's nest now has three eggs, but I fear it has been deserted. Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers very common, as are Magpies and Jays. Also seen is the Beccamoschino (Fantailed Warbler).

**11 April:** 4 Roe deer hinds seen (we thought they had all been killed by the 'Tedeschi' or the mines). Serin very active, as are Chiffchaffs.

**12 April:** An Osprey, one leg only hanging, seen hunting over vineyards near Serchio.

**13 April:** Sighted a Wryneck. Flat grey head with chocolate stripes down the back and chocolate eye streaks. Grey back and breast, woodcock-brown wings. Peculiar position on branch and 'snaky' movement of head. Green Sandpiper flew up from the dyke; bronzy chocolate back, wings and head, white rump, tail and underparts, swift snipe-like flight, with a chattering call in flight.

**14 April:** 3 Green Woodpeckers and 2 Hoopoes feeding near each other in a meadow. 3 Jays together. Cock Wheatear captured at Marina di Massa.

**16 April:** Saw a Mistle Thrush feeding on the ground. Nightingales singing well.

**20 April:** Broken-legged Osprey seen again. Also a grand view of a Red Footed Falcon. Very handsome cock Redstart with hen. A small chestnut mouse with a furry tail ran out of a tiny nest. Hoopoes up-up-upping, particularly in the early morning. Chiffchaffs singing in the woods. Nightingales singing all around.



**Plate 6.** Ile Vache Marine. An eight hectare island that is likely to be the target of the next rat eradication project in the Chagos Archipelago - possibly an opportunity for an RNBWS expedition to assist in this worthwhile venture. © Peter Carr

## The Chagos 2012 Scientific Research Expedition

*Major Peter Carr was the British Forces Executive Officer in Diego Garcia from October 2008 to October 2010. He then left the Royal Marines after 32 years' service to take up the post of Environmental Director in Diego Garcia.*

I had the good fortune to be invited to join another Chagos Scientific Research Expedition (Chagos is also known as the British Indian Ocean Territory - BIOT - by the way), which took place from 13 February to 7 March 2012. As with previous expeditions, the scientists first gathered at the US Naval Support Facility on Diego Garcia before boarding the BIOT Patrol Vessel, the PACIFIC MARLIN, for the trip to the northern atolls. Supported by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and numerous other institutions, twelve scientists and supporting team members took part in the first full scientific expedition since the establishment of the 'no-take' Marine Protected Area (MPA) in April 2010. The overall aim of the expedition was the continuation of long-term monitoring programmes, as well as establishing the best way to monitor and manage the MPA. These initiatives help the BIOT Administration in the FCO to increase their understanding of this extraordinarily rich area of marine and terrestrial biodiversity and to assist them in managing the world's largest fully no-take MPA.

My primary task on the expedition was to repeat the censuses of the seabird colonies that were conducted in 1996 (Symens, 1999), 2006 (McGowan, Broderick & Godley, 2008) and 2010 (Carr, in prep). Secondary tasks were to assess whether the present system of designation of IUCN Important Bird Areas (IBAs), based upon specific islands, is the most conservation-efficient method; to develop the plans for enhancing the environment of some of the islands to improve their appeal to breeding seabirds; and finally to assist in the development of the revised Chagos Environmental Management Plan. In between tasks, I also conducted field work for a Masters by Research degree that hypothesises on the (re-)colonisation by Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* of the atolls in relation to human habitation and shoreline vegetation.

## The Breeding Seabirds

In macro terms the 2012 results assisted in building the picture of seabird breeding phenology in the Chagos. Combined with the censuses from February/March 1996 and 2006 and data collected by fellow RNBWS member and former British Representative Commander Chris Moorey RN and myself between October 2008 and December 2010, the results show that the seabirds of the Chagos do not all breed annually and moreover do not use the same islands for breeding each time.

The year-round seabird counts have revealed that Red-footed Booby breeds continuously throughout the year, with spikes in breeding triggered by as yet unknown factors. Data also suggests that the trigger on the southern atoll of Diego Garcia is about two months later than in the northern atolls. This species is still expanding its breeding range in the Chagos, with a new small colony of 23 pairs discovered on Petite Ile Mapou in 2012 and at least two pairs found to be breeding on the eastern headland of the formerly inhabited Ile Diamant. (Both of these islands are in the unprotected western half of the Peros Banhos atoll). A single pair was also recorded nesting on the Ile Lubine group of islands in the Egmont Islands atoll. Since the first comprehensive breeding seabird survey in 1996 (Symens, 1999) this species has colonised, (or more probably re-colonised) four islands in the Salomon Islands atoll, both island groups of the Egmont Islands atoll, and now the northern islands of the western Peros Banhos atoll.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* has been shown to breed in the Chagos at a less than annual cycle (Carr, in prep.). In February 2012 there were 155,500 breeding pairs on four islands and a total of 48,000 pairs on Ile Longue in eastern Peros Banhos (the highest count ever for a single island). However, what is now becoming clear is that some islands are periodically deserted as breeding sites. This phenomenon has been recorded elsewhere (Feare, 1976) and it may be, as Feare considered to be the case on Bird Island in the Seychelles, that parasitic ticks are the cause, infestations being noted in July 2009 on Ile Longue, an island not used for breeding in 2010. Another example of desertions and island cluster breeding epicentres is that in 2012, 32,000 breeding pairs were present on Middle Brother

(one of the Three Brothers), while in July 2009 there were an estimated 10,000 pairs on each of these three islands. Similar 'island hopping breeding' for this species has been noted from clusters of islands in eastern Peros Banhos.



**Plate 7.** A Sooty Tern chick heavily infested with parasitic ticks - possibly the cause of periodic desertions of islands classified as Important Bird Areas in the Chagos. © Peter Carr

The unravelling of the breeding phenology of the Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris* has been equally challenging. This species has three breeding epicentres in the Chagos: Nelson's Island, the Three Brothers and eastern Peros Banhos. In February 1996 the breeding at all three epicentres coincided and resulted in a count of 43,275 breeding pairs (Symens, 1999). In 2006, however, the breeding epicentres were presumably asynchronous and resulted in a count of only 2,682 breeding pairs and a cautious assumption that this species had catastrophically declined in the Chagos (McGowan, Broderick & Godley, 2008). Through-year

counts between 2008 and 2010 have shown this species also breeds on a less than annual cycle and the three epicentres of breeding are not necessarily synchronised.

## The Important Bird Areas

The conclusion drawn from analysing the breeding seabird data has been that classifying individual islands as IBAs based upon annual spot-counts does not necessarily do ecological justice to the island (Carr, 2011). The proposal now under consideration is that clusters of islands (and possibly the surrounding and intervening seas) should be classified as IBAs, e.g. the eastern Peros Banhos island group, taking in to consideration the shifting nature of the most populous breeder, Sooty Tern (Carr, in prep).

## Ecological restoration

In amongst the proposed cluster of island IBAs are islands currently of low ornithological importance. These are usually islands that were given over to the coconut *Cocos nucifera* plantation regime and are now infested by Black Rats *Rattus rattus* and dominated by a monoculture of unmanaged coconuts, both of which are strong deterrents to most ground-nesting seabirds. The long term aspiration for these degraded islands is some form of ecological rehabilitation in order to improve their biomass and biodiversity, particularly for breeding seabirds and sea turtles. The precedent has been set with the 2006 rat eradication effort on Eagle Island, the second largest land mass in the archipelago (243.5 hectares), though sadly, this far-sighted and bold venture was unsuccessful (Daltry, Hillman & Meier, 2007).

Sights have now been set on removing rats from the tiny Ile Vache Marine in eastern Peros Banhos. Set amongst six IBAs, it is hoped that a successful rat eradication project on this island will provide a further safe haven for breeding species. At eight hectares, with meticulous planning, financial backing and, most important, political will, this island is very feasible for a successful ecological restoration venture.

## The Future

Future ornithological research and conservation work in the Chagos may offer opportunities for other members of RNBWS. If a feasibility study of Vache Marine takes place on the planned 2013 scientific research expedition, the attempt at full rat eradication may take place later the same year, and volunteers will be sought to assist a rat eradication specialist on the project. This is likely to involve a ship passage to Peros Banhos from Diego Garcia, living under expedition conditions on an uninhabited tropical island for a period of weeks, laying bait, setting traps, and taking part in a very worthwhile venture. The fact that the project, if successful, will improve the prospects for breeding seabirds must surely make it a project worthy of serious consideration by the RNBWS.

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Peter Carr



**Plate 8.** Wandering Albatross, South Georgia, 19 April 2011. © Steve Copsey

## **Birding Abroad: The South Atlantic Ocean**

*A chilly morning in February 2011 saw HMS York slip away from Portsmouth naval base on her way to the South Atlantic. As we departed home shores I started my quest for the trip, which was to see 100 species of seabird before the ship returned to Hampshire in July.*

The Solent and the English Channel allowed me to pick up some easy ticks in the form of Black-headed, Common and Herring Gulls as well as Gannet, Fulmar and Kittiwake, not forgetting Razorbill and Guillemot. The passage south took the ship close to the Mediterranean and no sooner had we passed the Straits of Gibraltar than we were ordered to turn back and head for Libya. All on board were glad to help out in the evacuation of foreign nationals from Benghazi on 2 March, but I was particularly happy as I encountered a good passage of Skuas a couple of miles offshore. Great, Arctic and Pomarine were seen all heading west, interacting aggressively with overwintering Lesser Black-backed Gulls and the local Yellow Legs. The breakwater in Benghazi also produced several Audouin's Gulls, which was a life bird for me. My tally was ticking along nicely. With the evacuees dropped off in Malta we headed out of the Med and continued on our way, encountering a single Yelkouan Shearwater north of Gozo as we passed by.

A refuelling stop in the Cape Verde Islands produced Fea's Petrel and Red-billed Tropicbird along with several Cape Verde Shearwaters. As we continued south through the tropics we sailed headlong into a north-bound passage of seabirds with dozens of Cory's Shearwaters and Leach's Storm Petrels passing the ship each hour. The warmer seas also produced three Booby species; Brown, Masked and Red-footed. It was interesting to compare the different feeding strategies of Masked and Red-footed Boobies as they both attempted to harvest the supplies of Flying Fish in the tropics. The Masked would hover briefly then plunge dive much like our own Gannet, while the Red-footed would spot the fish underwater and as the fish started to fly they would swoop down and pick them off in mid-air. Without doubt both species were using the ship as an aid to feeding, for as we pushed through the sea we caused the flying fish to fly/glide out of our way. The birds recognised this behaviour and the ship attracted Boobies like a magnet for the next week or so. A single Brown Noddy resting on the roof of the helicopter hangar was brought to my attention by a colleague asking me if I had seen the 'fat Starling up top'. As we continued south the air and water temperatures started to drop, and we started to meet our first South Atlantic specialities. Species such as Atlantic and Spectacled Petrel were soon joining the list, as were Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross, Great Shearwater and Wilson's Storm Petrel.

A day or two away from Port Stanley Black-browed Albatrosses became common. This is the one seabird I always associate with the Falklands and true to form they were seen every day for the next three months. White-chinned and Soft Plumaged Petrels soon followed and as East Falkland became visible both Southern and Northern Giant Petrels began to accompany the ship, the former always in the majority. We passed close to Port Stanley to announce our arrival and as we passed Cape Pembroke we had splendid views of Imperial and Rock Shag. Soon after, streams of Sooty Shearwaters flew by, as did South American Terns. Two species of Penguin were also easy to locate on the surface; Gentoo and Magellanic busy fishing whilst being pestered by the ever present Kelp Gulls trying to steal an easy meal.



**Plate 9.** Black-browed Albatross, South Atlantic, 24 April 2011. © *Steve Copsey*





**Plates 10–17.** Previous pages, top left; Light-mantled Albatross, South Georgia, 19 April 2011. Middle left; Brown Noddy, Atlantic Ocean, 20 March 2011 and Cory's Shearwater, Atlantic Ocean, 17 March 2011. Lower left; Slender-billed Prion, South Atlantic, 15 April 2011. Top right; Antarctic Skua, South Georgia, 19 April 2011. Middle right; Antarctic Tern, South Georgia, 19 April 2011 and Wandering Albatross, South Atlantic, 24 April 2011. Lower right; Leach's Storm-petrel, Atlantic Ocean, 18 March 2011. All photographs © Steve Copley

We patrolled the islands for the next month or so in increasingly rough seas, calling in at various bays and inlets when the weather dictated. During this period two of the Great Albatrosses made it onto the trip list. Wandering Albatross, the bird which for many epitomises the South Atlantic were seen most days to the south and east of the Islands, while on our patrols to the north and west we tended to run into more Southern Royals. Initially I was a little concerned about telling the two apart, especially at distance over rough seas, but as time passed the task became easier as the jizz of each bird became more recognisable. Birds which breed further south and winter in the milder waters of the Falklands started to appear as March gave way to April. Cape Petrels, Southern Fulmars and Pale-faced Sheathbills began to be seen on most days. Slender-billed Prion was probably the most common seabird seen during these island patrols, and on one day several flocks of hundreds passed the ship within a few minutes of each other.

The highlight of the trip for me was the patrol to South Georgia. A four day passage south-east was followed by two days in Grytviken and another two days around the east of the island. This was my chance to catch up with some of the more difficult seabirds that did not commonly appear in Falkland waters and soon I was seeing new birds. Grey-headed Albatross numbers started to increase the nearer we got to South Georgia and I had some crackers in the form of Grey Petrel, Antarctic Prion and Light-mantled Albatross. However, the one bird I was after more than any appeared on the 18th. A single Sooty Albatross made a couple of passes on the ship before drifting away over lunch time. It was an Albatross that I had missed on two previous visits down south, but was certainly worth the wait. As we neared Grytviken Macaroni Penguins, South Georgia Shags and Antarctic Terns were indentified and towards the south east of the island Chinstrap and King Penguins became more obvious - particularly the latter



**Plate 18.** Cape Petrel, Falkland Islands, 13 April 2011. © Steve Copley



**Plate 19.** King Penguins, South Georgia, 20 April 2011. © Steve Copsey

which breed on the island in large numbers. Blue Petrels are another South Georgia regular and sure enough we saw many birds over the period we spent around the island. Diving Petrels too were seen in moderate numbers. These were mainly Common Diving Petrels and I was also reasonably confident that I had seen a Georgian Diving Petrel but the two are very difficult to differentiate at sea so I was never completely sure. We departed from Grytviken harbour, threading our way through a number of small bergs on 23 April, the temperature having plummeted the previous evening. Easter Sunday fell on the 24th and with virtually the whole day off, I enjoyed nearly nine hours looking out over a relatively calm sea with the sun shining bright. Three Wandering Albatross spent most of the day drifting in and out of the ship's wake, accompanied by Black-browed and Grey-headed Albatrosses and often the Wanderers were so close to the stern I could have reached out and touched them. As the ship cut through the water our propellers often churned up a tasty morsel and all three Wanderers would drop to the surface to feed on what was on offer. Cape Petrels were also ever present in the wake and would be quick to join them, looking tiny in comparison.

The remainder of the patrol passed by all too quickly and whilst no more new birds were seen around the Falkland Islands, I did have more opportunities to get to grips time with the two Giant Petrel species and the Falkland sub-species of Antarctic Skua. As the winter weather closed in I started to see more Grey-headed Albatrosses around the islands but never in the numbers of the Black-brows, which every day passed the 100 mark, wherever we seemed to be. Numbers of Cape Petrels and Southern Fulmars built up while numbers of Great and Sooty Shearwaters dwindled to zero as they headed north in search of warmer climes. All too soon it was time to head home; my seabird tally for the trip stood at a very pleasing 75 species but I was still 25 short of my target. Fortunately though, my luck was in; the ship was heading back to the northern hemisphere via the Pacific Ocean and the Panama Canal. But that, as they say, is another story.

**Steve Copsey**



Plate 20. Steppe Buzzard. © Chris Patrick

## Exercise Raptor Watch

*Exercise Raptor Watch was a RAFOS-led, Joint Service raptor survey held in Cyprus from 16 September to 8 November 2010. Fifteen RAFOS members took part, together with two from AOS, and three from RNBWS - Steve Copsey, Mark Cutts and Chris Patrick.*

The background to this was that a number of new communication aerials had been put up in the Sovereign Base Area in recent years, and it was thought that these might be a serious hazard to large raptors during migration. The military therefore undertook to carry out raptor surveys, and these began in 2007. The main aim of our expedition therefore was to record all birds near the aerials, using the same viewing point as in previous surveys (the 'Plinth'), in order to provide consistency. The second aim was to continue with the Wetland Survey that RAFOS had started in 2008 in various reed beds nearby, and the third was to monitor the departure of Eleonora's Falcon from the Akrotiri and Episkopi cliffs for their wintering grounds in Madagascar.

We were asked to undertake the survey from the beginning of September until the second week of November, but this was beyond our capacity so we settled for 8 weeks. With hindsight we realise that we should have started a week earlier, for the Honey Buzzard migration was well underway by the time we started on 16 September.

## The Raptor watch

**Honey Buzzard** (*Pernis apivorus*) make up about 97% of the large raptors that migrate through Cyprus in the Autumn and this passage was well under way when we started the watch on 16 September. The learning curve was pretty steep for the first 4 surveyors who had very limited experience of this type of work and I'm sure we made one or two errors. Fortunately, on 18 September we were joined by Jerry Bilbao, who has taken part in many raptor surveys, and under his expert tutelage our knowledge and identification skills quickly improved. Daily Honey Buzzard numbers built up rapidly and we recorded our biggest day on 21 Sep when 440 went through during the morning session. (On the same day, BirdLife Cyprus were conducting a Raptor Watch at Paphos Headland and they recorded 690). These birds continued to come through in good numbers, 100+ per day, until the end of the month when the numbers started to fall off.

Other good birds during September were 8 **Booted Eagle** (*Hieraetus pennatus*), 6 **Montagu's** (*Circus pygargus*), 2 **Pallid** (*Circus macrourus*) and one **Hen Harrier** (*Circus cyaneus*), several **Long-legged** (*Buteo fufinus*), **Common** (*Buteo buteo*) and **Steppe Buzzards** (*Buteo buteo vulpinus*), a single **Egyptian Vulture** (*Neophron percnopterus*), while a **Griffon Vulture** (*Cyps fulvus*) was seen around the Kensington Cliffs. An **Osprey** (*Pandion haliaetus*) was seen on 3 days and on 26 September a **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** (*Accipiter nisus*) put in an appearance, as well as a pair of **Levant Sparrowhawk** (*Accipiter brevipes*). These are the subject of a BirdLife Cyprus rare bird report, as is the **Caspian Tern** (*Sterna caspia*) seen by Dick Knight and Daphne Yates at Zakaki Marsh on 28 September. The **Red-footed Falcon** (*Falco vespertinus*) passage also made a slow start in September

For the first week in October the **Honey Buzzard** count remained at around 30–50 a day but after that it dropped to tens and low teens. However, other good birds were coming through in small numbers to keep us interested. **Marsh Harrier** (*Circus aeruginosus*) were seen daily in ones and twos and **Black Kite** (*Milvus nigrans*) were regular enough to keep us on our toes and make us check all birds thoroughly. **Bonelli's** (*Hieraetus fasciatus*) and **Booted Eagle** were reported, with most of the Booted Eagles being the pale morph. **Red-footed Falcon** numbers increased to reach 65 on the 4th and 41 on the 6th. **Long-legged, Steppe and Common Buzzard** continued to be seen and 2 more **Osprey** were reported on 11 and 12 October. **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** became a regular sight and the odd **Hobby** (*Falco subbuteo*) was seen from the observation site, though it was more common at Bishops' Pool.

October saw the arrival of Mark Cutts, Steve Copsey and Chris Patrick, our three RNBWS members.

Meanwhile, the Raptor Watch continued to provide good birds. On 15 Oct Mark and Steve, both with wide raptor experience from Gibraltar Raptor Watches, were on the plinth and observed 2 flocks, one of 37 birds and the other of 39 birds. Both agreed that they were Sparrowhawk; and based on the number of birds and the flocking activity they were assessed to be **Levant Sparrowhawk**. They submitted a Rare Bird Report, but, unfortunately the birds were a long way away and Steve's photos were not detailed enough for a positive ID, so we shall never be certain.

Raptor numbers started to fall off towards the end of October, but during the first week of November we had 3 **Pallid Harrier** and a late push of **Hen Harriers** in ones and twos. **Red-footed Falcon** had by now pretty well stopped, but the occasional **Steppe** and **Common Buzzard** kept us watching.



Plate 21. Male Red-footed Falcon. © Steve Copsey

On the last Monday afternoon I managed to get both the military vehicles cleaned and returned to Akrotiri, along with the camp beds and bedding that I had borrowed, and that left us the Tuesday free, so three of us took a trip up to Troodos for a 7 km walk round Mt Olympus. There we picked up **Cyprus Coal Tit** (*Periparus ater ssp cypriotes*) and the locally endemic sub-species of **Winter Wren** (*Troglodytes troglodytes cypriotes*). **Chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*) were abundant in Troodos Square and we spotted a **Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*); but it was not until we took a walk round the paths surrounding the new visitor centre that we caught up with our main target, **Red Crossbill** (*Loxia Curvirostra*), - at least a dozen, though only one or two red males - and the endemic sub-species of **Short-toed Treecreeper** (*Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae*).

That was the end of Raptor Watch 10. As to our other two aims, the wetland survey was achieved, with visits every 3 or 4 days, though **Phasouri Reedbed** was completely dry and in an awful state. (The Cyprus Government does not allow any water in during the summer months, for all water is needed for the farmers). As a result, there were no water birds or waders, and even Yellow and White Wagtails were scarce. A few **Red-throated Pipit** (*Anthus cervinus*) were seen hunting for insects around the feet of the few remaining cows. However, it is indeed an ill wind that blows no-one any good, for



Plate 22. Bluethroat. © Chris Patrick

**Fan-tailed Warbler** (*Cisticola juncidis*) have benefited from this neglect; they are all over the place. Nevertheless, the state of this important wetland is a disgrace and it is essential that a management plan is adopted and implemented very soon.

**Zakaki Marsh** is very much the same as it was during the survey of 2008. The Marsh is still flourishing but the port traffic on the narrow track is heavy. There was no strike this time so it was not as bad as 2008, but the area is still an accident waiting to happen. However, we did see some good birds there. Early morning usually gave us the sight of 70+ **Grey Heron** (*Ardea cinerea*) at the back of the marsh, and **Bluethroat** (*Luscinia*

*svecica*), **Bearded Tit** (*Panurus biarmicus*), **Penduline Tit** (*Remiz pendulinus*) and **Moustached Warbler** (*Acrocephalus melanopogon*) were all present as they passed through. Also in evidence were **Common Kingfisher** (*Alcedo atthis*), **Sedge Warbler** (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*) and **Reed Warbler** (*Acrocephalus scirpaveus*) while **Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus collybits*) and **Willow Warbler** (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) did their best to challenge the ID skills of everyone. Other interesting birds seen here were **Eurasian Spoonbill** (*Platalea leucorodia*), **Little Bittern** (*Lxobrychus minutus*), **Water Rail** (*Rallus aquaticus*) and **Whiskered Tern** (*Chlidonias hybridus*), plus a few waders.

**Lady's Mile** held the usual populations of **Kentish Plover** (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) with **Spotted Redshank** (*Tringa erythropus*), **Common Redshank** (*Tringa totanus*), **Little Stint** (*Calidris minuta*), **Dunlin** (*Calidris alpina*), **Common Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius hiaticula*) and the occasional **Curlew Sandpiper** (*Calidris ferruginea*).

The least affected area is probably **Bishops' Pool**. Here we saw **Little Crake** (*Porzana parva*), **Spotted Crake** (*Porzana porzana*), **Ferruginous Duck** (*Aythya nyroca*), **Glossy Ibis** (*Plegadis falcinellus*), the occasional **Wood Sandpiper** (*Tringa glareola*) and lots of **Coot** (*Fulica atra*), **Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloropus*) and **Little Grebe** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*). The surrounding trees also held good numbers of **Spotted Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa striata*), the regional race of **Great Tit** (*Parus major aphroditi*), and **Greenfinch** (*Carduelis chloris*), while **Goldcrest** (*Regulus regulus*), **Blackcap** (*Sylvia atricapilla*) and in the latter part of the survey **Robin** (*Erithacus rubecula*) were all spotted. However, it was the **Red-breasted Flycatcher** (*Fidicula parva*) that created the most interest, and a rare bird report was submitted.

Other birds on migration, and seen regularly at most locations, were **Whinchat** (*Saxicola rubetra*), **European Bee-eater** (*Merops apiaster*), **Red-backed Shrike** (*Lanius collurio*), **Northern Wheatear** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) and **Yellow** (*Motacilla flava*) and **Grey Wagtail** (*Motacilla cinerea*), while **Isabelline** (*Oenanthe isabellina*) and **Eastern Black-eared Wheatear** (*Oenanthe malanoleuca*) and **Lesser Grey Shrike** (*Lanius minor*) had a rather more limited distribution. Chris Patrick found the only **Desert Wheatear** (*Oenanthe deserti*) of the trip.



