



## NEWSLETTER 121

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## BREEDING SEASON NEWS

### ISLE OF MAY

For seabirds on the Isle of May NNR, 2012 proved to be a very mixed season as was the case in 2011, with adverse weather again playing its part. The season started well with return rates for colour marked adults of all species being consistently above the long term average: shag (93%), guillemot (92%), razorbill (93%), puffin (90%) and kittiwake (80%).

As with 2011, breeding was again earlier than in recent years particularly for guillemots, razorbills and kittiwakes. However, the 2012 season was dominated by unusually high rainfall which affected the

breeding success of some species particularly puffins. Flooding of burrows appeared to severely affect puffins as their breeding success

was one of the worst on record at 0.57 chicks fledging per pair. Razorbills also had a poor season at 0.56 fledged chicks per pair, which was an improvement on 2011 but still one of the worst on record. Guillemots had an above average season with 0.79 chicks fledging per pair. Kittiwakes were the biggest success story of 2012 recording their highest breeding success since 1989 with 0.98 chicks per completed nest, and several pairs raising three chicks. Shag



productivity, although slightly above average, was down following four highly successful years at 1.18 chicks per pair, with many broods succumbing to the heavy rainfall. Fulmars recorded their worst season on record of 0.13 chicks per apparently occupied site with most losses appearing to occur at the chick rearing stage which may have been a result of the high rainfall chilling downy chicks.

In terms of diet, prey composition varied considerably among the species. Guillemot chicks were predominantly fed clupeids (85%) while razorbills brought in sandeels in 92% of loads with small clupeids making up the rest of the chick diet. Sandeels made up 90% of fish brought in by puffins, the remainder being small rockling and clupeids. Kittiwake fed their chicks largely on sandeels (99% of samples) but clupeids were recorded more often than usual. Samples collected from shags indicated that sandeels dominated the diet (77% of samples).

For more information on the Isle of May study look up the website:

[www.ceh.ac.uk/sci\\_programmes/IsleofMayLong-TermStudy](http://www.ceh.ac.uk/sci_programmes/IsleofMayLong-TermStudy)

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## **SHETLAND (EXCLUDING FAIR ISLE)**

The 2012 season further emphasised the patchiness of seabird breeding fortunes around Shetland, both between species and within species geographically, even at a relatively fine scale. If there was a common theme, it was of late laying, moderate to extensive non-breeding, early failures, and then a turn-around at the end of June, with late breeding attempts at some colonies and reasonable survival of remaining chicks.

On Foula, **Red-throated Divers** occupied ten sites, eight pairs bred and five chicks fledged (0.63). Four pairs on Hermaness NNR fledged two young, while on Fetlar divers experienced a high level of egg predation, many losing two clutches before giving up; from 18 breeding pairs on the island, five broods were recorded but only two young fledged (0.11), the lowest productivity since 1990. On the RSPB Yell reserve (Lumbister and Black Park), 10 breeding pairs fledged six young (0.6). More generally, Shetland Ringing Group reported a late season, but better than in 2011 with more broods of two, although few successful pairs in Unst.

**Fulmar** numbers either decreased or were unchanged at monitored colonies, with the overall population index falling for the second successive year. Breeding success using the mean June count of AOS method (0.42) was 36% higher than the average for 2002-11 (four colonies), and using the marked photograph method averaged 0.45 (seven colonies). As usual, **Gannet** had a successful season, fledging 0.69/AON at Hermaness and 0.71 on Noss.

