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APRIL 1996

ANOTHER MAJOR OIL SPILL

At about 20.00 hrs on 15 February 1996, the oil tanker *Sea Empress* was attempting to enter Milford Haven in south-west Wales when she struck a sandbank. It was one of the lowest tides of the year. Around 6000 tonnes of oil were lost immediately. By 22.00, the tanker was afloat again, and was held in place by tugs. Despite calls to tow the tanker offshore, it was held for the next two days in the entrance to Milford Haven, an area with strong currents and a large tidal range. Much of the time was spent planning how to lighten the tanker in this location, an operation hindered by the discovery that the ship's pump room was flooded. On 17 February, it became obvious that the tugs in attendance were not capable of holding the tanker, and in the late afternoon the tanker grounded again, with further leaks of oil. Only now were additional tugs ordered. On 19 February, salvors still considered that a further two to three days were required to prepare the vessel prior to pumping out its load. However, that evening, the ship moved a further 400m and grounded on a rock pinnacle. A large amount of oil leaked out overnight. It took a further two days for the tanker to be refloated, and be taken into Milford Haven itself. Pumping of the remainder of the oil on board finally began on 24 February. In total, around 70,000 tonnes of the 130,000 tonnes of North Sea crude oil on board were lost.

Damage to the wildlife and habitats of the area has been severe. By the end of

March, 6,900 oiled birds had been recovered from the affected area, of which 4,600 were dead, or died in care. As ever, this figure is many less than will have died in total: of 238 corpses released in drift experiments from the area of the spill, twelve arrived in SE Ireland, an area considered prior to this to be unaffected by the incident! The species most affected was common scoter. Carmarthen Bay was the UK's most important wintering site for this species, and the 4,600 casualties recovered from the beaches represent more than half of the numbers known to be in the bay at the time of the spill. Oil will undoubtedly have affected shellfish in the area also, probably blighting scoter food for some time into the future. The internationally important seabird colonies on Skomer, Skokholm and Grassholm are very close to Milford Haven. The spill occurred before the main return of auks and gannets to these colonies, but nevertheless some 1,800 guillemots and razorbills were picked up by beached bird surveys. Two of UK's three statutory marine nature reserves (Skomer and Lundy) were affected; damage is still being assessed. At least 190 km of coastline was affected including 26 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, three Special Protection Areas (under the EU Birds Directive), two candidate SPAs, two candidate Special Areas of Conservation (under the EU Habitats Directive) and a potential SAC. Fishing has been banned from some 750 km² of sea along much of the south Wales coast.

The above account, gleaned mainly from the press and other sources, poses some awkward questions about the causes of the grounding and the conduct of those involved in the salvage operation. The *Braer* incident resulted in an independent inquiry under the chairmanship of Lord Donaldson. It is clearly evident that many of the recommendations of that inquiry have not been carried out, and there are many suspicions that this is due to the Department of Transport not wishing to upset the ports and shipping industries for which it is responsible. There may also have been a measure of attempted cost saving: the Donaldson report recommended that at least three ocean-going tugs be stationed around Britain's coasts to aid tankers if they got into difficulties. Two such tugs are in place but a third, which would have covered the Milford Haven area, has not been deployed.

Three inquiries have been established in the aftermath of this incident. The first will examine the causes of the accident and the conduct of the salvage operation, another will look at the environmental consequences while the third will assess the oil spill response and clean-up. The first will be carried out by the Department of Transport's own Marine Accident Investigation Branch. The Labour Party, the RSPB and others consider that an independent inquiry would be more likely carry out the necessary in-depth review of procedures, and of the state of implementation of the Donaldson report. Given that three of the fifteen worst tanker accidents in the world have now happened on British coasts, it must surely be time to look hard at Governmental policies, and particularly whether one department should be both sponsoring and regulating the shipping and port industries.

