



NEWSLETTER 116

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RESEARCH NEWS

**KITTIWAKES TRANS-ATLANTIC ODYSSEY LINKED
TO BREEDING SUCCESS**

One of Britain's best known seabirds winters on opposite sides of the Atlantic depending on whether its breeding attempt has been successful according to new research. The findings highlight previously unsuspected links between summer breeding performance and wintering distributions of kittiwakes.

The research team was led by Dr Maria Bogdanova from the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) in conjunction with



*Kittiwake with data logger on the Isle of May.
Mark Newell*

Colleagues from CEH and the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). The discovery of such patterns of segregated winter distributions is important for defining key wintering areas in declining species such as the kittiwake that are experiencing poor breeding seasons with increasing regularity.

The results show that kittiwakes which experienced breeding failure left their colony earlier than successful breeders. Failed breeders then travelled over 3000km and wintered off Canada while their successful neighbours remained close to Britain. The two groups did not differ in the timing of return to the colony the following spring. However, over half the males from both groups made a previously undescribed long-distance journey out into the central Atlantic before the breeding season.

The results demonstrate important but previously poorly understood links between breeding performance and winter distribution, with significant implications for populations. The study found that successful and unsuccessful pairs nesting only a few metres apart in the colony can be separated by thousands of kilometres in the winter.

During the 2007 breeding season 80 kittiwakes on the Isle of May were fitted with geolocators. Geolocators were developed by BAS and have so far been used on animals such as geese, albatrosses, penguins and seals. They make regular recordings of light intensity, data which can be used to generate two geographical positions per day.

The full paper can be found at:

Maria I. Bogdanova, Francis Daunt, Mark Newell, Richard A. Phillips, Michael P. Harris and Sarah Wanless. Seasonal interactions in the black-legged kittiwake, *Rissa tridactyla*: links between breeding performance and winter distribution. In Proceedings of the Royal Society. 5 January 2011.

Adapted from press release at: www.ceh.ac.uk

YTHAN SANDWICH TERNS



*EHD at Burghead Bay, Moray Firth on 20th September 2010.
This had been ringed as an adult on the Ythan Estuary on 25th August. David Pullan.*

The Sands of Forvie, on the Ythan Estuary in North East Scotland has a long history as an important Scottish breeding site for terns. Records of breeding sandwich terns come from at least as far back as 1932, but it was in the 1950's that breeding became regular. The colony was important for both common and sandwich terns with sandwich terns peaking at 2,100 pairs in 1971. Through the 70's, 80's and early 90's fox predation was a major problem and a majority of the breeders are thought to have moved to the Loch of Strathbeg, where numbers eventually reached 900 pairs. In 1999, the Forvie colony was re-occupied and birds successfully bred, this was mainly due to the installation of an electric fence to reduce fox predation.

Since 1999 Grampian Ringing Group has helped Alastair Smith to ring over 6,000 sandwich tern chicks in the Sands of Forvie colony. During this time we have had over 100 ringing recoveries, with a majority of overseas movements to West Africa and with very few from the UK or Europe. In 2009 and 2010 metal rings of breeding adults were read within the colony using a telescope and came from a variety of different countries as well as colonies around the UK. In September 2009 we made our first attempts to catch adult sandwich terns at night with mistnets, tape lures and decoys – which we had heard had been successful elsewhere. Although it was late in the season and we were only able to catch on two nights we were delighted to catching over 50 Sandwich terns, including several ringed birds from elsewhere in the UK.

The success of 2009 spurred us on to increase our effort in 2010 and to try and increase the information about movements by individually colour ringing some of the birds we caught. From the end of July through to mid September we caught 416 individual sandwich terns and individually colour ringed 200 of them. We have had 66 re-sightings with a majority of these being local, 2 from outside of the region and 5 from France. We have not had any recoveries of birds in France, so this is already building up a different quite different picture to what we get from recoveries only.



Around 1 in every 4 sandwich terns we caught was already ringed, including 30 having been ringed at the Forvie colony in previous years and 40 individuals ringed elsewhere in the UK for which we eagerly await the details from the BTO. On 30 July we heard there had been a Dutch colour ringed sandwich tern from a colony in the Netherlands seen at Musselburgh, the researchers commented that they had seen northwards movements before, but this was by far their furthest yet. Having heard this we were surprised to catch four different Dutch ringed birds, which were intriguingly an adult and juvenile on two different nights. We also caught four other foreign ringed sandwich terns, a Danish ringed juvenile, French ringed adult and two Belgian ringed adults – one of which we had read breeding in the colony.

*Danish ringed juvenile sandwich tern.
Ewan Weston.*

The colour rings we have fitted are inscribed darvics with three letters always starting with E at the top, black letters on white. Please look out for these ringed birds and report them to ewan_weston@hotmail.com. We are particularly keen to hear from anybody who may be able to read rings at breeding colonies in 2011. This would tie-in with work currently being done at the Sands of Forvie colony and on the adjacent Ythan Estuary.



Dutch and Belgian ringed sandwich terns. Ewan Weston.

