



NEWSLETTER 113

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RESEARCH NEWS

WINTERING AREAS OF ATLANTIC PUFFINS



Puffin with geolocator (Liz Mackley)

A recent increase in winter mortality in Atlantic puffins could be due to worsening conditions within the North Sea, according to new findings published in the journal *Marine Biology*. The study used geolocation technology to track puffins from the Isle of May National Nature Reserve, home to the largest colony of puffins in the North Sea.

The research team included scientists from the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and the British Antarctic Survey and was led by Professor Mike Harris, Emeritus Research Fellow at CEH, who has studied puffins for 37 years.

Geolocation has revealed that some of the quarter of a million puffins that breed in north-east Britain make long trips into the Atlantic, when it was previously thought that they stayed in the North Sea over winter. This is vital new knowledge, which should help explain recent declines in puffin numbers. Most seabird mortality occurs during the winter when food abundance is depressed, weather conditions are poor and shorter days restrict foraging opportunities.

Data from the new logging devices shows the birds are travelling greater distances into the Atlantic, where they have to adapt to different habitats, and for longer periods. Since there was an unprecedented mortality of adult puffins over the 2007/2008 winter, the results suggest that conditions in the North Sea may have become less favourable for puffins in recent years, forcing the birds to move into the Atlantic.

The British Antarctic Survey has pioneered the development of miniaturised loggers for tracking large-scale movements and fine-detail activity patterns of seals, terrestrial birds and, particularly, seabirds. They have provided numerous insights into habitat use, migratory connectivity, and variation in distribution.

CONTENTS	Page
RESEARCH NEWS.....	1
SEABIRD MONITORING PROGRAMME.....	7
CONSERVATION NEWS.....	8
MUSEUM COLLECTION SPECIAL.....	14
CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS.....	16
SEABIRD GROUP NEWS.....	18

Logging devices weighing 1.5g were deployed on 50 puffins on the Isle of May reserve during the 2007/2008 winter. Data was downloaded from 13 of these geolocators, with the records showing that more than three-quarters of the birds made excursions lasting between one and four months into the Atlantic between successive breeding seasons.

Previous studies have shown that puffin numbers at the two largest colonies on the east coast of Britain declined by 30% between 2003 and 2008 following rapid population increase over the previous 40 years. Further counts in 2009 have confirmed the decrease, and also recorded a decrease at two other colonies.

Co-author Dr Francis Daunt, also from CEH, said that although the factors causing the recent changes in puffin distribution and mortality required further study, he was confident the new approach, combining data from logging devices together with other information on changing conditions in the North Sea, would help improve understanding of what is a complex ecological issue.

The Isle of May is situated off the coast of east Fife in south-east Scotland. It is a rocky island, about two km long and 400 m wide. It is managed by Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Government's advisor on all aspects of nature and landscape across Scotland. The island is home to about 40,000 pairs of Atlantic puffins, as well as common guillemots, razorbills, black-legged kittiwakes, European shags, Atlantic puffins, herring gulls and lesser black-backed gulls. The resident puffin population attracts many thousands of visitors each year.



Puffin at long term monitoring plot
(Elie Owen)

The Natural Environment Research Council funded the study. Scottish Natural Heritage supplied permission for the authors to work on the Isle of May National Nature Reserve and the British Trust for Ornithology supplied the recoveries from their Ringing Scheme that is funded by a partnership of the British Trust for Ornithology, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (on behalf of Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council for Wales, and also on behalf of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside in Northern Ireland), The National Parks and Wildlife Service (Ireland) and the ringers themselves.

The full reference can be found at:

Michael P. Harris, Francis Daunt, Mark Newell, Richard A. Phillips and Sarah Wanless (2009) Wintering areas of adult Atlantic puffins *Fratercula arctica* from a North Sea colony as revealed by geolocation technology. Marine Biology DOI 10.1007/s00227-009-1365-0

Adapted from www.ceh.ac.uk

NATIONAL BEACHED BIRD SURVEY 2009

During the weekend of 21/22 February, around 650 volunteers participated in the 2009 National Beached Bird Survey, covering 2,245 km of UK beaches. Just 431 dead birds (excluding 'wings only') were recorded, of which 331 were seabirds (including seaducks, divers and grebes). This equates to a density of 0.15 dead seabirds per kilometre walked: the lowest since monitoring restarted in 1991 (1991-2008 mean = 0.91 birds per km, s.d. \pm 0.82).

It was a largely quiet winter preceding the 2009 survey: no oil spills occurred and no major seabird wrecks were reported from our shores. A fulmar wreck, however, did occur in early January mainly along the Dutch, German and also south Norwegian coast (*source*: www.zeevogelgroep.nl). It was of short duration, almost completely passing-by the UK coast, and not affecting the survey at the end of February.

Only eight of the 653 beaches walked were reported as slightly oiled (two in the North-West, one in the South-East, three in the South and two in Wales), the lowest number recorded since 1991. Beaches in Orkney, Shetland, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands continued to be free of oil. Plastic debris and other litter, however, were reported from many beaches and two of the dead gulls were entangled in fishing line.

Auks were found at their lowest density since 1991 (Table 1), equivalent to only five percent of their average density (1991-2008 mean = 0.58 dead auks per km, s.d. \pm 0.69). All other seabird groups were also found at below average densities (Table 1). The calm, although cold, weather for about a month prior to the survey and the lack of onshore winds during this period is likely to have contributed to the low density of dead birds and particularly auks found (Figure 2).

Table 1: Numbers, density and % oiled for different groups of seabird species found during the 2009 National Beached Bird Survey, with 2008 results for comparison

Species Group	Number found		Density (no./km)		% Oiled	
	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008
Auks	59	240	0.03	0.10	13.56	24.58
Gulls	129	126	0.06	0.05	1.55	3.97
Cormorant & Shag	28	93	0.01	0.04	0.00	3.23
Fulmar	64	55	0.03	0.02	3.13	1.82
Gannet	11	20	<0.01	0.01	18.18	5.00
Kittiwake	23	13	0.01	0.01	8.70	0.00
Seaducks	12	16	<0.01	0.01	0.00	6.25
Divers	2	3	<0.01	<0.01	0.00	0
Grebes	0	2	0.00	<0.01	N/a	0
Terns	2	1	<0.01	<0.01	0.00	0
Skuas	0	1	0.00	<0.01	N/a	0
Petrels	1	3	<0.01	<0.01	0.00	33.33

Auks: guillemot, black guillemot, razorbill, puffin, little auk, auk sp. Gulls: great black-backed, lesser black-backed, herring, common, black-headed, glaucous, little, gull sp. Seaducks: long-tailed, eider, common scoter, red-breasted merganser, scaup, seaduck sp. Divers: great northern, black throated, red throated, diver sp. Grebes: great crested. Terns: Sandwich, common, tern sp. Petrels: Manx shearwater, storm, petrel sp. Skuas: great.