It was generally a late and protracted season for **Shags**, especially in the southeast Mainland where perhaps 50-70% of experienced adults failed to breed. The latest nest site to fledge young at Sumburgh Head had been occupied continuously from at least 9<sup>th</sup> April (trace nest) but the pair only constructed a proper nest and laid between 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> July, two chicks fledging by 21<sup>st</sup> September. Breeding success of laying pairs at Sumburgh (0.39) was the second lowest on record after 2011 (0.30), and well below 2008-10 (1.51, 1.58, 1.23). Very few birds attempted to breed on Foula, where the 13 pairs that built full nests (in 10 plots!) fledged just six chicks. On Mousa, only eight sites qualified as AON in plots, these fledging an average of one chick. Nest counts further north and west around Mainland and Noss in late June were similar to 2009-10, but with most birds still incubating in freshly built nests. At Burravoe (southeast Yell), the first young fledged over a month earlier than at Sumburgh and success (0.72/incubating pair) was markedly higher.

**Arctic Skuas** were late returning to Foula; 37 pairs established territories, of which 27 laid (41 and 32 in 2011, respectively), and while only four young fledged (0.11/AOT), these were the first juveniles to leave the island since 2009! There were six AOT on Mousa, but only one pair laid (and failed). On Fetlar, four AOT in three study plots all failed, as did the single pairs on both Noss and Hermaness; apart from those on Foula nobody seems to have seen a fledged juvenile this year. **Great Skuas** were also late in establishing territories on Foula; chick survival was poor, with some found predated, and success was 0.30/AOT in one study area, 0.18 in another. They fared better on Mousa, with success of 0.83 at 36 AOT, yet on Noss (20 km to the northeast) success at a sample of 82 AOT was 0.16 in this high-density colony, with much evidence of intra-specific predation of chicks (cannibalism sounds better). Within three study plots on Fetlar, productivity was 0.97 from 110 AOT, while success at a sample of 40 AOT at Hermaness was 0.68. Shetland Ringing Group reported a better season than in 2011, but still below average with few broods of two found.

Counts of **Kittiwakes** in southwest Mainland found a total of 311 nests at seven breeding stations, compared to 459 in 2009 and 1,675 in the 'baseline' year of 1981. In the west Mainland there were 52 nests at four stations (77 in 2009, 1,024 in 1981), and 135 nests at six stations in northwest mainland (169 in 2007, 4,978 in 1981); change was not uniform, with some colonies decreasing and some increasing. On Foula, however, a relentless decline continues, with 378 AON counted on 20<sup>th</sup> June (480 in 2011, 1,065 in 2006, 4,978 in 1981). At eight monitored colonies, laying was again late but more synchronous than in 2011, while the proportion of nests known to have contained chicks ranged from zero to 60%. Most of these chicks died, however. Success was low at four colonies in south Mainland (0.00; 0.00; 0.04; 0.17), zero on Foula and Noss, a remarkable 0.52 at Burravoe, Yell and 0.15 at Hermaness, averaging 0.11 at these eight colonies.

Modest numbers of pairs of **Arctic Terns** settled and laid at colonies in the south Mainland and on Mousa, but most had failed by early July. Two of four small colonies on Foula were deserted by late June, but the other two had fledged approximately one chick per pair by late July. On Fetlar three very small colonies fledged a handful of young (the first since 2009), whilst a fourth and largest colony of 22 AONs failed shortly after the first few chicks hatched. In contrast, by late July good numbers of fledged young were being reported in the west and (especially) north Mainland, where there is little monitoring of colonies. Casual observations indicated fledglings were being fed small Saithe, rather than sandeels, and large flocks of adults and juveniles remained in Yell Sound throughout August.

Increased **Guillemot** numbers (up to 12%) in study plots at three monitored colonies probably just reflected extremely low attendance in 2011, with little change at two colonies and a 19% decrease at Hermaness; numbers in general remain 40-60% lower than at the time of the Seabird 2000 census. Breeding success was monitored at Sumburgh Head (daily checks), and (for the first time) at Burravoe, Yell (26 visits). Median laying date at Sumburgh (14<sup>th</sup> May) was five days later than in 2011 and things progressed normally until the second half of June, when low feeding rates, and much fighting and fish-stealing contributed to an increased rate of chick loss. Things settled down in early July, and a continued high attendance of adults after fledging began helped reduce predation opportunities for gulls, with success of 0.39. Chick diet was 63% gadoid, mostly small Saithe probably caught close to the colony, and chick weights just prior to fledging were rather low. Although fewer visits were made to Burravoe, success of 0.51 was thought to reflect better breeding performance there rather than be an artefact of fewer checks.