CONSERVATION NEWS

SUPPORTERS RALLY TO SAVE EUROPE'S RAREST SEABIRD

During the summer of 2010, forest fires ravaged parts of Madeira, a Portuguese island and home to Europe's rarest seabird, Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira*.

On 13 August they hit the heart of the central massif, where many Zino's Petrel nestlings were still in their burrows. Two days later, as soon as the ground and soil had cooled sufficiently, staff from Parque Natural da Madeira (PNM) visited the breeding cliffs to assess the damage. The results were shocking: 25 young and 3 adults were found dead, and only 13 young fledglings were found alive in their underground chambers. But with vegetation burned away, the remaining chicks were exposed to predators, and many more were taken by cats and rats in the following weeks.

Fire and the loss of vegetation had also exacerbated soil erosion, and several nesting burrows had disappeared completely.

Staff from SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal) and PNM set to work immediately to stabilise and then restore the breeding area. BirdLife International and SPEA launched an appeal for the funds needed to carry out the work that had to be done before the winter rains set in, and washed away the remaining soil.

BirdLife supporters from around the world responded quickly, and donations soon reached over £14,000.

Further erosion was prevented using a soil retention 'blanket' —a technique PNM had adopted successfully to arrest erosion at the Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma feae* colony on the island of Bugio. The team then began to install artificial burrows made of fireproof material, first replacing the existing nests, before adding new ones to attract first-time breeders to the colony.

Generous donations by BirdLife supporters have enabled emergency work to install artificial burrows and prevent further soil erosion (PNM).

Plants have already begun to regenerate naturally around the burrows and on the cliffs, but in December seeds of native species will be sown around the site to restore the vegetation cover before the birds begin to return to the breeding colony in late March.

Once on the edge of extinction, with numbers down to a few tens of pairs, Zino's Petrel is living evidence that conservation works. Europe's rarest seabird, Zino's Petrel nests only on a few mountain ledges in the rugged central massif of the island of Madeira. Intense action over the past 20 years, led by the Natural Park of Madeira (Parque Natural da Madeira—PNM) with support from SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal), the Freira Conservation Project and Funchal Municipal Museum, helped its population grow to almost 80 pairs.

Adapted from www.birdlife.org

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN....RAT FREE FIJIAN ISLANDS

Two years after the BirdLife International Fiji Programme implemented an operation to eradicate rats from the Ringgold Islands, all seven islands have been confirmed rodent-free. Early monitoring also shows that the birds, people and wider wildlife of these remote islands are already benefitting from the removal of these invasive pests. BirdLife staff are continuing to work with local people to ensure the rats don't return.

Located to the northeast of Taveuni, Fiji, the Ringgold Islands hold internationally important numbers of nesting seabirds. Seabird populations here, as elsewhere in the Pacific, were suffering because of rats, which eat eggs and nestlings. The Ringgolts are also an important source of natural resources and income for the islands' landowners.

In August 2008, the BirdLife Fiji programme began working closely with the two landowning clans, Yavusa Naqelelevu and Mataqali Qilo, to eradicate the rats. A specially formulated rodent bait was dropped on the islands from a helicopter. Among the positive changes recorded since 2008 include Bridled Terns *Sterna anaethetus* which have been observed on two of the seven islands. This species was not previously known in the area, and its appearance is a promising sign that birds vulnerable to the impacts of rats will establish breeding colonies.

In mid-November 2010, BirdLife's Fiji team led a survey of the Ringgold Islands. Colonies of Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*, Black Noddy *Anous minutus* and Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* were recorded. These populations represent over 1% of the global number for each species, and qualify the island group as an Important Bird Area. In addition, nationally significant numbers of Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*, Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*, Common White Tern *Gygis alba*, and the globally Vulnerable Bristle-thighed Curlew *Numenius tahitiensis* were also present.

The eradication programme was only the first step in keeping these islands free of rats and other foreign pests. Biosecurity plans have been developed for all the islands, and village representatives have been trained in techniques to prevent the introduction of alien species.

In association with the landowning communities, BirdLife has established a Site Support Group – the Ringgold Seabird Committee – to lead the islands' management, communicate the results of the eradication, and champion the islands' protection among the wider communities.

The seven islands are traditionally under the District (*tikina*) of Laucala. Mr Josefa Tale, the *Mata ni Tikina* (Laucala District representative), heads the SSG, and provides a link to the Cakaudrove Provincial Council in achieving support for the islands protection.

The BirdLife Seabird Island Restoration programme is supported by the David & Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Darwin Initiative. Assistance to the programme has also been provided by the Pacific Invasives Initiative, the Pacific Invasives Learning Network, and the New Zealand Department of Conservation. The Fiji Department of Environment and wider Fiji Government have also supported the island restoration programme.

Adapted from www.birdlife.org

REQUEST FOR SPECIMENS

As part of a European wide project documenting the issue of marine plastics pollution, the British Trust for Ornithology is asking people to keep an eye out for dead Fulmars.

At present Fulmar corpses are collected, and the stomach contents monitored, from the tide lines of Orkney, Shetland and eastern England. The BTO in partnership with scientists in the Netherlands aim to extend this study to incorporate south Wales, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Hampshire, and are asking people to look out for dead Fulmars in these areas.