Only 4.8% of all seabirds recovered were oiled. This is the third-lowest oiling rate since 1991 (1991-2008 mean = 13.2%, s.d. \pm 7.02). The oiling rate of 13.6% for auks was well below the long-term average for this group (1991-2008 mean =18.7%, s.d. \pm 11.52), whereas the oiling rate for gannets was the highest of all seabird groups in 2009 (Table 1). It has to be noted, however, that only two oiled gannets were recorded and that gannets were found at their lowest density since 1991.

Although oiling rates were highest in the South (Table 2), they were the third lowest for this region since 1992 and just half the long-term average (1992-2008 mean = 53.9%, s.d. \pm 17.17). Actual numbers involved were very low: only 16 oiled birds were found, restricted to five of the nine Beached Bird Survey regions (Figure 1). For the first time since monitoring restarted in 1991, no oiled birds were found in the North-West region and for a tenth consecutive year there were no oiled seabirds recorded in Northern Ireland.

We are very grateful to all the dedicated volunteers, who took part in the 2009 Beached Bird Survey. Many thanks also to Martin Heubeck of the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG) for making available the data from Shetland, to the regional RSPB staff for co-ordinating the survey and to Paul Britten for producing the maps. The next National Beached Bird Survey will be held on **27/28 February 2010**.

NB. Results presented here are those from surveys carried out 14 February – 01 March 2009 (a week either side of 21/22 Feb). This is to standardise the results with those of other countries involved in the International Beached Bird Survey, of which this National Beached Bird Survey forms a part. No data were available for Lancashire or Cheshire (southwest region).

Table 2: Numbers, density and % oiled for all seabirds in each region found during the 2009 National Beached Bird Survey, with 2008 results for comparison. For details of the regions, please refer to Appendix 1.

Region	Distance walked (km)		Number of dead seabirds		Density (no. dead birds/km)		% Oiled	
	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008
Shetland	48.4	48.4	9	42	0.19	0.87	11.11	4.8
Orkney	38.3	43.2	4	29	0.10	0.67	0.00	0.0
North-East	548.35	607.2	59	141	0.11	0.23	3.39	0.7
South-East	303.5	349.5	43	63	0.14	0.18	13.95	39.7
South	258.95	271.3	23	64	0.09	0.24	26.09	56.3
South-West	69.25	54.25	16	2	0.23	0.04	6.25	50.0
Wales	256	232.1	23	32	0.09	0.14	0.00	3.1
North-West	594.79	650.74	143	195	0.24	0.30	0.00	2.1
N. Ireland	127.7	131.8	11	5	0.09	0.04	0.00	0.0

N.B.: South region includes Channel Islands

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Figure 1. Location of oiled 'seabirds' found during the National Beached Bird Survey 2009 (all dots mark single birds found except one location in the North East, where two were recorded)



Figure 2. Number of auks (guillemot, razorbill, puffin, unidentified auks) found during the National Beached Bird Survey 2009

KITTIWAKE LONGEVITY RECORD FOR NORWAY

Among the many tourists to visit Hornøya, a small seabird colony on the NE extremity of Norway, are a few whose holiday seems to revolve around reading (or “cracking” as they say) bird rings. Apart from the many sightings of birds we have colour-ringed for survival estimates, we also receive notice of “normal” rings.

Last year (2009) Jürgen Steudtner from Leipzig (I guess some of you have also heard from him – he’s very keen on colour-ringed gulls) read kittiwake ring Stav. Mus. 6101507 on a bird standing on a nest. It turns out that this bird was ringed as a chick either by me or Pat Monaghan (Glasgow University) in July 1983, giving an age of 26 years and 2 months since hatching.

This turns out to be a longevity record for Norway and one that is only two years shorter than the European record given on the Euring web site (but five years longer than the US record on the USGS website – so not everything is bigger in America!). Accompanying Pat to Hornøya was, among others, Bob Furness who, on 3 July fulfilled his life’s ambition of ringing 1000 birds in a day by ringing 999 chicks and one adult kittiwake! So there were a lot of kittiwakes ringed that year from which this survivor remains.



Neil Metcalfe, Bob Furness and Pat Monaghan
colour-ringing herring gulls in North Norway,
summer 1983
(Rob Barrett)

This longevity record is, however, set to be broken in a year or two. In the early 1980s Norway had a ringing blitz and we were encouraged to ring as many seabirds as possible. This resulted in ca. 20 000 kittiwakes being ringed in 1981-1985. Among them was another I also ringed as a chick, this time on Bleiksøya in 1985, an island south of and not far from Tromsø. This one was caught and colour-ringed (by my colleague Signe Christensen-Dalsgaard, NINA) on Anda (ca. 40 km. south of Bleiksøya) in 2008, and seen again in 2009. We wait with ‘bated breath’ to see if it turns up over the next 2-3 years.

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SEABIRD MONITORING PROGRAMME

SEABIRD ECOLOGISTS AND CONSERVATIONISTS SIGN MAJOR DATA SHARING AGREEMENT

Eighteen organisations with an interest in nature conservation and ecological research signed a major agreement on the 3rd November that will see the sharing of valuable species data. This information will be invaluable in helping us monitor the health of our seas and the wildlife they support. The agreement is the latest flight forward for the Seabird Monitoring Programme ('SMP'), celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. A website-based reporting system was also unveiled at the launch meeting at Edinburgh Zoo.

The SMP provides information to help agencies work to maintain seabird populations in Britain and Ireland. It ensures that sufficient data on breeding numbers and appropriate demographic and behavioural information on seabirds are collected, both regionally and nationally. These enable their status to be assessed, and to monitor the impacts of ecosystem pressures, such as climate change, fisheries and non-native mammalian predators.

Seabird Group chairmain Dr Norman Ratcliffe said 'The Seabird Group has been involved in seabird monitoring in the UK and Ireland since the 1960s, when data were collected by keen amateurs on shoestring budgets. Increasingly the importance of this work has been recognised by a growing number of organisations, culminating in the new agreement. We are delighted that seabird monitoring is now receiving the levels of financial and political support that it deserves.' The agreement will

continue until 2015, subject to the outcome of annual reviews. It has relevance to both Britain and Ireland (including the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands).