**Plate 23.** A super study of Desert Wheatear. © Chris Patrick

By the end of October the summer breeding visitors such as **Cyprus Wheatear** (*Oenanthe cyprica*) and **European Roller** (*Coracias garrulus*) had started to depart and the winter visitors were beginning to move in. **Common Stonechat** (*Saxicola rubicola*) were everywhere and **Western Black Redstart** (*Phoenicurus ochruros*), **Woodlark** (*Lullula arborea*) and **Eurasian Skylark** (*Alauda arvensis*) were becoming quite common. It is really fascinating to see the changeover between these 2 sets of Cyprus visitors as the season progresses.



Plate 24. Eleonora's Falcon over Akrotiri Cliffs. © Chris Patrick

Finally, to our third study, the **Eleonora's Falcon** (*Falco eleonorae*). In 2008 we monitored their arrival, with the first birds being seen on 13 April and then just a trickle until the main body began arriving around 1 May, with most birds apparently in by the time the survey finished on 16 May. This year, departure seemed to follow a roughly similar pattern, with no noticeable fall off in numbers until about 23 Oct. After that the numbers of birds counted on each visit, both at Akrotiri and Episkopi Cliffs, dropped off quite sharply until 3 Nov when only 2 birds could be found at Akrotiri. A final visit to both Akrotiri and Kensington Cliffs on 7 Nov found no birds left at all.

## Conclusion

Raptor Watch 2010 was one of the longest expeditions that RAFOS has attempted in recent years and we only just had the numbers to complete the 8 week survey. However, we gathered a considerable amount of data which was given to both the Sovereign Base Area Environment Office and to BirdLife Cyprus and I believe that we achieved the aims that we were set. Regarding the impact that the aerials have on migrating raptors, I think it is safe to say that there is minimal risk to birds. We witnessed a number of near misses and several collisions, but none of the birds involved appeared to have been harmed by the experience.

The state of the wetlands within the SBA continues to be of concern and management plans are badly needed to preserve these environments. The SBA Environment Office is working on this but in times of severe financial cut-backs there is little cash to spare for environmental projects. However, the author believes that the UK Government has commitments and responsibilities under EU Conservation Directives and, despite the fact that the Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus have been specifically excluded from the EU, it should be doing more to protect them.

Finally, a huge thank you to the 5 RNBWS and AOS members; they made up a quarter of the overall party and without them Raptor Watch 10 would not have been possible.

*Dick Yates, RAFOS member*

# Cream-coloured Courser and Stone Curlew observed at sea from HMS IRON DUKE, off the coast of Libya

by Warrant Officer Anthony Tindale

On 12 Jul 2011 I flew out to join the frigate HMS IRON DUKE which was alongside in Marmaris, Turkey. The ship was en route to the UK via Malta and Gibraltar after an operational deployment to the Gulf, but shortly after we sailed from Turkey we were sent to join NATO forces operating off Libya.

Although from a birding perspective July is probably the worst month of the year to transit the Mediterranean Sea, I still made visits to the upper deck whenever I could, just in case there was something of interest to see. Apart from two separate sightings of European Storm-petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*) the only other species encountered in the first couple of days was the occasional Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*) gliding effortlessly over the surface of the water. However, on the evening of Monday 18 July I was rewarded with a real cracker. As I walked forward along the port side I spotted a medium sized bird approaching the ship, and I was delighted to identify it as an adult Cream-coloured Courser (*Cursorius cursor*). After passing up the ship's side the bird veered away, but soon approached again from the stern, and it carried out that manoeuvre several times, giving me the opportunity to nip below for my camera.

The sighting was without doubt for me the champagne moment of the trip, not just because it was a first sighting for me, but also because it was so completely unexpected; it highlighted what I enjoy most about birding, its unpredictability.

The very next day I was rewarded with another completely unexpected land bird. After I stepped out of the airlock onto the midships cross-passage I spotted a bird approaching the ship from the port quarter. It



Plate 25. Cream-coloured Courser. © Tony Tindale

was chunkier than the Courser, had a completely different wing pattern that included a very prominent black and white wing bar, and I suspect that had I been in the Breckland of Norfolk or walking on Salisbury Plain I would have recognised it instantly as a Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oedicanus*), but it actually took a few seconds for the penny to drop as I watched this beautiful bird fly alongside and then up and over the superstructure. Unfortunately it did not linger, so there was no time for a photograph.

Although the Stone Curlew is a migratory species the Cream-coloured Courser is only a vagrant in Europe. The fact that I spotted two species of wader that inhabit inland habitats, in the limited amount of time I had to spare on the upper deck, seems unlikely to have been mere coincidence. I could only conclude that it was either a normal event for the time of year, or possibly a consequence of the many explosions that could be heard from the Libyan shore, some of which were pretty massive.

Tony Tindale

# Pallid Scops-owl in the Arabian Gulf on board HMS ARGYLL

by Warrant Officer Anthony Tindale

On 30 Oct 2011, instead of sailing out of Portsmouth on HMS IRON DUKE I found myself taking off on a trooping flight from RAF Brize Norton to join HMS ARGYLL in Kuwait as a temporary relief. Unfortunately, most of my two weeks onboard was spent living a nocturnal existence (on watch 1900–0700), as the ship was in Defence Watches, conducting an operational patrol of the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman. As a result, opportunities for birding were limited and compounded by the fact that sunset was around 1730. Although my enthusiasm to get up to conduct an hour of birdwatching before sunset during my off-watch time waned as the days passed, I had no such problem in taking a stroll around the upper deck at first light during my on-watch time.

It was during one of those early morning vigils that I had the champagne moment of my time onboard. As I looked out to sea beside the hangar, a small bird flew in behind me and perched on a conduit underneath the adjacent sponson. I turned round and was delighted to see a Pallid Scops-owl (*Otus brucei*), no more than two metres away, looking down at me. The bird remained on its perch throughout the day, to be enjoyed by many of the ship's company, before continuing its journey the following night.

*Tony Tindale*



Plate 26. Pallid Scops-owl, Central Arabian Gulf, 12 November 2011. © Antony D. Tindale



**Plate 27.** Pallid Scops-owl, Central Arabian Gulf, 12 November 2011. © Antony D. Tindale

# The 'Adopt a Sooty Tern' Scheme: get involved in the twists and 'terns' of seabird migration on Ascension Island

by Dr S. James Reynolds

Since 2008 I have been accompanying the AOS expeditions to Ascension Island in the South Atlantic when I have been acting as a scientific advisor. As you will no doubt have been aware, Ascension has been the destination of such expeditions since the early 1990s and since then RNBWS members have contributed to the collection of long-term data concerning the island's seabird populations.

In the most recent work on the island we have been using the very latest technology to track the migration of Sooty Terns (*Onychoprion fuscatus*). We use tiny 2 g devices called geolocators (Plate 28) that are deployed on rings on each bird's leg to track its migration across some 1 million square miles of ocean. Each geocator contains a photoreceptor cell that through changes in light intensity detects sunrise and sunset at the location of the bird on a daily basis. Data are downloaded to a memory card which is 'on board' each device and then they are

downloaded from the geocator once the bird is recaptured on its return to Ascension for its next breeding attempt. Day length and time of sunrise data allow us to determine latitude and longitude, respectively, of the tern for each daily fix.

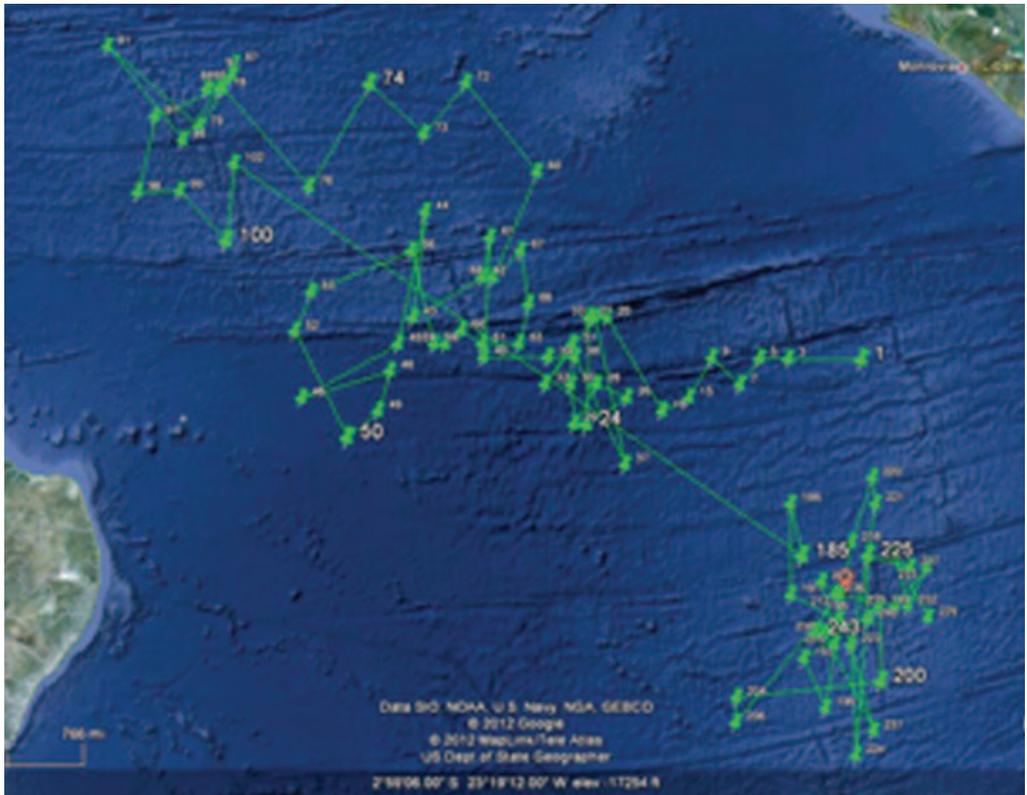
In March 2011 we deployed these devices on 20 adult Sooty Terns at the Mars Bay colony and at the beginning of this year we returned to the island to continue our seabird monitoring work. Despite only about 10% of the Sooty Tern breeding population having returned, we managed to recapture three birds carrying geolocators from which we retrieved some fascinating data (see example in Figure 1). By tracking the movements of Sooty Terns between their breeding seasons, we hope to add to our rather limited knowledge about the migration ecology of perhaps the most aerial of bird species in the world.

Sooty Terns are of 'Least concern' according to BirdLife International. While they are distributed in very large numbers, they only occur at a few circumequatorial breeding colonies that are typically remote oceanic islands like Ascension. Our work informs applied avian conservation and provides valuable movement data that are fundamental to the establishment of new marine protected areas (MPAs) and to biological action plans (BAPs) for the island.

These are the first movement data for this species and they are a great start. We have shown that it is possible to use the most modern and miniature technology to achieve some astounding results. The technology is reliable and the geolocators have no adverse effects on the birds carrying them. However, we are appealing to you for help to take this research to the next level.



**Plate 28.** A geocator deployed on the left leg of an adult Sooty Tern breeding on Ascension Island in the South Atlantic. © Simon Croson



**Figure 1.** The track of a female adult Sooty Tern deployed with a geolocator on 30th March 2011 at Mars Bay on Ascension Island. Day 1 of tracking is on 4th May 2011 while each fix is annotated with the corresponding day of migration. The geolocator was recovered on 6th January 2012 and data revealed that the bird had migrated a minimum distance of 21,951 km over only 7 months.

We are launching the 'Adopt a Sooty Tern' Scheme in the hope that we can obtain movement data from a sufficient number of Sooty Terns that will allow us to determine with confidence the locations in the Atlantic Ocean that are most important to the species between breeding seasons. We will return to Ascension in late November in the hope of recovering the remaining 17 geolocators from birds. Data will be recoverable from these devices but we want to deploy many more devices to continue this study.

In return for your purchase of a €291 geolocator, we will provide you with details of:

- when and where the bird was caught
- a photograph of the bird with the geolocator deployed on its leg
- the ring number of the bird
- an opportunity to name the bird

- details of geolocator recovery efforts on two subsequent AOS expeditions to the island
- when and where the geolocator was recovered
- a jpeg image of the migration path of the bird as visualised in Google Earth (as in Figure 1)
- the actual geolocator that has been carried across the South Atlantic by 'your' migrating bird

Further information can be obtained from me, please Email: J.Reynolds.2@bham.ac.uk It is hoped that through your support and through pre-existing collaborations, we can push forward with this research initiative promoting Ascension as one of the most globally important sites for breeding seabirds.

**Dr S. James Reynolds  
& the AOS**

# The Chichester Peregrines

by Commander Michael Casement

I have a personal interest in the Peregrine Falcons which have now achieved local celebrity status in Chichester Cathedral, having nested in the spire for the past 13 years. When I finally retired from daily commuting to London, in January 1993, I briefly took on the job as Cathedral Trust Secretary, responsible for fund-raising for the building restoration programme. Led by the Clerk of the Works, I completed a tour round the whole building to view the state of progress, and on arrival inside the spire saw a large collection of bones and feathers, clearly recognizable as several species of gulls, waders and pigeons. I remarked that a Peregrine Falcon was the only bird of prey that was large enough to be responsible for this, and indicated this site was being used as a plucking post for one of the Peregrines habitually seen around nearby Chichester harbours. I remarked that it would not be surprising if the spire was chosen as a nesting site.

Peregrines were subsequently observed roosting in the spire and, in March 1995, Graham Roberts of the Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS) installed a nestbox in the south-east turret, and a pair continued to roost high up in the spire for several years. Their first attempt at breeding was 2001, when the eggs failed to hatch. A larger nestbox was then installed, and that has been used successfully every year since 2002. Furthermore, in collaboration with the RSPB, a video camera was installed to record events inside the nestbox, and that has become a major tourist attraction for visitors to the Cathedral every spring.

Four nestlings fledged in 2012, bringing the total over the past 11 years to 42. The average of 3.8 young successfully fledging over this period is exceptional. In a study into their dispersal and survival rates, and to determine whether young from urban sites establish their own territories in urban areas



Plate 29. Female Peregrine, Chichester. © Michael Casement

on artificial sites (i.e. urban imprinting) each chick has been tagged with individually recognizable BLACK rings. I am grateful to Graham Roberts, who has personally ringed all the chicks, and provided the following data. Eight of these birds have been subsequently identified:

- A female ringed in June 2002 has bred in a secret location in Hampshire since 2006, and a male from the same brood was subsequently observed in Essex in 2004, and bred successfully in 2007, 2008, 2011 and 2012
- A male ringed on 22 May 2003 was seen at Farlington Marshes on 15 Feb 2004
- A male ringed on 27 May 2005 has bred annually in the SOS nestbox on an apartment block in Brighton since 2009
- A male ringed on 1 June 2006 bred successfully in Hampshire in 2008
- A male ringed on 23 May 2007 was rescued from the ground during a severe storm at Goodwood, near Chichester on 9 March 2008, and was subsequently reported roosting on a Church in Cambridge, during November and December that year. After further sightings during March and May 2009, it flew into wires at Longtown, Cambridge on 10 May 2009 and died in care
- A female ringed on 13 May 2009 was seen at Rottingdean, E. Sussex, in September, but was found dead in the November, having flown into wires near Petworth. Another female from the same brood was seen in Surrey in June 2010 and May 2011

It is not possible to determine whether both of this remarkable pair comprise the same individuals, but it is probable that one, or both, may be at least 13 years old.

I have monthly duties in Chichester Cathedral and with other tourists, have watched the annual activities on the RSPB videos for many years. On 16 May 2012, whilst having a lunchtime snack in the cloisters garden, I saw a Buzzard flying over the cathedral, which caused both birds to leave the nest and chase it away. Seizing my camera, I managed to take a snapshot of the female silhouetted against the spire with weathercock, newly resplendent with fair trade gold.

There is evidence that Peregrine numbers in Sussex are increasing but those recently seen around Harting have BTO aluminium rings only, so have not originated from Chichester. RNBWS members are asked to look out for further sightings, and to check if they are carrying black rings - the white numerals should be clearly readable through telescopes and digital cameras - and report the numbers to me.

The ship's crest of HMS *Peregrine*, now displayed in the Royal Navy Chapel, was presented to the Cathedral when RNAS Ford was closed down, to become HM Prison, Ford. This was 50 years before this pair of Peregrines adopted the Cathedral as their nesting site, and has nothing to do with the present residents.

**Michael Casement**

# Birds seen from HMS Liverpool during Operation Ellamy, Mediterranean Sea - April to November 2011

by Chief Petty Officer Mark Cutts

In early 2011 HMS Liverpool was taking part in exercises in the Mediterranean when we were sent to support the UN Security Council's decision to impose a No Fly Zone over Libya.

From an ornithological point of view this meant going on station off the coast of Libya in early April, a few weeks into the spring migration, and leaving the area in the first week of November, towards the end of the autumn migration. This gave me an opportunity to study migration activity in the Mediterranean away from the usual hotspots such as the Straits of Gibraltar, the Straits of Messina and the Bosphorus.

I was unsure what to expect. Would I witness any passerine migration? Given that our ship was a relatively small island, just 125 metres long, and given that for lengthy periods we would be just a few miles off the coast of Libya, and rather busy with military activities, would we see any land birds on the ship?

I also had the problem of my own availability. I had a demanding job on board, especially as the ship was now on a war footing, and with

helicopter operations often going on round the clock getting onto the upper deck was difficult.

The other factor which affected my little project was that we went off station from time to time to replenish with food and stores and to take some much needed R and R. One of these occasions was in August in Taranto, Italy, conveniently between migration periods, but here I was nearly arrested for taking photographs of butterflies in the dockyard. But that, as they say, is another story...

## Seabirds

Seabirds were uncommon in our patrol area. Here is a brief rundown of sightings:

**Yelkouan Shearwater** *Puffinus yelkouan*. Birds seen on two occasions, on 6 May and 11 August.

**Scopoli (Cory's) Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea diomedea*. This familiar bird was first sighted soon after getting into theatre from 7 April onwards. Here is a breakdown of bird days per month: April (7) May (5) June (5) July (2) August (7) September (1) October (4). I believe sightings would have been more frequent with a little more sea watching effort.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus cachinnans*. Seen on my first few days in the Mediterranean, then again on 29 April and 1 May. Not seen again until our return through the Straits of Gibraltar.

**Baltic (Lesser Black-backed) Gull** *Larus fuscus fuscus*. A single was seen in my first few days in the Med. Not seen again until 22 and 23 September, with further birds seen on 5, 8, 17, 18 and 26 October. The most seen were four following the ship throughout the day on 22 September after two were fed by a member of the ship's company. One was still present the next day.



Plate 30. Yellow-legged Gull. © Mark Cutts

**Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis*. A single bird soared over the flight deck on 23 April.  
**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*. In the autumn a large flock of 90+ Black Terns was found. These were first seen on 1 August. After this they were seen on a further 12 bird days throughout the month with the last being seen on the 29th.

## Land Birds

I have placed the species in taxonomic order in accordance with Vouus 1977:

**Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*. Eight birds were seen flying in formation eastwards at midday on 20 May while the ship was at anchor off Valleta Harbour, Malta.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides*. On 22 April a single bird sat on the flight deck nets for an hour before departing north.



Plate 31. Squacco Heron. © Mark Cutts

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzeta*. A single bird flew around the ship on 5 April.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*. A single bird flew directly over the ship heading south on 3 September

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*. A loose flock of about twenty was seen at a distance on 17 August, and I am fairly confident it was this species.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*. A single bird flew south over the ship an hour after dawn on 26 September.

**Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*. Single bird seen flying north on 12 April.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*. Single bird seen for a few hours circling and finally landing onboard on 5 May.

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni*. Single bird seen and photographed flying north on 13 April.

**Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*. Three were seen on 4 October with a further two on the 17th.



Plate 32. Dunlin. © Mark Cutts

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpine*. The only wader to be seen, a juvenile was found wandering around the flight deck at midday on 26 August.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*. First bird was seen on 5 April. After this, sightings involved probably three more individual birds, all in spring, the latest on 11 May.

**European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*. First seen on 19 April and then nearly daily after that, with a total of 26 sightings in the spring involving 66 individuals. The autumn pattern was similar; 23 sightings involving 33 birds. Highlights were five huddled on the foc'sle in strong winds on 3 May and eight flying together on 20 May. The last bird seen was on the afternoon of 9 October.



Plate 33. European Turtle Dove. © Mark Cutts

**Common Swift** *Apus apus*. A single bird flew low over the ship on 30 April.

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*. The first bird was seen on 13 August. A further 12 were seen that month, almost daily, and a further five the following month, the last on 18 September. All birds were singles.



Plate 34. Hoopoe. © Mark Cutts

**Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops*. A single bird landed onboard on 20 April, while the ship was at anchor about four miles offshore to the east of Valetta harbour, Malta.

**European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*. An adult landed on the hangar roof while the ship was entering Souda Bay, Crete on 26 April. On leaving Crete on 29 April eight were seen during two hours of visible migration.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*. A single bird was heard calling as it flew over the ship on 26 October.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*. This was the first land bird seen in the Mediterranean Sea, on 4 April. In Spring there were 12 sightings involving 107 birds; in autumn just 6 sightings involving 21 birds. The last seen were on 26 October. For sheer quantity this was the most common bird seen throughout. Birds often arrived at dusk and took shelter in the hangar.



Plate 35. Barn Swallow. © Mark Cutts

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica*.

Three birds were seen amongst 90 Barn Swallows during visible migration south of Crete on 29 April.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbica*. The first sighting was of three birds seen during the 'vis-mig' on 29 April. After that singles took shelter in the hangar on the evening of the 10th and 11th (possibly the same bird) and one was seen on the 21st.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*. The first was seen on 2 April off the coast of Portugal. Birds seen in the Mediterranean were singles in April and May and two in September.

**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*. A single bird was found on the foc'sle at dusk on 11 April. It was obviously unwell and was taken into care overnight, but it didn't survive.



Plate 36. Red-throated Pipit. © Mark Cutts

**Pipit sp** *Anthus sp.* Three pipits were seen but not positively identified.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*. First bird identified on 29 March., while departing English Waters. After that it was not seen until the late autumn when a single came on board on 23 October. Ten more were seen between then and 2 November.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*. The first bird was seen 11 April, and there were 13 sightings in spring involving 25 birds. In Autumn there were 23 sightings and 26 birds. This was the most common bird by numbers of sightings. It is easy to identify in flight because of its distinctive call and flight behaviour. The last bird seen was on the morning of 24 October.

**European Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*. It was seen only in the autumn and was by far the most numerous bird of that period. First seen on 5 October; a further 29 sightings involving 81 individuals were achieved, with the last on 2 November as we headed through the Straits of Gibraltar.

**Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*. A single bird was photographed in the hangar on 21 April.



Plate 37. Rufous Bush Robin. © Mark Cutts

**Rufous Bush Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes*.

One seen in the late afternoon of 3 May. Another was seen on 23 October, strangely sitting on the water while we were at anchor off Valleta Harbour.

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*.

A single bird was found sheltering on the foc'sle at midday on 23 September.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochrurus*. At midday on 26 October a single bird arrived onboard, and later that afternoon a further five were seen hopping around the foc'sle. A single came onboard on 1 November and the next day another was on the flight deck as we approached Gibraltar.



Plate 38. Black Redstart. © Mark Cutts

**Wheatear sp** *Oenanthe sp.* An unidentified Wheatear landed onboard on 2 September.

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*. Two seen on 3 May were a male and a juvenile, with the male still present the next day. Another male was seen on 6 May and then nothing until 6 October and a very late bird on the 26th.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*. First seen late autumn on the afternoon of 17 October. Singles seen on 18, 24, 25 and 26 with three on the 19th. Eight were seen on 1 November and two birds perched on the flight deck stanchions on the 2nd.



Plate 39. Song Thrush. © Mark Cutts

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*. Seen only in the autumn, the first on 12 September, after that a further six were seen through the month with the last on 24 October.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*. Another species seen only in the autumn. The first was seen on 4 October when both a male and female were onboard. A further nine were seen after this, the last on 2 November.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*. A single bird landed on the hangar roof on 19 October.

**Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*. A single immature bird was found in the hangar on 18 August.

**Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans*. Only seen in the autumn, the first stayed in the hangar during the night of 4 August. After that, two landed on the 11th and two more on the 18th. On 2 September an immature bird was found freshly dead on the flight deck and another flew into the hangar. Singles were then seen on 14 and 15 September.

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. Two took refuge in the hangar on 4 May and then were not seen until the autumn, with one on 8 August, two on 24 September and singles on 5 and 7 October.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*. Only two birds were seen, on 20 and 22 October.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicopa striata*. The first were 2 during the 'vis-mig' of 29 April just south of Crete. The only other was found in the port waist on 7 May.