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SCAVENGING WAVED ALBATROSS AROUND THE GALAPAGOS ARCHIPELAGO: AT RISK FROM LONG-LINERS

In 1994, the waved albatross *Diomedea irrorata* population was estimated to contain ca 15000 breeding pairs (Anderson 1995a). Well over 99% of their breeding activity is confined to Española Island in the Galapagos Archipelago. By attaching satellite transmitters to five breeding birds in the incubation period, Anderson (1995b) showed that the main feeding area was over the continental shelf of Peru. However, the present report of an at-sea survey carried out later in the same year shows that scavenging near the Galapagos Archipelago may also form an important part of the diet. A previous unpublished dissertation on the occurrence and feeding activities of the waved albatross also suggested that the birds are, to some extent, scavengers when found in the waters near the Archipelago during the breeding season. The proposed introduction of new fishing techniques (longlining and squid fishing) near the

Islands could result in a new conservation problem in an already beleaguered Archipelago.

An excellent opportunity to collect further observations on the distribution and scavenging behaviour of waved albatross came when the author was asked by David Parer and Elizabeth Parer-Cook, of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, to accompany them on a reconnaissance trip to the western part of the Archipelago, aboard the motor yacht Samba. This took place between 1 and 14 September 1995. We maintained a dawn-to-dusk survey for nine full days. On the other days, the Samba was anchored or made short journeys. Observations were also made on these short trips. The survey was carried out mainly by two observers (myself and David Day) but additional help was provided by the crew of the Samba, Naturalist Guide Mauricio Garcia, and David Parer and Elizabeth Parer-Cook. The seas were, on the whole, remarkably calm and the white necks and heads of the albatrosses made them relatively easy to spot and count even when they were on the sea. In high winds flying birds were also easy to see, because their soaring flight pattern took them above the horizon. Most of the observing was carried out using 8x binoculars. We avoided counting birds twice by only scanning ahead of the boat. When the boat stopped, made circles or other manoeuvres, the census was ended. Thus, only straight line sightings were made. Where large concentrations of albatross were encountered, several counts were made by independent observers. After leaving such an area, no counts were made for half an hour. For most of the survey the boat was travelling at 8 knots. All the positions were determined using GPS instruments.

Waved albatross were common in the offshore waters a month after the first observations were made. They were often found either flying or sitting on the water. When flying, they were almost always alone, although there were from a few to many in the area. By far the greatest concentrations were found where blue-

footed boobies *Sula nebouxii* were or had recently been feeding. On one occasion, 389 albatross were present closely associated with several other species in a feeding frenzy. Such activities were frequent offshore in deep water, when magnificent frigate birds *Fregata magnificens*, common dolphins *Delphinus delphis*, blue-footed boobies, masked boobies *Sula dactylatra*, waved albatross, white-vented storm petrels *Oceanites gracilis*, wedge-rumped storm petrels *Oceanodroma tethys* and Galapagos sea lions *Zalophus californianus* were present. Inshore (in shallower water or between the central islands) bottle-nose dolphins *Tursiops truncatus* may replace common dolphins. Close inshore, there was another assemblage of animals that formed feeding frenzies. Waved albatross were not associated with these. What was happening underwater was not clear. It is possible that various species of fish, including tunas and their prey, may be found associated with the dolphins.

The development of a feeding frenzy showed a consistent pattern. Dolphins found the food, with blue-footed boobies following overhead. Once the food was accessible to the birds, they began to dive on it. Frigate birds, which had been keeping up and were often at considerable height, then descended to mob the boobies so that they disgorged their recently gathered fish; if this occurred, the fish was eaten by the frigate birds. However, albatross, which were also flying along with the general activity, also tried to take advantage of the melee by moving in and grabbing at the disgorged food. This behaviour was observed on dozens of occasions. We saw up to four albatross around one "downed" booby. Albatross did not seem to mob the boobies initially, but seemed to depend on frigate birds to initiate the attack. Storm petrels fluttered amongst these birds and picked up whatever morsels were left over by the others. Masked boobies however, were not involved in the feeding association as they never represented more than 5% of the boobies feeding and the figure was often as low as 2%.

These feeding activities were highly dynamic and moved over the ocean at considerable speed. Some lasted for hours, but many broke up after 20 minutes or so. It was not known how stable the productivity was in the areas in which these major feeding events occurred, since there is a suggestion that they may be related to water fronts which are unstable in themselves. On two consecutive days we found boobies and albatross in the same area to the south of Cape Hammond (southwest Fernandina). However, along the equator we never found the great concentration that we had found the previous day. Possibly this was due to changes in oceanic conditions or perhaps it was because on the first day we witnessed an attack by orcas *Orcinus orca* on the common dolphins. Although 389 albatross was the greatest number counted, on several other occasions large concentrations were observed at various locations as indicated on the map. They were always associated with areas where feeding frenzies (or less dramatic feeding events) were occurring or had recently occurred. The majority of the sightings, however, were of 1 to 3 birds.