The Statement of Intent can be downloaded in full at:

<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/pdf/SMP%20Statement%20of%20Intent.pdf>

The organisations involved in the Seabird Monitoring Partnership (SMP) are as follows:

- BirdWatch Ireland
- The British Trust for Ornithology
- Centre for Ecology & Hydrology
- Countryside Council for Wales
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (Isle of Man)
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Republic of Ireland)
- States of Guernsey Government
- JNCC
- Manx Birdlife
- Manx National Heritage
- The National Trust
- National Trust for Scotland
- Natural England
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Seabird Group
- Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group
- Scottish Wildlife Trust

It would take one person at least 1000 breeding seasons to collect the 56,000 species records that many have already contributed to the SMP!



Representatives of the SMP partner organisations with the Statement of Intent at Edinburgh Zoo (Catherine Gardener, JNCC)

Highlights of the 20 year history of the SMP, in Britain and Ireland...

An arctic tern breeding in Shetland and wintering in Antarctica will have migrated over 700,000km, enough for it to have flown to the moon and back.

Guillemots consumed over 4 million tonnes of fish, equivalent to eating the weight of 2000 blue whales each year.

The oldest known living wild bird, a Manx shearwater found breeding on Bardsey Island, NW Wales was already over 35 years old when the SMP started.

Adapted from www.jncc.gov.uk

CONSERVATION NEWS

THE STATUS OF THE BALEARIC SHEARWATER

The Balearic Shearwater has received a good deal of attention in recent years, including upgrade to a distinct, critically endangered species, as set out by Pierre

Yésou in *Atlantic Seabirds* 8: 97-103. Its distinct specific identity was proposed by G. Sangster *et al.* in *British Birds* 95: 636-639, but seems debatable owing to possible mingling with the Yelkouan (originally Levantine) Shearwater on Menorca (Ruiz, A. & Marti, R. (eds.) 2004. Pp. 62-63 in *La Pardela Balear*. SEO/Birdlife- Consellaria de Medi Ambient del Govern de les illes Balears, Madrid). The threat of imminent extinction speculated by D. Oro *et al.* in *Biological Conservation* 116: 93-102, is also being readdressed following several recent counts of over 16,000 birds seen passing Mediterranean watchpoints (data collected by Fundacion Migres and RAM Valencia). We are now working with colleagues in Iberia in order to understand these large-scale movements better; Russell Wynn (Seawatch SW) and Tim Guilford (Oxford University) are planning to lead an expedition to the Balearic Islands in order to work with local observers on a new tracking project using light-logging geolocators. This will hopefully shed some light on where these birds go throughout the year. The species' status in UK waters continues to be monitored by the Seawatch SW project (www.seawatch-sw.org).

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ASCENSION

The Army Ornithological Society have monitored the Sooty Terns that breed with every tenth lunar cycle on Ascension Island in the tropical Atlantic for some twenty years. Their latest journal; (Adjutant 30: 2-7, 2009) contains a report by John Hughes and Colin Wearn on the latest expedition in October 2009 following the final elimination of feral cats in 2004. Whereas three surveys

with a mean of 3.5 rats caught per hundred trap night in the 1990s produced a mean count of 368,000 terns, with cats killing 33 nightly, and no evidence of rat predation; in 2009, there was no evidence of cat predation, but an average of 1.6 dead tern chicks per ten-metre square, amounting to some 4,800 chicks in the only three of ten sub-colonies where any survived at all. Two trap-lines produced means of 74.5 and 36.8 rats killed per hundred trap-nights. Ten young egg-eating Mynas (SBG Newsl. 108: 13-15) were also trapped on the edge of the tern colony, and seven re-trapped, suggesting rather few birds were involved, which might easily be eliminated. Despite an improvement in adult survival during the breeding season the tern population was estimated to have declined to about 240,000 birds, and there appeared to be a shortage of food for the young.

It appears to have been forgotten that the original reason for the introduction of cats to Ascension was a plague of introduced Rats, and their resurgence was foreseeable. It does not seem certain that they are the only reason for the poor success of the Sooty Terns at the moment, though, since it was found that they were feeding their chicks largely on squid rather than small fish driven to the sea surface by Tuna, which were not being caught on the island. This might be a result of overfishing for Tuna, though there is apparently a return of El Nino in the Pacific, which may sometimes also have effects in the Atlantic (Atlantic Seabirds 3: 187-2002, 2001). It seems desirable that when so much trouble has been taken to remove the cats from Ascension that a proper watch should be kept on the situation and means found to control the consequent resurgence of Rats.

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UK MARINE AND COASTAL ACCESS BILL

The UK Marine and Coastal Access Bill has gained Royal Assent. The new legislation gives Scottish Ministers new powers to protect Scotland's marine life.

Scotland's seas are unique to the UK and Europe, hosting a range of nationally important marine features; from habitats such as coldwater coral reefs and seamounts, to species including many commercially important fish; 36 per cent of the world's population of grey seals; the most northerly resident population of bottlenose dolphins; minke whales and most of the UK's reported sightings of basking shark. Site based protection measures exist for some of these features through Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), designated under the EC Habitats Directive. However, new legislation was required to designate Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) for other remaining features that are of nature conservation importance, such as the flameshell, northern sea fan, common skate and burrowing anemone.

The UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 provides the necessary framework for Scottish Ministers to manage human activities in Scotland's marine environment in a sustainable manner. In particular, the Act enables Scottish Ministers to designate MPAs in Scottish offshore waters (beyond 12 nautical miles from the coast) for the conservation of important marine habitats and species. The Scottish Government is working closely with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) to ensure that the site selection process is underpinned by sound scientific advice.

The Scottish Government is taking further measures to ensure that inshore waters

around Scotland (within 12 nautical miles from the coast) are also afforded targeted protection. The Marine (Scotland) Bill, which was introduced to Scottish Parliament in April 2009, includes new powers to designate MPAs in Scottish inshore waters. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) will make recommendations to the Scottish Government about new MPAs within inshore waters.

The Scottish Government will work with JNCC and SNH to enable Scottish Ministers to contribute to international efforts to develop MPA networks and protect important marine features in Scottish waters.

In recognition of the important contribution marine industries and activities can make to Scotland's future, the Scottish Government will take measures to further ensure that the sea users are involved in developing recommendations on the establishment of MPAs.