Apart from at Sumburgh Head (no change since 2011) and Noss (-25%, mean of 30) **Razorbill** numbers in study plots at monitored colonies are now in single figures, with between year differences of just a few birds resulting in large percentage changes. Razorbills seemed to out-perform Guillemots at Sumburgh Head, with success of 0.56 from 54 pairs known or assumed to have laid. A good scatter of males with chicks were seen inshore throughout August (the same for Guillemots), but small numbers of starved juveniles of both species started washing ashore from about 10<sup>th</sup> September.

**Puffin** breeding success is harder to assess. At Sumburgh Head in the second half of July, adults were recorded bringing fish to 37 out of 100 burrows that were known to have been occupied in early June, a maximum success of 0.37. Impressions on Foula were of a poor season and a continued decline in numbers; none were seen carrying sandeels, dead chicks were seen at burrow entrances from 2<sup>nd</sup> July, and while most adults had left by 28<sup>th</sup> July, a few were still bringing in small fish on 19<sup>th</sup> August.

Finally, pre-breeding monitoring of **Black Guillemots** in April suggests a generally stable or slightly increasing population, with record numbers along some coastal stretches, including West Burra where the count of 279 adults was 12% higher than the previous peak, in 1992, the spring before the January 1993 *Braer* oil spill.

**Martin Heubeck & Mick Mellor (SOTEAG); Stacey Adlard, Bruce McKee & Katherine Snell (SNH); Martha Devine, Newton Harper & Malcolm Smith (RSPB); Sheila Gear (Foula Heritage); Dave Okill & Roger Riddington (Shetland Ringing Group).**

## LEACH'S PETRELS NEST IN ARTIFICIAL BURROWS ON ST KILDA

Leach's storm petrels successfully nested in artificial burrows on St Kilda for the first time this year.

Leach's Storm-petrels are some of the most restricted seabirds of the British Isles, known only from a handful of sites, of which the remote Hebridean archipelago of St Kilda is by far the most densely inhabited, with about 94% of the known breeding population. A study carried out on St Kilda in 1999 found 45,000 pairs of petrels in 1999 – yet by 2003 the number had halved.

This year the charity the National Trust for Scotland, which owns and manages the St Kilda World Heritage Site, joined forces with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Inverness College to find out what is happening to the petrel population by constructing wooden nest boxes.

Leach's Storm-petrels are quite difficult to observe because they breed in hollows and cracks in the rocks and only return to their burrow after dark. Previously, researchers had installed wooden nest boxes in the hope that these would attract breeding pairs and make it much easier to study them. This wasn't successful as, although petrels did visit the boxes over the years, only one egg was laid but was deserted and no further breeding took place. NTS and JNCC staff realised that a smaller design of nest box was required more akin to the small and cramped spaces petrels prefer as their natural nest sites. Carpentry and joinery students at Inverness College took up the challenge and crafted a set of flat-packed nesting boxes in kit form that, when assembled, provided a much better facsimile of a cosy petrel burrow. The kits were sent out to St Kilda for immediate field-testing.

The petrels have taken to the new-style nesting boxes with a vengeance, and the result is the first successful hatching of a very fluffy chick. This is thought to be the very first record of a Leach's Storm-petrel breeding in an artificial burrow.

**Adapted from [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk)**

### SEABIRD WRECK ON THE EAST COAST – AUTUMN 2012

A period of low pressure led to storms in September and a wreck of seabirds (mainly auks) along the East coast of mainland Scotland and NE England.