We also observed albatross scavenging in other situations. Orcas are not uncommon in the waters of Galapagos and on 7 September (at 0°09'44"N, 91°44'W), seven were involved in an attack on common dolphins. They moved into an area where the dolphins were feeding and separated at least one animal from the school which was apparently eaten, since we noticed several of the orcas milling about and what appeared to be small pieces of flesh floating in the water. These attracted frigate birds, storm petrels, and albatross in a general melee of feeding. On another occasion (at 0°19.9'S 91°43.4'W), three albatross were seen with their heads under the water feeding on the remains of a large squid. This animal has been identified as *Angistrocheirus lesevri*.

During the 24 days of observations (the cumulative time of the two reports), not a single albatross was seen feeding on live

prey. Harris (1973) reported that the main food of breeding waved albatross was fish and squid. Since blue-footed boobies do not eat squid, the albatross must gather this themselves. Some of the fish found in albatross stomach contents in Harris's study could have been scavenged. Harris (1973) observed the interaction of albatross with boobies but felt that this behaviour did not contribute greatly to their diet. However, the frequency with which we observed this behaviour leads me to believe that at least at times it may be important.

When concentrated feeding activity began, boobies and albatross were drawn into the area from a great distance. The spacing of the birds over the ocean was such that the individuals were in sight of their neighbours at any particular moment, although not necessarily in direct sight of all the birds in the area. When dolphins were present and boobies began to dive on available food, the diving appeared to act as a signal to nearby boobies or albatross, which moved into the fray. Their movement may have caused others, further away and not in sight of the feeding activity, to move in the same direction. Sometimes this process continued until very large numbers of birds were present (1000+ boobies), although often the process broke up before such large accumulations gathered. Thus, although many solitary boobies and albatross were seen spaced over a huge area of ocean, it is highly probable that they were capable of joining various concentrated feeding groups. This aerial dispersion may be very useful as large areas of ocean are kept under surveillance and individuals can quickly take advantage of any feeding opportunity that occurs. The albatross, clued into the reaction of the boobies or using their own eyesight, can take advantage of this system which allows them to scavenge more efficiently in areas where food is more abundant. It is not easy to ascertain the exact relationship of the organisms involved in feeding frenzies because in this area common dolphins are very nervous of the close approach of vessels. This may be due to the presence of purse seine tuna boats which often set their nets on the dolphins because tunas

are frequently associated with the small cetaceans.

It seems that the waved albatross is, at least at some times, a scavenger. From the duration of the observations and their limitation to daylight, it is not possible to say how important this method of feeding is to them. However, this feeding technique is extremely common. Should it be important, then the availability of food to scavenge has to be maintained. This, in turn, means that the structure of feeding frenzies and the well being of all their components (fish, dolphins, boobies, frigate birds) may be of importance to the feeding success of albatross. We are referring to no less than the maintenance of the pelagic trophic system that is found in the western part of the Galapagos.

At present (1996), there is enormous pressure to allow local fishermen to increase the tonnage of their fleet. One of the reasons that the marine area has remained relatively untouched until the last few years is that the fishing fleet has been slow, local, and primitive in the techniques used. A large increase in the fleet will have serious and unforeseen consequences for the marine environment, especially if strong measures are not taken to control fishing activities. One of the "new" techniques to be introduced is the use of longlines for the valuable yellow fin tuna *Thunnus albacares* and other pelagic fish in the waters surrounding the Archipelago. The effect of longlining on albatross in other parts of the world has been catastrophic (e.g. Mare and Kerry 1994, Gales 1993). The albatross scavenge from the baited hooks as the hooks enter the water. It is not known whether the waved albatross will take up the same habit if this source of food becomes available to them. However, with the knowledge that the birds are not only scavengers, but also feed largely on squid (Harris 1973), which is a popular bait for longlining, it is clearly inadvisable to ignore the effects that may result from opening a fishery and further studies are urgently needed. In order to protect the assemblage of animals that may help to ensure the future of the endemic albatross, complete

protection should be given to the waters within the Marine Resource Reserve (15 nautical miles seaward from the perimeter of the Archipelago) by prohibiting potentially dangerous fishing techniques within this area. This is not for the protection of single species, but to the well being of the ecosystem.