Any dead Fulmars found in reasonable condition (as it is the stomachs that need to be analysed) should be collected and kept safe from scavengers. If you find a large number of birds, then it may be possible for these to be picked up, so do contact Lee Barber, lee.barber@bto.org in the first instance.

As long as they are in good condition, dead birds should be sent **FIRST** class to:
Lee Barber, Fulmar Study, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

They must be sent frozen, triple-bagged and with the notification 'Biological Specimen' clearly written on the package.

If requested, BTO will also be able to refund postage costs for sending birds in. If Fulmars are found outside the region the BTO are still interested to receive them.

BREEDING SEASON NEWS

ORKNEY 2010

Red throated diver

On Hoy, a mammoth 203 previously used sites were checked; 58 showed signs of occupation and eggs were laid at 56. 36 sites were successful and productivity was 0.76 per occupied site or 1.22 per successful site. On the Mainland, 11 monitored pairs reared nine young, productivity 0.82, while on Rousay eight occupied sites produced nine young, productivity 1.1.

Fulmar

On Eynhallow, the long-term Aberdeen University study located 108 occupied sites, 75 of which hatched their eggs; this hatching rate of 67% is one of the highest on record. 44 chicks were still ongoing on 20th August, the largest number of chicks reared since 2002. The productivity of 41% compares to the mean productivity over the whole study of 35.5%.

On North Ronaldsay, 84 nesting attempts were monitored, the 54 chicks still present on 23rd August giving a productivity of 0.64. On Papa Westray, 156 nests were monitored and 75 chicks reared, productivity 0.48 while on Rousay, 75 nests reared 35 young (productivity 0.47.) On Hoy, a plot at the Old Man (n=66) had a productivity of 0.42 while another at Bay of Creekland (n=58) did less well at 0.31.

JNCC stopped their monitoring work on the five Mainland sites so our knowledge of this species' breeding success is nowhere near as comprehensive as in the past.

Gannet

The colony established in 2003 at Noup Head, Westray continued to expand, the number of nests increasing from 499 in 2009 to 583. 317 large chicks were counted in the colony late in the season, a productivity of 0.54. The colonies at Sule Stack and Sule Skerry were not visited this year.

Shag

On Copinsay, 24 monitored nests fledged a mean of 1.97 chicks. On the Muckle Skerry, where 25 nests were monitored, the figure was 1.73 while on Swona (ten nests) it was 1.80.

Arctic Skua

A full survey revealed just 376 AOTs, a decline of 48% since the last full survey for Seabird 2000 and of 64% since the 1992 survey. The decrease has been most severe on Hoy where numbers have fallen by 97% since 1982.

Although the main species that Arctic Skuas depend on for their food, Arctic Terns and Kittiwakes, had a very poor year, the skuas themselves did manage to rear some chicks in 2010. The productivity of 44 pairs on the North Hill, Papa Westray was 0.32 and small numbers of fledged young were seen on Rousay and in at least two areas of the West Mainland. It was thus not the total disaster that we have seen in some recent years.

Great Skua

Bonxies were also fully surveyed this summer and 1,710 AOTs located; a decline of 23% since the Seabird 2000 surveys. The decline has been most severe in the major colony on Hoy where numbers were down by 32% over the same period from 1,973 to 1,346. It appears that Bonxies, as well as declining, are redistributing from high density nesting areas on Hoy to lower density areas on the same island and to other of the Orkney islands. It is possible that this may be due to high levels of cannibalism within high density colonies during times of food shortage.

The only breeding success data available this year came from the North Hill, Papa Westray where 29 AOTs reared at least 23 chicks, productivity 0.79.

Black-headed Gull

59 AOTs on Egilsay fledged 35 chicks, productivity 0.59, but the once large colony at Mill Dam, Shapinsay held just 31 AONs and only two or three nests were successful in rearing one or two chicks. The situation appeared to vary widely from island to island and colony to colony as, on Papa Westray, birds were said to have returned in good numbers and to have fledged many chicks. Even within the Mainland success was very variable. For example, a colony at The Fidge, Orphir had declined from 260 adults on 15th June to just 40 adults by 2nd July and only one chick was seen. In contrast, at Orakirk, in the same parish, on 1st July there were lots of unfledged and some fledged chicks.

Common Gull

In general, Common Gulls seemed to have a good year but this was not universally the case. Colonies on the Mainland seemed to do best with colonies on the Rendall Moss, at Scorradaile, at Bigswell Road and at Winksetter Moss all producing lots of young. However, the Stines Moss colony again failed totally, perhaps due to predation by larger gull species.

On Papa Westray, the species also seemed to do well but this was not the case on North Ronaldsay, where only two broods of two were noted, nor on Hoy, where both the Whaness and Sandy Loch colonies fared badly; a colony near Saltness however, did fledge at least 35 young.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

The only breeding success data came from Papa Westray's North Hill reserve where 12 AONs reared six chicks, productivity 0.50.

Herring Gull

Nine AONs on the North Hill, Papa Westray reared four chicks, productivity 0.44. At Burray Ness, on 17th June there were 63 nests and 52 chicks were ringed compared to 54 nests and 46 chicks ringed in 2009.