#### **City of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire**

The first reports were received during the first week of September when moribund auks were found near Cruden Bay and taken into care at the NE Wildlife Centre but subsequently died. Aberdeenshire Council reported that 80 dead guillemots were collected off the beach at Cruden Bay during that first week, along with 10 dead cormorants and 10 kittiwakes, and another 104 dead guillemots were picked up on 10<sup>th</sup> September. Around the same time came reports of further dead auks just south of the Ythan with c.100 reported sheltering in the river mouth there, an unusually high number.

These reports prompted local observers to comb nearby beaches in a more systematic manner. On 12<sup>th</sup>-13 September all beaches between the River Dee north to The Ythan were visited. In total, 124 dead auks were found (those identified to species comprised 96 guillemots, 3 razorbills and 3 puffins). Most had died recently, although few were fresh due to scavenging, but the freshest individuals were judged to be thin which, along with the fact that only one bird showed signs of pollution, pointed to birds having expired due to a lack of food. Where possible, birds were aged. Of 80 guillemots, 75 were 1<sup>st</sup> years, as were two of the three razorbills; the only puffin aged was an adult. Small numbers of other species were also recorded on this survey 24 kittiwakes (19 1<sup>st</sup> years), 4 gannets (all adults), 4 fulmars and 16 gulls (most of which were long-dead and not identified to species).

Between 14-15<sup>th</sup> September a further 82 guillemots (at least 23 1<sup>st</sup> years) were found on the Donmouth to Ythan stretch although this included some double counting of previously recorded corpses which had not been buried. Further information came from Rattray Head (previously un-surveyed) where on 19<sup>th</sup> September 15 guillemots (14 1<sup>st</sup> years) and 6 razorbills (all 1<sup>st</sup> years) were recorded along with smaller numbers of other seabirds.

During these surveys observers also commented on the number of live auks off-shore but close in; c. 300 were off the Beach Boulevard in Aberdeen, with a further c.200 to the south of this in Greyhope/Nigg bays, and c. 1,000 between Blackdog and The Ythan with most of the latter within 50m of the shore (the Donmouth to Blackdog stretch was not assessed). In addition, a remarkable 260 guillemots were just off the mouth of the Ythan with a local birder commenting that this build-up had begun in late-August but had recently peaked. Such concentrations close in to the shore suggested further casualties could be expected.

No further surveys were undertaken until after 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> September, a period that saw strong easterly winds buffet the east coast. This period of poor weather resulted in more widespread reports of casualties from not just around Aberdeen but along the east coast to NE England (see below). All beaches from Aberdeen (Nigg Bay) to Collieston were searched again between 28<sup>th</sup> September to 2<sup>nd</sup> October which resulted in a further 134 guillemots (mostly 1<sup>st</sup> years but no age breakdown at present), 2 razorbills, 5 puffins plus 7 un-identified auks. Three of the juvenile guillemots from this batch had been ringed during the 2012 breeding season; 2 at North Sutor and 1 at the Isle of May. Few birds were noticeable on the sea during these surveys so little further effort was put in to surveying beaches although records of small numbers of dead auks are still being received at the time of writing (23<sup>rd</sup> October).

## **Tayside and Fife**

The first report of dead guillemots was at Montrose Basin on the 27<sup>th</sup> September when 6 dead birds were found, including a ringed Razorbill. There were unusually large numbers, up to 500 Guillemots and Razorbills coming into the Basin with the tide at the end of September/early October. At Forfar Loch, well inland, there was 1 live Guillemot on 14<sup>th</sup>, 6 on 20<sup>th</sup> with 4 still on 28<sup>th</sup> September.

Arbroath harbour was checked on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October and no dead auks found, but 5 guillemots were swimming in the marina. Dead Guillemots were also found at Elliot just west of Arbroath and at Easthaven further still towards Dundee.

28<sup>th</sup> September and Bob McCurley counted 70 dead at Broughty Ferry. An article in the Courier stated that the SSPCA attempted to rescue any still alive. A member of the public reported that the council had collected 36-38 dead guillemots from the area on the 28<sup>th</sup> September and a further 30 on the 5<sup>th</sup> October.