Under the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act the Scottish Government has executive devolution of marine nature conservation and marine planning functions in offshore waters adjacent to Scotland. The identification, selection and designation of MPAs in offshore waters adjacent to Scotland will be led by Marine Scotland. The Scottish MPA project will facilitate a science based process with integral stakeholder engagement to develop recommendations on the MPAs required to complete the MPA network in the offshore waters adjacent to Scotland.

The UK Marine and Coastal Access Act also include powers to designate Marine Conservation Zones in English territorial waters and offshore waters adjacent to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The

Marine Conservation Zone Project has been established by Defra, Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to identify and recommend Marine Conservation Zones

(MCZs) in these waters to UK Government. The Marine Conservation Zone Project will be delivered through four regional MCZ projects -covering the south-west (Finding Sanctuary), Irish Sea (Irish Sea Conservation Zones), North Sea (Net Gain) and south-east (Balanced Seas). These regional MCZ projects will work with sea users and interest groups to identify MCZs and provide recommendations for sites within their regions to Government.

Adapted from www.jncc.gov.uk

CALL TO PROTECT EUROPEAN SEABIRDS

In the last decade an estimated two million seabirds are thought to have died at the hands of the European fishing industry in the waters around Europe and the Atlantic. This slaughter has to stop, say BirdLife International and the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), which are urging people to sign a [petition](#) to be sent to Maria Damanaki – designate European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries - to bring in long overdue measures to protect these birds.

Several of the species, which die on the end of longline hooks, get caught up in trawls or drown in gill nets are ones which are declining rapidly, and some, such as Critically Endangered Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*, are considered to be facing extinction within a human generation.

Globally, bycatch in fisheries is threatening more seabirds than ever before and is one of the major factors causing seabirds to decline faster than any other group of birds.

Despite proven, low-cost solutions being available, the EU's Common Fisheries Policy has so far failed to address the tragedy of seabird bycatch. Several countries outside the EU have started to tackle this issue in a serious way and have shown European leaders how much can be achieved.

BirdLife International and the RSPB are calling on the European Union to introduce a beacon of hope for seabirds, by introducing without further delay a robust EU Seabird Action Plan, following the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation's best practice guidelines.

BirdLife's seven-point plan includes:

1. Ensuring that the action plan covers all relevant fisheries and gears, including EU vessels operating in both Community and international waters, including the high seas;
2. Emergency action for the most threatened species, especially action within one year for Mediterranean longline fisheries killing Balearic Shearwater, Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* and Near Threatened Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*;
3. Introduce minimum mitigation standards in the areas where threatened species interact with fisheries, not least in areas that are internationally important for seabirds;
4. Require EU Member States to collect and report seabird bycatch information by having a minimum of 10 per cent on-

board observer coverage of fishing effort;

5. Provide EU funds for research and to develop and test mitigation measures tailored to specific fisheries;
6. Raise the awareness of the fishing industry and observers through training;
7. Establish a platform to foster collaboration between scientists, the fishing industry, governments and NGOs to develop and improve the action plan.

BirdLife has identified hotspots in Europe where vulnerable seabird populations are under siege from fisheries, notably the Mediterranean for longline fisheries and the Baltic for gill-net fisheries. The EU plan will also address the impact of the EC's distant water fleets, especially those of Spain, which target high-value species like tuna swordfish and toothfish in the south Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans.

You can sign the petition online at:

http://www.birdlife.org/eu/EU_policy/Fisheries_Marine/seabird_pledge.html

Adapted from www.birdlife.org

MARINE IBA INVENTORY PUBLISHED IN SPAIN

SEO/BirdLife (BirdLife in Spain) published the first national inventory of Marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in December.

The LIFE Project, 'Marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Spain', has been concluded after more than four years of work, and together with the already identified areas for seabirds on the mainland, this inventory

will address the complete protection of these birds through a network of integrated areas. Many of the 42 selected areas have also been identified as important for the protection of other species, such as sea turtles and fish. The project monitored and surveyed an area of about 1 million km².

The identification of marine IBAs is the first step in ensuring the complete protection of seabirds, and the marine environment as a whole. Following the preparation of this inventory, the next steps in guaranteeing the future of seabirds is now to achieve effective protection of marine IBAs and designate them as SPAs, and to provide proper management through the development and adoption of relevant management plans.

The LIFE project has received the support from the Spanish Minister of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs (Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Medio Rural y Marino - MARM) and the European Commission. The Spanish inventory is a result of a parallel project with Portugal, where SPEA (BirdLife In Portugal) has recently published 'Areas Importantes para as Aves Marinhas em Portugal', their first Marine IBA inventory.

You can view the complete inventory at: <http://www.seo.org/avesmarinas/flash.html>

Adapted from www.birdlife.org

WWF SMARTGEAR COMPETITION

WWF's International Smart Gear Competition, first held in 2005, brings together the fishing industry, research institutes, universities, and government, to inspire and reward practical, innovative fishing gear designs that reduce bycatch -

the accidental catch and related deaths of sea turtles, birds, marine mammals, cetaceans and non-target fish species in fishing gear such as longlines and nets.

This most pressing threat to marine life requires a wide-ranging, multidisciplinary response, and WWF believes the Smart Gear competition will help catalyze that response by encouraging creative thinkers everywhere to share their ideas. Applicants are asked to submit their ideas for modified fishing gears and procedures that increase selectivity for target fish species and reduce bycatch for other species. The competition is open to eligible entrants from any background, and entrants have included gear technologists, fishermen, engineers, chemists, and inventors.

An international panel made up of gear technologists, fisheries experts, representatives of the seafood industry, fishermen, scientists, researchers and conservationists judges the entries. The judges are guided by the following criteria:

- Does it reduce bycatch of nontarget fish and other species, especially vulnerable and/or endangered species?
- Is the idea innovative and original?
- Is the idea practical and is the idea easy to use?
- Is the idea cost-effective?
- Will it allow fishermen to maintain or increase profitability?
- Could the idea actually be developed?

The 2009 winner 'The Underwater Baited Hook' developed by Phil Ashworth and Dr. Graham Robertson, Australia, has the potential to reduce mortality of surface feeding albatrosses. To operate the device, fishermen place a baited hook in a capsule chamber, then mount the capsule in a docking station that is fixed to the vessel.

There, it is secured to a carriageway by spectra rope attached to pulleys and operated by hydraulics. With the press of a button, the hydraulics propel the capsule down the carriageway, out of which the capsule freefalls to a preprogrammed depth.

At the end of the descent, the system reverses the hydraulics, flushing the baited hook from the capsule through a springloaded door. The capsule then returns to the docking station to be set again. The aim is to release baited hooks beneath the lower limit of propeller turbulence, so that the turbulence forms a curtain of opaque water above the sinking bait, shielding it from the eyes of scavenging seabirds.