I would like to thank David Parer and Elizabeth Parer-Cook for giving me the opportunity to travel with them. Also to the crew of the Samba for the use of their keen eyes and especially to David Day. My appreciation is also extended to Mike Harris and Sarah Wanless for their help in preparing this manuscript.

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Godfrey Merlen
Puerto Ayora
Galapagos

SEABIRD NUMBERS AND BREEDING SUCCESS IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND, 1995

This report is the seventh annual report on the results of seabird monitoring at colonies throughout Britain and Ireland, produced jointly by JNCC, RSPB and SOTEAG as part of JNCC's Seabird Monitoring Programme. Over 330 people, many of them volunteers, contributed data to the 1995 report. The report summarises population changes and breeding success at seabird colonies in 1995 on a regional basis and draws comparisons with 1994 and earlier seasons.

In general, 1995 was a moderately good year for all species monitored, but several findings are of note. Mammalian predation continues to pose major problems to some seabird populations. Most notably, on the west coast of Scotland, Clive Craik has documented further colony failures and desertion amongst terns, gulls and black guillemots attributable to predation by introduced American mink. In one study

area which held 1829 pairs of common terns in 23 colonies in 1987 there were fewer than 1140 pairs at just 14 colonies by 1995. Avian predation is also a problem at some colonies (see for example Martin Heubeck's article on bonxies in the last Seabird Group newsletter). High tides again caused breeding failure in some black-headed gull, arctic tern and little tern colonies in 1995, while there was evidence that heat stress caused by the unusually hot summer weather may have reduced fulmar chick survival at some colonies. There was also further evidence of problems for some seabirds populations in the southern Irish Sea. For the third season in a row, lesser black-backed gulls in south Wales had very low breeding success. Some Irish Sea kittiwake colonies also again experienced almost total breeding failure as did fulmars on the Isle of Man.

However, there is also encouraging news to report from 1995. In Shetland, there was evidence of a possible halt to the long term decline in cormorant numbers, while shag

and tystie populations in the vicinity of the Braer oil spill site also showed evidence of some recovery. Shag populations in SE Scotland and NE England experienced limited recovery from the 1993-94 winter wreck, while the numbers of pairs of kittiwakes attempting to breed in these regions returned to 1991-93 levels, following a major reduction in 1994. The 1994/95 gannet survey, run by Sarah Wanless and Stuart Murray, found an overall increase in numbers of 2.5-3.0% per annum since the last survey in the mid-1980s (they will be reporting the survey elsewhere shortly). Guillemot numbers continued to increase along the east coast of Great Britain and also in Wales.

A census of inland nesting common gulls in NE Scotland found a 35-40% increase at the Mortlach Hills colony (to c.18,400 pairs) but a 73-80% decline in the Correen Hills (to c.4,700 pairs). Susan Raven's 1994 survey of roof-nesting gulls indicates that c.4% of the British and Irish population of lesser black-backed gulls and c.8% of herring gulls now nest on roofs and that this habit is also increasing amongst common and great black-backed gulls. Roseate tern numbers remained stable overall in 1995 but there was evidence of some spread of the population to new colonies.

The report is scheduled for publication and distribution in late May. All contributors will be sent copies as will advisory and area staff in the country agencies and RSPB. Copies will also be available for purchase from the Natural History Book Service, 2 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5XN. Any queries should be directed to JNCC, Thistle House, 7 Thistle Place, Aberdeen AB10 1UZ.

{Thompson, K.R., Brindley, E. & Heubeck, M. 1996. *Seabird numbers and breeding success in Britain and Ireland, 1995*. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee. (UK Nature Conservation, No. 20)}

Kate Thompson

REPORT: ORNITHOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE COAST OF LIBYA: JULY 1993

The Libyan coast is probably that part of the Mediterranean coastline with fewest data on waterbirds, and there are almost no data available on the numbers of waders breeding, on migration or wintering.