Plates 40–41. Pied Flycatcher. © Mark Cutts

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*. A single female landed on board on 6 May.

**Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis*. On the morning of 21 April a male was photographed sitting on the rear of the ship's helicopter. That afternoon a female flew into the hangar. A first summer male was found onboard on 11 May. In the autumn a female Pied/Collared type landed on board on 26 August.



Plate 42. Common Starling. © Mark Cutts

**Common Starling** *Sturnus Vulgaris*. The first two were seen in failing light on 5 October; after that singles on 21, 22 (later died), 23 and 26 October. In November a bird arrived on the 1st and stayed until the 3rd as the ship headed north into the Atlantic.

## In Conclusion

I was quite pleased with the grand total of 43 land birds sighted on and from the ship. Highlights were sighting the Rufous Bush Robin, a superb looking bird; the day watching the 'vis-mig' south of Crete; and the afternoon in late October when I sat on the foc'sle watching Black Redstarts and Robins hopping around, with Song Thrush, Starling and Whinchat in attendance.

An interesting footnote: the word Ellamy is randomly generated and was then designated to this military operation. The only time that it is found in English Literature is in a poem attributed to the 15th century poet John Skelton entitled "The Harmony of Birds". How very apt.

Mark Cutts



Plate 43. Lynx over Jason Island. © Ian & Georgina Strange

## Flying with the Albatross

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by Ian & Georgina Strange

*Ian Strange MBE, a member of RNBWS, has an international reputation for his conservation work in the Falkland Islands spanning over 45 years. He purchased and established New Island as a wildlife reserve in 1972–73 for conservation research and later founded the New Island Conservation Trust. This charitable Trust now ensures that New Island will remain a nature reserve in perpetuity. His daughter Georgina manages the island and its research facilities.*

Flyers of a different kind took to the air again in late September and first days of October 2010 to carry out further surveys of Black-browed Albatross colonies in the Falkland Islands. Hardly before work had been completed on analysing 2009 aerial photographic surveys, a team of five, all professionals in their own particular field, were flying with, but well above, the albatross again.

Following the same pattern, same timing and using the same methodology developed over a number of years, the objectives were also the same. Refining aerial photographic survey skills was one aim: a system which can now be used to count albatross precisely and even define if they are on new or old nests. A further aim was to confirm whether or not this new breeding season in the Falkland Islands had brought back the increasing numbers of potential adult breeding pairs shown by our surveys in the last twenty-five years.

Following our all-island survey in 2005, surveys have been made of about a third of the twelve Black-browed Albatross colonies in the Islands every year since. This most recent survey was successful in covering all colonies. As shown with the earlier surveys, the results of the annual surveys made between 2005 and 2010 have been

interesting. With the high upward trend in the albatross population shown in our 1986 to 2005 surveys, our expectation had been for a levelling of the population. However, although dips occurred in the population at some sites in some years, the overall trend is

for an increasing population. A similar pattern was found in this present survey, with one colony showing a 2.3 % decline since 2005, but with the remaining eleven sites showing increases of between 1.2 % and 62%; an average increase for the total island population of 23 %.



Plate 44. Colony. © Ian & Georgina Strange

The process of counting each individual bird on a nest, carried out from digital images on a 24 inch high definition screen, is a very slow process. Nearly 780 images were taken of the twelve colonies in the Falklands, and from these, 373 were selected for counting. Counting was then carried out by selecting and marking individually those nests occupied by a bird. For the 2010 survey, the counting process took over ten weeks to complete. Different researchers, depending on their requirements, will employ different counting units with ground survey methodology. No system will be perfect, but aerial photographic surveying of albatross populations in the Falkland Islands, by its very simplicity, has demonstrated that it is a powerful tool.



Plate 45. Black-browed Albatross with chick. © Ian & Georgina Strange



**Plate 46.** Landsend Bluff. © *Ian & Georgina Strange*

What our aerial survey photographs do show, through undisputed imagery, is that the albatross in the Falkland Islands are currently doing well and are not in decline. Hopefully this is rewarding news for all those landowners and individuals who have maintained this view from their own observations over the years. It has also been especially gratifying that our independent surveys and methodology are now being recognised and given support, not just by many individuals, but by organisations such as FIFCA (Falkland Islands Fishing Companies Association). We can only hope that larger international conservation organisations, which have a strong voice in the conservation world, will see the wisdom in presenting the reality of the Falkland population of Black-browed Albatross in a better light.

Following the 2010 survey reported here, assistance was given to the FIG's Environmental Planning department, as part of FIG's commitment to ACAP (Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels) in a separate survey. Aerial survey photographs were taken of some albatross colony sites in conjunction with ground counts, and this cooperative effort we hope will go some way to understanding the value of aerial survey methodology.



**Plate 47.** Beauchene Island. © *Ian & Georgina Strange*

Many thanks to the other three professionals, to British International Helicopters, the Captain and flight of HMS GLOUCESTER, and BFAI for their support. Thanks too to landowners, to FIFCA and Monika Egli for their help.

*Ian & Georgina Strange*  
New Island, West Falkland



Plate 48. Scopoli's Shearwater, Naples. © Vincenzo Cavaliere

## Seawatching and technology in southern Italy

by Mark Walters

*Naples based Mark Walters has been the RNBWS Italy rep for the past twenty years. He lectures on Mediterranean civilisations and the environment, and is actively involved in the monitoring of bird populations in southern Italy.*

When it comes to seabirds, the last decade in southern Italy has seen a revolution in both data quality and observer effort. The creation of a national database ([www.ornitho.it](http://www.ornitho.it)) and the success of nationwide projects such as *Morus*, which monitors the presence of seabirds at least four times a year from hotspots along the coastline, have added substantially to our knowledge of what flies

up and down Italy's coasts. Combined with the increasing use of telescopes, good-quality cameras and greater observer effort, pelagic species which used to be a closed book (like the various skuas) are now being observed and logged on a regular basis. To give one example, in a 1993 checklist on the birds of Campania, the region around Naples in southern Italy, (*Gli Uccelli della Campania* by Sergio Scebba, 1993), the Pomarine Skua (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) is listed as an accidental species, with only one sighting in the region's ornithological history. Yet in the month of March 2012 alone there were as many as 15 sightings of the Pomarine Skua along the coast of Campania, and even allowing for duplicate records on the same day, it is patently obvious that the species is no accidental along Italy's western seaboard.

The hotspots for seawatching around Naples are about 40 km (25 mi) to the north-west of the city at the mouth of the historic drainage canal, Regi Lagni, and a five-minute drive further north at the mouth of the River Volturno. That said, when crossing the Bay of Naples you are likely to come across a few individuals of Scopoli's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea diomedea*) and the occasional procession of the Yelkouan Shearwater (*Puffinus yelkouan*) almost



Plate 49. Yelkouan Shearwater, Naples. © Vincenzo Cavaliere

skimming the surface of the water. When it comes to gulls, even the port of Naples regularly turns up Mediterranean Gulls (*Larus melanocephalus*), the odd Common Gull (*Larus canus*) and Lesser Black-backed (*Larus fuscus*), while out in the bay you may run into Audouin's Gull (*Larus audouinii*), which has a small - and fairly precarious - breeding population on the island of Ischia.

If in Italian waters for any length of time - the scheme has now spread to France and Germany from its home base in Italy and Switzerland - you should consult the website ([www.ornitho.it](http://www.ornitho.it)) to see what rarities have been seen nationwide and to log your own sightings. The sightings are ratified on a regular basis to ensure the overall quality of the input data. The benefits are considerable both for the ornithological community and for the individual birder. For example, I log all my bird records, know how many species I've seen in any province in Italy, in any year,

and can compare spring arrival dates for certain migrants year-on-year. At a glance, using the system's summary facility, I can see what birds have been seen and where by other birders on any particular day.

As regards visits to the sites I have mentioned, though they are generally safe, new birders to the area would be well advised to get in touch with someone in a local association for advice and preferably a joint visit, at least the first time round. English speakers living closest to the area include some of Italy's top experts, Ottavio Janni, [coeligena@hotmail.com](mailto:coeligena@hotmail.com), and Davide De Rosa, [derosadavide@yahoo.it](mailto:derosadavide@yahoo.it). Alternatively, as the RNBWS representative in Naples, I am always keen to have an excuse to get out of the office and do some birding in company.

**Mark Walters**

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Plate 50. Audouin's Gull, Naples. © Vincenzo Cavaliere



Plate 51. Ruddy Turnstone. © Sheila Burrows

# Bahrain first impressions: tyre burning, molotov cocktails - and excellent birding

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by Commander Chris Moorey, Defence Attache,  
British Embassy, Manama

Having merely scratched the surface when it comes to the Kingdom of Bahrain's birdlife, this is just a brief 'first impressions' piece based on a small number of sites that I have visited fairly regularly over the period September 2011 to May 2012. Not a particularly scientific contribution to *Sea Swallow*, it rather aims to let RNBWS members know that a fellow member is here - due to stay until late 2014 - and open for visitors.

Sitting astride a north/south migration route between Africa and Eurasia, this small island on the southern shore of the Arabian Gulf has a number of different bird habitats (many man-made) and that means that it plays host to a great number and variety of temporary avian visitors during the spring and autumn migrations, in spite of the arid nature of the region. The sites selected for this report are

Dowhat al Muharraq (adjacent to Bahrain International Airport); Bahrain Fort (on the north coast) and the British Embassy garden (in central Manama).

Both Dowhat al Muharraq and Bahrain Fort have extensive mudflats that sustain a multitude of waders wintering on the island. The records detailed in Table 1 and 2 below have been somewhat limited - particularly in the case of Bahrain Fort - by the author's current lack of a telescope - a must for full coverage of the mudflats there, and a must-buy for the future. The figures for Bahrain Fort therefore represent only a fraction of the total present at the site, being only those in the immediate vicinity of the Fort, whereas the mudflats stretch for several hundred metres to seaward at low water. In the case of Dowhat al Muharraq, a 3km paved footpath

**Table 1.** Selected ornithological records from Bahrain Fort September 2011 to May 2012.

Species	Comment/Count per visit
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Usually one present
Western Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	One in Feb 12
Western Reef-Heron <i>Egretta gularis</i>	Average 2–4
Squacco Heron <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	One in Apr 12
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	< 5
Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	One in Jan 12
Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	4 individuals - one day - Apr 12
Common Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	One in Apr 12
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Average 5–10
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Average 1–3
Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	< 5
Lesser Sand Plover <i>Charadrius atrifrons</i>	Large numbers (not counted)
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Count of 40 in Feb 12
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Count of 14 in Feb 12
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	One in Jan 12
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Average 1–2
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	Average 5
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Average 1–3
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>	One in Jan 12. One in Feb 12
Little Stint <i>Calidris minuta</i>	Counts of 10 in Jan 12 and Apr 12
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	Count of 200 in Feb 12 and 80 in Apr 12
Curlew Sandpiper <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	One in Apr 12
Broad-billed Sandpiper <i>Limicola falcinellus</i>	5 in Apr 12
Armenian Gull <i>Larus armenicus</i>	Up to 5
Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Large numbers up to Apr 12 (not counted)
Slender-billed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>	Large numbers up to Apr 12 (not counted)
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	Average 3–5
Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	2 individuals - one day - Feb 12
Gull-billed Tern <i>Gelocheilidon nilotica</i>	Average 3 in Feb 12
Caspian Tern <i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	One in Feb 12
Lesser Crested Tern <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	6 individuals - one day - Apr 12
European Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>	4 individuals - one day - Apr 12
Desert Wheatear <i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	One in Apr 12
Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	One in May 12
Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin <i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>	First seen May 12

goes round the mudflats and offers excellent views of birds that appear to be used to, and unafraid of, the many human passers-by. However, be ready to fend off questions from curious policemen who are not quite up to speed on the concept of ornithology!

Moving away from the coast, the British Embassy in Manama has been in its present location since the early 20th Century and sits in a reasonably small but well-vegetated compound in central Manama. The building and its gardens, which until the early 1960s were on the northern shoreline of the island, are now some 2 kilometres inland and surrounded by a mixture of dense housing, high-rise commercial properties and multi-lane roads. As such, it acts as a green beacon to



**Plate 52.** Little Stint. © Janet Prushansky

**Table 2.** Selected ornithological records from Dowhat al Muharraq Jan/Feb 2012.

Species	Comment/Count per visit
Greater Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	Average 15–20
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Average 2–3
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	One in Feb 12
Western Reef-Heron <i>Egretta gularis</i>	Average 5–10
Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	One in Feb 12
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Average 10–15
Common Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	One in Feb 12
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	< 5
Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	< 5
Lesser Sand Plover <i>Charadrius atrifrons</i>	Large numbers (not counted)
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Average 5–10
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Average 2–3
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Average 2–3
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Average 2–3
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	Average 10–15
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Average 3
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Average 2
Little Stint <i>Calidris minuta</i>	Average 2
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	Count of 350 in Feb 12
Broad-billed Sandpiper <i>Limicola falcinellus</i>	Count of 50 in Feb 12
Armenian Gull <i>Larus armenicus</i>	Average 3
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	Varied between 10 and 60
Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Average 50–60
Slender-billed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>	Average 5

**Plate 53.** Common Greenshank. © Stacie Jackson



**Plate 54.** Bar-tailed Godwit. © Peter Carr

**Table 3.** Selected ornithological records from the British Embassy gardens September 2011 to May 2012.

Species	Comment
Pallid Swift <i>Apus pallidus</i>	Nesting on a nearby municipal building since Dec11.
Eurasian Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	A pair remained for over a week in Mar 11.
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	Several individuals, of both sexes, present Apr/May 12.
Isabelline Shrike <i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	Several individuals recorded throughout the period. One female over-wintered.
Lesser Grey Shrike <i>Lanius minor</i>	One remained for a week Apr 12.
Masked Shrike <i>Lanius nubicus</i>	One remained for approximately 10 days in Apr 12.
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler <i>Iduna pallida</i>	Several visiting individuals Apr/May 12.
Upcher's Warbler <i>Hippolais languida</i>	One individual - one day - Apr 12.
Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Both males and females seen over a 10 day period in May 12.
Common Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>	One female - one day - Apr 12.
Barred Warbler <i>Sylvia nisoria</i>	Several individuals visited during the Autumn and Spring migrations.
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	One remained for 2/3 days Mar 12.
Common Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Both males and females passed through in Apr 12.
Blue Rock Thrush <i>Monticola solitarius</i>	One male remained for a week Feb/Mar 12.
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Single birds seen during Autumn and Spring migrations.
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	Several individuals visited during the Autumn and Spring migrations.
White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	A pair over-wintered.
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Two individuals - one day - Apr 12.
Ortolan Bunting <i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	One individual - one day - Apr 12.

migrating birds crossing the Arabian Gulf, and the recent Spring migration has afforded especially fine views, at a few feet, of fresh-plumaged individuals, requiring only a swivel of the office chair. The table below provides a brief summary of the more interesting records from the Embassy garden over the period.

The records at Tables 1 and 2 are drawn from a small number of visits, and the desert areas in the southern two thirds of the island have yet to be explored. There is therefore much to be done to gain a fuller picture of population trends throughout the year (let alone different states of tide, for the coastal sites).

Further - more extensive - reports for *Sea Swallow* will follow, insh'allah!

Postscript. During my stint as British Representative in the British Indian Ocean Territory of Diego Garcia in 2010 and 2011, RNBWS member Pete Carr taught me the value of the *Worldbirds* database and so further reports for these and other sites in Bahrain can be found at [www.worldbirds.org](http://www.worldbirds.org). My thanks to Peter for all his help.

**Chris Moorey**



Plate 55. The Cliffs at Cape Wrath © Martin Alabaster

# Visits to Operation Auk - Bird Survey at Cape Wrath, 2009–2011

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by Rear Admiral Martin Alabaster

Cape Wrath is an extraordinary place. Two hours' drive from Inverness and five from Edinburgh, it is very remote and forms the most North-Westerly point on the Scottish mainland. Although windswept and bleak, the Cape features the highest sea-cliffs in the UK and is of substantial importance as a seabird colony. Examined through a different lens, it is also 100 square miles of MOD firing range and offers the best location in Europe

for live naval, air and land firings. The potential for conflict is clear, and when I arrived in post as Flag Officer Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland (FOSNNI) in 2009 I readily appreciated both aspects of the Cape's importance and determined to find out more.

## History

Cape Wrath's military use dates back a long way but it was in 1992 that Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) raised their concern that military activity on the range was having an impact on the breeding seabird population. The Flag Officer of the time, Vice Admiral Sir Hugo White, directed work to gather proper evidence, Major Tony Crease was approached and has run the resulting operation - Op Auk - every year since. (Tony Crease established the excellent Foxglove Covert NNR within the Catterick Garrison and still runs the reserve. See [www.foxglovecover.org.uk](http://www.foxglovecover.org.uk)).



Plate 56. Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula artica*) © Martin Alabaster

Supported by boat crews from the Royal Marines Fleet Protection Group at HM Naval Base Clyde and with modest funding for rings from FOSNNI, the operation is run entirely by volunteers and consists of 2 weeks' survey and ringing work during the long days of mid-summer. The team live in the range observation building and spend their days climbing the rock stacks and negotiating the rubble fields in order to monitor and ring the birds. And every year, the resulting reports are forwarded to SNH, RSPB and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).

## Findings

From 1992 to 2001 the colonies were very healthy, with over 25,000 puffins, and large populations of Terns, Gulls and the other Auks. As well as making the visits an extraordinary experience for the Op Auk team, these numbers also suggested that the military activity was having no detrimental effect. Indeed it seems likely that occasional and very localised bombing may be less harmful than continuous human presence. 2002, however, saw the beginnings of a major population crash with all species in marked decline.

This decline continued each year until 2008 when there were no breeding seabirds on the cliffs at all. In June that year all the nests were abandoned at the egg stage and the team found no adult birds, no chicks and just broken eggs. In 2009 there was a small recovery but many chicks were abandoned and many adults were found choked on



Plate 58. Sea-Cave © Martin Alabaster

pipefish. Re-assuringly, 2010 and 2011 have shown a continuation of this improving trend. From FOSNNI's point of view, it has also been important to note that exchanging results with other agencies has shown that the Cape Wrath population changes have closely mirrored those at other sites in Scotland. The RN in Scotland has worked hard to plan major activities to avoid the peak breeding season and it is pleasing to have evidence that we can continue the important joint international maritime/land/air exercises whilst minimizing environmental impact. For the seabirds, it is all about the food supply - especially the availability of sand-eels - and not about the occasional military activity.



Plate 57. (Black-legged) Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) © Martin Alabaster



Plate 59. Common Guillemot (*Uria aalge*) © Martin Alabaster

## Visiting

Knowledge of Cape Wrath through my role as FOSNNI naturally caught my interest and so I was delighted to receive an invitation from Tony Crease to visit Op Auk and see what goes on. I visited first in June 2009 and enjoyed it so much I went back again the following two years, recruiting one new RNBWS member in the process and taking 2 others with me in 2011.

Each time we started with dinner with the ringing team in the range observatory building. This gave us a chance to get news of the work to date: What are the Auk numbers like? Have the Golden Eagle Chicks flown yet? Have any Red-Throated Divers been spotted on the small inland pools (lochens)? And of course, we had to check on their catering, for in this department OP Auk is fortunate to have an excellent Army chef amongst its volunteers.

The next morning is an early start by vehicle down to the Kyle of Durness for embarkation in Rigid Raiders. Commanded by Royal Marine Coxswains, these are excellent and exciting craft that make for a smooth and very fast passage across the flat waters of the Kyle but offer a slower and more violent experience once out in the open sea. The boats provide the only feasible access to the high sea-cliffs, stacks and boulder-fields where the nests are and so this first run is used to drop off the ringing teams at their sites for the morning. Last year I was due to join a team on an offshore stack but getting from the boat straight onto a vertical rock face - albeit with good hand and foot holds - was simply too dangerous in a 2m swell. For the Op Auk regulars, each day's activity is weather-dependent and hardships are frequent. Feeling wet and cold is common but I also saw evidence of a nasty shag-bite on the nose and a good covering of Fulmar vomit. (Surely the most foul substance known to science).



**Plates 60–61.** Arctic Skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) (Dark Phase left, Light Phase right) © Martin Alabaster

For the day-visitor like me, the boat provided unrivalled views of birds on the nest, on the water and in flight. It was simply wonderful to be surrounded by so many that one had to duck as small groups of guillemots or puffins flew low over the boat. We also had excellent views of Bonxie (Great Skua) and got to see how their presence affects the birds around. It was also possible to go inside some of the sea-caves and experience the din of an active colony of Auks, Shags, Fulmar and Kittiwake - and the frequent squirts of guano.

In each case, the next phase of the visit was ashore, so after a short but lively, even bruising transit, we landed at a disused stage quite close to the Cape itself and set off in pursuit of our target birds for ringing on the moorland. The landscape across most of the area is rough grassland, interspersed with bogs and small lochens. Arctic Skua nest on

the range and whilst the adult birds were easy to spot, finding the nests was not. The nests - on the ground - are very hard to see and the adults are skilled in misdirection as they act as though they are protecting a spot some distance away. Both dark and light-phase birds are present at Cape Wrath and on each visit we managed to find at least one nest, ringing chicks if they were present.

The second target species was Red-throated Diver and after tussocky treks to previously identified sites we found birds and chicks each year. By this stage, the chicks were approaching adult size and swimming with the mother away from the nest. The adults are easily spooked and fly away, leaving the still flightless birds on the water. Capture requires the use of a net across the lochen and a swimmer who is prepared to brave the cold water. On each occasion, the 2 chicks



**Plate 62.** Great Skua (*Stercorarius skua*) (Bonxie) © Martin Alabaster





**Plate 67.** Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula artica*) © Martin Alabaster

were successfully caught, ringed and released although ringing was a delicate task as the birds' legs are an elongated ellipse in section, for better hydrodynamic properties and the rings had to be individually modified to fit. After releasing the young birds and retreating from the site, it was pleasing to see the adult bird returning promptly to her brood.

During the day a packed lunch was taken whilst on the move. This, like most things at Cape Wrath, was weather dependent but 2009 is memorable for glorious sunshine and sandwiches eaten sitting on the grass at the top of the cliffs watching Gannets diving for fish. The water was so calm that from our high vantage point we could see them starting at our eye level and throughout the dive, including underwater. At the end of the day we returned to the West side of the Kyle to meet the Rigid Raiders for our final trip back to Durness and in true Cape Wrath style this short trip gave good views of a Merlin (2010) and a thorough drenching from a thunderstorm (2009).

**Plates 63–66 opposite.** Adult Red-throated Diver (Loon) (*Gavia stellata*), and chick; capture, ringing and release © Martin Alabaster



**Plate 68.** (European) Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) © Ian Grier

In summary, each visit was a most enjoyable and informative 24 hours during which I learned a great deal and came to appreciate the resilience of the Op Auk volunteers. If any RNBWS members wish to join the Op Auk team, they should contact Tony Crease at [foxglovelnr@btinternet.com](mailto:foxglovelnr@btinternet.com)

**Martin Alabaster**

# Two Estuarine Reserves at opposite ends of the World

by Captain Chris Peach

In January 2012 I visited an exciting new reserve at South Efford, adjacent to the River Avon in South Devon, near my home, and a month later visited a very different estuary reserve in Australia. Both sites provided me with some interesting observations and developments to share with members.

The South Efford Marsh reserve in Devon is a 6 hectare site, where a new tidal control gate has been installed in order to recreate a saltmarsh habitat. (Efford, by the way, means a ford, usable at ebb tide). The last time this area was subject to tidal movements was in the 1940s when large numbers of wintering wading birds could be seen here, and it is hoped that migratory winter birds will soon be a familiar sight again. South Efford was originally reclaimed from the estuary in the late 18th century by the construction of a bank adjacent to the river, but during the Second World War a bomb was dropped on the bank and this allowed sea water to return until it was repaired in the mid 1950s. Now as part of the UK's Habitat Creation scheme a tidal sluice has been installed to control water levels in the lowest-lying parts of the marsh. The tidal gate lets sea water in at a specific tidal level, closes when there is a risk of

flooding and then allows water to drain out as the tide falls. The vision is for the whole area eventually to become a salt marsh, and already the sea water is killing off grassland, while marsh plants such as sea spurry and sea arrow are starting to flourish. The creation of areas of ground and pools will be ideal for wading birds and other wildlife, and saltwater crayfish were already evident halfway up the marsh when I visited. There are now plans for a bird hide that will give good views over the reserve and adjacent mud flats, but in the meantime the track provides good observation points. In my brief visit I saw Curlew, Redshank, Bewick and Black Swans, and even a Glossy Ibis, all of which were an interesting and stimulating precursor to my next estuary visit, a month later - in Australia.

