

## A resident Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* on Christiansø in the central Baltic Sea

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In March 2012, a Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* (hereafter 'Gannet') in full adult plumage arrived on the small Danish island of Christiansø (55°19'N 15°11'E) in the Baltic Sea. As it only constituted the second record on the island (the first was of a bird migrating by in April 1988), it caused quite a lot of excitement, especially as it remained there, sitting on rooftops and in the small harbour.

In spring 2013, the Gannet began building a nest in the harbour, firstly on some large sacks of gravel. But as the gravel was being used daily, the sacks were removed and the Gannet then chose to build a nest close to a power-socket pole in the busiest part of the harbour where the daily ferries with tourists and goods moor. Since then it has maintained its nest there, remaining on the island year round.



**Figure 1 (above).** The Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* at Christiansø chose to place its nest at the busiest part of the harbour, July 2013. **Figure 2 (opposite).** The Northern Gannet defending its nest and its beloved power pole, May 2015. © both Peter Lyngs.



The Gannet is a male. We know that because at one point it raped an apparently highly attractive white plastic bag. The Gannet is in excellent condition, always showing immaculate plumage. It is very attracted to its power pole, and when returning from fishing trips or nest-material collecting, it greets the power pole with all the classical Gannet-greeting postures. It defends its nest and the power pole vigorously in a 1 m radius, but otherwise seems quite indifferent to people and the occasional tractor passing close by.

During summer, some 45,000 tourists visit Christiansø. Hundreds of tourists pass the Gannet every day, and it must be the most photographed Gannet in the world - a quick estimate suggest that more than 60,000 shots are taken of it annually. So far, we have had no incidences where people have bothered the Gannet deliberately, but several cases where the Gannet has pecked people trying to use the power pole. The local seabirds largely ignore the Gannet (and vice versa), except for some immature Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* that seem to consider it good sport to harass the Gannet when it is flying. In May 2015, the Gannet changed its habits somewhat. It now often leaves in the morning to frequent some of the small harbours at northern Bornholm, especially Listed (55°08'N 15°06'E; 20 km off Christiansø) where it spends some hours sitting on a certain roof in the harbour. It then returns to its nest on Christiansø around midday.

On a few occasions, Gannets have been found nesting and even breeding far from the established gannetries, e.g. a single bird that 'nested' for at least four years on a roof-top in the seaside town of Seaford, East Sussex, southern England (Palmer 2001), and a few birds built nests and bred on piers and boats in several harbours on the French Mediterranean and Italian coasts from the 1990s onwards (Fernandez & Bayle 1994; Bouillot 1999; Wernham 2001; Giagnoni et al. 2015; <http://t.co/61ngNGAXu2>), with some pairs actually fledging a chick. Thus, the Christiansø Gannet is not exceptional, but somehow still fits the name Danish fishermen often use for this species - the loony bird.

## References

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