The main aim of this Dutch-Libyan expedition was to rediscover breeding colonies of lesser crested tern *Sterna bengalensis*, as breeding had not been confirmed since the late 1930s. The finding of two colonies (of 1,700 and 40 pairs) thus made the expedition very successful indeed. The breeding conditions of the lesser crested terns are described in details in this WIWO report.

Most efforts were invested in the search for seabird colonies and for sea turtles. Brief visits, however, were made to a number of coastal wetlands and these are described also in the report.

The visit period (19 to 28 July) was too late to get very much information on breeding waders and too early to hit any migration peak. Still the expedition obtained some interesting observations even on waders. The breeding of black-winged stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and collared pratincole *Glareola pratincola* was proved for the first time in Libya; the stilt was found breeding at two sites both with tens of pairs, whereas a pair of pratincoles with an almost fledged juvenile was found at one of the same sites.

Kentish plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* was found at most of the coastal wetlands both breeding and moulting, and in the lagoon named Ayn Zayanah an impressive concentration of at least 700 birds was seen. This site proved to be a very interesting wetland (holding also the breeding collared pratincole and black-winged stilts). I can strongly support the recommendation of the report, that more complete wader and waterbird surveys should be undertaken at the site, which is

quite easily accessible situated very close to the city of Benghazi.

Meininger, P.L., Wolf, P.A., Hadoud, D.A. & Essghaier, M.F.A. 1994. *Ornithological survey of the coast of Libya, July 1993 (with notes on some wetlands in Tunisia)*. WIWO report No. 46. Dfl 15,- (+ Dfl 15,- adm. & postage costs) from Stichting WIWO, van Stuyvenbergweg 4, NL-6644 AB Ewijk, The Netherlands.

Ole Thorup

**FROM: AUSTRALASIAN SEABIRD
GROUP NEWSLETTER, No 29.**

This issue is primarily about albatrosses. Lance Tickell's Southern Ocean albatross atlas is reprinted with some revisions (previously published in *Sea Swallow* 42, and the *Pacific Seabird Group Bulletins* 21 & 22). The second half of the issue is a list of oral and poster papers from the first international conference on albatrosses held in Hobart in August 1995. Judging by the list, this was an exciting conference, hopefully many of the papers will be published in due course. Kerry-Jayne Wilson has written a page on news from New Zealand researchers. As part of her PhD study, Amanda Freeman has been using satellite tags to study Westland petrels, while Phillipa Gardner is studying burrow competition between Chatham petrels and broad-billed prions. If anyone would like to write a column or two on research in their country for the Seabird Group Newsletter, it would be very welcome.

**FROM: MARINE ORNITHOLOGY,
Vol. 23 no. 1**

Two papers in this issue deal with the effects of mammalian predators on seabirds: Jean-Claude Thibault shows that black rat predation has a greater effect on Cory's shearwater on small islets where rat density tends to be high compared with larger islands where rat density tends to be low, and fluctuates. John Cooper and co-

authors publish the first paper after the eradication of cats from Marion Island showing an improvement in breeding performance of greatwinged and blue petrels. No such improvement was evident for whitechinned petrels, but it may be that breeding improved prior to the complete elimination of cats.

Other problems faced by southern Ocean seabirds are highlighted in a paper by Jon Cooper on fishing hooks found in albatross regurgitations, and a paper by K Reid on oiled penguins, both on South Georgia. Six papers cover breeding or sight records of birds. A paper by Bee de Speroni and Carezzano compares aspects of the brains of rheas, tinamous and penguins.

**FROM: COLONIAL WATERBIRDS
Vol. 18 (Special Publication 1)**

This volume is a must for any cormorant affectionados. Edited by David Nettleship and David Duffy, it is entitled *The double-crested cormorant: biology, conservation and management*. It comprises 27 papers from the Colonial Waterbird Symposium of the same name held in October 1992. The papers fall into six subject categories: population history, population dynamics, feeding ecology, fisheries and aquaculture, cormorants and human interactions, management responsibility and future needs. These papers have been distributed into four parts in this volume: the bird and the problem (three papers), regional distribution, status and conflicts (nineteen papers), management responsibility and policy (three papers) and conclusions and recommendations (two papers).