Griffiths Island is located on the estuary of the Moyne River in Victoria, where I could not resist the opportunity to see and report on the fascinating Short-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) under its local name of Muttonbird, having read the article in the last edition of Sea Swallow by Jaimie Cleeland, whose diet analysis of this bird off the coast of Tasmania was partly funded by a RNBWS scholarship.

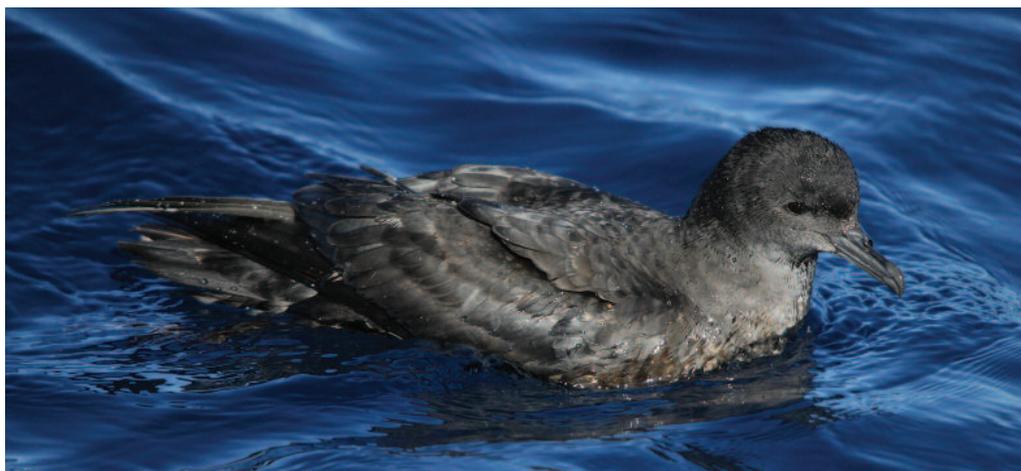


Plate 69. Short-tailed Shearwater, at 38.2S 140.6E off Port MacDonnell, South Australia, 8th November 2009. © Neil Cheshire



**Plate 70.** Short-tailed Shearwater, at 38.2S 140.6E off Port MacDonnell, South Australia, 8th November 2009. © Neil Cheshire

The Muttonbird may not be spectacular in appearance, but it does have some quite remarkable characteristics regarding its annual migration around the Pacific Ocean, and an uncannily precise life cycle. Griffiths Island is home to one of Australia's most accessible breeding colonies, and here one can easily see the birds at close quarters. After a short walk along a causeway and past a small mob of swamp wallabies you approach an area of nesting burrows. By this stage it is just getting dark, but still no sound or sight. Then suddenly, and exactly on cue, when all light has faded, a few birds fly in from the sea and then vast waves of birds swoop in low over one's head and respond to the calling of the young chicks and make a rather poor landing near the entrance to the burrow. I was fortunate to be visiting at the peak feeding period in February.

Very nearly all the breeding birds had returned to this island on a single day - 22 September. They even return to the same burrow that they occupied the previous year and generally mate with the same partner throughout their breeding life. For a few weeks after returning to the colony, the birds remain busy digging or clearing out nest burrows, tunnels about one metre long dug in soft soil or sand close to the surface. This

results in nests being difficult to avoid and easily crushed by walkers and that is why these burrows are fully protected. Mating occurs in early November, and the entire population then flies off to sea, again nearly all on a single day (12 November, in 2011) to replenish food stores, and eggs are laid immediately after the return on 25 November. The male and female birds share the duty of incubation, with the male spending the first 12 to 14 days on the egg, followed by the female for 10 to 13 days. This alternating duty continues until the single white oval egg, similar in size to a domestic hen, hatches in mid January. Two to three days after hatching, the chick is left during the day while the parents forage at sea for food, sometimes flying up to 1500 kms from the nest. Progressively, the period between feeds increases until the chick can wait up to two weeks between meals. Meanwhile, the chick gains weight rapidly and for a period becomes heavier than the adult birds. In mid April the adult birds commence their Pacific migration, leaving the young behind. Hunger begins to bring the chicks from the nest at night, until eventually they set off in early May after the adults. Somehow they find the migratory route without the guidance of the older birds.

After departing from the breeding grounds, the birds fly rapidly north to their wintering grounds around the Aleutian Islands and Kamchatka peninsula at the northern edge of the Pacific. The journey, of about 15000 km, passes New Zealand and Japan and is completed in only two months. The return journey follows the coast of North America to California, then south-west across the Pacific. Prevailing winds aid their flight for most of the journey but on the final leg, from the central Pacific, the birds battle against the wind and arrive at to their nesting grounds exhausted.

I felt very fortunate to witness that spectacular sight at Griffiths Island. To see about fifty thousand birds returning en masse to individual burrows at night to feed their chicks must be one of nature's most remarkable offerings, and it was a real pleasure for this member, for whom bird watching is a spare-time recreation, either home or away.

**Chris Peach**

Email: peachcc@aol.com



Plate 71. Portland Bird Observatory. © Tony Tindale

# RNBWS visit to Portland Bird Observatory

by Commander Stuart Lawrence

With the weather set fair, twelve RNBWS members spent a weekend at the Portland Bird Observatory in the middle of April to catch up with the UK's spring migration. This was the first outing to Portland for some years but 2013 is already booked and the intention is to make this an annual event.

Before going into the detail of the weekend, it might be helpful to conduct a brief history lesson for those readers not familiar with the 'Obs'. For almost 300 years lighthouses have stood on Portland Bill to guide vessels heading for Portland and Weymouth and acting as a waymark for vessels navigating the English Channel. In 1869 the high and low lighthouses were built, but very early in the 1900s Trinity House announced its intention to replace them with a single tower - the present lighthouse. The high tower complex is now given to holiday accommodation and the low tower, not used as a lighthouse since 1906, is the bird observatory and field centre.

But back to our weekend. The advance party arrived Thursday 12th April having picked up a Rose Coloured Starling in Hordle and a Black-winged Stilt at the Abbotsbury Swannery - not a bad start. Before the main party arrived on Friday, Mark Cutts continued his bird ringing apprenticeship; it proved a busy day and over 300 birds were logged with Willow Warblers the most numerous. The main party arrived around noon, and a group headed towards the top fields above Culverwell. These had held good numbers of migrants in the morning and we were quickly rewarded by a cracking male Redstart in full breeding plumage. Wheatears were very conspicuous on just about every stone wall and fence post, and each field appeared to hold at least one bird. An immature Kestrel was very accommodating as a splinter group headed towards the west cliffs and Steve Copsy managed a good shot that clearly suggested a recent successful hunt as the bird had blood stains on its bill. On return to the Observatory, the team were

**Plates 72–76 opposite.** Top left; Matt Birchett, Top right; Immature Kestrel, Centre; Teal, Bottom left; Glossy Ibis, Bottom right; Stuart Lawrence and Michael Casement. © Martin Alabaster & Steve Copsy





Plate 77. Peregrine viewing. © Tony Tindale

joined by our chairman Martin Alabaster and two other members, Dorothy and Duncan Robertson, who had spent a similarly enjoyable afternoon at Radipole Lake. After an impromptu meeting, it was off to the Pulpit pub for a bite to eat and a beverage - apart from the author who decided to stay in and listen to the radio as his beloved Southampton were beaten by Reading in a top of the Championship clash. (However, the result mattered not, for Southampton were promoted as runners-up after beating Coventry on the last day of the season).

We awoke to a quite a strong northerly breeze on the Saturday morning and with Mark reporting a marked reduction in the number of birds being rung, we were not expecting to see large numbers of migrants. After the obligatory bacon sandwich and some excellent homemade marmalade courtesy of David Dobson, the group headed around the fields and scrub above Culverwell, the east cliffs and quarries as well as the Bill itself. The only migrants of note were a few Wheatears, Willow Warblers, Barn Swallows and House Martins. About midday, the group decided to check out Radipole Lake via Barleycrates Lane. The path leading to the cliffs was very productive with good numbers of Hirundines, Wheatears and the odd Redstart, but the pick was a Whinchat. On reaching the cliffs overlooking Chesil

Beach there were some good views of a Peregrine nicely silhouetted on the cliff face. On the way back a Ring Ouzel was another good tick. Radipole Lake afforded some great views of Cettis Warblers, Bearded Tits and Great Crested Grebes, with the Hooded Merganser showing really well. The group also connected with an immature Glossy Ibis feeding in front of the North Hide and there were some excellent views of a male Marsh Harrier. After a short hop to a very quiet Lodmoor where the only highlight was Little Ringed Plover, there was a brief stop at Ferrybridge where a Sanderling was added to the list and then it was back to the Obs for a Chinese and glass of red - a thoroughly enjoyable day's birding.

Even though we had stronger northerly winds on Sunday morning than we experienced on Saturday, the group still managed a brief excursion around the top fields without anything noteworthy, but an hour at the Bill delivered a good haul of sea birds. We picked up several Manx Shearwaters a mile or so out along with small numbers of Fulmars, Gannets and Kittiwakes. Guillemots and Razorbill were common and a pair of Puffins brought up the Auk trio. And for a seafaring organisation, it was an appropriate end to the weekend, with a grand total of 93 species.

*Stuart Lawrence*



Plate 78. Wandering Albatross, juvenile, 38.4S 140.8E, Port MacDonnell, South Australia, 26 November 2011. © Neil Cheshire

# Seabirds on a voyage between Sydney and Cape Town, 3–21 June 1972

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by Beau W. Rowlands

*Beau Rowlands has published personally or jointly nearly forty papers and articles (nine in Sea Swallow) together with two books. These have been largely based on his many seabirding voyages, and another trip, to Ascension and St Helena, is planned for late 2012.*

## Introduction

This article covers an 18-day winter voyage in 1972 from Sydney to Cape Town (7663 nm), on the one-class P&O liner *Orcades*. This voyage, her final (71st), under Captain R.B. Nowell, concluded a year in the Indian Ocean, Australia and New Zealand. [For earlier (same journey) records of Indian Ocean winter seabirds, at the Cargados Carajos Shoals (July–August 1971 - *en route* Australia), see Rowlands (1974) and Williams and Rowlands (1980).]

Built in 1948 for the UK-Australasia route (normally via Suez), *Orcades* carried up to 1635 passengers. Southampton-bound, she sailed from Sydney on 3 June, at 1900, made brief calls at Melbourne, Port Adelaide, Fremantle, and Durban, and arrived at Cape Town at 0900 on 21 June. Her speed was from 13 to 16 knots between Sydney and Port Adelaide, 19 to 22 knots thereafter. Due to the frequent time changes, almost every day, all times given are ship's time. Navigational details from the bridge were obtained by request through the office of the Purser, K.J. Flint, and from the ship's daily *Good Morning* news sheets. Unlike subsequent voyages (e.g. Rowlands 2011, published in last year's *Sea Swallow*), this was well before the ten-minute card method of counts was described by Tasker *et al* (1984); hence the following detailed inclusion of noon positions, distances and other data below.

Table 1. Navigational Data.

Date	Noon Pos.	Dist. Run (nm/hrs)	Temps © Air/Sea	Notes
3 Jun	Sydney		19/20.3	Cloudy, calm, sea calm
4 Jun	19nm off C Everard, Victoria	275/17	14.7/16.9	Cloudy, calm, sea calm
5 Jun	Melbourne	307/24	13.8/14.7	Calm. Clear after morning mist
6 Jun	12nm off C Nelson, Victoria	214/24.5	14.3/14.2	Slightly cloudy, calm, sea calm
7 Jun	Port Adelaide	300/24	15.9/15.3	Slightly cloudy, calm, sea calm
8 Jun	240nm S of Eucla, W Aust	453/24.75	13.9/15.6	Cloudy. Wind light westerly
9 Jun	32nm S of C Riche, W Aust	492/24.75	15.8/16.1	Wind freshened to strong NW
10 Jun	Fremantle	398/24	20.6/20.0	Cloudless. Variable breezes
11 Jun	30.9S, 108.6E	374/24.75	20.0/21.1	Cloudy, strong W winds. Rough
12 Jun	29.9S, 98.8E	513/24.75	19.5/19.4	Cloudy, v. rough seas, rain squalls
13 Jun	29.8S, 89.7E	472/24.75	20.0/20.0	SW squalls, seas very rough
14 Jun	29.9S, 80.2E	496/24.75	19.4/19.4	Slightly cloudy
15 Jun	29.9S, 69.7E	548/24.75	19.4/20.0	Overcast, strong winds, heavy seas
16 Jun	29.9S, 59.7E	520/24.75	20.0/20.1	Cloudy, rough seas, wind SW
17 Jun	29.9S, 49.5E	532/24.75	20.0/21.7	Cold front. Overcast. Seas rough
18 Jun	30.2S, 39.1E	540/24.75	20.6/21.7	Partly cloudy, light winds
19 Jun	Durban	411/24	20.0/22.1	Partly cloudy, light winds, rain later
20 Jun	12nm off Bird I, Algoa Bay	383/24	22.2/21.5	Calm, cloudless. Coast in sight
21 Jun	Cape Town	435/21	16.3/12.0	Benguela Current. Overcast

The full distance steamed from Fremantle to Durban (4406 nm), was, to my regret, confined to the 29S–30S latitudes. There was talk on board of the shorter though more southerly (and colder!) great circle route, which would have brought us closer to the mid Indian Ocean islands of Amsterdam and St Paul (resp. 37.9S and 38.7S) - and therewith the expected chance of more diverse and greater numbers of birds!

During this crossing, on 14 June (*c* 1100 hrs ship's time), *Orcades* had a rendezvous with the bulk carrier/tanker *Berge Istra* [of Bergesen D.Y. Tankers - Japan bound, from Rio de Janeiro]. The two vessels were stationary (sea calm) for the transfer of an injured crewman to *Orcades* for hospital treatment in Durban.

After further calls, at Dakar (29 June), Lisbon (3 July) and Rotterdam (6 July), *Orcades* finally arrived at Southampton on 7 July. Thereafter, she cruised until taken out of service on 13 October. In February 1973, she was delivered to the breakers' yard at Kaohsiung.

## Species Accounts

Observations were mainly from the stern, as the bridge was open to passengers only once per person (in group visits) and that only by prior booking. Observations were between breakfast and mid-morning (given below as AM) and between lunch and mid-afternoon

(PM), and periods varied in length from half an hour to an hour. Because of generally poor visibility, and with 8x30 binoculars, only birds within about 100 m of the vessel could be properly identified. Most birds followed well astern, exceptions being those that crossed our track without being diverted from their course by the vessel, and/or which 'met' the ship up forward, passing at great speed to join others astern.

21 seabird species were identified, plus many unidentified giant petrels, prions, and shearwaters. My main reference on board was Serventy *et al* (1971). Where relevant, accounts are sub-headed - for the respective legs, i.e. *Sydney–Melbourne* (582 nm), *Melbourne–Port Adelaide* (514 nm), *Port Adelaide–Fremantle* (1343 nm), *Fremantle–Durban* (4406 nm, av 21.11 knots) and *Durban–Cape Town* (818 nm). Repeat sightings were not distinguished, and no note was made of subspecies, nor subsequent changes in species/subspecies..

**Jackass/African Penguin** *Spheniscus demersus*. *Durban–Cape Town leg*: One (PM) S of Cape St Francis, 20 Jun.

**Royal Albatross** *Diomedea epomophora*. *Fremantle–Durban leg*: Single bird, at 29.7S 80.2E, Indian Ocean, *c* 1855 nm from Fremantle, 14 Jun (late AM - *c* 1100 hrs ship's time). It (and a Wandering Albatross) made several close passes around and over

the ship during her rendezvous with the bulk carrier/tanker *Berge Istra* (see above).

**Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans*.

*Sydney–Melbourne leg*: First sightings a single bird, between Green Cape and Gabo Island, NSW (0830 hrs), and 15 birds (PM), S of Cape Everard, Victoria, 4 Jun. *Melbourne–Port Adelaide leg*: 7 birds (AM) and 7 (PM), S of Cape Nelson, Victoria, 6 Jun. *Port Adelaide–Fremantle leg*: 2 birds (AM) and 2 (PM), c 240 nm S of Eucla, Western Australia, 8 Jun, and 22 birds (AM) and 20 (PM, including 2 very old 'snowy' males), c 32 nm S of Cape Riche, Western Australia, 9 Jun. *Fremantle–Durban leg*: 3 birds (AM, two juveniles and an adult) and 3 (PM), 11 Jun, 1 (AM) and 1 (PM, adult), 12 Jun (sea very rough), 1 (AM, adult) and 1 (PM, adult), 13 Jun (see below), 1 (AM), 14 Jun (adult, sea calm, making several close passes around and over the ship during rendezvous of *Orcades* with the *Berge Istra* - see Royal Albatross above), 1 (PM, adult male) at 29.9S 59.7E, 1490 nm E of Durban, 16 Jun, a Pintado Petrel (see below) also present (sea rough), and 1 (AM, adult male) and 1 (PM), 17 Jun (sea rough). The 2 sightings on 13 Jun were Stage 4 adults (Harrison 1983: 46), up to 1483 nm W of Fremantle.

**Black-browed Albatross** *Thalassarche melanophris*.

*Sydney–Melbourne leg*: First sighting 12 birds (PM), S of Cape Everard, Victoria, 4 Jun. *Melbourne–Port Adelaide leg*: 14 birds (AM) and 8 (PM), S of Cape Nelson, Victoria, 6 Jun. *Port Adelaide–Fremantle leg*: 3 birds (AM), 4 (PM), c 240 nm S of Eucla, Western Australia, 8 Jun.

**Grey-headed Albatross** *Thalassarche chrysostoma*.

*Port Adelaide–Fremantle leg*: 2 birds (AM) and 3 (PM), c 240 nm S of Eucla, Western Australia, 8 Jun.

**Yellow-nosed Albatross** *Thalassarche chlororhynchos*.

*Port Adelaide–Fremantle leg*: 5 birds (PM), c 32 nm S of Cape Riche, Western Australia, 9 Jun.

**Shy Albatross** *Thalassarche cauta*.

*Sydney–Melbourne leg*: First sighting 4 birds (PM), S of Cape Everard, Victoria, 4 Jun. *Melbourne–Port Adelaide leg*: 6 birds (AM), S of Cape Nelson, Victoria, 6 Jun.

**Sooty Albatross** *Phoebastria fusca*.

*Fremantle–Durban leg*: Single bird (PM), c 29.8S 89.7E, Indian Ocean, 13 Jun.

**Giant Petrel** *Macronectes* sp.

*Sydney–Melbourne leg*: First sighting 18 birds

(PM), S of Cape Everard, Victoria, 4 Jun. *Melbourne–Port Adelaide leg*: 10 birds (AM) and again 10 (PM), S of Cape Nelson, Victoria, 6 Jun. No white morph birds were seen.

**Pintado Petrel** *Daption capense*.

*Fremantle–Durban leg*: One (AM, one adult male Wandering Albatross also present - see above) and one (PM), western Indian Ocean (2 days from Durban), 17 Jun.

**Great-winged Petrel** *Pterodroma macroptera*.

*Port Adelaide–Fremantle leg*: 15 birds (PM), c 32 nm S of Cape Riche, Western Australia, 9 Jun. In this area the species is a regular winter breeder on Eclipse Island (Serventy *et al* 1971: 93).

**Prions** sp *Pachyptila* sp.

*Port Adelaide–Fremantle leg*: 5 birds (PM), c 240 nm S of Eucla, Western Australia, 8 Jun.



**Plate 79.** Sooty Albatross, 39.9S 85.3E South Indian Ocean, 14 May 2005. © Neil Cheshire



**Plate 80.** Short-tailed Shearwater, 38.4S 140.7E off Port MacDonnell, South Australia, 8 November 2009. © Neil Cheshire

**Short-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus tenuirostris*.

Port Adelaide–Fremantle leg: 5 birds (PM), passing close to ship, E of Trowbridge Shoal, South Australia, 7 Jun (recognised also by a passing crewman as ‘Tassie Muttonbirds’), and one (PM) c 32 nm S of Cape Riche, Western Australia, 9 Jun. Sightings of this solely Australia-breeding shearwater were unexpected, given the species’ trans-equatorial migratory pattern and highly synchronous breeding, with departure April–early May (Serventy *et al* 1971: 132, Cleeland, J. 2011: 81).

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes*.

Fremantle–Durban leg: 2 singles (AM), passing close astern, on a NW course, eastern Indian Ocean, 13 Jun. As with the previous species, sightings were unexpected, given the species’ trans-equatorial migratory pattern and post-breeding departure from Australia in April–early May (Serventy *et al* 1971: 123).

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus pacificus*.

Fremantle–Durban leg: 3 singles (PM), passing close astern, on a NW course, eastern Indian Ocean, 13 Jun.

**Shearwater sp** *Puffinus* sp. Fremantle–Durban leg: Single bird (AM), appearing all-dark, eastern Indian Ocean, 12 Jun.

**Wilson’s Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus*.

Port Adelaide–Fremantle leg: 4 birds (PM), c 240 nm S of Eucla, Western Australia, 8 Jun.

**Australasian Gannet** *Morus serrator*. Port Adelaide–Fremantle leg: Single adult (AM), that passed close to the ship on arrival Fremantle, 10 Jun.

**White-breasted Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*. Fremantle–Durban leg: Single bird (AM), flushed from the water by the ship on arrival Durban Docks (Bluff), 19 Jun.

**Southern Skua** *Catharacta antarctica*. Port Adelaide–Fremantle leg: 2 birds (PM), around ship on departure, 7 Jun, 4 (AM) and again 4 (PM) around ship c 240 nm S of Eucla, Western Australia, 8 Jun. Durban–Cape Town leg: One (AM), off Port Alfred, overhead, 20 Jun, one (PM) c 12 nm off Bird Island, Algoa Bay, 20 Jun, circling the ship until it disappeared W of Port Elizabeth.

**Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus*. Fremantle–Durban leg: 18 birds (AM), around ship, near whaling station on arrival Durban Docks (Bluff), 19 Jun. They were attracted to some 8 whale carcasses (strong smell), on rocks and in water awaiting flensing. [The Durban whaling station was closed down in 1975 by the way.] Seven birds (AM), noted around ship on arrival Cape Town Docks, 21 Jun.

**Silver Gull** *Larus novaehollandiae*. Before departure, Sydney (PM), up to 25 were counted around ship, 3 Jun. At Melbourne, in harbour c 22 were seen soon after arrival (AM) and 28 (PM, alongside), 5 Jun. At

Port Adelaide, up to 31 were counted soon after arrival (AM) and *c* 30 on departure (PM), 7 Jun. At Fremantle, up to 28 were counted on arrival (AM) and *c* 33 on departure (PM), 10 Jun.

**Hartlaub's Gull** *Larus hartlaubii*. Durban-Cape Town leg: On arrival Table Bay (early AM), up to 24 birds counted close to and around ship, 21 Jun.

**Swift Tern** *Sterna bergii*. Fremantle-Durban leg: One (PM), Fremantle, following departure, 10 Jun.

## Acknowledgements

Not meeting any birding enthusiasts on board, I was largely alone in carrying out my observations, though a few crew and passengers occasionally drew my attention to birds. However, earlier, in New Zealand, I was greatly encouraged by my late uncle, Tom E. Rowlands (of Federated Farmers, Christchurch), who at Christmas gave me my copy of Serventy *et al* (1971), and later an introduction to the late John Warham, an ornithologist and third author of the above (1971) work, notable for his research on seabirds, especially petrels. The late Drs Roger Duff (Director, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch) and R. J. (Ron) Scarlett, a paleozoologist at the Museum, granted me access to seabird specimens, eggs and literature. They also introduced me to the late Robert Henry 'Roy' Traill of Stewart Island (see Natusch, 1991) who not only personally hosted me on that island (January 1972) but gave me a superb hands-on field introduction to nesting Sooty Shearwaters (Muttonbirds), and other sub-Antarctic species. At the Sydney Museum (February), the late Dr Henry John de Suffren Disney also kindly showed me over that Museum's extensive specimen collection. All the above were most helpful in providing relevant information prior to the voyage. On board, Captain R.B. Nowell, and K.J. Flint the Purser, supplied me with the necessary navigational details.

I also owe thanks to Captain Neil Cheshire, who has provided illustrations for this article - mine were alas old, and not good enough for publication. He has also solved a small puzzle, concerning muttonbirds. In page 81 of *Sea Swallow* 61 I read that muttonbird was the common name for the Short-tailed Shearwater, but in New Zealand I was told that the name muttonbird was given to the Sooty Shearwater.

Neil explains: "Muttonbird is correct for both species, but to be more precise: The Tasmanian Muttonbird is the Short-tailed Shearwater. The New Zealand Muttonbird is the Sooty Shearwater.

Short-tailed breeding is confined to Tasmania and southern Australia; Sooty is mainly in New Zealand, Chile, Falklands and Tristan, with a few small colonies in southern Australia.

In the past both the Maori and Australian Aboriginals have taken the fat young nestlings for food shortly before fledging, and indeed there is still small scale controlled exploitation for traditional food in both countries.