Because it is a workable alternative to baited hooks on the water's surface, this device has the potential to eliminate the mortality of surface-seizing species such as albatrosses, and to reduce or eliminate the mortality of deep-diving species such as white-chinned petrels, shearwaters and grey petrels.

It may also enable fishing at any time of the day or night cycle, and in all seasons - including in seabird breeding seasons, when attacks are most intense. It also allows government regulators to monitor fishing vessel compliance in the absence of an onboard observer.

In March 2009, researchers set 300 underwater baited hooks and ran extremely successful trials. Results showed that bait quality and bait retention on hooks were not affected by the new method of deployment, so that use of the device is unlikely to affect the catch rates of target and non-target fish species.

The underwater baited hook was originally the brainchild of New Zealand fisher Dave Kellian. Australian tuna fisher Tony Forster also contributed to the concept and ran trials of a basic model on his fishing vessel. However, Dave and Tony's version of the machine was extremely rudimentary because they had neither the engineering skills nor (as working fishermen) the time to perfect it.

Tony sought the assistance of Phil Ashworth, general manager at Amerro Engineering, a company with links to the Australian tuna fishing industry. Ashworth agreed to help advance the concept to the point where production fishing could be conducted without compromise.

Subsequently, Dr. Graham Robertson – principal research scientist (seabird ecology and bycatch) in the Southern Oceans Ecosystem program of the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) – became involved when he saw a prototype of the device at Amerro Engineering. That fateful sighting led to the initial round of fundraising for the device and cemented the collaboration between Amerro and the AAD.

More information on WWF's Smartgear competition, previous winner and runners up can be found at:

http://www.smartgear.org/about_smargear/

Adapted from www.wwf.org

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS SPECIAL

SEABIRDS, OILSPILLS AND MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Until c. 50 years ago, additions to museum bird collections were generally achieved through donation by individuals who had built systematic series of particular species (numerically larger) or through *ad hoc* acquisition of specimens (numerically many fewer, often single specimens). Bird skins, as now, were the main type of specimen preparation; skeletal collections often consisted of one or two complete preparations of skeletons (often disarticulated), representing one male and one female. This usually reflected the latter's historical use as teaching aids rather than as primary research material. Skeletal collections therefore lacked series and were generally data-poor compared with extensive skin collections with good documentation.

High bird mortality following a number of oil-spills has created opportunities to boost the seabird collections in National Museums Scotland (NMS), Edinburgh. Other museums have been involved in analysing corpses of oiled seabirds, but few have shown such commitment to the permanent preservation of statistically adequate samples as NMS. This has been achieved through the coordinated recovery of corpses by third parties and methodological acquisition of data.

Specimen processing and preparation is very labour-intensive, and NMS has benefited from assistance of university staff and students and also from grants (e.g. from Scottish Natural Heritage) to fund the support of a few casual staff with particular

expertise. Information on sex, age, condition and diet adds to the data-richness of these samples, providing opportunities to study biometrics, geographical variation/origins, moult, condition, pathologies and mortality impacts in populations. These projects have often been carried out in collaboration with other research institutions. Ideally, given adequate funding, all available specimens from oil-spills would be preserved to provide a comprehensive 'snap-shot' of a population at a particular time.

For practical reasons NMS has concentrated on building skeleton collections (usually a complete skeleton plus intact, feathered left wing) rather than skins. Taxidermy time for skin preparation tends to be more restricted than the bulk processing of skeletons. Usually, therefore, a representative sub-sample of c. 10 skins has been prepared for each batch of 50-60 skeletons.



(a)



(b)

Before (a) and after (b) photos of Long tailed oiled ducks (Bob McGowan)

The following table (see next column) summarises numbers of specimens of the main species from the following incidents: A - *Esso Bernicia* (Shetland, 1978/79); B - *Braer* (Shetland, 1993); C - *Sea Empress* (Pembrokeshire, 1996). Other series acquired during 1978-1998 are listed as D. [Species represented by few specimens e.g. *Larus argentatus* are omitted.] The first number indicates skin*s and the second number indicates skeletons**, followed by the incident letter code. The totals here do not, of course, necessarily represent the total NMS holdings of these species.



**Great Northern Diver skeleton
(Bob McGowan)**

Incorporation of these samples in a permanent reference collection makes them available for research purposes. Access to this material and other parts of the ornithological collections may be arranged by contacting the curator. A more detailed discussion on this topic has appeared in Kitchener, A. C. & McGowan, R. Y. 2003. Sudden large samples: opportunities and problems. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 123A Supplement *Why Museums matter: Avian Archives in an Age of Extinction*.

<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	0; 34
B	
<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	11; 49
B	
<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	2; 17
C	
<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	47; 0
D	
<i>Gavia stellata</i>	0; 20
C	
<i>Gavia immer</i>	66; 14
A, B, C	
<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	7; 47
B, D	
<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	21; 50
B	
<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	0; 25
D	
<i>Larus marinus</i>	1; 10
B	
<i>Larus glaucooides</i>	13; 6
B	
<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	14; 80
B, D	
<i>Alle alle</i>	1; 12
B	
<i>Uria aalge</i>	53; 141
A, B, C	
<i>Alca torda</i>	5; 52
A, B, C	
<i>Cephus grylle</i>	38; 57
A, B	

*Skins: any bones not incorporated in the skin (e.g. sternum, pelvis) were usually retained separately and additionally as skeletal preparations i.e. not counted under 'skeletons' here.

**Skeletons: usually prepared as disarticulated full skeletons with associated complete, feathered wing.

Bob McGowan

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GREAT AUK REMAINS DISCOVERED AT HUNTERIAN MUSEUM

For zoologists at the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery at Glasgow University, the Great Auk was a subject of much dismay. The existence of the flightless great birds, which once lived in Scotland and were hunted to extinction in the 19th century, was thought not represented in the university's massive collections of more than one million items.

Now, however, it appears that for the last 30 years the museum has had the skeletal remains of the birds, dubbed the "original penguins", all along, but did not realise. The bones, found in a grave at Crosskirk Broch in Caithness in the early 1970s, will be able to be viewed by the public after being rediscovered in an extensive new categorisation of the museum's collections.

Experts at the museum would have taken 50 years to sort through the paper records of their entire collections – which span from fine art to physics equipment owned by Lord Kelvin, to coins, rocks and geological finds, Egyptian and Roman artefacts, to the natural sciences, sculpture and medical collections – and put them on easily accessible computer files.