It is hard to pick out any papers from this excellent volume, although the more general papers, such as that by Ludwig and co-authors on the effects of toxic chemicals on Great Lakes cormorants, and the introductory and conclusion papers are perhaps of greatest interest to those not dealing directly with double-crested cormorants. I congratulate the Colonial Waterbird Society, and the two editors of

this volume for bringing together such a comprehensive series of papers that are sure to shed light and help remove heat from the controversial topic of cormorants and their interaction with man.

Mark L Tasker

BEACHED BIRDS IN THE NETHERLANDS AS INDICATORS OF MARINE OIL POLLUTION (*SULA* Vol. 9 (Special Issue)

This 90 page special issue of *Sula* by Kees Camphuysen is in Dutch with a good English summary. It demonstrates that the Dutch continue to be the world leaders on beached bird surveys and their uses. The key recent change in use of beached bird surveys is a switch from numbers of birds per kilometre of beach to an oiling rate (the fraction of birds oiled out of the total number washing ashore). This ratio is thought to be a good indicator of the degree of oiling in offshore waters, and is relatively robust to factors such as wind direction, currents etc.

This volume summarises the Dutch beached bird survey results from 1986 to 1995. Oiling rates were highest in divers, grebes, gannet, scoters, kittiwake and auks. Oil rates were higher in winter than in summer. Oil rates in the Netherlands are very high in comparison to other European countries. This is undoubtedly because the Netherlands lies next to some of the world's busiest shipping lanes: most of the oil on Dutch beaches is bilge oil or engine room residues and crude oil is rarely encountered. Numbers of birds washing ashore showed large fluctuations from year to year, and between months.

Camphuysen goes on to apply power tests to a series of beached bird data, not only from the Netherlands, but also from other parts of Europe. These power tests indicate that oil rate is robust, and that changes in oil rate (decrease or increase) can be detected, given the variance in the data, over runs of about 12 years of data. Tests on the Netherlands data showed that

indeed there had been a decline in oil rates, and therefore oil pollution over the past ten years (and probably a longer period). However the declines over the decade were quite weak. If the rates represent the chances of birds becoming oiled, they imply that the amount of oil being released into the southern North Sea has declined by 20% since 1986. This is good news, and perhaps a good demonstration that the measures taken to reduce oil pollution from shipping are beginning to work.

FROM: *SULA* Vol. 9 No. 4

The main paper in this issue is on the numbers of breeding gulls and terns in the Netherlands in 1992, by Arend van Dijk and Peter Meininger. The commonest breeding seabird is black-headed gull (170,000 pairs), followed by herring gull (90,000) and lesser black-backed gull (34,200). Counts for 1992 are compared with those of 1979-85 and of 1973-77. Mediterranean gull numbers have increased over this period to 75 pairs, while black-headed gulls increased and then decreased (possibly related to agricultural change). Yellow-legged gulls have started breeding recently. Little gull numbers have declined from 30-45 in 1979-85 to only one pair in 1992. Among the terns, common, Sandwich, and arctic terns have probably increased, with a decreases in the black tern population.

Further papers in this issue describe a cormorant colony and eider numbers on Vlieland. Kees Camphuysen describes the stomach contents of 38 guillemots found dead on the beach in the Delta area. Most stomachs had remains of herring and/or sprat, with a few also having sandeel or small gadids. One stomach contained a squid beak.

FROM: *SEEVÖGEL* Vol. 17, No 1

It is likely that there is a rather confused young kittiwake roaming the oceans! In this issue, Ommo Hüppop describes the first nesting attempt of Mediterranean gulls on Helgoland. A pair established a site on the

cliffs (!), but failed 13 days after laying when a kittiwake nestling fell into the nest. This was subsequently reared successfully by the gulls. Bernd Hälterlein and Peter Südbeck summarise numbers of breeding waterbirds on German coasts in 1994.

**FROM: *WORLD BIRDWATCH* Vol. 18,
No. 1**

Seabirds are hardly mentioned in this issue of BirdLife International's house magazine. An interesting article on the birds of Saudi Arabia by Georgina Green summarises tern numbers: 34,000 pairs of bridled, 24,000 pairs of lesser crested, 10,000+ pairs of white-cheeked and a smaller number of swift tern nest on 190 ha of coral islands in the Gulf of Arabia.