I must confess that when I lived in New Zealand I was given a pair to eat by a Maori neighbour. They had been prepared in the traditional way, preserved in their own fat without the benefit of refrigeration. They were very 'gamey', the flavour being a cross between a chicken and an aged herring/mullet with a bouquet of well hung pheasant!"

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## Notes on seabird reports received 2011–2012

by Neil Cheshire

Another welcome increase in contributions during 2011–2012. The area of greatest activity was around the Falklands, Antarctic Peninsula and South America, with extensive records from our Hon. Treasurer Steve Copsey, back records from Peter Fraser and a welcome return of observations from HMS Protector. Simon Cook sent detailed notes of his activities as an ornithological guide aboard south polar eco-tourist vessels. During his return voyage to Europe his ship was diverted to South Georgia with engine problems, and after a week there, passengers and staff were taken to Montevideo by a relief vessel. Peter Fraser also supplied back records from two very interesting voyages to seldom visited areas in the central Pacific. His back notes of voyages to the NZ sub-antarctic islands and to the Western Pacific have been held over until next year. David Ballance once again supplied an excellent very detailed bound account of his voyage around the West Indies and the return to UK. Increased naval activity in the Mediterranean last year gave our webmaster Mark Cutts and Tony Tindale the opportunity for interesting observations in that area. Thomas Johannsen continues to send his regular reports from the far east and Australian waters and was fortunate to observe Saunder's Gull in northern China. Chris Caldwell who sailed as a musician aboard Rotterdam on the North Atlantic found time for observations between his performances. Records would be enhanced if observers used the standard RNBWS report sheet or a computer version of this. All contributors are thanked for their participation.

David K. Ballance (DKB)	<i>m.v. Discovery</i>	Barbados–West Indies–Azores–Portsmouth March–April 2011. 33N + summary.
Chris Caldwell(CC)	<i>m.v. Rotterdam</i>	Rotterdam–Southampton–New York and return. July 2011. 5R.
Simon G. Cook(SGC)	<i>m.v. L'Austral</i> <i>m.v. Le Boreal</i> <i>m.v. Plancius</i> <i>m.v. Ushuaia</i>	Two voyages Ushuaia–Antarctic Peninsula Dec. 2011. 3R+1N. Four voyages Ushuaia–Antarctic Peninsula Jan–Feb 2012. 7R. Ushuaia–Antarctic Peninsula–South Georgia. 2R. South Georgia to Montevideo. 1R.
CPO Steve Copsey(SC)	<i>HMS York</i>	Falklands–Strait of Magellan–Callao–Panama–Jamaica–Bermuda May–June 2011. Spreadsheet.
CPO Mark Cutts(MC)	<i>HMS Liverpool</i>	Southern UK waters to central Mediterranean March–Nov 2011. Spreadsheet.
Bridge team (HMSP)	<i>HMS Protector</i>	UK–Falklands–Antarctic Peninsula. Spreadsheet (per. Surg.Lt. Rachel Evershed).
Capt. Thomas Johannsen	<i>m.v. Fiesta</i>	Xingang–Bankok, Jakarta–Fremantle March–April (TJ) 2012. 4C.
WO2 Anthony Tindale (TT)	<i>HMS Iron Duke/Argyll</i>	UK waters–Mediterranean–Arabian Gulf July, Sept, Nov 2011, Feb 2012. 1R.
Peter Fraser (PF)	<i>m.v. Polar Star,</i> <i>m.v. Clipper Odessey</i> <i>m.v. Clipper Odessey</i>	Callao, Peru to Cape Horn. Nov 2005. Spreadsheet. Hawaii to Tahiti Aug–Sept 2008. Spreadsheet. Tahiti–Tuamotus–Pitcairn–Ducie I.–Henderson I.–Easter Island Oct 2010. Spreadsheet.

Observers are referred to by their initials. Dates refer to 2011 unless otherwise listed. Positions are given in degrees and decimals of degrees of latitude and longitude. nm = nautical mile (1.852 km), Ad = Adult, h = hours, imm = immature, juv = juvenile, C = census sheets, N = notes.

### Penguins *Spheniscidae*

**King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus*.** SGC saw one at 52.75 40.4W, NW from South Georgia on 19 April'12. **Gentoo Penguin *Pygoscelis papua*.** Two at 64.75 62.1W, Wilhelmina Bay on 15 Dec and six at 63.35 56.9W, Antarctic Sound the next day, 10 at 64.65 62.2W Wilhelmina Bay on 23 Feb'12 (SGC). **Adelie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae*.** Around the Antarctic Peninsula SGC saw 13 at 63.55 56.6W on 4 Dec, nine at 64.75 62.1W on 15 Dec, four at 63.35 56.9W on 17 Dec, two at 62.75 59.8W on 18 Dec and 104 at 63.45 56.8W on 2

April'12. **Chinstrap Penguin *Pygoscelis antarctica*.** SGC saw four at 61.75 59.9W in Drake Passage on 3 Dec, then eight at 64.75 62.1W in Wilhelmina Bay on 15 Dec, two at 62.75 59.8W in Bransfield Strait on 18 Dec and one at 59.55 62.5W on 19 Dec, c.40 000 at 62.95 60.4W Deception Island, Bransfield Strait on 21 Jan'12, four at 64.5 61.7W Croker Passage on 24 Jan'12, 83 in small groups at 61.25 60.9W on 31 Jan'12, 21 at 61.95 59.7W on 10 Feb'12, two at 61.25 61.6W, Drake Passage on 20 Feb'12, 290 at 62.35 59.3W Nelson Strait on 4 April'12 and in the Scotia Sea

three at 57.2S 48.4W on 6 April'12, two at 54.5S 40W on 7 April'12. HMSP saw six at 62.2S 58.9W on 13 Jan'12. **Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome***. SGC recorded 11 in two groups at 55.9S 66.8W on 28 Jan'12, 67 in small groups at 58.2S 63.7W Drake Passage on 30 Jan'12, seven at 60.3S 64W on 25 Feb'12 and 24 in small groups at 59.1S 65W on the 25 Feb'12. SGC reported Drake Passage on the 25 Feb'12 was unusually calm like a millpond and he had the privilege of seeing seven species of cetacean during the day, Fin Whale, Sei Whale, Antarctic Minke Whale, Hourglass Dolphin, Southern Bottlenose Whale, Gray's beaked Whale and his first Spectacled Porpoise a female and calf. **Macaroni Penguin *Eudyptes chrysolophus***. SGC saw three in Drake Passage at 59.7S 63.1W on 16 Feb'12. **Magellanic Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus***. SC recorded four at 52.6S 69.6W, Straits of Magellan on 19 May. Heading south in Chilean waters PF saw the first two at 36.3S 73.5W off Talcahuano on 13 Nov'05, six at 44.9S 73.5W on 16 Nov'05 and 20 at 54.4S 71.2W near Tierra del Fuego on 21 Nov'05. SGC saw c.1 000 in the eastern part of Beagle Channel, 54.9S 66.9W on 10 Dec and 6–700 there on 20 Dec. HMSP saw seven at 52.3S 61.5W in the Falklands on 9 Jan'12. **Humbolt Penguin *Spheniscus humboldti***. During Nov 2005, PF saw 40 at 13.7S 76.4W near Islas Ballestas on the 6th, one at 15.2S 75.5W the next day, 11 at 18.8S 70.4W on the 9th, six at 27.3S 71.5W and three at 28.7S 71.7W on the 11th, 12 at 33.3S 71.9W off Valparaiso on the 13th and the last at 36.3S 73.5W on the 13th. SC observed 17 when entering Callao, Peru on 29 May.

### **Albatrosses *Diomedidae***

**Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans***. SC recorded one at 51.7S 57.6S near Cape Pembroke, Falklands on 6 May, 11 at 45.8S 75.8W off southern Chile on 22 May. HMSP recorded one at 52.5S 61.1W near the Falklands on 9 Jan'12 and three at 55.2S 59.1W on 10 Jan'12. SGC saw three at 55.7S 65.9W in Drake Passage and one at 58.1S 63.7W on 20 Jan'12, one at 55.9S 66.8W on 28 Jan'12, three at 56.2S 65.5W on 30 Jan'12, one at 61.9S 59.7W South Shetlands on 10 Feb'12, one at 57.8S 64.2W on 19 Feb'12, two at 57.4S 63.7W on 30 March'12, one at 59.3S 55.6W on 5 April'12 which was recorded later the same day at 58.8S 53.8W, one at 57.1S 48.3W on 6 April'12 and 20+ at 54.5S 40W in the Scotia Sea on 7 April'12, three at 52.7S 40.4W on 19 April'12, nine at 50.8S 46.8W on 20 April'12, eight at 47.3S 50W on 21 April'12, five at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April'12 and eight at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12. **Southern Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora***. SC saw three at 51.7S 58.5E off Cape Pembroke, Falklands on 7 May, six at 52.4S 61.8W on 18 May, four adults and 25 Northern or Southern Royal immatures at 45.8S 75.8W off southern Chile on 22 May and one at 41.4S 74.4W on 23 May. SGC observed one at 56.3S 65.4W in Drake Passage on 2 Dec and two

at 57.2S 65.7W on 12 Dec, three at 55.7S 65.9W on 20 Jan'12, two at 55.9S 66.8W off Cape Horn on 28 Jan'12, five at 56.2S 65.5W on 30 Jan'12 and singles at 56.2S 65.1W, 56.3S 65W on 9 Feb'12.

**Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi***. PF observed one at 33.3S 71.9W off Valparaiso on 12 Nov'05 and five at 35.5S 73.2W the next day. SC recorded two at 45.8S 75.8W and one at 41.4S 74.4W on 23 May. Thomas et al.(2010) document GPS tracking and behaviour of juvenile Northern Royal Albatrosses between NZ and Chilean coastal waters. **Waved Albatross *Diomedea irrorata***. SC observed this Galapagos endemic in Peruvian waters with three at 17.1S 75W on 28 May, four at 7.7S 80.5W on 3 June and three at 4.7S 81.8W later the same day. **Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris***. During Nov 2005 PF recorded many in Chilean waters north to 16.5S 73.5W off Mollendo, Peru where he saw one on the 8th, then six at 28.7S 71.7W on the 11th and thereafter daily until the 22nd. Larger counts included 33 at 35.5S 73.2W on the 13th, 100 at 36.3S 73.5W off Talcahuano the same day, 2 500 at 48.3S 74.2W in Canal Messier on the 17th, 500 at 54.3S 71.3W St. Magellan to Beagle Channel on the 21st and 2 500 at 55.3S 66.8W off Cape Horn on the 22nd. SC saw c.60 at 51.4S 58.5W near Cape Dolphin, Falklands on 7 May, 107 in 1.3h at 52.4S 61.9W southwest of the Falklands on 18 May, one at 53S 73.7W, Magellan Straits on 20 May, c.85 at 45.8S 75.8W off southern Chile on 22 May, 11 at 41.4S 74.4W off Puerto Montt, Chile on 23 May, 18 at 35.3S 73.9W on 24 May, 36 at 31.2S 72.8W on 25 May, one at 26.6S 71.6E and two at 26S 71.6W on 26 May, four at 23.3S 70.9W off Antofagasta on 26 May, one at 22.9S 70.8W and the last two at 22.7S 71.5W on 27 May. SGC saw small numbers in Drake Passage during Dec with the most southerly record of one at 62.7S 59.8W Bransfield Strait on the 18th. Later in the season he recorded 720 in 4h at 55.9S 66.8W off Cape Horn on 28 Jan'12, 30 in 2h at 56.2S 65.5W on 30 Jan'12, 62 feeding on a krill concentration at 63.7S 61.1W in Gerlache Strait on 3 Feb'12, 17 in 3h at 61.9S 59.7E approaching Nelson Strait South Shetlands on 10 Feb'12, 3–400 in 3h at 55.6S 66.6W off Cape Horn on 17 Feb'12. On passage from South Georgia to Montevideo he saw 14 at 52.7S 40.4E on 19 April'12, 54 at 50.8S 46.8W on 20 April'12, 76 at 47.2S 50W on 21 April'12, 38 at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April'12 and 320 in 4h at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12. **Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta***. One was observed by SC at 35.3S 73.9W off Chile on 24 May. **Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini***. PF recorded 25 in 4h at 16.5S 73.6W off Mollendo, Peru on 8 Nov'05, six at 17S 72.8W and two at 17.4S 72.1W later the same day, one at 18.8S 70.4W near Arica on 9 Nov'05, one at 22S 70.8W on 9 Nov'05, two at 32.5S 71.7W off Valparaiso on 12 Nov'05 and three nearby at 33.3S 71.9W the same day, three at 35.5S 73.2W on 13 Nov'05, one at 37.5S 73.8W on 14 Nov'05, one at 47.5S 75.1W

in the Golfo de Penas on 17 Nov'05 and one in the western Straits of Magellan at 53S 73.5W on 20 Nov'05. SC saw 27 at 45.8S 75.8W off southern Chile on 22 May. **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche chlororhynchos***. In the South Atlantic HMSP saw their first two at 38.7S 55.8W on 6 Jan'12 and two more the next day at 43S 58.2W. SGC saw one at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12. **Grey-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrystostoma***. PF saw one at 55.3S 66.8W off Cape Horn on 22 Nov'05. SC recorded seven in 1.6h at 51.6S 57.2W SE of Cape Pembroke, Falklands on 3 May, one at 51.9S 58.2W Falklands on 11 May, 13 in 1.3h at 52.4S 61.9W southwest of the Falklands on 18 May and five at 45.8S 75.8W off southern Chile on 22 May. SGC had several records from Drake Passage during Dec with one at 56.3S 65.3W on the 2nd, two at 58.6S 63.4W on the 9th, one at 57.2S 65.7W on the 12th, four at 62.5S 63.8W on the 13th and two at 59.5S 62.5W on the 19th. Later he saw one at 55.7S 65.9W on 20 Jan'12 and two at 58.1S 63.7W the same day, one at 61.6S 60.4W on 21 Jan'12, three at 61.2S 60.9W on 31 Jan'12, nine at 61.9S 59.7W South Shetlands on 10 Feb'12, 27 in 4h at 60.3S 64W on 25 Feb'12 where one was seen to plunge dive below the sea surface, 15 at 59.1S 65W later the same day, five at 57.4S 63.7W on 30 March'12, one at 62.3S 59.3W Nelson Strait on 4 April'12, four at 57.1S 48.3W on 6 April'12, four at 54.5S 40W on 7 April'12, 21 at 52.7S 40.4W on 19 April'12, 32 at 50.8S 46.8W on 20 April'12 and 12 at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April'12. **Buller's Albatross *Thalassarche bulleri***. PF saw six at 17S 72.8W off Mollendo Peru on 8 Nov'05, 31 at 23.2S 71W off Antofagasta Chile on 10 Nov'05, 100 in a morning at 27.3S 71.5W and later three at 28.7S 71.7E the next day, one at 33.3S 71.9W on 12 Nov'05 and the last two at 35.5S 73.2W on 13 Nov'05. He also provided an interesting record from mid-South Pacific of a single bird heading SW at 26.3S 115.7W, 340nm WNW from Easter Island on 16 Oct'10. SC observed two at 31.2S 72.8W off central Chile on 25 May, one at 23.3S 70.9W on 27 May and eight at 22.8S 71.5W on 27 May and the last four at 17.1S 75W off southern Peru on 28 May. **Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca***. On passage from South Georgia to Montevideo SGC saw two at 52.7S 40.4W on 19 April'12, three at 50.8S 46.8W on 20 April'12, 24 in 4h at 47.3S 50W on 21 April'12, 14 in 4h at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April'12 and one at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12. **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata***. One was recorded by SC at 45.8S 75.8W off southern Chile on 22 May. SGC described one with a white back which was likely a sun-bleached immature rather than a bird with aberrant plumage, seen at 57S 63.7W in Drake Passage on 2 Dec. He also saw one at 61.7S 59.9E, two at 62.6S 59.5W, one at 62.7S 59.1W on 3 Dec, one at 62.7S 59.8W in Bransfield Strait on 8 Dec, eight in 3h at 62.5S 63.8W on 13 Dec and three at 62.7S 59.8W in Bransfield Strait on 18 Dec, one at

61.2S 61.6W on 20 Feb'12, one at 59.3S 55.6W on 5 April'12, three at 57.1S 48.3W in the Scotia Sea on 6 April'12, one at 54.5S 40W on 7 April'12.

### Petrels *Procellariidae*

**Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus***. During Nov 2005 PF recorded small numbers each day off Chile from 27.3S 71.5E on the 11th to 55.3S 66.8W off Cape Horn the 22nd where he recorded a maximum of 50. In the Falklands area SC saw four at 51.6S 57.2W on 3 May, 14 at 51.7S 57.6W on 6 May, 27 at 51.9S 58.2W on 11 May and 83 at 52.4S 61.9W on 18 May. Heading north off Chile he saw two at 52.6S 73.6W in the Patagonian Canal on 20 May and four including a white morph at 45.8S 75.8W on 21 May. SGC recorded four at 56.3S 65.3W and one at 58.1S 62.7W in Drake Passage on 2 Dec, three at 63.5S 56.6W in Antarctic Sound on 4 Dec, two at 54.9S 66.9W Beagle Channel on 10 Dec, six at 57.2S 65.7W in Drake Passage on 12 Dec, three at 62.5S 63.8W on 13 Dec, four at 63.3S 56.9W on 17 Dec, three at 54.9S 66.9W on 20 Dec, eight at 56.2S 65.5W on 30 Jan'12, 15 including two white morph birds at 61.9S 59.7W on 10 Feb'12, one dark and one white morph at 57.4S 63.7W on 30 March'12, 22 in 3h at 62.3S 59.3W Nelson Strait on 4 April'12, nine at 59.3S 55.6W on 5 April'12, 17 at 54.5S 40W on 7 April'12. **Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli***. Single birds were seen by PF at 33.3S 71.9W on 12 Nov'05, 35.5S 73.2W the next day and at 47.5S 75.1W Golfo de Penas on 17 Nov'05. SC observed one at 51.6S 57.2W, Falklands on 3 May, one at 51.7S 57.6W on the 6 May. SGC observed one at 55.7S 65.9W in Drake Passage on 20 Jan'12, one at 57.4S 63.7W on 30 March'12, one at 58.8S 53.8W on 5 April'12. Between South Georgia and Montevideo he saw two at 52.7S 40.4W on 19 April'12, two at 50.8S 46.8W on 20 April'12, three at 47.3S 50W on 21 April'12 and the last one at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April'12. **Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis***. Recorded by DKB approaching the Channel on 22 April with two at 49N 6.1W, four at 49.3N 5.8W and one at 49.7N 5.4W. MC saw one at 50N 4.1W and one at 50.3N 4.2W approaching Plymouth on 31 March. **Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialisoides***. Seen by PF in Chilean waters with one at 32.5S 71.7W off Valparaiso on 12 Nov'05, 25 at 35.5S 73.2W on 13 Nov'05, 50 in Golfo de Penas at 47.5S 75.1W on 17 Nov'05 and 10 at 54.3S 71.2W off Tierra del Fuego on the 21 Nov'05. In the Falklands area SC recorded 15 at 51.6S 57.2W on 3 May, 11 at 52.1S 58.6W the next day, 21 at 51.7S 57.6W on 6 May, c.100 at 51.4S 58.5W near Cape Dolphin on 7 May, 15 at 51.9S 58.2W on 11 May, and 37 at 52.4S 61.9W on 18 May. SC also saw 17 at 52.8S 69.6W Magellan Straits on 19 May, 11 at 52.6S 73.6W in the Patagonian Canal on 20 May, and nine at 49.9S 74.4W on 21 May and the last 26 at 45.8S 75.8W the next day. Further south in Drake Passage and around the Antarctic Peninsula during Dec, SGC

saw 22 in 2h at 61.7S 59.9W on the 3rd, two at 63.5S 56.6W on the 4th, one at 59.7S 62.4W on the 9th, three at 62.5S 63.8W on the 13th, six at 63.3S 56.9W on the 17th and two at 59.5S 62.5W on the 19th. He also saw 12 at 64S 61.7W Croker Passage on 24 Jan'12, two at 61.9S 59.7W on 10 Feb'12, five at 57.4S 63.7W on 30 March'12, eight at 61.4S 60.2W on 31 March'12, nine at 62.3S 59.3W on 4 April'12 and one at 59.3S 55.6W on 5 April'12. HMSP saw five at 52.5S 61.1W Falklands on 9 Jan'12, 10 at 53.5S 59.7W on 10 Jan'12 and 50 at 61.8S 57W South Shetlands on 12 Jan'12.

**Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*.** SGC saw five at 61.7S 59.5W in Drake Passage on 3 Dec, three following his ship at 63S 60.3W off Deception Island on 8 Dec and two at 62.5S 63.8W on 13 Dec. **Cape Petrel *Daption capense*.** In Chilean waters PF saw one at 22S 70.8W on 10 Nov'05, seven at 27.3S 71.5W the next day, two at 33.3S 71.9W on 12 Nov'05, six at 35.5S 73.2W on 13 Nov'05, 25 at 47.5S 75.1W Golfo de Penas on 17 Nov'05, 10 at 54.3S 71.3W off Tierra del Fuego on 21 Nov'05 and 100 at 55.3S 66.8W off Cape Horn on 22 Nov'05. In the Falklands area SC saw 11 at 51.6S 57.2W on 3 May, three at 51.7S 57.6W on 6 May, c.200 at 51.4S 58.5W near Cape Dolphin on 7 May, seven at 51.9S 58.2W on 11 May, and 23 at 52.4S 61.9W on 18 May. In Chilean coastal waters he went on to record 63 at 45.8S 75.8W on 22 May, three at 41.4S 74.4W on 23 May, seven at 30.1S 72.5W on 25 May and the last one at 22.8S 71.5W on 27 May. HMSP recorded one at 57.2S 58.5W on 11 Jan'12, up to 150 accompanying the ship at 60.9S 57.1W near the South Shetlands on 12 Jan'12 and five at 64.9S 63.3W, Antarctic Peninsula on 19 Jan'12. SGC had many sightings in Drake Passage and around the Antarctic Peninsula from Dec'11 to Feb'12 and larger counts included 27 at 61.7S 59.9W on the 3 Dec, 127 at 63.5S 56.6W on the 4 Dec, eight at 62.5S 63.8W on the 13 Dec, 43 at 63.3S 56.9W on the 17 Dec and 33 at 59.5S 62.5E on the 19 Dec, 45 at 62.9S 60.4W in Bransfield Strait on 21 Jan'12, 50 at 61.9S 59.7W approaching Nelson Strait on 10 Feb'12, 16 at 61.4S 60.2W on 31 March'12, 17 at 62.3S 59.3W on 4 April'12, 10 at 59.3S 55.6W on 5 April'12 and 13 at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12.

**Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea*.** SGC observed seven at 63.5S 56.6W in Antarctic Sound on 4 Dec, two at 64.7S 62.1W in Wilhelmina Bay on 15 Dec, seven at 63.3S 56.9W on 17 Dec, 79 at 63.4S 56.8W Antarctic Sound on 2 April'12. **Kerguelen Petrel *Lugensa brevirostris*.** SGC observed eight at 57.4S 63.7W in Drake Passage on 30 March'12 and two at 60.4S 61.1W on 31 March'12, 39 in 3h at 52.7S 40.4W on 19 March'12. **Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata*.** SGC saw one at 59.5S 62.5W in Drake Passage on 19 Dec, 18 at 60.4S 61.1W on 31 March'12, 65 in 4h at 58.8S 53.8W on 5 April'12, eight at 47.3S 50W on 21 April'12, seven at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April'12 and one at 38S 53.7W off Argentina on 23 April'12. **Slender-billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri*.** SC recorded c.200 at 51.4S

58.5W near Cape Dolphin, Falklands on 7 May, 20 at 52.4S 61.9W on 18 May, 1 000+ at 45.8S 75.8W off southern Chile on 22 May and 21 the next day at 41.4S 74.4W. SGC saw two at 57.2S 65.7W in Drake Passage on 12 Dec. **Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*.** SC saw one at 51.6S 57.2W, Falklands on 3 May. SGC observed 16 at 54.5S 40W in the Scotia Sea on 7 April'12. **Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*.** SGC recorded 11 at 56.3S 65.4W in Drake Passage and one at 58.1S 62.7W on 2 Dec, three at 59.7S 62.4W and 26 in 3h at 58.6S 63.4W on 9 Dec, 76 in 3h at 59.5S 62.5W on 19 Dec, 73 in 2h at 58.1S 63.7W on 20 Jan'12 most heading for Diego Ramirez where they breed, 33 in 2h at 61.6S 60.4W on 21 Jan'12, 13 at 58.7S 64.2W on 27 Jan'12, seven at 61.9S 59.7W South Shetlands on 10 Feb'12, three at 57.4S 63.7W on 30 March'12, five at 58.8S 53.8W on 5 April'12, seven at 54.5S 40W Scotia Sea on 7 April'12 and two at 52.7S 40.4W on 19 April'12. **Tahiti Petrel *Pterodroma rostrata*.** In the central Pacific PF saw one at 11.5N 157.3W on 30 Aug'08, one at 8.3N 158W and one at 6.8N 158.7W on 31 Aug'08, one at 0.3N 156W on 4 Sept'08, one at 4.2S 155.1W on 5 Sept'08, one at 8.2S 154.1W and one at 9.1S 153.4W on 7 Sept'08, two at 11.1S 152E, 12 at 11.5S 151.8W on 8 Sept'08, one at 14.2S 151.7W and five at 16.3S 151.7W on 9 Sept'08 and six at 17.1S 151.1W on 10 Sept'08. Further east he saw 10 at 15.3S 143.1W near Rangiora on 4 Oct'10, five at 17.5S 149.5W near Tahiti on 5 Oct'10 and one at 16.4S 145.2W the next day. **Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*.** In the central Pacific PF recorded one at 8.2S 154.1W on 7 Sept'08 and one the next day at 11.1S 152W. In eastern Polynesia PF had numerous records from Oeno Island 23.9S 130.7W on 11 Oct'10 to 26.8S 111.7W near Easter Island on the 17 Oct'10 mainly of single birds. Larger counts included 20 at Ducie Island 24.7S 124.8W on 14 Oct'10, six at 25.6S 120.2W on 15 Oct'10, six at 26.2S 116.8W on 16 Oct and nine at 26.8S 112.8W on 17 Oct'10. **Phoenix Petrel *Pterodroma alba*.** PF observed one at 11.5N 157.3W between Hawaii and Kiribati on 30 Aug'08, one at 8.3N 158W and one at 6.8N 158.7W the next day, one at 2.1N 157.4W near Kiritimati on 3 Sept'08, 10 at 1.9N 157.3W Motu Cook the same day and one at 11.5S 151.8W SE of Flint Island on 8 Sept'08. In a subsequent voyage he observed one at 20.6S 137.2W on 9 Oct'10, one at 24.4S 128.5W near Henderson Island on 13 Oct'10 and one at 24.5S 127.4W later the same day, one at 24.6S 127.4W near Ducie Island and five at Ducie Island on 14 Oct'10. **Herald Petrel *Pterodroma heraldica*.** PF saw one on 8 Sept'08 at 14.2S 151.7W between Flint Island and Bora Bora in the central Pacific. Further east he recorded two at 23.9S 132.2E near Oeno on 11 Oct'10, three at 24.5S 127.4W near Henderson Island on 13 Oct'10, two at 24.6S 125.1W near Ducie Island on 14 Oct'10, 50 at Ducie Island the next day, one at 25.2S 122W and one at 25.3S 121.6W on 15 Oct'10. **Henderson Petrel**

***Pterodroma atrata***. Previously considered a dark morph Herald Petrel until given species status in view of behavioural and molecular differences (Brooke & Rowe 1996) but cannot be distinguished in the field. Observations by PF in the vicinity of Henderson Island included 10 at 24.7S 129W, one at 24.4S 128.5W and two at 24.4S 127.8W on 13 Oct'10, 24.6S 125.1W on 14 Oct'10.

**Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera***. TJ observed five at 31.5S 113.1E off Western Australia on 2 April'12 and in the SW Atlantic SGC saw single birds at 50.8S 46.8W and 47.3S 50W on 20/21 April'12, two at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April and another singleton at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12.

**White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii***. In the SW Atlantic SGC saw one at 50.8S 46.8W on 20 April'12.

**Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta***. In the SW Atlantic SGC observed 14 at 50.8S 46.8W on 20 April'12, 16 at 47.3S 50W on 21 April'12, 18 at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April'12 and 429 in 4h at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12.

**Murphy's Petrel *Pterodroma ultima***. PF had numerous records in eastern Polynesia between 21.5S 136.4W on 9 Oct'10 and 26.8S 112.7W WNW from Easter Island on 17 Oct'10. Larger concentrations included 50 at 23.9S 132.2W near Oeno Island on 11 Oct'10, 5 000 at Oeno Island 23.9S 130.7W later the same day, 50 at 24.7S 129W on 13 Oct'10, 3,000 at 24.6S 125.1W 15nm WNW Ducie Island and 10 000 at Ducie Island on 14 Oct'10 and 16 at 25.3S 121.4W on 15 Oct'10.

**Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis***. PF had several observations in the central Pacific with two at 13N 155.8W and five at 11.4N 157.3W on 30 Aug'08, three at 8.3N 158W and two at 6.8N 158.7W on 31 Aug'08, one at 8.2S 154.1W and two at 9.1S 153.4W on 7 Sept'08.

**Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis***. Southerly records from SGC at 59.5S 62.5W Drake Passage on 19 Dec, two at 58.2S 63.7W on 30 Jan'12, three at 59.7S 63.1W on 16 Feb'12, three at 58.7S 64.2W later the same day, five at 57.6S 64.2W on 19 Feb'12, two at 57.4S 63.7W on 30 March'12, two at 59.3S 55.6W on 5 April'12, 22 at 58.8S 53.8W on 5 April'12, 24 at 57.1S 48.3E Scotia Sea on 6 April'12, 28 at 52.7S 40.4W on 19 April'12, 123 in 4h at 50.8S 46.8W on 20 April'12, 21 at 47.2S 50W on 21 April'12, 76 at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April'12 and one at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12.

**Galapagos Petrel *Pterodroma phaeopygia***. SC saw 11 at 4.7S 81.8W off Ecuador on 3 June.

**Juan Fernandez Petrel *Pterodroma externa***. PF observed one at 17.8N 155.5W south of Hawaii on 29 Aug'08 and further south towards Kiribati saw 35 at 13N 155.8W, 31 at 12.2N 157W and 35 at 11.5N 157.3W on 30 Aug'08, 12 at 8.3N 158W and three at 6.8N 158.7W the next day and one at 8.2S 154.1W on 7 Sept'08. The species breeds in the southern Spring at the Juan Fernandez Group off southern Chile.

**Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii***. PF reported one at 8.2S 154.1W between Starbuck and Flint Island in the central Pacific on 7 Sept'08.

**De Filippi's Petrel *Pterodroma***

***defilippiana***. This Chilean endemic breeding on Masatierra Island and Des Venturadas Is. was recorded by PF from southern Peru, south to central Chilean waters during Nov 2005. He saw three at 16.3S 73.9W off Mollendo on the 8th with nine nearby at 16.5S 73.6W and 10 at 17S 72.8W later the same day, one at 22S 70.8W and 12 at 23.2S 71W on the 10th, five at 28.7S 71.7W on the 11th, 25 at 32.5S 71.7W off Valparaiso on the 12th and three the same day at 33.3S 71.9W, 29 at 35.5S 73.2W and 16 at 36.3S 73.5W on the 13th. The species was also observed by SC who saw the first 15 at 35.3S 73.9W on 24 May then two more the same day at 34.4S 73.7W, 19 at 31.2S 72.8W on 25 May, 11 at 26S 71.6W on 26 May, one at 18.8S 74W on 28 May and the last two at 18.1S 74.4W later the same day.

**Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera***. PF reported one at 12.2N 157W between Hawaii and Kiribati on 7 Sept'08.

**Collared Petrel *Pterodroma brevipes***. PF saw one at 2.1S 155.8W between Kiritimatī Land Malden Island in the central Pacific on 4 Sept'08.

**Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii***. Single birds were seen by PF in the central Pacific at 12.2N 157W on 30 Aug'08, at 8.3N 158W and 6.8N 158.7W on 31 Aug'08 and at 9.1S 153.4W on 7 Sept'08.

## Shearwaters *Procellariinae*

**Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea***. HMSP saw one at 51.2S 61.7W near the Falklands on 9 Jan'12. In the SW Atlantic SGC recorded three at 52.7S 40.4W on 19 April'12 and 64 in 4h at 50.8S 46.8W on 20 April'12.

**White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis***. Seen by PF off the coast of Peru and Chile during Nov 2005 with four at 15.2S 75.5W on the 7th, 25 in 4h at 16.5S 73.6W near Mollendo on the 8th, three at 17S 72.8W on 8th, five at 18.8S 70.5W on the 9th, eight at 22S 70.8W on the 10th, 16 at 27.3S 71.5W and nine at 28.7S 71.7W on the 11th, two at 33.3S 71.9W on the 12th, 13 including one in heavy moult at 35.5S 73.2W on the 13th, 100 at 47.5S 75.1W in Golfo de Penas on 17th and five at 53S 73.5W in the western Straits of Magellan on the 20th. SC saw one at 51.6S 57.2W, Falklands on 3 May, one at 52.4S 61.9W on 18 May, 17 at 45.8S 75.8W off southern Chile on 22 May, six at 35.3S 75.9W on 24 May, 26 at 31.2S 72.8W on 25 May, five at 26S 71.6W on 26 May, two at 22.3S 71.5W on 27 May and five at 7.7S 80.5W near the northern limit of their range on 3 June. SGC recorded two at 63.5S 60.6W in Gerlache Strait, Antarctic Peninsula on 3 Feb'12, his most southerly record of the species, normally seen in the open waters of Drake Passage. He also saw three at 59.7S 63.1W on 16 Feb'12, 12 at 57.6S 64.2W on 19 Feb'12, nine at 57.4S 63.7W in Drake Passage on 30 March'12, five at 59.3S 55.6W and 19 at 58.8S 53.8W on 5 April'12, 22 at 57.1S 48.2W in the Scotia Sea on 6 April'12, 28 at 54.5S 40W on the 7 April'12, 40+ at 52.7S 40.4W on 19 April'12, 80+ at 50.8S 46.7W on 20 April'12, 11 at 47.2S 50W on 21 April'12, 45

at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April'12 and 450 in 4h at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12. **Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata***. SGC saw three off Argentina at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12. **Parkinson's Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni***. Recorded by PF in eastern Polynesia with two at 23.9S 132.2W on 11 Oct'10, one at 24.6S 125.1W on 14 Oct'10 and several sightings on 15 Oct'10 with one at 25.2S 122W, one at 25.3S 121.7W, two at 25.3S 121.5W, two at 25.3S 121.2W one at 25.4S 120.9W and two the next day at 26.3S 116.1W. **Westland Petrel *Procellaria westlandica***. An interesting range of observations by PF from the coast of Chile during Nov 2005 which he has written up elsewhere (Fraser 2009). He saw one at 18.8S 70.5W on the 9th, one at 28.7S 71.7W on the 11th, one at 32.5S 71.7W off Valparaiso on the 12th, one at 33.3S 71.9W on the 12th, a remarkable 400 at 47.5S 75.1W Golfo de Penas and 850 at 48.3S 74.2W in Canal Messier on the 17th. **Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris (diomedea) borealis***. In the North Atlantic DKB observed one at 31.3N 47.6W on 14 April and one at 34.4N 39W on 15 April. On the 16 April he encountered a remarkable passage throughout the day from 36.2N 34.7W(325nm SW Flores,Azores) to 37.1N 32.5W(160nm SSW Flores). In all he estimated between 6 000 and 10 000 Cory's passed by heading in an easterly direction. He counted 384 in 1.5h at 38.4N 28.7W approaching Faial, Azores and 275 in 1h nearby at 38.4N 28.5W on 17 April and 60 the next day at 37.7N 28.2W near Sao Miguel, Azores. MC observed three at 38.6N 9.9W off southern Portugal on 3 Nov. SGC recorded 90 in 4h at 38S 53.7W off Argentina near the southern limit of their normal range on 23 April'12. **Scopoli's Shearwater *Calonectris (diomedea) diomedea***. MC was in the central Mediterranean from April to October and recorded Scopoli's each month. Larger counts included 15 at 32.3N 15.5E on 17 April, 300+ at 36.3N 14.3E on 20 April, 52 at 33.1N 15.2E most moving east on 6 May, 50+ at 32.4N 16.6E on 10 May, 15 at 32.7N 15.3E on 13 May, 30+ at 36.2N 13.8E on 18 August, 20+ at 33.6N 12.6E on 26 Aug, 17 at 31.8N 16.1E on 1 Sept, 12 at 32.9N 12.5E on 13 Sept, 'hundreds' at 33.1N 13.2E on 25 Oct. **Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus***. Several observations from the central Pacific between Hawaii and Tahiti by PF with larger counts of 26 at 13N 155.8W on 30 Aug'08, 100 at 12.2N 157W on 30 Aug'08, 50 at 2.1N 157.4W, 70 at 1.3N 157.4W on 3 Sept'08 and 55 at 0.3N 156W on 4 Sept'08. **Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri***. PF observed 10 at 22S 70.8W off Tocopilla, Chile on 10 Nov'05, an unusual date as the species is mainly seen here on migration in Feb/March. He also recorded this species migrating through the central Pacific with three at 2.1S 155.8W on 4 Sept'08, three at 5.6S 155.9W on 6 Sept'08, nine at 8.2S 154.1W and 17 at 9.1S 153.4W on 7 Sept'08. **Pink-footed Shearwater**

***Puffinus creatopus***. Many were seen by PF off southern Peru and Chile from 16.3S to 44.9S during Nov 2005. Larger counts included 160 at 27.3S 71.5W on the 11th, 1 000 at 32.5S 71.7W off Valparaiso on the 12th and 100 at 33.3S 71.9W on the same day, 500 at 35.5S 73.2W on the 13th and 100 at 37.5S 73.8W on the 14th. SC saw c.40 off Callao, Peru on 29 May, two at 7.7S 80.5W on 3 June and 21 at 6.7N 79.9W off Panama on 5 June. **Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis***. Single birds were recorded by DKB at 31.1N 48.1W and 31.3N 47.6W in the mid North Atlantic on 14 April. In mid North Atlantic CC observed many rafts of Great Shearwater at 47.2N 34.3W on 8 July and large numbers further west at 40.5N 68.8W on 13 July. MC saw one at 38.6N 9.9W off southern Portugal on 3 Nov. In the SW Atlantic SGC observed five at 55.9S 66.8W off Cape Horn on 28 Jan'12, 26 at 55.6S 66.6W off Cape Horn on 17 Feb'12, four at 50.8S 46.8W on 20 April'12, three at 47.3S 50W on 21 April'12, 84 in 4h at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April'12 and 330 in 4h at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12. SC saw one in the Falklands at 52.1S 58.6W on 4 May and two nearby at 51.7S 57.6W on 6 May. **Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus***. In the North Atlantic DKB saw two at 23.4N 66.8W on 11 April. In the South Atlantic HMSP saw one at 29.3S 48W on 25 Dec, two at 38.6S 55.7W on the 6 Jan'12 and one at 51.2S 61.7W near the Falklands on 9 Jan'12. PF saw many off southern Peru and Chile during Nov 2005. Larger concentrations included 250 at 15.2S 75.6W on the 7th, 1 500 in 5.5h at 17S 72.8W and 3 500 at 17.4S 72.1E on the 8th, 2 500 at 32.5S 71.7W and 2 500 at 33.3S 71.9W on the 12th, 1 000 at 35.5S 73.2W and 5 000 at 36.3S 73.5W on the 13th, 500 at 37.5S 73.8W on the 14th, 2 500 at 47.5S 75.1W Golfo de Penas on the 17th and 100 000 at 55.4S 66.8W off Cape Horn on 22 Nov'05. He also saw one at 5.6S 155.9W near Starbuck Island in the central Pacific on 6 Sept '08. SGC saw one in the eastern Beagle Channel on 10 Dec and two there on 20 Dec, two at 55.7S 65.9W on 20 Jan'12, 650 at 55.9S 66.8W off Cape Horn on 28 Jan'12, 204 in 2h at 56.2S 65.5W on 30 Jan'12, c.10 000 at 55.6S 66.6W off Cape Horn on 17 Feb'12. During the southern Autumn SC recorded the species off northern Chile and Peru with seven at 22.9S 70.8W and 13 at 22.7S 71.5W on 27 May, 17 at 18.1S 74.4W and 39 at 17.1S 75W on 28 May, c. 800 whilst entering Callao on 29 May, four at 11.7S 78.1W on 2 June and c.60 at 7.7S 80.5W on 3 June. **Christmas Island Shearwater *Puffinus nativitatus***. Sailing from Hawaii towards Kiribati PF recorded one at 11.5N 157.3W on 30 Aug'08, one at 6.2N 158.8W on 31 Aug '08, then one at 2.1N 157.4W near Kiritimati on 3 Sept'08 and 10 the same day at 1.9N 157.4W off Motu Cook. He also saw 25 at 23.2S 135.2W on 10 Oct'10, 15 at 23.2S 134.7W the same day, three at Ducie Island 24.7S 124.8W on 14 Oct'10. **Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus***. In the North Atlantic DKB

observed one at 26.8N 58.7W and five all flying north at 27.1N 58.1W SE from Bermuda on 12 April, one flying north at 28.7N 54W the next day, three singles at 33.7N 48W on 15 April. In the Bay of Biscay he saw one at 45.6N 10.5W and one at 46.4N 9.2W on 21 April. Two flying east at 50.3N 4.2W off Plymouth on 27 July and four flying east at 50.3N 3.1W on 28 Sept (TT). SGC recorded one off Argentina at 38S 53.7W on 23 April'12. **Newell's Shearwater** *Puffinus newelli*. Three were recorded by PF at 11.5N 157.3W between Hawaii and Kiribati on 30 Aug '08. **Yelkouan Shearwater** *Puffinus yelkouan*. Two records from the central Mediterranean by MC with one at 33.1N 15.2E on 6 May and one at 37.8N 17E on 1 Aug. **Subantarctic Little Shearwater** *Puffinus elegans*. SGC saw one in the SW Atlantic at 47.3S 50W on 21 April'12 and another the following day at 42.7S 51.6W. **Audubon's Shearwater** *Puffinus lherminieri*. DKB had several records from the Caribbean area including 21 flying west in 1.5h probably towards Redonda Is. on 26 March, two at 17.8N 67.8W off Puerto Rico on 28 March, two at 22.6N 78.2W and nine at 22.8N 78.7W near Cuba on 2 April, a feeding flock of 42 at 23.8N 81.3W in the Bahamas on 6 April, one at 25.1N 77.3W approaching Nassau on 8 April, two at 24.7N 75.1W, a flock of 10 at 24.4N 74.6W and one at 23.4N 73.3W in the Bahamas on 9 April, 30 at 21.6N 70.9W off Grand Turk on 10 April. SC saw one at 11.1N 79.4W in the Caribbean north of Panama on 7 June and five at 21.6N 77.1W north of Cuba on 12 June. **Arabian Shearwater** *Puffinus persicus*. TT observed one at 25.3N 57.6E SE from Strait of Hormuz on 7 Nov. **Tropical Shearwater** *Puffinus bailloni*. PF reported the western subspecies *dichrous* from the central Pacific with two at 2.1N 157.4W on 3 Sept '08, 40 at 1.3N 157.4W later the same day then on the 8 Sept'08 one at 11.5S 151.8W and seven at 14.2S 151.7W, four at 16.3S 151.7W on 9 Sept'08 and 10 at 17.6S 149.7W on 11 Sept'08, 10 at 23.2S 135.2S near Mangareva on 10 Oct'10 and five at 23.2S 134.7W the same day. **Galapagos Shearwater** *Puffinus subalaris*. SC counted c.550 in 2h at 6.7N 79.9W in the Gulf of Panama on 5 June.

### Diving-petrels *Pelecanoidinae*

**Peruvian Diving-petrel** *Pelecanoides garnoti*. Seen by PF off southern Peru and northern Chile with 10 at 13.7S 76.4W, Islas Ballestas and 10 nearby at 13.7S 76.3W on 6 Nov'05, three at 15.2S 75.6W on 7 Nov'05, one at 16.3S 73.9W on 8 Nov'05, four at 32.5S 71.7W off Valparaiso and one at 33.3S 71.9W on 12 Nov'05. **Magellanic Diving-petrel** *Pelecanoides magellani*. Three were seen at 47.5S 75.1W Golfo de Penas on 17 Nov'05 and one in the Straits of Magellan at 53S 73.5W on 20 Nov'05(PF). One observed in eastern Beagle Channel 54.9S 66.9W on 10 Dec and singles there on 20 Dec and at 58.1S 63.7W Drake Passage on 20 Jan'12(SGC). **Common**

**Diving-petrel** *Pelecanoides urinatrix*. One at 51.7S 57.6W near Cape Pembroke, Falklands on 6 May(SC). SGC saw three at 58.8S 53.8W Drake Passage on 5 April'12, three at 57.1S 48.2W Scotia Sea on 6 April'12 and four at 54.5S 40W on 7 April'12.

### Storm-petrels *Hydrobatidae* Southern Storm-petrels *Oceanitinae*

**Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus*. In Chilean waters PF saw one at 33.3S 71.9W on 12 Nov'05, 250 at 35.5S 73.2W and 100 at 36.3S 73.5W on 13 Nov'05, large numbers estimated at 5 000 at 47.5S 75.1W in Golfo de Penas on 17 Nov'05 and 100 at 55.4S 66.8W off Cape Horn on 22 Nov'05. SC observed one at 51.6S 57.2W Falklands on 3 May, three at 52.4S 61.9W on 18 May, 25 at 44.3S 75.6W off I.de Chiloe, Chile on 22 May, one at 35.3S 73.9W on 24 May, two at 26.7S 71.7W and seven at 26S 71.6W on 26 May, 23 at 11.7S 78W off Peru on 2 June and the last two at 4.7S 81.8W on 3 June. SGC had several records from Drake Passage south to the Antarctic Peninsula during Dec with one at 58.1S 62.7W on the 2nd, four at 61.7S 59.9W on 3rd, nine at 63.5S 56.6W on the 4th, one at 62.7S 59.8W on the 8th, three at 59.7S 62.4W on the 9th, one at 57.2S 65.7W on the 12th, two at 62.5S 63.8W on the 13th, six at 63.8S 56.9W on the 17th and 13 at 62.7S 59.8W on the 18th. Later in the season larger counts included 11 at 64S 61.7W, Croker Passage on 24 Jan'12, 10 at 56.2S 65.5W on 30 Jan'12, 35 feeding on a krill concentration at 63.7S 61.1W on 3 Feb'12, 21 in 2h at 62.8S 60W Bransfield Strait on 15 Feb'12, two at 57.4S 63.7W on 30 March'12, one at 57.1S 48.3W Scotia sea on 6 April'12, four at 47.2S 50W on 21 April'12, nine at 42.6S 51.6W on 22 April'12 and 240 in 4h at 38S 53.7W off Argentina on 23 April'12. **Elliot's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites gracilis*. Observed by PF in Peruvian and northern Chilean waters with 30 at 13.7S 76.3W between Islas Ballestas and Paracas on 6 Nov'05, two at 15.2S 75.5W on 7 Nov'05, 24 at 16.3S 73.9W, 15 at 16.5S 73.6W, 10 at 17S 72.8W and 650 at 17.4S 72.1W all on 8 Nov'05, 325 at 18.8S 70.5W off Arica on 9 Nov'05, 500 at 27.3S 71.5W and 35 at 28.7S 71.7W on 11 Nov'05. **Grey-backed Storm-petrel** *Garrodia nereis*. SGC recorded one in the SW Atlantic at 42.7S 51.6W on 22 April'12. **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina*. An interesting record from SC of two near the limit of their Pacific range at 4.7S 81.8W off Ecuador on 4 June. In the South Atlantic HMSP saw one at 33.1S 51.2W on 26 Dec. In the south Pacific PF observed one at 24.8S 124.8W near Ducie Island on 14 Oct'10 and one at 25.6S 120.2W the following day. **White-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta grallaria*. SGC observed three at 42.7S 51.6W in the SW Atlantic on 22 April'12. HMSP reported two in the South Atlantic at 25.5S 45W on 24 Dec. In the South Pacific PF saw one at 26.2S 116.3W about 380nm WNW from Easter

Island on 16 Oct'10. **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregatta tropica*. SGC had several sightings in Drake Passage with 12 in 2h at 61.7S 59.9W on 3 Dec, two at 62.5S 63.8W on 13 Dec and four at 59.5S 62.5W on 19 Dec, 17 at 61.6S 60.4W on 21 Jan'12, four at 58.2S 63.7W on 30 Jan'12, 26 in 2h at 61.2S 60.9W on 31 Jan'12, 12 at 61.9S 59.7W approaching Nelson Strait on 10 Feb'12, one at 62.8S 60W on 15 Feb'12, 38 in 4h at 60.3S 64W on 25 Feb'12 three at 57.4S 63.7W on 30 March'12, nine at 61.4S 60.2W on 31 March'12, eight at 59.3S 55.5W on 5 April'12 and six at 58.8S 53.8W on 5 April'12. Further northeast he saw 14 at 57.1S 48.3W in the Scotia Sea on 6 April'12, three at 54.5S 40W on 7 April'12, 64 in 3h at 52.7S 40.4W on 19 April'12, three at 50.8S 46.8W on 20 April'12 and the last seven at 47.3S 50W on 21 April'12. **Polynesian Storm-petrel** *Nesofregatta fuliginosa*. This rare species was recorded by PF at 23.2S 134.7W near the Gambier Islands on 10 Oct'10.