Great Black-backed Gull

On the North Hill Reserve, Papa Westray, there were 22 AONs and ten chicks were reared, productivity 0.45. On the Hoy RSPB Reserve, only 10 pairs bred; they reared five chicks, productivity 0.50. 28 AONs were found on Hunda in early June and 35 chicks were ringed there three weeks later.

Kittiwake

The once-thriving colony on Fowl Craig, Papa Westray held only two late nests this year and neither reared young. On Rousay, none of the twelve monitoring plots held any nesting Kittiwakes at all; as recently as 2007 there had been 73 AONs here. At Marwick Head where JNCC have unfortunately discontinued their monitoring, of 48 nests randomly selected on 3rd June, 34 were empty, five had no chicks but an adult in attendance, eight had b/1 and one had b/2.

In general, it seemed that colonies in the north and west of the archipelago, like those mentioned above, had a poor season but that colonies in the south and east did not fare so badly. On Copinsay, for example, 229 monitored nests had a productivity of 0.37 while on the Muckle Skerry, 85 nests had a productivity of 1.13. However, the final visit to the latter site was on 23rd June and failures may have occurred subsequently.

Sandwich Tern

90 adults were in a colony at The Fidge, Orphir on 15th June; only 16 adults were present on 2nd July but they were accompanied by seven fledged young so the colony had at least some success. Other colonies on Westray (40 adults), Papa Westray (a few birds) and North Ronaldsay (one-two pairs) were all abandoned before hatching.

Common Tern

The main Orkney colony on a derelict pier at Lyness, Hoy held 140 adults on 8th June. By 12th July, 120 adults were still present and at least 30 chicks had fledged.

Arctic Tern

2010 was a year of almost total failure for Orkney's Arctic Tern population. 356 pairs settled on Papa Westray's North Hill but no young were reared. On nearby Westray, the picture was similar with the usual colonies occupied and most reaching the hatching stage before failing shortly thereafter. Most failed during incubation on North Ronaldsay, the Nouster colony surviving a little longer but failing by early July. Colonies on Rousay (120 pairs), Egilsay (20 pairs) and Copinsay (79 pairs) all failed to rear young. On Burray, 250 adults were present at the Haas in May but all had gone by 27th June. Similarly, on nearby Hunda, 300 adults were present early in the season but had abandoned the site by 23rd June. On the Muckle Skerry, 170 adults were on territory on 17th May but no young fledged. On Swona, 610 adults were counted in colonies on 17th May; by 24th June 74 nests and some chicks were seen at the southern end of the island while adults were still present over a colony in the north; the eventual outcome of these colonies is, however, unknown.

The well-known colony at Skipi Geo, Birsay held 49 nests on 30th May but by 6th July, although 30 adults were still present, only two live and one dead chick were visible. Several other small colonies on the Mainland all failed. The only evidence of definitely fledged chicks were on Hoy where five pairs at Lyrawa Bay raised two chicks and on South Walls where 30 pairs reared three young.

Little Tern

At the regular South Isles colony, five adults were watched bringing in food on 7th July but fledging success is not known.

Guillemot

No work was done at the five Mainland sites previously monitored by JNCC; we therefore do not have such a clear picture of breeding success as in past years.

On Fowl Craig, Papa Westray, there were 158 AOSs, a marked reduction on the 2009 figure of 281. Only seven chicks were reared, a productivity of just 0.04. On neighbouring Westray very few fledglings, or chicks approaching fledgling size, were seen on the Noup Cliffs and all Guillemots had departed by the early date of 10th July.

92 AOSs were monitored on Copinsay, 23 and 10 in small sub-colonies on low cliffs and 59 on the main cliff face. A higher proportion of birds (0.91 and 0.70) managed to rear a small chick in the sub-colonies than on the main cliff (0.40). Unfortunately, logistics prevented sufficient subsequent visits to accurately assess breeding success and most chicks had either fledged or failed by the time of the final visit on 2nd July. However, on 29th and 30th June, 20—30 chicks were seen to fledge when the majority of chicks were calculated to be 15-17 days old. Although 15 days is the official age at which successful fledging can be recorded, the observer was of the opinion that many of the chicks that she watched were of smaller size/younger age than she would have expected from experience at other colonies. Thus, although chicks certainly fledged, their subsequent survival might be in doubt.

Razorbill

Only 12 AOSs were located on Fowl Craig, Papa Westray and no young were reared. It proved difficult to assess the situation on The Noup, Westray but no fledglings were observed and all Razorbills had left the cliffs by 10th July.

On Swona, 23 nests were monitored until late June. Nests with eggs on the final visit were assumed to have failed and nests with chicks were assumed to have been successful; on that basis, productivity was calculated at 0.53. Using the same methodology, 16 monitored nests on the Muckle Skerry had a productivity of 0.70. As with Guillemots on Copinsay, however, it was felt that chicks on Swona and the Muckle Skerry may have been fledging prematurely thus compromising their subsequent survival.

Black Guillemot

On North Ronaldsay, the spring census gave a total of 596 (549 in 2009). 29 chicks were later ringed (8 x b/2; 11 x b/1), most of these being in the south-western sector of the island. Other stretches of coast were not so productive, perhaps due to cat predation. On Papa Westray, the spring census produced a count of 375 compared to 234 in 2009 and a five-year average of 188.