In Fife, hundreds of dead and dying auks were found at West Sands on the 25 September and 3 dead guillemots (unaged) were found at Tenstmuir point on 28<sup>th</sup> September. Up to 1000 guillemots were sheltering in St Andrews Bay prior to the storms and subsequently moved to Anstruther and up the Tay for shelter. The Angus bird recorder had heard about an auk wreck at Aberdour in the week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> September. The SSPCA wildlife rehabilitation centre near Alloa received 147 seabirds in total (between 18<sup>th</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> October) 110 guillemots, 1 razorbill, 32 gannets and 4 fulmars all grounded due to the storms and their general poor condition. All of the gannets and the vast majority of the guillemots were juveniles as was the razorbill. The 4 fulmars were all adults in poor condition. They managed to release 74 guillemots and 20 gannets so at least some got away for a second chance. The birds were largely from Fife, Angus, Perthshire and the Central belt. They included a guillemot on Loch Tummel and a 1<sup>st</sup> year guillemot handed into the RSPB Perth office having been found walking alongside the Tay.

More wrecks were reported to the RSPB Edinburgh office on both sides of the Forth on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October and over 100 dead guillemots washed up at Rosyth.

## **Other regions**

Although the wreck appeared to be centred on Aberdeen City and Shire, spreading southwards into Tayside and Fife after the storms around the 24<sup>th</sup>, reports of dead auks were received from other areas to the north and south indicating just how widespread the wreck was. In Shetland, where monthly beached bird surveys are carried out, guillemot numbers at the end of September were the highest for 20 years, but only marginally so; all were suspected of being juveniles. Few reports have been received from Orkney at present but 20 dead guillemots were reported from Scapa Beach around about 10<sup>th</sup> September. On 14<sup>th</sup> September c.30 dead guillemots were recorded from beaches in Moray, with most found between Burghead and Findhorn. In the Forth Estuary, concentrations of auks and some other seabirds built up west of the bridges from 30<sup>th</sup> August onward (with inland records also reported as far as west as Stirling). The first casualties were recorded on 26<sup>th</sup> September with 150 dead guillemots recorded from local beaches by the 7<sup>th</sup> October. Of those aged, 56 of 59 were classed as 1<sup>st</sup> years. In north-east England, beaches covered between 22<sup>nd</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> October produced 79 guillemots (37 juvenile / first-winter of 39 aged) and 7 razorbills (4 juveniles of 6 aged). None of the auks from this incident have been reported as oiled.

## **Roddy Mavor and Claire Smith.**

### **Acknowledgements**

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### WINTER PUFFINS STILL WANTED!

Following a request in the October 2011 Newsletter, several members sent me photos of the heads and wings of Puffins found dead during the winter to check on their state of plumage. Thank you!

Adults (aged from the number of bill grooves) with old primaries were reported in December (1), January (1) and March (1) while birds with newly moulted primaries were reported in January (1), February (4 birds including one just completing the growth of the longest primary) and March (1). Two immatures in February both had fresh primaries whereas all nine first-winter birds photographed through the winter still had the primaries that they had grown when chicks the previous June or July. In addition, a Puffin ringed as an adult on the Isle of May in 2006 was reported dead on a Danish beach in early February 2012. I contacted the finder who, luckily, had taken a couple of pictures; these clearly show that the primaries were just completing their growth so this individual would have been flightless in January. Overall, these records support the suggestion that most adults would be flightless in the second half of the winter between January and March.

However, all the records came from North Sea coasts so provide no information on the situation in the Atlantic. Given some recent records of flightless Puffins in the Faeroes in October (Harris & Wanless 2011, *The Puffin*), one is left with the worry that Puffins in the Atlantic might be moulting earlier in the winter. We are still far from understanding when most Puffins are flightless so I would welcome further photographs of the beaks and wings of dead Puffins (whether or not they were moulting) from anywhere away from the breeding colonies. It would also be useful if you could keep a few the outer primaries just in case there is any doubt about whether they were new or old.