**FROM: *PENGUIN CONSERVATION*
Vol. 8, No 2**

Several announcements start this issue, including an announcement on a penguin marking workshop being organised by Bill Fraser for late June. The aim is to discuss marking techniques that do not have the hydrodynamic disadvantages of flipper bands. The Falkland Islands Government has awarded a contract to two companies to undertake an environmental baseline study of the Islands prior to exploratory drilling for oil scheduled for 1998 or 1999. Much of the rest of the issue is taken up with the annual report of the penguin taxon advisory group, and minutes of a group meeting held in September 1995, and a similar set of reports from the Humboldt penguin group.

Robert Crawford reports on the results of the *Apollo Sea* oil spill that led to around 2,500 tonnes of heavy fuel oil washing ashore on Dassen and Robben Islands just north of Cape Town. These islands supported more than 20% of the world population of African penguins. About 9,750 live oiled penguins were collected in the area. Just over 1,700 birds were dead on arrival at the rehabilitation centre, and a further 3000 died during rehabilitation

(about 40% within 24 hours of arrival). The remainder were washed over a period of weeks to remove oil from their feathers. They were released back to the wild once they had returned to a good weight, had waterproof plumage (tested with a long swim) and were not moulting. Nearly 5,100 were returned to the wild. Many of these birds have been seen back at Dassen and Robben Islands. About 1,000 chicks were reared to fledging and released.

About 4700 penguins are known to have died (2.5% of the world population), and about 6,000 chicks will not have fledged. Lessons learned include the need to reduce stress during transport, thought to have caused the death of a substantial number of those that died after being caught. Much credit must go to the South African National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) and many supporting organisations and individuals for rescuing so many penguins.

Sue Crissey provides a 3 page, 18 paper annotated bibliography on penguin diet and nutrition.

**FROM: *WWF ARCTIC BULLETIN* No.
1.96**

The wintering grounds of spectacled eiders has long been a mystery. Last March, Margaret Petersen, Bill Larned and Greg Balogh trailed a freak signal from a long dead satellite transmitter and found nearly 150,000 spectacled eiders (roughly equal to the current world breeding population estimate) wintering in an otherwise unbroken sea of ice halfway between St Lawrence and St Matthew Islands in the Bering Sea. These were divided between about 25 flocks all within 25 miles of each other. The eiders were packed tightly into tiny holes in the ice. Since the air temperature was -30°C these holes were presumably maintained as open water solely by the activity of the birds themselves. A follow-up survey found the flocks in the same area three weeks later, but a little less congested as higher temperatures had led to more open water.

Future research is planned to determine the diet of the eiders.

PRIORITIES FOR MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

A 4-volume treatise, A global representative system of marine protected areas, has recently been published by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, World Bank and IUCN. Its aim is to identify priorities for establishing new marine protected areas and improving management in each of the world's 18 major regions. BirdLife International has contributed information to this important work, which should mark a further step forward for seabirds and other bird species which live on the coast or at sea.

NEWS FROM BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

The educational initiative being carried out by BirdLife International in Senegal to reduce tern trapping (mostly by children) has restarted following funding from Switzerland and the Netherlands. The practice of tern trapping is still widespread, even along the urbanised coast around Dakar. Some are sold to European tourists, others eaten, and yet others taken home as pets. Any rings may be removed to make necklaces or put on pigeons. The education programme focuses on the usefulness of terns for the local fishermen in locating shoals of fish. Around 60% of fish landed in Senegal comes from traditional fishermen who are not equipped with radar or fish-finding gear, and most of the children's parents are fishermen.

NEW ADDRESS FOR SEABIRD GROUP NEWSLETTER EDITOR, SEABIRD MONITORING PROGRAMME and JNCC'S SEABIRDS AT SEA TEAM

Your editor takes great pleasure in announcing that JNCC's Seabirds and

Cetaceans Branch has escaped from the basement of 17 Rubislaw Terrace. We may now be found at:

7 Thistle Place
ABERDEEN
AB10 1UZ

Tel: +44 (0)1224 646181
Fax: +44 (0)1224 621488
Email: seabirds.jncc@aberdeen.ac.uk

Both telephone numbers and email may change shortly.