Acknowledgements:

My thanks to the following for all the valuable information that they submitted:

Bob Adam; Chris Bell; Chris Booth; Paul Brown; Colin Corse; Lorna Dow; Alison Duncan; Keith Fairclough; Derren Fox; Paul Higson; Paul Hollinrake; Andy Knight; Alan Leitch; Mara Nydegger; Barry & Rebecca O'Dowd; Ellie Owen; Julie Remp; Brian Ribbands; Lee Shields; Jenni Taylor; Paul Thompson; Jim & Stuart Williams; Tim Wootton. **Apologies for any accidental omissions.**

Eric Meek, RSPB Orkney Area Manager
Eric.meek@rspb.org.uk

Ed: The JNCC Seabird Monitoring Programme has withdrawn funding from its monitoring work on cliff-nesting seabirds in Orkney, but is keen to retain involvement in future monitoring work.

DVD REVIEW

FULMARINE PETRELS BY BOB FLOOD & ASHLEY FISHER. GETTING TO KNOW... PELAGIC BIRDS & BIRDING. A DVD COLLECTION. SCILLYPELAGICS, ISLES OF SCILLY. 2010. AVAILABLE FROM WWW.SCILLYPELAGICS.COM £ 19.00 (€ 22.00) INCLUSIVE OF POSTAGE.

Despite the ever-increasing quality of drawings, pictures and descriptions in bird guides and photo books, birdwatchers may still have difficulties when faced with the real thing. Seabird identification is often problematic, because a distant glimpse of a fast moving bird from a rocking ship may be all one gets. Bob Flood and Ashley Fisher therefore decided to start making motion picture bird guides of pelagic seabirds. What a great idea! They made a kick start with a DVD on the Fulmarine Petrels, the Northern *Macronectes halli* and Southern Giant Petrels *M. giganteus*, Northern *Fulmarus glacialis* and Southern Fulmars *F. glacialoides*, Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*, Cape Petrel *Daption capensis* and the Snow Petrels *Pagodroma nivea/confusa*. For me, a DVD on the Fulmarines was an absolute must, so at first notice of its publication I ordered a copy from the Scillypelagics website. Maybe my order was a bit too hasty, because the DVD would not run properly on my DVD player. Luckily, when inserted into my computer the DVD did play properly, but the disc's name 'test02' confirmed the thought that my copy was maybe a bit of an early bird.

The DVD contains about 50 minutes of footage, in a total of 118 scenes of which a few are photographs. Almost all the video footage has been made at sea. These are described as amateur recordings, but anyone who has tried to make film from a moving ship will admire the stability of the scenes. The DVD starts with a group introduction of the Fulmarines, dealing with issues like common morphological characters such as the nasal tube, flight modes, and foraging behaviour. This section is not the strongest point of the DVD as the continuous switches between species make the video sequences rather chaotic, without much depth to the information given. This also goes for the texts in the small accompanying booklet. This is a good companion to the DVD, but do not expect a high quality manual on this group with accurate details and traceable sources for statements. The most annoying amongst this was that the distribution maps for Northern Fulmar and Antarctic Petrel contain serious errors on breeding distributions, a totally unnecessary omission by the authors. But the seven species sections of the DVD itself are superb in their main goal: to prepare people for at-sea observations of these fantastic birds, and then knowing what to look for to quickly and properly identify species or subspecies. This video is the first to truly illustrate the differences between, and variability within, the two species of Giant Petrels and the Pacific and Atlantic forms of the Northern Fulmar. I doubt whether the 11 grade scale for Fulmar plumage coloration (from ½ for the lightest to 5½ for darkest) will prove to be very practical, but admittedly, this work does nicely describe the plumage variations of Pacific and Atlantic Fulmars in one single system, where earlier published work failed.

If I may make a suggestion for a future version of the DVD, it is to please include some more of the sounds of these species. Sounds must have been recorded in some of the footage shown. All Fulmarines have highly characteristic sounds that can help identify them, even in polar darkness or a full-scale blizzard, sometimes also from a ship at sea. The loud laughter of Cape Petrels or the grunts from Giant Petrels are too good to be missed!

This DVD will be a great help for any birder considering distant travels to polar oceans, and it is even more a must for the birder dreaming of rarities showing up close to home. If in doubt, take a look at www.scillypelagics.com, which has a trailer that properly shows what one may expect.

Jan Van Franeker

PAPER REVIEWS

Changes in body composition during breeding: Reproductive strategies of three species of seabirds under poor environmental conditions

Shoshanah R. Jacobs, Darryl B. Edwards, Julian Ringrose, Kyle H. Elliott, Jean-Michel Weber, Anthony J. Gaston. *Comparative Biochemistry and Physiology, Part B* 158 (2011) 77-82

Jacobs et al compare changes in body composition of three seabird species of contrasting life history strategy during the 2002 breeding season at Prince Leopold Island, Nunavut, Canada. The environmental conditions characterising this season were harsh, with heavy ice cover limiting reproductive success in all three species (black-legged kittiwake, thick-billed murre and northern fulmar). Few previous studies have considered changes in body composition in seabirds during the breeding season despite significant interest in their breeding behaviour and life-history strategies.