However, with a fresh way of categorising items in the collection – putting similar objects together in groups rather than noting them all individually – a small team of archivists will have the information about the entire collection available online by the end of 2010. Along the way, the university is finally discovering what is in its unrivalled collections, which is where the Great Auk comes in. Because they were included in an archeological find they were put with the museum's archeological items

and zoologists were unaware the museum held them.

At the moment, 130,000 items are listed online by the museum, but a website to access information on the entire collection should be completed by Mr Faithfull and his assistants, Rachel Jennings and Shan Macdonald, by the end of summer.

CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

WORLD SEABIRD CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS DEADLINE EXTENSION

The deadline for submitting your research for the [1st World Seabird Conference](#) has been extended to **March 5, 2010**. Don't miss your opportunity to share your work!

Early Bird Registration Deadline:
May 31, 2010



WORLD SEABIRD CONFERENCE

7-11 September 2010
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Hosted by: Pacific Seabird Group
Local Committee Co-Chairs: Louise Blight and Jo Smith
Organizing Committee: David Irons (Chair), Lisa Ballanée, John Borg, Rob Butler, Kees Camphuysen, John Cooper, John Croxall, Francesca Cuthbert, Jessica Hardesty, David Hyrenbach, Mathieu Le Corre, Norman Ratcliffe, Dan Roby, Bill Sydeman, Mark Tasker, Yutaka Watanuki, and Chip Weseloh

"Seabirds: A Global Perspective"

Proposed Symposia; A Global Look at:
Suggestions for sponsoring a symposium welcome. Contact David_Irons@usgs.gov

- Seabird/Fisheries Interactions
- Climate Change
- Island Restoration and Control/Eradication of Invasive Species
- Seabird Migration and Wintering Areas
- Life History and Evolution

- Proposed Products:**
- Global Online Seabird Colony Database
 - Global Online Seabird Reproductive Information Network
 - Global Online Seabird Die-off Information Network
 - Global Conservation of Seabirds (update Croxall et. al. 1995, Status and Conservation of the World's Seabirds)

Participating Seabird Groups

African Seabird Group	Indian Ocean Seabird Group
Agave, Cormor, Albatrosses & Petrels	Intl. Tattler Birding Association
American Bird Cons. Seabird Prog.	Japanese Seabird Group
Atlantic Marine Bird Coop.	Mar. Cons. Unit, NZ Dept. of Cons.
Australian Seabird Group	Mediterranean Seabird Association
BirdLife Intl., Global Seabird Prog.	N. Pacific Albatross Working Group
Circumpolar Seabird Group	Pacific Seabird Group
Dutch Seabird Group	Sci. Committee on Antarctic Research
European Seabirds At Sea Group	The Seabird Group
	Waterbird Society



TRAVEL AWARDS TO THE WORLD SEABIRD CONFERENCE

In seeking to make the 1st World Seabird Conference truly a global meeting, the Travel Awards Committee will search for representation from many countries and organizations.

Students and Scientists, who wish to present their research and are in need of travel support to attend the 1st World Seabird Conference (WSC), are encouraged to apply. These Awards are intended to help defray the cost of attending the meeting, not to cover all expenses.

Travel Awards generally will range from \$200 to \$1,500 (US dollars), depending on the applicant's travel expenses, availability of alternative travel support, and quality of the abstract submitted for an oral or poster presentation.

Award Categories

Travel Awards are available for four categories:

1. Students from countries other than the US and Canada;
2. Students from the US or Canada;
3. Scientists from countries other than the US and Canada; and
4. Scientists from the US or Canada.

Evaluation Criteria

Travel Awards will be evaluated based upon the following criteria:

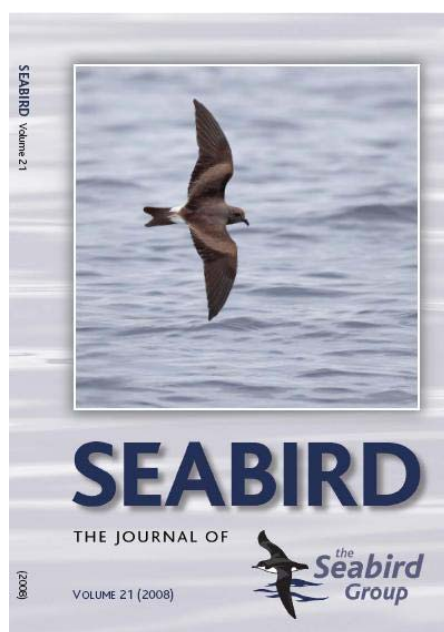
1. The applicant's participation in the meeting (ie. quality of the abstract submitted for oral or poster presentation);
2. The applicant's current involvement in seabird research or conservation (work, study, volunteering) or future plans to promote seabird research and conservation in their home country;
3. The applicant's plans for future work on seabirds; and
4. The availability of funds to support travel to the meeting.

How to Apply

Persons who wish to apply for a Travel Award should submit completed applications by email to WSCTravelAwards@DeArmondManagement.com with subject line **WSC Travel Award Application**. Submission deadline is **5th March 2010**. Applicants will receive email confirmation of receipt of application. Applicants are fully responsible for their application. Incomplete applications may not be considered. Award decisions will be no later than 22 April 2010, to allow successful applicants to register for the conference by the 30 April early bird deadline.

The full guidelines can be found online at: https://www.confmanager.com/communities/c1813/files/hidden/docs/webdocs/WSC_Travel_Awards_Application.pdf

SEABIRD GROUP NEWS



SEABIRD 22 & 23

At the time of writing (15 January 2010), *SEABIRD 22* is almost at the stage of being sent to the printers. Apologies for the delay in publication, which was compounded by family bereavements at a critical stage of preparation last autumn, but we hope that the issue will be worth the wait, although we acknowledge it will be a bit thinner than *SEABIRD 21*.

A few interesting papers and short notes are in preparation for *SEABIRD 23*, but we are determined this issue will be published in late autumn 2010 so we **need more contributions soon**, and preferably before the start of breeding season fieldwork. Essentially, this means first drafts of papers received after 1 June may not make an autumn publication unless they are tightly written and need little editing or revision.