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**Wing of an adult Puffin washed up dead in Co. Durham on 3 February 2012. Note the immaculate recently grown primaries and secondaries (Daniel M. Turner).**



**Adult Puffin with old and faded primaries and secondaries, Orkney 6 March 2012 (Eric Meek).**



**Freshly grown primaries of an adult Puffin in Shetland 1 March 2012. The outer primary was just finishing growing (Martin Heubeck).**

## TAXONOMIC REVISIONS

The October issue of *Ibis* contains the latest recommendations by the Taxonomic Sub-Committee of the British Ornithologists Union (BOU) Records Committee. For seabirds:

Cory's shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* to be treated as three species:

- Cory's Shearwater *C. borealis* (Category A)
- Scopoli's Shearwater *C. diomedea* (Category A)
- Cape Verde Shearwater *C. edwardsii* (extralimital)

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro* to be treated as three species in the Western Palearctic:

- Cape verde Storm-petrel *O. jabejabe*
- Madeiran Storm-petrel *O. castro*
- Monteiro's Storm-petrel *O. Monteiroi*

Sangster, G., Collinson, M., Crochet, P-A., Knox, A. G., Parkin, D.T., & Votier, S.C. 2012. Taxonomic recommendations for British Birds: eighth report. *Ibis* 154:874-883.

## CONSERVATION NEWS

The *e-Atlas of Marine Important Bird Areas* was launched by BirdLife International at the Eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP11) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in Hyderabad, India, on 16 October.

The first global inventory of important sites for the conservation of migratory marine species represents a major contribution to marine conservation and will prove to be a vital resource for meeting the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) target of protecting 10% of marine and coastal areas by 2020. It will also be crucial to the process of describing ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) and will have significant input into the siting of offshore energy infrastructure.

The *e-Atlas* covers 3,000 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) worldwide. It is the result of six years of effort that, to date, has involved around 40 BirdLife Partners, with the world's leading seabird scientists from inside and outside the BirdLife Partnership, in collaboration with government departments of conservation, environment and fisheries, and the secretariats of several international conventions (CBD, EU Bird's Directive, Nairobi Convention). Over 150 marine IBAs have already been recognised in the CBD process to identify Ecologically or Biologically Significant marine Areas (EBSAs).

The *e-Atlas* provides essential information for conservation practitioners and policy makers; for energy sector planners (windfarms, gas and oil exploration and drilling); for fisheries managers; for marine pollution management planners; and for the insurance industry.

The *e-Atlas* provides a model for inventories of areas of conservation importance for other mobile pelagic taxa, such as whales, turtles and sharks. IBAs have been found to capture a large and representative proportion of other biodiversity, providing a reliable and easily monitored way of identifying priorities for conservation. Effective management of IBAs will therefore help conserve a wider range of taxa and habitats. BirdLife has been working through the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative (GOBI) to link with other organisations working for the conservation of other marine taxonomic groups.

The e-Atlas represents a breakthrough in the format of BirdLife's IBA inventories. It will be available exclusively online at:

<http://54.247.127.44/marineIBAs/default.html>

Like a Google Map, the e-atlas will be dynamically updated as new sites are identified and new data about them become available. It will be linked to other BirdLife data resources, including BirdLife's species accounts, IBA fact sheets and *State of the World's Birds* case studies.

*The work of the BirdLife International Secretariat to compile this inventory has been supported via generous contribution from the Lenfest Ocean Program, Boston Environmental, Tilia fund, EU LIFE, Jensen Foundation, Nippon Keidanren, Nairobi Convention, IUCN, Conservation International, Global Greengrants Fund, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Canadian Wildlife Service, Wallace Research Foundation, World Seabird Conference.*

**Adapted from [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)**

## **EU PLAN OF ACTION TO REDUCE SEABIRD BYCATCH LAUNCHED**

On 16 November after a long fight, the European Commission has finally launched an EU Plan of Action to reduce seabird bycatch: the incidental deaths of seabirds ensnared in fishing gears.