Birds at the Prince Leopold Island colony were captured during early incubation, late incubation and chick rearing. After capture individuals were weighed, killed and stored for dissection and tissue analysis. From their results, Jacobs et al show that seabird organ dynamics can be explained by a combination of life-history strategy and environmental conditions. In the case of the species with lower metabolic rates (fulmar and murre), lipid mass decreased during the season, whilst in the high metabolic rate species (kittiwake) lean body mass increased. This mass increase can be explained by the poor environmental conditions during incubation, resulting in nutritional stress in the locally foraging kittiwakes, followed by improved conditions during chick rearing, which allowed the population to recover. Kittiwakes adjusted all their organ systems similarly in response to stress, whereas fulmars and murrens adjusted their exercise and digestive organs separately, reducing the costs of unnecessary digestive organs and increasing fasting ability. This study has huge implications for understanding how environmental variation and life-history variation relate to the reproductive success of seabirds.

Bethany Hawkins

A capture–recapture model for exploring multi-species synchrony in survival.

Lahoz-Monfort, J. J., Morgan, B. J. T., Harris, M. P., Wanless, S. and Freeman, S. N. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, no. doi: 10.1111/j.2041-210X.2010.00050.x

This paper discusses a mark-recapture statistical model that uses random effects for studying synchrony in a demographical parameter at multi species level. The method is demonstrated using data on individually marked puffins, guillemots and razorbills on the Isle of May, Scotland and explores the synchrony in the species' survival and two environmental covariates, the North Atlantic Oscillation and Sea Surface Temperature. Most of the between-year variation was synchronous to the three species and the same environmental covariates acted simultaneously on adult survival. The model provides insight into whether sympatric species respond similarly or differently to changes in their environment, and helps to disentangle the sources of these differences.

Much of the paper deals in detail with the actual model and is for the more statistically minded. However, there is also an excellent video available which contains some excellent footage of the Isle of May and explains the results in a very accessible manner. It is available at:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/MethodsEcolEvol#p/c/4ADF7CAA34DD8E4D/1/StxOrO83MGs>

Mark Newell

LOOKING FOR MAXIMUS!

An alert is being sent out this month to birdwatchers up and down the country to be on the look-out for a very special gannet. The gannet, nicknamed Maximus, set a UK record two years ago as the latest chick ever recorded when he was plucked to safety by the Scottish Seabird Centre from the Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth. The largest single island gannet colony in the world, in summer 150,000 gannets crowd onto the island but by December 2008 one solitary bird had been left alone, abandoned by its parents with little chance of survival in the harsh Scottish winter.

Young gannets migrate thousands of miles south in autumn, as far as West Africa and, having missed the mass migration, Maximus hit the headlines when Royal Navy Air Rescue Team HMS Gannet in Prestwick came to the rescue and transported the chick as far as Cornwall (as part of a routine exercise) where he was then taken by a Cornish fishing trawler and released into the Bay of Biscay. Rescued from the Bass Rock by the Seabird Centre's boat guide Maggie Sheddan, Maximus was then fed and looked after by Pat Macaulay of Sula II in North Berwick in readiness for his big adventure.

After two years, fully grown Atlantic gannets usually return to where they were born and the Seabird Centre is hopeful that Maximus will be able to find his way back home to the Bass Rock.

As well as having a silver BTO ring, Maximus will be identifiable by two large red rings on his right leg.

The Seabird Centre would welcome any possible sightings of Maximus by email info@seabird.org or by calling 01620 890202.

Marine Biology & Ecology
Research Centre

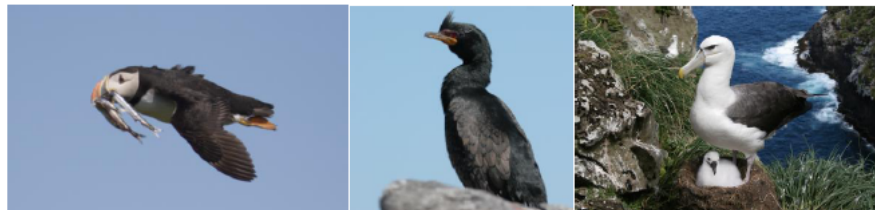


**Please save the dates 2nd - 4th
September 2011**

for

**The Seabird Group 11th International
Conference at:**

The University of Plymouth



Full details of the conference will be publicised shortly.

To discuss the conference, contact:

Dr. Stephen Votier
University of Plymouth,
Email: stephen.votier@plymouth.ac.uk Phone: +44 (0) 1752 584654

However, if you would like to register your interest at this early stage please email pde@plymouth.ac.uk or call 01752 586005.

The venue will be the Roland Levinsky Building, University of Plymouth. There will be a reception on Friday 2nd September with wine and a buffet and conference meal on Saturday 3rd September at the [National Marine Aquarium](#). Keep an eye on the Seabird Group web-site <http://www.seabirdgroup.org.uk/> for further announcements on costs, bookings and field trips.