### **Northern Storm-petrels** *Hydrobatinae*

**European Storm-petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus*. One at 33N 14.5E north of Libya on 17 July, 30+ at 44.1N 9.2W in the Bay of Biscay on 26 July and two at 49.9N 4.1W off Plymouth on 21 Sept (TT). The European Storm-petrel is now considered polytypic with the Atlantic form now *Hydrobates(p.) pelagicus* and the Mediterranean form now *Hydrobates(p.) melitensis*. (Cagnon et al. 2004). **Wedge-rumped Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma tethys*. PF recorded small numbers off southern Peru and northern Chile, with five at 16.3S 73.9W, 20 at 16.5S 73.6W, six at 17S 72.8W and one at 17.4S 72.1W on 8 Nov'05, 10 at 22S 70.8W and five at 23.2S 71W on 10 Nov'05 and the last two at 28.7S 71.7W on 11 Nov'05. SC saw eight at 11.7S 78.1W on 2 June, two at 2.3N 80.8W on 4 June and three at 6.7N 79.9W off Panama on 5 June. **Madeiran Storm-petrel**. *Oceanodroma castro*. One at 38.6N 9.9W off southern Portugal on 3 Nov(MC). **Leach's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. DKB recorded nine flying northeast at 23.4N 66.8W in the western Atlantic on 11 April, one at 25.9N 60.8W, two at 26.1N 60.3W, two at 26.8N 58.7W one at 27.1N 58.1W SE from Bermuda on 12 April, one at 32N 45.8W in mid Atlantic on 14 April, 18 at 33.7N 48W SW from the Azores on 15 April and one at 36.2N 34.7W the next day. MC saw four at 38.6N 9.9W off southern Portugal on 3 Nov. PF recorded seven in the equatorial Pacific at 0.3N 156W on 4 Sept'08. **Markham's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma markhami*. Seen by PF off southern Peru and northern Chile with three at 16.3S 73.9W, 190 at 16.5S 73.6W, 140 at 17S 72.8W and 250 at 17.4S 72.1W on 8 Nov'05, 125 at 18.8S 70.5W on 9 Nov'05, 275 at 22S 70.8W and 50 at 23.2S 71W on 10 Nov'05, 45 at 27.3S 71.5E and the last 15 at 28.7S 71.7W on 11 Nov'05. SC observed four at 18.8S 74W, 13 at 18.1S 74.4W, eight at 17.1S 75W all on 28 May and 11 at 11.7S

78.1W on 2 June. **Hornby's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma hornbyi*. PF counted 5 500 of this distinctive Humbolt endemic in 4.5h at 17S 72.8W off Mollendo on 8 Nov'05, representing a significant proportion of the total population. It most likely breeds in the Atacama Desert but colonies have not yet been found. He also recorded 11 at 16.3S 73.9W, 28 at 16.5S 73.6W and 600 at 17.4S 72.1W the same day with 23 at 27.3S 71.5W and two at 28.7S 71.7W on 11 Nov'05. Also seen by SC who recorded five at 22.8S 71.5W on 27 May, 16 at 18.8S 74W, 21 at 18.1S 74.4W and 37 at 17.1S 75W on 28 May, 27 at 11.7S 78.1W on 2 June, and the last one at 4.7S 81.8W on 3 June.

### **Tropicbirds** *Phaethontidae*

#### **Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda*.

One at 28S 112.2E, NW from Houtman's Abrolhos, Australia on 1 April'12(TJ). In the Pacific PF saw two at 2N 157.3W off Kiritimati on 3 Sept'08 and 10 at Malden Island 4S 154.8W on 5 Sept'08. He had 12 records between 17.7S 142.3W and Easter Island from 7 Oct'10 to 18 Oct'10 including 50 at Maturei Vavao 21.5S 136.4W on 9 Oct'10, 20 at Oeno Island 23.9S 130.7W on 11 Oct'10, 100 at Ducie Island 24.7S 124.8W on 14 Oct'10 and 25 at Easter Island on 18 Oct'10. **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus*. DKB saw two at 16.7N 62.2W and five at 16.8N 62.3W near Montserrat on 26 March, one at 18.2N 75.5W off Jamaica on 30 March, one at 19.8N 75.6W near Cuba on 1 April, one at 23.3N 82.1W approaching Habana on 3 April, two at 24.4N 74.6W and one at 23.4N 73.3W in the Bahamas on 9 April and two at 23.1N 67.5W off shore from Puerto Rico on 11 April. In the Pacific area PF observed three at 17.8N 155.5W south of Hawaii on 29 Aug'08, one at 16.1N 155.9W on 29 Aug, two at 8.3N 158W on 31 Aug'08, one at 9.1S 153.4W on 7 Sept'08, and one at 14.2S 151.7W on 8 Sept'08. He had six records of single birds between 25.3S 121.7W and 26.3S 115.7W on 15 and 16 Oct'10.

### **Pelicans** *Pelecanidae*

#### **Brown Pelican** *Pelecanus occidentalis*.

DKB recorded one at 18.4N 64.6W when approaching Tortola on 27 March, two in San Domingo harbour. Dominica on 29 March, a few at Montego Bay, Jamaica on 31 March, 30 in the estuary at Santiago de Cuba on 1 April, 10 in Habana harbour on 3 April and 80 there the next day and one in Freeport harbour, Bahamas on 7 April. SC saw 27 at Panama City anchorage on 5 June. **Peruvian Pelican** *Pelecanus thagus*. PF observed 80 at 13.7S 76.4W Islas Ballestas on 6 Nov'05, 20 at Puerto San Juan Moreno (15.3S) the next day, one at 16.5S 73.6W on 8 Nov'05, one at 27.3S 71.5W on 11 Nov'05, 50 at 33.3S 71.9W on 12 Nov'05 and the last two at 36.3S 73.5W on 13 Nov'05. SC saw one at 23.3S 70.9W on 27 May and c.300 when entering Callao on 29 May.

**Gannets and Boobies *Sulidae***

**Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*.** Recorded by DKB in small numbers from 45.9N 9.8W in the Bay of Biscay on 21 April to the Channel with counts of 30 Ad 1 imm at 49N 6.1W off Ile d'Ouessant and 31 Ad 1 imm at 50N 4.5W off Start Point on 22 April. MC saw four at 50.3N 1.7W in the Channel on 29 March, 14 all moving east at 50.1N 4.1W SW from Start Point, 16 in 0.5h at 50.3N 4.2W off Plymouth on 30 March, two at 47.9N 7.3W on 31 March, two at 46.8N 8.2W on 1 April and 28 at 38.6N 9.9W off southern Portugal on 3 Nov. **Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxii*.** SC counted c.80 at 7.7S 80.5W off Peru on 3 June. **Peruvian Booby *Sula variegata*.** Recorded by PF from 13.7S to 36.3 S off Peru and Chile during Nov'05. Large counts included 250 000 at 13.7S 76.4W Islas Ballestas on the 6th, 250 at 15.2S 75.5W the next day, 500 at 27.3S 71.5W on the 11th and 250 at 33.3S 71.9W on the 12th. SC saw three at 23.3S 70.9W, 12 at 22.9S 70.8W and 17 at 22.8S 71.5W on 27 May and c.400 when arriving at Callao on 29 May. **Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*.** One Ad at 17.8N 67.8W near Puerto Rico on 28 March (DKB). SC observed two at 0.8S 81.2W and 10 at 2.3N 80.8W off Ecuador on 4 June and one the next day at 6.7N 79.9W. Singles were seen in the central Pacific by PF at 17.8N 155.5W on 29 Aug'08, 13N 155.8W on 30 Aug'08, 8.3N 158W and 6.8N 158.7W on 31 Aug'08, 2N 157.5W on 3 Sept'08, two at 2.1S 155.8W on 4 Sept'08. He also saw an impressive 1 000 at Malden Island, 4S 154.8W on 5 Sept'08 and 50 at Starbuck Island, 5.6S 155.9W on 6 Sept'08. In eastern Polynesia he saw 10 at Maturei Vavao on 9 Oct'10, 10 at Henderson Island on 13 Oct'10, 200 at Ducie Island on 14 Oct'10, and one at 26.1S 116.9W about 400nm WNW of Easter Island on 16 Oct'10. **Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*.** In the Caribbean DKB saw two at St.Vincent on 23 March, two imm at 14.6N 61.1W near Martinique the next day, one imm at 16.1N 64.6W off Guadeloupe on 25 March, one imm at 16.8N 62.2W and seven Ad at 16.8N 62.3W on 26 March, 20 Ad at 17.7N 66.5W off Puerto Rico on 28 March, one at 21.7N 76.7W near Cuba on 2 April, one imm at 26.4N 78.9W Grand Bahama on 7 April, eight singles at 24.3N 74.6W and four at 23.4N 73.3W near the Bahamas on 9 April, 20 in 2h at 21.6N 70.9W near Grand Turk on 10 April and the last offshore in the Western Atlantic at 23.6N 66.3W on 11 April. In the South Atlantic HMSP observed two at 23.3S 43.2W on 23 Dec. In the eastern Pacific SC counted 11 in 2h at 6.7N 79.9W on 5 June. In the South China Sea TJ saw three at 16.1N 118.3E on 10 March'12, and five the next day at 13.1N 114E. He also observed 15 at 10.5S 106E south of Java on 28 March'12. PF saw five at 2N 157.5W near Kiritimati on 3 Sept'08 and three at 9.1S 153.4E on 7 Sept'08 and 20 at 16.9S 144.7W off Tahanea on 6 Oct'10.

**Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*.** Recorded in the Caribbean area by DKB with three ad at 17.8N 67.8W near Puerto Rico on 28 March and 19 Ad/imm at 18.2N 75.5W near Jamaica on 30 March. In the tropical Atlantic HMSP saw two at 1.7S 30.6W on 12 Dec and had up to 10 accompanying the ship at 2.9S 30.8W on 13 Dec. In the South China Sea TJ saw one at 13.1N 114E on 11 March'12 and in the eastern South Indian Ocean he saw 25 Ad/imm at 10.5S 106E on 28 March'12, two at 15.1S 107.8E on 29 March'12, two at 19.6S 109.5E on 30 March'12 and one at 23.7S 111.2E off Western Australia on 31 March'12. PF had several observations in the central Pacific including three at 6.8N 158.7W on 31 Aug'08, 100 at Motu Cook 1.9N 157.3W on 3 Sept'08, 50 at Malden Island 4S 154.8W on 5 Sept'08, 25 at Flint Island, 11.4S 151.7W, 12 at 11.5S 151.8W, 50 at 17.1S 151.1E and 100 at 17.6S 149.7W between Moorea and Tahiti on 11 Sept'08. Further east he saw 25 at 15.3S 143.1W on 4 Oct'10, 20 at 16.4S 145.2W and 50 at 16.8S 144.7W off Tahanea on 6 Oct'10, 50 at Maturei Vavao 21.5S 136.4W on 9 Oct'10, and a few in the vicinity of Ducie and Henderson Island on 13/14 Oct'10.

**Cormorants and Shags*****Phalacrocoracidae***

**Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*.** One in the SW Approaches at 49.4N 5.2W on 27 July(TT). **Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*.** DKB observed three at 22.6N 78.2W and two at 22.8N 78.7W in Cuban waters on 2 April, and one offshore at 23.6N 66.3W on 11 April. **Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*.** PF observed 100 at 13.7S 76.4W Islas Ballestas on 6 Nov'05. SC counted 30 at Panama City anchorage on 5 June. **Imperial Shag *Leucocarbo atriceps*.** PF observed 300 at 44.9S 73.5W off southern Chile on 16 Nov'05, 20 at 54.4S 71.2W on 21 Nov'05 and 200 at 55.4S 66.8W off Cape Horn on 22 Nov'05. SC saw 23 at 52.8S 70.5W Straits of Magellan on 19 May, 18 at 52.6S 73.6W in the Patagonian Canal the next day, c.150 at 49.9S 74.4W on 21 May and 32 at 41.7S 73.9W on 23 May. SGC estimated c.10 000 in the eastern part of Beagle Channel, 54.9S 66.9W on 10 Dec and the same numbers there on the 20 Dec, 53 at 55.9S 66.8W off Cape Horn on 28 Jan'12, c.2 000 nearby at 55.6S 66.5W on 17 Feb'12. **Antarctic Shag *Leucocarbo bransfieldensis*.** SGC recorded c.200 at 63.5S 56.6W in Antarctic Sound on 4 Dec, four at 62.9S 60.4W Bransfield Strait on 21 Jan'12, three at 62.3S 59.3W Nelson Strait on 4 April'12. **Guanay Shag *Leucocarbo bougainvillii*.** One at 12S 77.1W off Callao on 5 Nov'05, an incredible 500 000 at 13.7S 76.4W Islas Ballestas on 6 Nov'05, three at 16.5S 73.6W on 8 Nov'05 and 590 at 33.3S 71.9W on 12 Nov'05(PF). SC saw one when entering Callao, Peru on 29 May. **Red-legged Shag *Stictocarbo gaimardi*.** PF recorded 25 at

13.75 76.4W Islas Ballestas on 6 Nov'05 and 10 at 44.95 73.6W on 16 Nov'05. SC saw six at 41.75 73.9W near the southern limit of their range in Chile on 23 May. **Rock Shag *Stictocarbo magellanicus***. PF saw three at 54.35 71.2W off Tierra del Fuego on 21 Nov'05. SGC saw c.70 in the eastern part of Beagle Channel 54.95 66.9W on 10 Dec and c.150 there on 20 Dec. HMSP observed four at 51.85 61.7W in the Falklands on 9 Jan'12.

### **Frigatebirds *Fregatidae***

#### **Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens***

Five seen in Bridgetown harbour, Barbados on 22 March, seven at 16.1N 64.6W in the approaches to Guadeloupe on 25 March, three at 18.4N 64.6W near Tortola on 27 March, two at 17.4N 66.5W off Puerto Rico on 28 March, three in Montego Bay, Jamaica on 31 March, one at 22.6N 78.2W off Cuba on 2 April, one at 23.6N 81.7W in Cuban waters on 6 April, two at 24.3N 74.6W and two at 23.4N 73.3W in the Bahamas on 9 April and the last two at 21.6N 70.9E near Grand Turk on 10 April (DKB). Four at Panama City anchorage on 5 June and three seen when sailing from Kingston, Jamaica on 11 June(SC).

**Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor***. PF saw one at 0.3N 156W between Kiritimati and Malden Island on 4 Sept'08 and recorded them at various central Pacific islands with three at Fanning on 2 Sept'08, 15 at Kiritimati on 3 Sept'08, 50 at Malden on 5 Sept'08 and 500 at Starbuck on 6 Sept'08. In eastern Polynesia he saw 15 at Rangiora on 5 Oct'10, 50 at Maturei Vavao on 9 Oct'10, 100 at Oeno on 11 Oct'10, five at Pitcairn on 12 Oct'10, and four at Henderson on 13 Oct'10. **Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel***. In the Pacific PF saw one at 2.15 155.8W on 4 Sept'08 and around various islands, 25 at Kiritimati on 3 Sept'08, 500 at Malden on 5 Sept'08, 10 at Starbuck on 6 Sept'08 and 10 at Flint on 8 Sept'08. Further east he saw one at Rangiora 14.95 147.7W on 5 Oct'10.

### **Phalaropes *Phalaropodidae***

**Grey(Red) Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius***. SGC reported one in non-breeding plumage at 50.55 47.5W 380nm ENE Falklands on 20 April'12. MC observed 15 at 38.6N 9.9W off southern Portugal on 3 Nov.

### **Sheathbills *Chionidae***

**Yellow-billed Sheathbill *Chionis alba***. One at 52.15 59.6W near East Cove, Falklands on 4 May(SC).

### **Skuas and Jaegers *Stercorariidae***

**Great Skua *Stercorarius skua***. Four at 49.3N 5.8W SW from Cornwall on 22 April(DKB). One in the Mediterranean at 36.3N 14.3E north of Malta on 20 April, three at 38.6N 9.9W off southern Portugal on 3 Nov and two the next day at 43.5N 9.8W off Cape Finisterre(MC). TT had several

sightings in the Channel during Sept with two at 50.2N 3W on the 20th, three at 49.7N 4.1W on 21st, three at 50.5N 1.5W on 26th, one at 50.3N 3.6W on the 28th and one at 50.1N 3.1W the same day. He also saw one at 51.1N 7.9W in the southern Irish Sea on 3 Feb'12. **Southern Skua *Stercorarius antarctica***. SGC saw one at 61.75 59.9W in Drake Passage on 3 Dec and one at 62.75 59.8W in Bransfield Strait on 18 Dec, two at 64.65 62.2W on 23 Feb'12. TJ observed one at 31.95 115.7E off Western Australia on 3 April'12. **Chilean Skua *Stercorarius chilensis***. Seen by PF most days in small numbers from Mollendo Peru to Cape Horn during Nov'05. Larger counts included eight at 22S 70.8W on the 10th, 10 at 51.95 73.3W on the 18th, 10 at 52.15 73.2W on the 20th and five at 54.45 71.3W on the 21st. In the same area SC recorded three at 35.35 73.9W on 24 May, three the next day at 31.25 72.8W and one at 23.35 70.9W on 27 May. SGC counted 39 in 4h at 54.95 66.9W Beagle Channel on 10 Dec and 68 in 4h there on 20 Dec, eight at 55.95 66.8W off Cape Horn on 28 Jan'12, one nearby at 55.65 66.6W on 17 Feb'12. **McCormick's Skua *Stercorarius mccormicki***. One was reported by PF at 23.25 71W off Antofagasta on 10 Nov'05. SGC saw three at 62.75 59.8W in Bransfield Strait on 8 Dec, three at 64.75 62.1W, Wilhelmina Bay on 15 Dec and one at 62.75 59.8W on 18 Dec, one at 61.65 60.4W on 21 Jan'12, one at 62.95 60.4W the next day, four at 64S 61.7W Croker Passage on 24 Jan'12, one at 61.25 60.9W on 31 Jan'12, three at 64.65 62.2W on 23 Feb'12, 17 at 62.35 59.3W Nelson Strait on 4 April'12. **Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus***. DKB recorded one flying north at 23.4N 73.3W in the Bahamas on 9 April, two singles flying north at 21.6N 70.9W off Grand Turk on 10 April, one flying north at 27.1N 58.1W SE from Bermuda on 12 April, 11 at 31.8N 46.3W on 14 April and a pair at 38.5N 28.7W near Faial, Azores on 17 April. PF observed one at 11.5N 157.2W between Hawaii and Kiribati on 30 Aug'08. In the Gulf of Siam TJ observed one at 9.4N 102.5E on 14 March'12. **Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus***. DKB recorded one at 25.9N 60.8W and one at 26.8N 58.7W SE from Bermuda on 12 April. PF saw three at 17S 72.8W off Mollendo Peru on 8 Nov'05, two the next day at 18.85 70.4W and three at 33.35 71.9W on 12 Nov'05. In the tropical Atlantic HMSP saw a light morph at 0.4N 30.4W on 12 Dec. **Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus***. A few records by PF off southern Peru/northern Chile, with one at 16.35 73.9W and three at 17S 72.8W on 8 Nov'05, three at 18.85 70.4W on 9 Nov'05 and one at 28.75 71.7W on 11 Nov'05.

### **Gulls *Laridae***

**Grey Gull *Larus modestus***. One seen at Callao, Peru 29 May(SC). **Band-tailed Gull *Larus belcheri***. SC saw c.100 whilst entering Callao, Peru on 29 May. **Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris***. TJ observed 30 Ad/imm at 33.1N 124.5E in the East

China Sea on 4 March'12, two at 28.7N 124.1E the next day and four at 25N 120.1E in the Formosa Strait on 6 March'12. **Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis***. Five in Nassau harbour on 8 April (DKB). **Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus***. MC had one Spring and several Autumn records of the subspecies *fuscus* ('Baltic Gull') in the central Mediterranean, with one at 33.3N 12.9E on 9 April, four at 34.7N 16.5E on 22 Sept, one at 31.7N 16.6E on 23 Sept, one at 33.3N 13.1E on 6 Oct, one at 33.5N 12.7E on 16 Oct, one at 31.1N 16.4E on 17 Oct and two at 35.1N 14.3E on 26 Oct. **Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans***. DKB recorded 10 at 37.7N 28.2W near Sao Miguel, Azores on 18 April. MC had several Spring records from the central Mediterranean with one at 36.8N 12.7E and one at 35.9N 13.6E on 7 April, one at 35.5N 23E on 29 April and three at 30.6N 19.4E on 1 May. **Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus***. MC observed six including two juv at 50N 4.1W and two at 50.3N 4.2W in the Channel on 30 March. **Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus***. SC recorded the species as numerous in the Magellan Straits 52.6S 69.6W on 19 May and 37 at 49.9S 74.4W in the Patagonian Canal on 21 May. SGC saw c.660 in the eastern part of Beagle Channel 54.9S 66.9W on 10 Dec and 300+ there on the 20 Dec, and an immature at 55.9S 66.8W off Cape Horn on 28 Jan'12. **Dolphin Gull *Larus scoresbii***. SGC recorded three in the eastern Beagle Channel 54.9S 66.9W on 10 Dec and one there on 20 Dec and one at 55.6S 66.6W off Cape Horn on 17 Feb'12. **Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichi***. In the Arabian Gulf TT saw one at 25.7N 53.6E off Dubai on 4 Nov and two the next day at 25.4N 54.5E. **Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla***. In the Caribbean DKB observed 40 Ad at St.Vincent I. anchorage on 23 March, two Ad at 16.1N 64.6W near Guadeloupe on 25 March, a few in Montego Bay Jamaica on 31 March, 100 at Santiago de Cuba on 1 April, 150 in Habana harbour on 4 April and 300 at Nassau Roads and harbour on 8 April. SC saw 30 when sailing from Kingston Jamaica on 11 June. **Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan***. A vagrant adult in breeding plumage flew up the wake and past the ship at 54.5S 40W 68nm SW of Willis Islands, South Georgia on 7 April'12(SGC). **Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus***. MC saw one following his ship at 32.7N 13.3E off Libya on 21 Oct and three at 38.2N 15.6E Straits of Messina on 30 Oct. **Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus***. DKB recorded one Ad sitting on a buoy when approaching Pointe a Pitre, Guadeloupe on 25 March. This species is a rare winter and spring visitor to the West Indies. MC recorded two at 38.2N 15.6E, Straits of Messina on 30 Oct. **Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei***. In the Arabian Gulf TT saw one at 25.4N 54.5E off Dubai on 8 Nov. **Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi***. TJ recorded 5 Ad and 5 imm at 38.8N 118.3E in the Bo Hai Gulf, Northern China on 2 March'12. **Swallow-tailed Gull *Creagrurus furcatus***. SC observed one at 18.8S 74W off southern Peru on

28 May, 41 at 4.7S 81.8W on 3 June, three at 0.8S 81.2W and one at 2.3N 80.8W off Colombia on 4 June. **Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla***. One imm seen in the Bay of Biscay at 46.4N 9.2W on 21 April (DKB). MC recorded two Ad and four juv at 43.5N 9.8W off Cape Finisterre on 4 Nov and 28 later in the day at 44.6N 8.9W.