Some tips to ease and speed up publication are:

- If you have not written a formal paper before, get an experienced colleague to comment on the draft before submitting it to the referee process. Is your text in the accepted Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion format? Do your data require statistical testing?
- Keep the Word document simple, without indents, bullets or locked formatting. Tables should be as Word Tables, but please only use left justification for the columns and no spaces. If you have used Excel spreadsheets to create and calculate values within Tables, please send them with your submission as a means of checking calculations, but please also insert the Tables in the Word text yourself.
- Virtually all submissions need editing down. If your Word Count says 3471, see if you can get it to 3000 without missing anything out!
- If you have good quality photographs that add to the manuscript, by all means submit a small selection in their original uncompressed size, but bear in mind they may not be able to be printed in colour, so choose ones with good contrast.

Martin Heubeck and Andy Webb
martinheubeck@btinternet.com
andy@andywebb.org.uk

INCREASE IN SUBSCRIPTION CHARGES

As you will be aware, the Seabird Group recently re-launched its journal *Seabird*, with the first re-launch issue (Volume 21, 2008) being published earlier this year. This 112 page, colour publication featured a number of high-quality scientific and short papers covering a diverse range of topics and received substantial positive feedback from members. We hope that you'll agree that it is proving to be a success, with the next issue due out shortly.

Understandably, such an improvement has involved increased costs, mainly in terms of design and printing. While the Seabird Group has maintained a healthy financial position, the continued production of this standard of journal is not sustainable at the current level of membership numbers and subscription rates. Therefore, the Executive Committee has decided to not only pursue an active strategy for membership recruitment, but also to increase the subscription rate.

At the recent Seabird Group AGM on 14 November 2009 (see minutes on page 20), it was therefore agreed that our subscription rates will increase from February 2010 (1 February being the normal annual renew date for members). This will ensure that the subscription rate increase is implemented before our membership recruitment drive at the World Seabird Conference in September 2010.

Although the increases may appear to be substantial ones from the current rates, they are consistent with other conservation charity subscription rates (if not lower), and reflect the amount of inflation since our last subscription increase over 20 years ago in 1986!

There are several options on how you can pay the Seabird Group now:

1) **Standing order** - If you are a UK resident we like to encourage you to fill in the attached standing order form as this payment method is the most effective payment method for us and will save you money and time too. To ensure a smooth process please fill in your initial/s on the application form. Please avoid using titles such as Miss, Mr or Dr.

2) **PayPal** - We highly recommend this payment method to our international members. It's free to sign up for a PayPal account and simple to use. Send your subscription fees quickly and safely to the Seabird Group by using seabirdgroup.membership@gmail.com (as shown for Ordinary Members below). Due to administration costs to the group, this payment method incurs an additional £1 to the subscription fee. For more details and to register online check out www.paypal.co.uk.

All you need is an email address and a PayPal password. If you are not familiar with PayPal have a look at the left hand column under Top Questions. It tells you details on what PayPal is and how it works and how to send money (your subscription fees) to the Seabird Group.

3) **Cheque or cash**

4) **Credit card** - Cards such as Visa and Mastercard are prohibitively expensive as they cause additional charges for the Seabird Group. Please try to use any of the above payment options first.

Our new subscription rates from 1 February 2010 are:

<i>Membership status</i>	<i>Rate (£)</i>
Ordinary Member	20
Overseas Member (paying by Paypal)	21
Concession*	15
Institution	35
Life Member	300

*only applies to students and retirees from 65 years of age

The Seabird Group would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and a special thank you to all members who have already responded and paid this year's subscription

Ilka Win
Seabird Group Membership Secretary
seabirdgroup.membership@gmail.com

Minutes of the 44th Annual General Meeting of The Seabird Group held at 15:00 on 14th November 2009 at the Fife Arms Hotel, Braemar.



Present

Linda Wilson, Andrew Ramsay, Simon Foster, Claire Smith, Linda Wilson, Stuart Will, Chris Redfern, Dave Sowter, Mike Harris, Sarah Wanless, Bernie Zonfrillo, Bill Bourne, Alan Leitch, Francis Daunt, John C Davies, David Jardine, Mark Grantham and Bob Swann

Apologies

Liz Humphreys, Ilka Win, Andy Webb, Norman Ratcliffe, Martin Heubeck, Jez Blackburn, Mark Tasker, Jeremy Greenwood.

Linda Wilson chaired the meeting in Norman Ratcliffe's absence, and Claire Smith took the minutes in place of Linda.

1. Minutes of the 43rd AGM

The minutes of the 43rd AGM were circulated to members via the February newsletter. They were proposed by Mike Harris and seconded by David Sowter.

2. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

3. 44th Annual report of the Seabird Group

The report was read by Linda Wilson. It was proposed for acceptance by Sarah Wanless and seconded by Alan Leitch.

The committee is investigating the possibility of putting the new Seabird journal on the website as a members only resource. Linda Wilson thanked Mike Harris for the idea to make the journals available online. Sarah Wanless thanked Linda Wilson for her hard work in getting this done.

Bill Bourne noted that the presentation on the seabird group forum was rather formal, compared to the Pacific Seabird Group version. Linda Wilson commented on the fact that although 200 members are now signed up to the forum, it is still used irregularly. All members were encouraged to use it to discuss matters relevant to the group.

Bill Bourne commented that the journal format and timing of publication had changed recently. Andrew Ramsay explained that the current new format is to be retained for the foreseeable future and Linda Wilson confirmed that the new format had received good feedback from members. Mike Harris commented that it is not unusual for publications to evolve and was appropriate given that Seabird ran for twenty years and Atlantic Seabird for ten years. Bill asked whether the old Bulletins could be added to the website.

AP: Linda Wilson to investigate putting the old Bulletins on website.

4. Accounts and Treasurer's report

The accounts and report were presented to the meeting by Andrew Ramsay. They were proposed by David Jardine and seconded by Mike Harris.

There are two corrections to the hard copy available at the meeting. Second paragraph, fourth line down should read £3829.04 not £1,800. The 2009 statement should read 'scanning old journals' not 'scanning old minutes'. A corrected version of the 2008/09 accounts will be published in the February newsletter following their audit. Andrew noted that postage costs for the journal were higher than expected.

John Davies agreed with reducing the surplus through grants, but concerned that the journal costs are higher than expected and that the group will have a deficit as there will be a time delay in income from increased subscriptions. Andrew Ramsay stated that the journal costs will be lower this year as they will not include start-up costs and that the large number of grants awarded in the March 2009 round was a one-off to reduce the surplus. Linda Wilson also confirmed that there will be a drive to increase membership. John Davies responded that it could take two years for a membership drive to take effect and it is hard to maintain the current level of membership. Andrew Ramsay responded that himself and Ilka Win (Membership Secretary) will be contacting all members who are currently paying the wrong amount or are not fully paid-up.