Mark L Tasker

SPARE NCC/JNCC PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

During the above move, it became apparent that the branch has been carrying too large a stock of some reports. The following are available free to good homes. We will keep all requests until mid June, when they will be evaluated on a "most deserving case" basis. Those requests bearing gifts may be treated favourably also! Write to Mark Tasker at the above address.

Tasker, ML *et al.* 1986. The dispersal of auks in the northern North Sea, June to September 1985. *NCC CSD Report* no. 627.

Seabird Group 1987. Counts of some seabird colonies in 1986. *NCC CSD Report* no. 706.

Tasker, ML and Pienkowski, MW 1987. Vulnerable concentrations of birds in the North Sea.

Benn, S *et al.* 1987. Studies of seabirds at North Rona and Sula Sgeir, June 1986. *NCC CSD Report* no. 736.

Burton, CA *et al.* 1987. The distribution of seabirds off north-west Scotland, August 1986. *NCC CSD Report* no. 737.

Webb, A and Tasker, ML 1988 Distribution of seabirds in inshore waters between

Ratray Head and Flamborough Head. *NCC CSD Report* no. 760.

Tasker, ML (ed) 1988. Seabird food and feeding ecology: proceedings of 3rd international conference of the Seabird Group.

Benn, S. et al. 1988. Seabird distribution on the north-west Scottish shelf. *NCC CSD Report* No. 803.

Thomas, CJ 1988. Surveillance of cliff nesting seabirds in Orkney, 1988. *NCC CSD Report* no. 872.

Harris, MP 1989. Development of monitoring of seabird populations and performance. *NCC CSD Report* no. 941

Harris, MP 1989. Isle of May seabird studies 1989. *NCC CSD Report* no. 989.

Harrison, NM *et al.* 1989. Seabird distribution and the movement of moulting auks west of Scotland and in the northern Irish Sea (late summer 1988). *NCC CSD Report* no. 994.

Heubeck, M (ed) 1989. Seabirds and sandeels: Proceedings of a seminar held in Lerwick, Shetland, 15-16 October 1988.

Harris, MP 1990. Isle of May seabird studies 1990. *NCC CSD Report* no. 1134.

Walsh, PM *et al.* 1991. Seabird numbers and breeding success in 1990. *NCC CSD Report* no. 1235.

Monaghan, P *et al.* 1991. The role of food supply in the breeding performance of terns: final report to NCC and RSPB. *JNCC Report* no. 2.

Aspinall, SJ and Venner, JPF 1991. A survey of breeding black-headed gulls and egg collecting at Needs Ore Point, Hampshire in 1990. *JNCC Report* no. 11.

Tasker, ML (ed) 1992. European seabirds. Proceedings of the Seabird Group conference held at Glasgow University, 27-29 March 1992.

Stone, CJ *et al.* 1992. Seabird distribution around Skomer and Skokholm Islands, June 1990. *JNCC Report* no. 30.

Murray, S and Wanless, S 1992. A count of the Noss gannetry in 1992 and analysis of gannet monitoring plots on Noss NNR 1975-1991. *JNCC Report* no. 50.

Stone, CJ *et al.* 1992. Lesser black-backed gull distribution at trawlers and food availability in the Celtic Sea. *JNCC Report* no. 106.

Harris, MP 1992. Isle of May seabird studies in 1992. *JNCC Report* no. 127.

Furness, RW 1992. Implications of changes in net-mesh size, fishing effort and minimum landing size regulations in the North Sea for seabird populations. *JNCC Report* no. 133.

Stone, CJ *et al.* 1992. Seabird distribution around Skomer and Skokholm Islands, June 1992. *JNCC Report* no. 152.

Barton, TR *et al.* 1993. Seabird distribution in inshore waters between Flamborough Head and Dungeness from aerial surveys in 1989. *JNCC Report* no. 182.

Barton, TR *et al.* 1993. Seabird distribution in inshore waters of the western UK between Wick and St David's Head from aerial surveys in 1987-1991. *JNCC Report* no. 183.

Barton, TR *et al.* 1993. Seabird distribution in inshore waters between Dungeness and St David's Head from aerial surveys in 1991. *JNCC Report* no. 1842.

Jensen, H. *et al.* 1994. A comparison of distribution of seabirds and prey fish stocks in the North Sea and adjacent areas. *JNCC Report* no. 207.