Mediterranean seabird ecology and conservation: update and progress

13th Medmaravis pan-Mediterranean Symposium

Alghero (Sardinia): 14-17 October 2011

First Announcement and Call for Abstracts

Scope

This Symposium is the 13th in a series of Pan-Mediterranean conferences on seabird ecology and conservation and the 8th symposium dedicated to seabird research throughout the Mediterranean and the wintering territories beyond.

The Alghero 2011 Symposium will focus on updated research data, on streamlining monitoring programmes as well as on progress achieved for coastal habitat conservation.

Accommodation

The Symposium organising Committee has secured preferred conference rates at two ** hotels in the historic centre of Alghero (10 minutes drive from the airport) and close to the conference hall.

Conference Language

The Conference language is English. No simultaneous interpretation will be made available. Please contact the Conference Secretariat if you need any help presenting your manuscript in English.

Symposium Subjects

The Symposium includes the following subjects:

- Ecology and migration of Shearwaters, Storm Petrel, Shag, Gulls and Terns
- Ecology of other coastal bird species as earmarked in the Biodiversity Protocol; of the Mediterranean Action Plan (Barcelona Convention)
- Monitoring of seabird colonies in protected area
- Management and conservation actions for seabirds and their habitats.

Call for Abstracts

Participants wishing to present a research paper or poster are requested to submit their abstract in English to the Conference Secretariat by 15th May 2011.

All abstracts will be reviewed by the Conference Committee as regarding the conference subject and scientific contents. People who submitted an abstract will be informed 1 month after their submission on the acceptance of their presentation or poster.

All accepted abstracts will be published in the Conference Programme Booklet before the symposium takes place. Abstracts should not exceed a full A4 page typeset on Word in Helvetica Font of 10 points.

Registration

A registration form is available in the MEDMARAVIS website (www.medmaravis.org). No conference registration fee is charged. A 50 Euro fee will be charged for participants wishing to take part in the excursion to the Asinara Island National Park scheduled for Monday 17th October 2011. This fee, payable on arrival, includes transport by coach and boat as well as lunch.

Deadline for registration is 20th August 2011.

Conference Proceedings

All accepted papers and posters will be published in English in the set of conference proceedings. Manuscripts in English should not exceed 8 pages for Papers and 4 pages for Posters including all figures and references.

The Conference Editor is:

Dr Daniel Oro, IMEDEA
Institut Mediterrani d'Estudis Avançats
Miquel Marqués 21
07910 ESPORIES Spain

Tel: 34.971611731 Fax: 34.971611761 Email: d.oro@uib.es

The Conference editor will contact all authors upon acceptance of their abstracts

For further info please visit: www.medmaravis.org

Or contact: Secretariat, MEDMARAVIS, BP.512 – 83470 Saint Maxim France. Email: medmaraxam@wanadoo.fr

CORRECTION

The article on 'Arctic skua colour ringing' in October's newsletter (SGN 116) should have been credited to **Sarah Davis**. Apologies for this omission.



**Minutes of THE FORTY-FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE
SEABIRD GROUP**

3pm, Saturday 13th November 2010

Scottish Ringers Conference, Carrbridge Hotel, Carrbridge.

Apologies: Norman Ratcliffe, Liz Humphries, David Sowter, Pat Nuttall, Oscar Merne, Steven Chapman, Hugh Harrop

Present: Andy Webb, Linda Wilson, Claire Smith, Ilka Win, Martin Heubeck, Andrew Ramsay, Simon Foster, Rab Morton, Bob Swann, Alan Leitch, Stephen Bentall, Bernie Zonfrillo, Francis Daunt, Sarah Wanless, Mike Harris, Kevin Cuthbert, Adrian George, Stuart Will, Chris Redfern, Hannah Watson, Bill Bourne, David Jardine

Andy Webb chaired the AGM in Norman Ratcliffe's absence.

1. Minutes of the 44th AGM

Minutes of the 44th AGM had been circulated in the February 2010 newsletter. They were proposed by Martin Heubeck, seconded by Sarah Wanless

2. *Matters arising from the minutes*

There was one action from the minutes to get the old Seabird Bulletins onto the website. This will be investigated by the new Excom member who takes on the role of website updates.

3. *The 45th Annual and Treasurers report*

Most of the points covered in the Secretary's report will be raised within the following agenda items. Ilka Win gave a brief summary of the current situation with the membership. The Executive Committee formally thanked Ilka for all the work that she has put into this, which has ensured that the membership subscription increases all went smoothly.

The Secretary's Report was proposed by Martin Heubeck, seconded by Claire Smith

Andrew Ramsay summarised the Treasurer's report.

Based on the turnover, the Charities Commission advises that the group should have a balance of £8-10K.

There was a discussion about the increased bureaucracy that has come with being registered with the Scottish Charities Commission (previously the Seabird Group was registered in England) and there was some need to review what the benefits were in light of this.

AP. Treasurer to prepare a discussion paper outlining the pros and cons of remaining as a registered charity to be circulated before or at the next AGM.

It was agreed that having a deficit was not sustainable and it was confirmed that the 2009/10 deficit was a one-off due to the Executive Committee proactively reducing the balance through increased grant awards, as well as partly being due to increased journal costs which had yet to be balanced through increased membership subscriptions.