The RSPB along with its EU partners have advocated for an action plan since 2001, when the European Commission first committed to proposing one. Since then, it is estimated that over two million seabirds have died in the fishing gears of vessels in EU waters alone, not counting the additional impact of EU-flagged vessels operating in the southern oceans where bycatch is held mainly responsible for 17 out of 22 albatross species being threatened with extinction.

The EU Seabird Plan of Action aims to minimise and, where possible, eliminate the bycatch of seabirds in EU and external waters. It sets out to achieve this through a range of actions, notably calling on vessels to apply mitigation measures to prevent seabirds coming into contact with fishing gears. Other key areas cover research and development, and awareness-raising and training for fishermen. The RSPB considers the plan to be best practice, drawing heavily on other regions of the world where non-EU fleets have already embraced the often simple solutions proven to stop seabirds being killed.

Of the species which are heavily affected by bycatch in European waters, three occur regularly in the UK. All three are cited as threatened with global extinction with seabird bycatch being listed as a major threat. The Balearic shearwater visits the English Channel and South Western Approaches regularly in autumn and winter, while the velvet scoter and long-tailed duck are sea ducks which regularly winter along the UK's North Sea coast.

In EU waters, most seabird bycatch arises from gillnets and longlines, but to a lesser extent also trawls and purse seine nets. At least 100,000 birds are killed every year in gillnets in the Baltic Sea and eastern North Sea. A Spanish longline fishery for hake off south-west Ireland is estimated to kill tens of thousands of seabirds annually, mostly great shearwaters. This slaughter flies in the face of the EU Birds Directive which is meant to protect European seabirds, including globally threatened species which are caught and drowned in EU fishing gears.

It is therefore a vital first step that the Seabird Action Plan has finally seen the light of day. Following the European Commission's proposal, it will be up to Member States to endorse the plan in Council, and then to translate it into effective measures in their national waters and also on the high seas, governed by the tuna Commissions, where EU-flagged vessels also roam.

**Adapted from [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)**



**9th Conference of the European Ornithologists Union 2013  
28-31 August 2013, Norwich, UK**

The European Ornithologists' Union (EOU) has been founded as an equal partnership among avian biologists across Europe to provide an international forum for the advancement of European ornithology in all its aspects. The bi-annual conferences provide ideal platforms to get in contact, exchange ideas and disseminate knowledge.

This event will be jointly organized by the University of East Anglia (UEA) and BTO, RSPB, BOU, EGI. The conference will cover the full range of ornithological research, including both basic and applied aspects. The programme will be composed of plenaries, symposia, contributed oral and poster sessions. Information on the scientific programme, conference venue, deadlines, registration fees, contact to organizers, etc. are available and will be further updated at <http://www.norwich.eouunion.org/index.php>.

For information about previous conferences, including pdfs of abstract books, and the EOU in general, please visit <http://www.eouunion.org>.



**February 20-24, 2013 at the Portland Hilton**

**The PSG 2013 local committee  
welcomes you to Portland, Oregon!**

Known for its green space and wide diversity of cuisines, art, music, local innovation, and sheer weirdness, Portland will be an ideal location to celebrate PSG's 40th. Although the city lies some 65 miles from the sea (as the murrelet flies), both the Willamette and Columbia rivers that surround it are home to huge populations of seabirds and waterbirds, including the largest colonies of Double-crested and Brandt's Cormorants and Caspian Terns on Earth. Portland lies within a short drive of the coast and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area with some of the most breath-taking natural beauty in the Pacific Northwest.