5. Membership and subscriptions

Linda Wilson reported that there will be a membership drive at the World Seabird conference. Sarah Wanless asked whether there is a strategy for this as there will be competition with other groups also looking for members. Linda confirmed this will be investigated by the committee and surplus copies of Seabird 21 will be taken along as an incentive. Bernie Zonfrillo reported that putting membership forms out at Glasgow University for students to join worked well.

Bill Bourne asked if members can join online. Andrew Ramsay confirmed that online payment was being investigated. Andrew Ramsay reported that the committee is proposing an increase to subscription rates as they have remained stable since the mid 1980's. PayPal is also being arranged, which will reduce the bank administration charges for credit card payments. The proposed new rates are:

UK: £20

Concession: £15

Foreign: £21

Institute: £35

Life: £300

Bill Bourne voiced his concerns that the aims of the Seabird Group have changed and of the expense of publishing the journal. He was of the opinion that increasing the subscriptions won't increase the number of members, neither will holding the AGM at the Scottish Ringers' conference. Bill is concerned that group members are no longer active in seabird monitoring and that the group should be more proactive in supporting active members.

Linda Wilson reported that the committee had approached Matt Parsons (JNCC) to highlight areas/species where research was needed so that the group could target support to these with grants. There are also plans for a resource page on the website to include reports on amateur work. The Seabird group now has a different role to in the past.

Bernie Zonfrillo raised the possibility of the Seabird Group coordinating a fulmar colony survey after the Bird Atlas has finished. Mike Harris and Andrew Ramsay raised the fact that the role of the seabird group had changed and JNCC now filled many of its previous roles e.g. in organising censuses.

Bill Bourne proposed that the Seabird Group collects and analyses seawatching data. Linda Wilson highlighted that there are many opportunities for such survey information to be collected and reported and asked how the group would focus its efforts. The Seabird Group already supports the South West Seawatching initiative through grants.

David Jardine raised the possibility of the Seabird Group advising on EIAs for offshore energy, targeting survey methods and processes. Linda Wilson confirmed that JNCC already fulfils this role, but David Jardine felt that the Seabird Group could also be consulted.

Sarah Wanless proposed that the Seabird Group be realistic in what it can do in order to do it well and maintain the membership. An example of this is running a well attended international

seabird conference with a high standard of papers. The group needs to identify where gaps are and determine how to fill them.

Bill Bourne proposed that the Seabird Group maintain a seabird database. Sarah Wanless pointed out that JNCC already have a good, accessible database and there is no need for the Seabird Group to replicate this.

Mike Harris proposed that there is a role for the Seabird Group to carry out some focused work e.g. fulmars/kittiwakes, arrange a count with JNCC and support through the grant system. The next full colony census is likely to be between 2012-2018, pros and cons of whole colony censuses were discussed and Linda reported that it is expected that the Seabird Group will be involved in the next whole colony census supporting JNCC.

Sarah Wanless asked what happens when members move from student concessions to full members. Linda Wilson reported that the committee needs to be more proactive at chasing people for payment and that the electronic payment system will be set up in a way to make it easier to keep track of payments. The subscription system will be overhauled and increased rates enforced by the start of February.

The increase in membership subscription rates was proposed by Sarah Wanless and seconded by Francis Daunt.

6. Update on Seabird

This had been covered in the Annual report.

7. Next Seabird Group conference

Linda Wilson reported that this is proposed for autumn 2011, (not 2010, due to the World Seabird Conference) on the south coast of England, possibly Plymouth and possibly linked to a seawatching theme. Steve Votier has been approached by the committee to look at venue and field trip possibilities. There is no formal announcement yet.

8. World Seabird Conference.

This will be held 7-11 September 2010. Norman Ratcliffe is on the scientific committee and Simon Foster is on the travel grants committee. Abstracts deadline is January. The Seabird Group is supporting the conference with a donation of £1,000.

Bill Bourne asked about the possibility of organising group travel for those attending from the UK to get a discount. Linda confirmed something similar took place for the Pacific Seabird conference. Andrew Ramsay will look into this. **Meeting adjourned at 16:00.**



Registered charity No. 260907

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www.seabirdgroup.org.uk

Seabird Group Forum :
<http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/seabirdgroupforum/>

The Newsletter is published three times a year. The editor welcomes articles from members and others on issues relating to seabird research and conservation. These should be received by 15th May (for June edition), 15th September (for October edition) or 15th January (for February edition).

The Seabird Group promotes and helps co-ordinate the study and conservation of seabirds. Members also receive the journal *Seabird*. The Group organises regular conferences and provides small grants towards seabird research. Current membership rates are:

Standing Order £9.00
Concession £5.00
Institution £15.00
Ordinary £10.00

CURRENT SEABIRD GROUP COMMITTEE

Current retiral dates (at AGM) are shown in bold after the name of each member. Nominations (which should be submitted to the Secretary) from members for replacements on the committee are always welcome.

Chairman

Norman Ratcliffe (**2011**)
c/o British Antarctic Survey, High Cross, Madingley Road
Cambridge, CB3 0ET
notc@bas.ac.uk

Secretary

Linda Wilson (**2012**)
JNCC, Aberdeen
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Treasurer

Andrew Ramsay (**2010**)
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Seabird Publishing Editor

Andy Webb (**2012**)

Seabird Group Newsletter Editor

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Seabird Group Newsletter Assistant Editor

Claire Smith (**2010**)
Claire.B.Smith@rspb.org.uk

Membership Secretary

seabirdgroup.membership@gmail.com

Ilka Win
121 Polmuir Road
Aberdeen, AB11 7SJ

Other Members:

Simon Foster (**2010**)

EDITORIAL

By now you will have realised that the Seabird Group has increased its annual subscription rates, the first time in nearly 25 years! Hopefully our members will continue to feel that they get real value for money! We also hope that our members will be able to attend the World Seabird, which promises to be an exciting event (see page 16 for further details)

Submissions for the newsletter must be in electronic format, preferably in word and should be no more than 1500 words wherever possible. If you would like to see any new themes, please get in touch with your ideas (Email: seabird@bto.org).

Every effort is made to check the content of the material that we publish. It is not, however, always possible to check comprehensively every piece of information back to its original source, as well as keeping news timely. Please will readers make further checks at their own discretion, if they have concerns about any of the information or contacts provided, and contact me to allow feedback to other readers if necessary.

We also try to provide a forum for readers' views, so that those provided in the *Newsletter* are not necessarily those of the editor or the Seabird Group.