There was discussion regarding how long the Executive Committee should retain accounting paperwork as currently all of this is kept and is becoming difficult to accommodate. There was a suggestion that seven years should be sufficient.

AP. Treasurer to investigate how long the group are required to keep accounting records for and to shred the older documents once confirmed.

The Treasurers Report was proposed by Alan Leitch and seconded by Mike Harris.

4. *Nominations to the Executive Committee*

Treasurer: Kerry Leonard (proposed Andrew Ramsay, seconded Linda Wilson)
Newsletter Editor: Claire Smith (proposed Ilka Win, seconded Sarah Wanless)
Ordinary Member (Assistant Newsletter): Mark Newell (proposed Martin Heubeck, seconded Alan Leitch)
Ordinary Member: Chris Thaxter (proposed Andy Webb, seconded Francis Daunt)
Stephen Bentall was co-opted as an Ordinary Member for a year (proposed Claire Smith, seconded Bob Swan)

5. Update on Seabird

Martin Heubeck gave a summary of the current situation with Seabird 23. This will be a much fuller issue than Seabird 22 and is hoped to be published by the end of 2010 or early January 2011. Submissions for Seabird 24 are already being offered, so the issue of lack of submissions for Seabird 22 appears to be resolved and the journal is attracting submissions from other countries including Spain, Denmark and Brazil. Martin is keen to keep a balance of papers both from professionals and amateurs, recognising the value of the latter although they tend to take longer to edit.

Mike Harris commented that the journal was very good and is now the face of the Seabird Group and that effort should be made to continue it as is.

There was discussion about whether or not to make the journal available on the website without being password protected for members and it was suggested that this could attract new members. At least eight of those present would be happy for the journal to be made publically available on the website after 18 months from publication. There was also a request that newsletters should be made available on the website.

AP. Andy Webb to discuss with Harry Scott whether it is possible to supply individual pdfs of the journal papers to post on the website.

AP. Executive Committee to investigate the feasibility of posting journal papers and newsletters on website.

6. Report on the Seabird Group's involvement in WSC

The World Seabird Conference held in Victoria, Canada was a great success. The Seabird Group made a modest but appropriate financial contribution as a Bronze sponsor of the event. Consideration would have to be given as to whether the Seabird Group would be in a position to regularly sponsor this event, given that there are plans to convene a world seabird conference on a regular basis (e.g. 4-5 years). Norman Ratcliffe sat on the Scientific Programme Committee and Simon Foster sat on the Travel Awards Committee.

There had been a decision not to publish proceedings from the conference, but some papers from at least one of the special sessions (Spatial Ecology at Sea) are planned to be published in Biological Conservation. The workshop abstracts are available online <http://www.worldseabirdconference.com/main.cfm?cid=1813&nid=14741>

7. The next Seabird Group conference

Stephen Votier has been making progress with finding a suitable venue for this in or around Plymouth. Out of all the options he has considered, he feels that the University offers the best venue in terms of the location, facilities and financial package, which includes some logistical organisation (e.g. setting up a website for online submissions and payments). The Executive Committee has yet to make a final decision on the venue, and therefore dates, but it is likely that the conference will take place in either August / September 2011 or March / April 2012.

8. AOB

Claire Smith confirmed plans to re-design the newsletter into one column rather than two, to assist with online viewing. Sarah Wanless commented on the high quality of the newsletter.

The meeting was adjourned at 1600

Eds Note: The Treasurer's report will appear in the June newsletter (SGN 117).



Registered charity No. 260907

Website: www.seabirdgroup.org.uk

Seabird Group Forum:

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

The Seabird Group,

C/O BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, England, UK

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 research.

CURRENT SEABIRD GROUP COMMITTEE (Retiral dates (at AGM) are shown in brackets)

Chairman	Norman Ratcliffe (2011)	notc@bas.ac.uk
Secretary	Linda Wilson (2012)	Linda.wilson@jncc.gov.uk
Treasurer	Kerry Leonard (2013)	kerryleonard@hotmail.com
Membership Secretary	Ilka Win (2012)	seabirdgroup.membership@gmail.com
Seabird Editor	Martin Heubeck (2011)	martinheubeck@btinternet.com
Seabird Publishing Editor	Andy Webb (2012)	andy@andywebb.org.uk
Newsletter Editor	Claire Smith (2013)	seabirdgroup.newsletter@gmail.com
Newsletter Assistant Editor	Mark Newell (2013)	manew@ceh.ac.uk
Ordinary members	Chris Thaxter(2013)	chris.thaxter@bto.org

Current membership rates	
Standing Order	£20.00
Concession	£15.00
Institution	£35.00
International:	£21
Life	£300

The Newsletter is published three times a year. The editor welcomes articles from members and others on issues relating to Seabird research and conservation. Deadlines are: 15th May (June edition); 15th September (October edition) and 15th January (February edition).

Submissions for the newsletter must be in electronic format, preferably in word and should be no more than 1500 words. Please email photographs/figures as separate files and with full credits.

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 any 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 Seabird Group.**