Register online at: <http://www.regonline.com/pacificseabirdgroup2013>

*Local Program Chair:* Holly Freifeld ([hfreifeld@abcbirds.org](mailto:hfreifeld@abcbirds.org))

For more information:

[www.pacificseabirdgroup.org](http://www.pacificseabirdgroup.org)



### NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Seabird Group AGM was held on 10 November at the Scottish Ringers' conference, full minutes and group accounts will follow in the February newsletter.

We are delighted to welcome Ellie Owen as Secretary and Mark Lewis as an ordinary member who will focus on improving our electronic communications. Ilka has been co-opted to continue as membership secretary for another year. We would like to thank Linda Wilson for all her hard work as secretary and Andy Webb. Andy will continue to help Martin produce the journal 'Seabird' acting as Publishing Editor in a non-committee role.

### CHANGES TO GRANT DEADLINES

The deadlines for Seabird Group grant applications will change to **28<sup>th</sup> February and 31<sup>st</sup> October**. To apply please contact [seabirdgroup.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:seabirdgroup.secretary@gmail.com) or download an application form from the website: <http://www.seabirdgroup.org.uk/>

### SEABIRD GROUP GRANTS – OCTOBER ROUND

A grant was awarded to Colin Carter to study the wintering distribution of Lowestoft kittiwakes.

### GIFT AID

Please can all members who are UK tax payers complete and return the Gift Aid declaration form on the back of the newsletter. This enables us to claim back up to a quarter of your annual membership rate.



Website: [www.seabirdgroup.org.uk](http://www.seabirdgroup.org.uk)

Seabird Group Forum:

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

**Registered charity No. 260907 & SC038820**

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**

Current retiral dates (at AGM) are shown in brackets:

Chairman	Russell Wyn (2015)	<a href="mailto:rbwl@noc.ac.uk">rbwl@noc.ac.uk</a>
Secretary	Ellie Owen (2015)	<a href="mailto:ellie.owen@rspb.org.uk">ellie.owen@rspb.org.uk</a>
Treasurer	Kerry Leonard (2014)	<a href="mailto:kerryleonard@hotmail.com">kerryleonard@hotmail.com</a>
Membership Secretary	Ilka Win (2013)	<a href="mailto:seabirdgroup.membership@gmail.com">seabirdgroup.membership@gmail.com</a>
Seabird Editor	Martin Heubeck (2015)	<a href="mailto:martinheubeck@btinternet.com">martinheubeck@btinternet.com</a>
Newsletter Editor	Claire Smith (2014)	<a href="mailto:seabirdgroup.newsletter@gmail.com">seabirdgroup.newsletter@gmail.com</a>
Newsletter Assistant Editor	Mark Newell (2014)	<a href="mailto:manew@ceh.ac.uk">manew@ceh.ac.uk</a>
Ordinary members	Chris Thaxter (2014)	<a href="mailto:chris.thaxter@bto.org">chris.thaxter@bto.org</a>
	Mark Lewis (2015)	<a href="mailto:lewis_sparky@yahoo.co.uk">lewis_sparky@yahoo.co.uk</a>

<b>Current membership rates</b>	
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: 15<sup>th</sup> May (June edition); 15<sup>th</sup> September (October edition) and 15<sup>th</sup> 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.**

# Gift Aid declaration form –

for past, present & future donations



*giftaid it*

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made to the Seabird Group.

Please tick **all boxes** you wish to apply.

today                       in the past 4 years                       in the future

- ✓ I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year.
- ✓ I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify.
- ✓ I understand the charity will reclaim 28p of tax on every £1 that I gave up to 5 April 2008 and will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008.

## Donor's details

First name ..... Surname .....

Home Address.....

Town/City ..... Postcode.....

Email.....

Signature..... Date .....

### Please notify the Seabird Group if you:

- Want to cancel this declaration
- Change your name or home address
- No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

*Please send this form to:*

*Seabird Group Membership Secretary, Ilka Win, 10 Broomfield Park, Portlethen AB12 4XT*