### Terns *Sternidae*

**Black Tern *Chlidonias niger***. MC had several records of this species on passage in the central Mediterranean during August with one at 36.9N 16.9E on the 1st, 13 at 33.7N 15.1E and a flock of 90 at 33.7N 14.5E on the 5th, six at 36.2N 13.8E on the 19th, 80+ at 33.5N 12.6E on the 23rd, six at 33.1N 13.2E on the 26th, two at 33.2N 13.1E on the 28th and three at 33.3N 13.3E on the 29th. **Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia***. DKB saw one Ad at Montego Bay Jamaica on 31 March, one Ad at 19.8N 75.6W in Cuban waters on 1 April, one in Habana harbour on 3 April and another there the following day. In the Arabian Gulf TT observed one at 25.3N 54.5E off Dubai on the 5 Nov. **South American Tern *Sterna hirundinacea***. SC observed eight in Chilean coastal waters at 41.7S 73.9 on 23 May. SGC estimated 4 to 5 000 in eastern Beagle Channel, mean position 54.9S 66.9W on 10 Dec and c.6 000 there on 20 Dec, 33 at 55.6S 66.6W off Cape Horn on 17 Feb'12. **Common Tern *Sterna hirundo***. One Ad seen in the approaches to Point a Pitre, Guadeloupe on 25 March (DKB). **Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea***. In the North Atlantic DKB saw three at 32N 45.7W on 14 April, two at 34.2N 39.5W and three at 34.4N 39W on 15 April, two at 37.7N 28.2W near Sao Miguel, Azores on 18 April, two settled on a plank in the Bay of Biscay at 45.6N 10.5W with another two also on a plank at 45.9N 9.8W and a remarkable large feeding flock of 850+ at 46.4N 9.2W on 21 April. **Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata***. Several recorded by SGC around the Antarctic Peninsula with one at 63.5S 56.6W Antarctic Sound on 4 Dec, two at 62.7S 59.8W Bransfield Strait on 8 Dec, four at 64.7S 62.1W in Wilhelmina Bay on 15 Dec, two at 63.3S 56.9W on 17 Dec and seven at 62.7S 59.8W Bransfield Strait on 18 Dec, 36 in 3h at 64.6S 62.2W Wilhelmina Bay on 23 Feb'12, one at 63.4S 56.8W Antarctic Sound on 2 April'12, one at 62.3S 59.3W Nelson Strait on 4 April'12, one at 58.8S 53.8W Drake Passage on 5 April'12, one at 54.5S 40W in the Scotia Sea on 7 April'12. HMSP observed two at 64.9S 63.3W on 19 Jan'12. **Grey-backed Tern *Onychoprion lunata***. PF saw two at 16.9N 155.7W south of Hawaii on 29 Aug'08, three at Malden island, 4S 154.8W on 5 Sept'08 and two at Starbuck Island, 5.6S 155.9W on 6 Sept'08, 40 at Rangiora 14.9S 147.7W on 5 Oct'10 and one at 16.4S 145.2W the next day. **Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus***. In the West Indies DKB recorded 20 at 21.6N 70.9W off Grand Turk on 10 April. **Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus***. A flock of 57 was seen by DKB at 23.8N 81.3W in the Bahamas on 6 April and another of 83 birds at

21.6N 70.9W off Grand Turk on 10 April. SC saw eight at 6.7N 79.9W off Panama on the 5 June. PF observed many in the central Pacific between 17.8N and 16.3S during Aug/Sept'08. Larger gatherings included 200 at 16.1N 155.9W on 29 Aug'08, 50 at 13N 155.8W on 30 Aug'08 and later the same day 500 at 12.2N 157W, 10 at 6.2N 158.8W on 31 Aug'08, 50 000 at Motu Cook 1.9N 157.3W on 3 Sept'08, 500 at 0.3N 156W and 300 at 2.1S 155.8W on 4 Sept'08, 10 000 at Malden Island 4S 154.8W on 5 Sept'08, 150 at 8.2S 154.1W and 300 at 9.1S 153.4W on 7 Sept'08, 40 at 14.2S 151.7W and 55 at 16.3S 151.7W on 8 Sept'08, 500 at Ducie Island 24.7S 124.8W on 14 Oct'10. **Little Tern *Sterna albifrons***. One at 38.8N 118.3E Bo Hai Gulf, northern China on 2 March'12(TJ). **Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii***. In the south Pacific PF recorded six at Taha'a, Society Islands at 16.6S 151.5W on 10 Sept'08. **Royal Tern *Sterna maxima***. Several observations by DKB from the Caribbean with two Ad at St.Vincent I. anchorage on 23 March, one at Port de France, Martinique and four at nearby at 14.6N 61.1W on 24 March, one at 16.1N 64.6W on 25 March, one at 18.4N 64.6W approaching Tortola on 27 March, three Ad at 18.3N 70W off Dominica on 29 March, a few in Montego Bay, Jamaica on 31 March, 20 in the estuary at Santiago de Cuba and one nearby at 19.8N 75.6W on 1 April, five in Habana harbour on 3 April and one in Freeport Harbour, Bahamas on 7 April. SC observed eight when sailing from Kingston Jamaica on 11 June. **Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis***. A flock of six was seen by DKB when approaching Pointe a Pitre, Guadeloupe on 25 March, three at 17.8N 65.6W off Puerto Rico on 28 March, 100 in Habana harbour on 4 April and two in Freeport harbour, Grand Bahama on 7 April, 10 at 38.5N 28.5W near Faial, Azores on 17 April and one in the Bay of Biscay at 46.4N 9.2W on 21 April. **Inca Tern *Larosterna inca***. SC recorded five of this attractive Humboldt endemic at 22.9S 70.8W on 27 May and c.200 whilst entering Callao on 29 May. **Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus***. Three were seen by DKB at 23.6N 81.7W near Cuba on 6 April. Regularly recorded by PF in the central Pacific with larger concentrations including 500 at Motu Cook 1.9N 157.4W on 3 Sept'08, 100 at Flint Island 1.4S 151.7W on 8 Sept'08, 100 at 17.1S 151.1W on 10 Sept'08, 300 at 17.6S 149.7W between Moorea and Tahiti on 11 Sept'08, 50 at 15.3S 143.1W on 4 Oct'10, 50 at 16.9S 144.7W on 6 Oct'10 and 100 at Oeno Island 23.9S 130.7W on 11 Oct'10. **Black Noddy *Anous minutus***. Seen by PF in the central Pacific with 25 at Fanning Island 3.9N 159.4W on 2 Sept'08, 20 at 3.6N 159.2W the same day, 1 000 at Motu Cook 1.9N 157.4W on 3 Sept'08, 100 at Flint Island, 11.4S 151.7W on 8 Sept'08, 100 at 17.1S 151.6W on 10 Sept'08, 300 at 17.6S 149.7W on 11 Sept'08, 250 at 15.3S 143.1W on 4 Oct'10, 100 at Rangiora 14.9S 147.7W on 5 Oct'10, 1 000 at 16.9S 144.7W on 6 Oct'10, 250 at Oeno Island on 11 Oct'10. **Blue-grey Noddy *Procelsterna***

***cerulea***. This Pacific endemic was seen by PF with one at 3.6N 159.2W south of Fanning Island on 2 Sept'8, 10 at Motu Cook 1.9N 157.4W on 3 Sept'08, 5 at 1.3N 157.4W later the same day and two at 4.2S 155.1W on 5 Sept'08, one at Rangiora 14.9S 147.7W on 5 Oct'10, six at Pitcairn Island on 12 Oct'10, two at 24.7S 129W on 13 Oct'10 and four at Ducie Island on 14 Oct'10. **White Tern *Gygis alba***. Numerous records in the central Pacific by PF between 13N 155.8W and 16.6S 151.5W. Larger counts included 50 at 3.6N 159.2W on 2 Sept'08, 500 at Motu Cook 1.9N 157.4W on 3 Sept'08, 40 at 11.5S 151.8W on 8 Sept'08. From 4th to 15th Oct'10 PF had records each day in eastern Polynesia between 15.3S 143.1W and 25.4S 120.9W. Large counts included 50 at 16.9S 144.7W on 6th, 70 at 17.7S 142.3W on the 7th, 25 at Maturei Vavao 21.5S 136.4W on 9th, 250 at Oeno Island 23.9S 130.7W on 10th, 25 at Henderson Island on the 13th, 300 at Ducie Island on the 14th.

### Alcids *Alcidae*

**Razorbill *Alca torda***. Recorded in the Channel by MC with two at 50.3N 1.7W on 29 March. **Common Guillemot *Uria aalge***. MC observed two at 50.3N 1.7W and six at 50.1N 3.7W on 29 March.

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# Landbirds from ships at sea

by Lieutenant Chris Patrick RN

Reports of landbirds at sea were received from six observers, two of whom are new contributors.

**David Ballance** - MV Discovery from Bridgetown, Barbados to Portsmouth via various Caribbean ports and the Azores, Mar–Apr 2011, 18 records

**Peter Fraser** - RV Professor Khromov during on its Western Pacific odyssey from Auckland, New Zealand to Kagoshima, Japan, Apr 2007, 9 records

**Lt Chris Patrick RN** - HMS Severn around the UK from Jan–Apr 2010, 27 records

**M Shivashanka** - FV Mulki on an Indian pelagic trip, Oct 2011, 5 records

**WO2 Anthony Tindale** - HMS Iron Duke in the Mediterranean, Jul 2011 and English Channel, Sep 2011 and HMS Argyll in the Arabian Gulf, Nov 2011, 5 records

**Capt Thomas Johanssen** - MV Fiesta from Ghana to Gibraltar, May 2011 and the Sea of Marmora, Jun 2011, 5 records

**CPO Mark Cutts** - submitted an amazing collection of 305 records during his prolonged Mediterranean deployment on HMS Liverpool. These are summarised in a separate article.

Four species make their first appearance in these reports and the RNBWS database of records. They are West Indian Whistling-Duck *Tauraco leucotis*, Pallid Scops-owl *Otus brucei*, Caroline Islands Swift *Collocalia iniqueta* and Chestnut-cheeked Starling *Sturnus philippensis*.

No reports were received from the North Atlantic (west of 30°W), Red Sea and Gulf of Aden or South Atlantic.

## North Atlantic (East of 30°W) and Bay of Biscay

**2011:** Heading towards the UK from the Azores on 20 Apr, DB recorded a House Martin *Delichon urbica* at 1430 at 42.4N 014.2 W and at 1800 3 Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica*. The following morning at 45.6N 010.5W he reported singles of possible Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* while 3 Barn Swallows remained around the ship all day. On 22 Apr, single Barn Swallows were noted at 0730, 0930 and 1130 and a male European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* and an unidentified Warbler were recorded at 0930 as the ship passed round Brittany at 49.0N 006.1W.

TJ reported a Nightjar, probably European *Caprimulgus europaeus*, resting onboard 65nm offshore from Morocco at 31.1N 011.2W on 28 May.

## English Channel, North Sea, Irish Sea, Norwegian Sea and Baltic

**2010:** In the southern North Sea on 13 Jan between 1300 and 1400, CP saw a Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* flying west and a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* and 2 Redwings *Turdus iliacus* flying southwest at 52.6N 002.1E. A Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* was seen in the same position the following day at 1330. During the following week 2 more Fieldfares and a male Blackbird were noted flying over. On the evening of 12 Feb, 16 Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* flew east

out of Weymouth Bay. The following day a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* was observed hunting low over the sea, 6nm east of Portland Bill, while 3 Common Scoter flew west. In Torbay, at 0800 on 19 Feb, a Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* flew east out of the bay as 6 Common Scoter flew west into it and 4 Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* were onboard while HMS Severn was at anchor. A couple of hours later, 2 Canada Geese *Branta Canadensis* were seen flying east, just south of Prawle Point. More geese, this time a flock of 31 Greylag *Anser anser*, were photographed on the sea, 17nm southeast of Beachy Head on 2 Mar, before flying off east after being harassed by a Great Skua. In fog and drizzle 5nm south of Brighton, at 0605 on 19 Mar, winter and summer migrants were recorded together in the form of single Eurasian Blackbird, Redwing, Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*, Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* and Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*. The following morning in the same position a Dunlin *Calidris alpina* flew southeast. In a similar position on 21 Mar a Willow Warbler and a female Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* were onboard at 1000. 13nm south of Portland Bill on 24 Mar, a European Greenfinch and a Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrelli* flew north at 1430. At anchor in Weymouth Bay on 26 Mar, a single Carrion Crow was onboard. At the entrance to the Clyde on 10 Apr, CP saw a pair of Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* at 55.7N 005.0W.

**2011:** On 29 Sep, AT recorded a male Chaffinch 10 miles south of the Isle of Wight at 50.4N 001.4W.

### Mediterranean

**2011:** In the Sea of Marmora, at 40.7N 027.8W on 5 Jun, TJ recorded a flock of 36 White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* that flew west at midday and between 1600 and 1700 several flocks totalling a further 150 also flew west. White Storks migrate through this area from early March to mid June so these are late, possibly non-breeding, birds. That evening, in the same position, several hundred Sandpipers and Plovers were reported flying past in a 3 hour period.

AT recorded an adult Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* 27nm off the Libyan coast at 33.0N 14.6W on 18 Jul. The following day in the same position he had another good wader in the form of a Stone Curlew *Burhinus oediceramus*.

### Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean

**2011:** On 20 Mar at 1730 while 30nm southwest of Puerto Rico, DB recorded a Barn Swallow flying around the ship at 17.7N 067.7W. On 30 Mar at 1845, another Barn Swallow was seen midway between Jamaica and Haiti at 18.2N 075.5W. 2 Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* flew west and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* flew over the ship at 0745 on 2 Apr at 21.4N 076.0W, 20nm off the north coast of Cuba. At 0755 the following day, a Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* was onboard and a Peregrine Falcon flew east 6nm off the north Cuban coast at 23.3N 082.0W. In the Gulf of Batabano, Cuba on the evening of 6 Apr, an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* was seen to fly west. A

flock of 10 West Indian Whistling-Ducks was seen to circle out to sea then return to San Salvador, Bahamas as the ship was 5nm west of the island at 1030 on 9 Apr.

### Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea

**2011:** On the morning of 15 Oct in an area around 8nm off the west coast of India at 13.7N 074.5E, MS saw 21 Barn Swallows in 2 hours. Numbers dropped off as the day progressed, with 7 in almost 4 hours during the afternoon and 2 in 2 hours during the evening. The following day in the same area he had 5 Barn Swallows in 6 hours.

### Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman

**2011:** In the Gulf of Oman, AT had a European Collared-dove *Streptopelia decaocto* at 25.3N 057.6E on 7 Nov and in the Arabian Gulf between Qatar and Iran at 27.1N 051.6E on 12 Nov he recorded a Pallid Scops-owl.

### Pacific, China Sea, Yellow Sea, Coral Sea and Philippine Sea

**2007:** Near the islands of Chuuk at 07.1N 152.1E on 16 Apr, PF saw a Caroline Islands Swift. On 20 Apr at 1300 while at sea in the Northern Marianas at 20.4N 145.9E he had a Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* and 4 Barn Swallow. 150nm south of Japan at 31.0N 136.4E on 24 Apr he saw a Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* and 25 Barn Swallows. The next day, still 115nm from Japan at 31.3N 134.5E, he enjoyed a fall that included a Chestnut-cheeked Starling, 6 Blue-and-white Flycatchers *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*, 2 Barn Swallows and a Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*.

# The RNBWS Library

by the librarian, Steve Copey

The RNBWS has a number of books available for the use of members, and our collection has recently been enhanced by the gift of Commander Frank Ward's bird books by his widow, June.

The books held are roughly half country field guides and half on other bird-related topics. The country guides include Birds of Gambia and Senegal by Barlow et al, and the Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa by Sinclair, while the more general books include the excellent new guide to North American Petrels, Albatrosses, and Storm Petrels by Steve Howell (reviewed in this edition of *Sea Swallow*), and the recent Gull Identification masterclass by Malling, Olsen and Larssen.

If any society member is planning to visit a country and does not want the added expense of purchasing the necessary field guide please contact me by Email or letter (my addresses are on the inside of the front cover), and if we do not already hold the relevant book I will buy it for the society and post it on. In my own case, when I visited South America in 2011 I made good use of three RNBWS books including the excellent Birds of Peru. These three books would have cost me over £100, but as our planned ship visit to Peru was for only two days it made perfect sense for me to make use of the RNBWS library. (Something about me being a tight Yorkshireman may spring to mind - and is totally untrue!)

I will post out books as long as it is reasonable to do so, and the society will cover this cost. All I ask is that the borrower covers the return postage.

## List of books available for loan

### Field Guides

Birds and Mammals of the Falkland Islands - *Woods*  
Birds of Gambia and Senegal - *Barlow, Wacher and Disley*  
Birds of Kuwait - *Gregory*  
Birds of Peru - *Schulenberg et al.*  
Birds of Southern Africa - *Sinclair, Hockey and Tarboton*  
Birds of the Indian Ocean - *Sinclair and Langrand*  
Birds of the Indian Subcontinent - *Grimmett, Inskipp and Inskipp*  
Birds of the Indian Subcontinent - *Kazmierczak*  
Birds of the Turks and Caicos Islands - *Ground*  
Birds of North America - *National Geographic*  
Birds of West Africa - *Serle, Morel and Hartwig*  
Birds of the West Indies - *Garrido and Raffaele*  
Falkland Islands Birds - *Woods*  
Field Guide to Australian Birds, vols. 1 and 2 - *Slater*  
Field Guide; the Straits of Gibraltar - *Cardona and Esteban*  
Sea Birds of the South Pacific - *Harrison*

### General Books

Albatrosses - *Tickell*  
Atlas of Breeding Birds in the Falkland Is - *Woods and Woods*  
Bird Ecology and Conservation - *Sutherland et al.*  
Complete checklist of the birds of the world - *Howard and Moore*  
Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife - *Shirihai*  
Crows and Jays of the world - *Madge and Burn*  
Enjoying Birds and other wildlife in Hawaii - *Pratt*  
Estuary Birds of Britain and Ireland - *Prater*  
Flight Identification of European Seabirds - *Blomdahl et al.*  
Gulls of Europe, Asia and North America - *Malling, Olsen and Larsson*  
Bird ID, Europe and the Western Palearctic - *Beaman and Madge*  
Migration Atlas -  
Petrels, Albatrosses and Storm Petrels of North America - *Howell*  
Pheasant Jungles - *Beebe*  
Raptors of the world - *Ferguson-Lees et al.*  
Sea Mammals of the World - *Reeves, Stewart et al.*

Status of Seabirds in Britain and Ireland - *Lloyd, Tasker and Partridge*  
Swifts, a guide to Swifts of the world - *Chantler and Driessens*  
Terns of Europe and N America - *Olsen and Larsson*  
Waders of Europe, Asia and N America - *Message and Taylor*  
Where to watch birds in Ireland - *Hutchinson and Parker*

## Multimedia Identification Guide to North Atlantic Seabirds: Storm-petrels & Bulwer's Petrel

by Bob Flood & Ashley Fisher, illustrations by Ian Lewington, 2011

**Published by Pelagic Birds & Birding Multimedia Identification Guides in association with [www.scillypelagics.com](http://www.scillypelagics.com). Hardback plus two DVDs. £39.99**

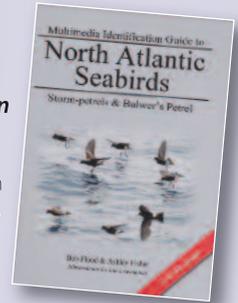
This identification guide consisting of a 212 page hardback book and two integrated DVDs could also be described as a thorough and effective ID training and instruction kit for pelagic birders. The seven storm-petrels recorded in the North Atlantic, White-faced, Wilson's, European, Black-bellied, Band-rumped, Leach's, Swinhoe's and Bulwer's Petrel are given comprehensive coverage as are White-bellied Storm-petrel, a potential vagrant and confusion species, and Matsudaira's Storm-petrel, also a confusion species.

The first part of the book gives a general introduction to storm-petrels, their topography, 'jizz', flight behaviour, structure, moult and useful tables of relative body lengths/wingspans and plumage patterns. This is followed by separate species accounts covering the same subjects in more detail. These accounts also include taxonomic notes, a readable range map for the Atlantic area showing breeding colonies and extra-limital records. A more detailed taxonomic summary for the European, White/Black-bellied and Band-rumped complexes is contained in an appendix. Moult is described using the Humphrey-Parke system favoured in the USA. There is an outstanding series of high quality colour images of each species provided by various photographers. I was pleased that the authors have chosen to supplement these images with Ian Lewington's subtle and evocative illustrations which appear throughout the book. The section on 'confusion pairs' discusses in detail species that are sufficiently alike to be misidentified. The final section of the book called the 'ID jogger' provides a bullet point summary of essential identification facts. The authors suggest this can be photocopied and taken on board for a small boat 'pelagic'. This is a good idea as the book is printed on quality glazed paper, susceptible to water damage.

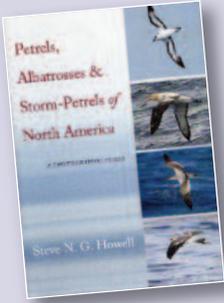
The two DVDs run for a total of 124 minutes and contain over 300 excellent quality video clips

with extensive coverage of all ten species in various types of flight. Some species are shown in the hand and there is footage of breeding sites on North and South Atlantic islands. Almost all of the video was taken by the authors, an outstanding achievement. Each clip is numbered and apart from the quiz section is annotated with species, location and date. A useful timeline for each video repeating this information is given in the book. Bob Flood's narration is clear, informative and demonstrates his astute observation skills.

The book is written in a lively style reflecting the authors' enthusiasm for the subject but by nature of its aim contains quite a lot of repetition. However, I found this acceptable in the context of mastering the identification of this difficult group of seabirds. Unexpectedly, for a book published in the United Kingdom the spelling style is American throughout; thus we have behavior, center, color, molt, maneuver etc. Perhaps the authors considered the USA to be their main market or was their spell checker left on the default setting? This well priced book/DVD set will be appreciated by all seabird enthusiasts and is now a proven template for their planned multimedia guides to other seabird groups.



**Neil Cheshire**



## Petrels, Albatrosses and Storm-petrels of North America: a photographic guide

by Steve Howell

**Hardback. Published by Princeton University Press. ISBN 978-0-691-14211-1**

This new book, eagerly awaited by pelagic enthusiasts on both sides of the Atlantic, contains detailed information on some of the most elusive and enigmatic seabirds in the World. Although there is still much to learn about many of the species described in its pages, the author, Steve Howell, is one of the key pioneers who has advanced our knowledge to its current state. His introductory words set the scene nicely: "Petrels, albatrosses and storm-petrels are among the most beautiful yet least known of all the world's birds, living their lives at sea far from the sight of most people".

This book is larger than a conventional field guide, coming in at just over 480 pages in length. However, the target audience is likely to be dominated by sea-going ornithologists making static observations from a vessel, so size and weight are not so much of an issue. The advantages of the large format soon become clear when one considers that the comprehensive introduction alone extends to 50 pages, and covers topics such as tubenose biology, ocean habitats, taxonomy and conservation. Almost half of the introduction is set aside for a useful section on field identification of tubenoses, with numerous handy tips on flight styles, moult and ageing.

The bulk of the book is made up of the species accounts, which cover the 70 or so species of tubenose to have been recorded in North American waters (this is an approximate figure depending on taxonomic boundaries). This total is about 50% of the global species total, and illustrates the advantage of being in a country that is bordered by both the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean, and that extends from sub-Arctic regions to the tropics. It makes our seabird fauna in the northeast Atlantic look rather meagre in comparison; for example the *Collins Bird Guide*, deemed to be the modern benchmark for our region, only contains about 20 tubenose species!

The species accounts are sensibly divided into sections, e.g. large shearwaters, white-rumped storm petrels, with each section containing a short introduction to the group. Individual species accounts are comprehensive; to give an idea of the level of detail, the Sooty Shearwater account spans seven pages and contains two distribution maps (Pacific and Atlantic) and ten

photos. For those of us based in the northeast Atlantic, the sections on the Cory's Shearwater complex (Cory's, Scopoli's and Cape Verde), Fea's/Zino's Petrel, and the band-rumped storm-petrel complex (including Madeiran and Grant's), will be of particular interest. Hardcore seabird enthusiasts in our region will also have their appetite whetted by species that are 'once in a lifetime' possibilities in UK waters, e.g. Black-capped and Trinidad Petrels.

A photographic guide is only as good as its photos, and the ones included here are generally excellent (considering the difficulties of photographing birds at sea) and have reproduced well on the printed page. In addition to close-up images that illustrate key identification features, there is as a scatter of images illustrating behaviour or multiple species in the same frame. I particularly liked the shots of a flock of loafing Short-tailed Shearwaters being split by the tail flukes of a diving Humpback Whale, and the two pages of photos depicting various white-rumped storm petrels in the same pose. There is also a nice bit of artwork by Ian Lewington, highlighting the subtle differences between Manx, Townsend's and Newell's Shearwater. The detailed images of second-cycle Black-browed Albatross also brought back happy memories of my sighting of this species from Porthgwarra in July 2009!

There isn't much to criticise in this book, although as someone who does a lot of land-based seawatching I did find that it is very much oriented towards the pelagic ornithologist. I would have liked more images that reflect a typical distant view from a windswept headland, as the full-frame (often sunlit) specimens typically used in the species accounts bear little resemblance to such observations. However, overall this is a top-quality product that successfully captures our growing knowledge and interest in pelagic seabirds. It is an essential purchase for anyone going pelagic birding in the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans, and I would also recommend it to seabird enthusiasts restricted to European coasts due to the comprehensive coverage of many northeast Atlantic species. At £31 it represents excellent value for money, so buy a copy, pack it with your binoculars and ginger biscuits, and get out there!

**Dr Russell B. Wynn**



Cory's Shearwater



Audouin's Gull



White-tailed Tropicbird



White Tern



Great Frigatebird

Northern Gannet

# RNBWS

ROYAL NAVY BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY  
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Email [s\\_p\\_lawrence@btinternet.com](mailto:s_p_lawrence@btinternet.com)

White Wagtail



Melodious Warbler



Yellow-rumped Warbler



Black Redstart



Scop's Owl





**Plate 81.** King Penguins, South Georgia, April 2011. © Steve Copsey