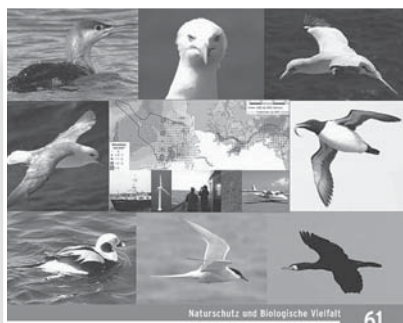


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REVIEWS



Profiles of seabirds and waterbirds of the German North and Baltic Seas
Distribution, ecology and sensitivities to human activities within the marine environment

Bettina Mendel, Nicole Sonntag, Johannes Wahl, Philipp Schwemmer, Henriette Dries, Nils Guse, Sabine Müller und Stefan Garthe



Profiles of seabirds and waterbirds of the German North and Baltic Seas. Distribution, ecology and sensitivities to human activities within the marine environment By Bettina Mendel, Nicole Sonntag, Johannes Wahl, Philipp Schwemmer, Henriette Dries, Nils Guse, Sabine Müller and Stefan Garthe. Naturschutz und Biologische Vielfalt 61. Bundesamt für Naturschutz, Bonn - Bad Godesberg. 2008. ISBN 978-3-7843-3961-0. 2008 427 pages, numerous maps, figures and tables. Paperback. €30.00. Available from BfN-Schriftenvertrieb

im Landwirtschaftsverlag, 48084 Münster, Germany.

This book describes the status, ecology and conservation of the 27 most abundant species of inshore and pelagic seabirds that occur within the German waters of the Baltic and North Seas. It is written in English and divided into five chapters: an introduction; a detailed account of how each species account was compiled; the 27 individual species accounts; a long reference list and finally a glossary and a list of abbreviations. Each of the 27 species accounts includes a section describing their identification, distribution and population,

biology and ecology, threats and sensitivities, a description of survey methods used for determining their numbers and distribution, and finally, a list of the research needs. Each account is illustrated with a small photograph of the species (most were taken by one of the authors), tables describing their population size and status, two distribution maps, a graph showing the population trend and a figure depicting the moult cycle. The overall design of the book is functional, but easy to use.

Germany's seabird populations are relatively well understood compared to those in other countries and the authors were able to draw upon reasonably complete colony, wetland, pelagic, and gull roost census data. Thus, their compilation into one publication makes this an invaluable resource for distribution, population estimates and trend data for seabirds in German waters. In many cases, population estimates used in this book were derived from the density of birds at sea; it would have been helpful if the methods for doing this had been explained in the introductory chapters rather than referring to other publications.

The sections on foraging ecology are well-researched, as you might expect from this group of authors, and provide authoritative, but succinct accounts of what is known about the diet of Germany's seabirds. The diet of diving birds in the Baltic part of German waters is much better understood than in the North Sea, mostly because of the high mortality that occurs in set nets around the coast. Information on foraging ecology and diet for the North Sea and for surface feeding species depends more on what can be

gathered at colonies or from limited observations at sea. The authors make best use of research on foraging ecology in local waters, and where not available, further afield.

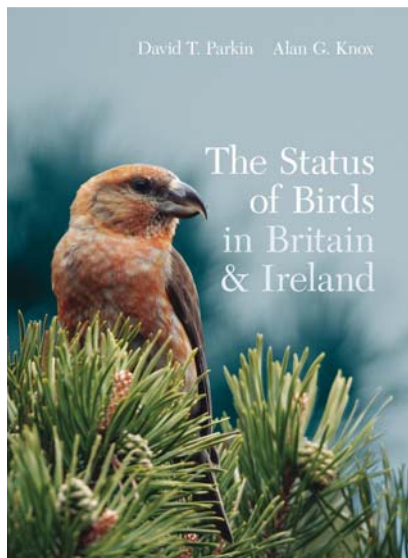
The section in each species chapter on sensitivity to human pressures is excellent and well researched. The authors draw on their own extensive studies, particularly in relation to disturbance by shipping and impacts of wind farms. I found it difficult to fault these accounts although for some species there is clearly a degree of conjecture on the importance of some threats. However, I didn't disagree with their conclusions.

I have few criticisms of this book, and they are mostly presentational. Only one pelagic distribution map is given for each species, even when it is present in sufficient numbers at sea to map for more than one season. These same maps use symbols of different sizes to depict seabird abundance; I find it difficult to pick out patterns using this representation and much prefer thematic shading. I also didn't understand why they included a section on identification in each species account, which is dealt with far better in the wealth of identification field guides available these days.

When I saw that this book was written in English, I wondered who its intended audience is meant to be, and I wasn't convinced that the authors knew this either. It is clearly not aimed at the popular end of the market. I believe that this book will be of greatest value to users and managers of Germany's coastal and marine waters. The wealth of information it contains accurate and well-researched

and makes an excellent foundation for anyone needing specific information on the status, ecology, conservation requirements, and the threats faced by seabirds and seaduck in German waters. The book's value goes much wider, as it makes valuable reading for anyone requiring generic information on seabirds in northern European waters. The authors should be congratulated for producing a highly readable work of reference.

Andy Webb



The Status of Birds in Britain and Ireland By David T. Parkin and Alan G. Knox. Christopher Helm, London. 2010. ISBN 978-1-4081-2500-7. 440 pages, 32 pages of colour photographs. Hardback, £50.00.

This is an update of a book of the same title published by the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) in 1971. The two authors are both past chairs of the BOU's Records Committee and have aimed to provide a definitive official position for birds that have occurred in Britain and Ireland, all conducted using a completely up-to-date taxonomy and set of English names. Despite a silly error in the name of the organisation that I work for inside the dust cover, I failed to find any further errors!

The introduction briefly covers a description of the British and Irish archipelago (not including the Channel Islands) including geography, climate, vegetation, habitats and the 'key' ornitho-

logical organisations. These do not include the Seabird Group, despite its role in establishing the status of seabirds in these islands and the statutory nature conservation agencies are not mentioned either, despite their fundamental role in bird conservation. A section on evolution and taxonomy is a good succinct summary of current methods and ways of expressing taxonomic relationships. The introduction is completed with a summary of the importance of the islands to migrant and resident birds, and covers the endemic taxa. Eighty-six colour photographs or maps form an interesting section of the book, but seem curiously unrelated to the text. One topic not treated is an old favourite of mine - what is the offshore limit of Britain and Ireland? Prior to claims of a 200 nautical mile offshore limit, this was comparatively straight forward, but offshore records are now treated inconsistently both nationally and in county avifaunas. A record of Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma feae* from c. 60 miles southwest of Scilly is noted, but other offshore records are not included and the status of birds in offshore waters of the Britain and Ireland is not consistently handled either.

The main part of the book is of course a short species-by-species summary of the current status of the British and Irish avifauna. Each species description includes a taxonomic summary, a summary of global distribution, and a compilation of recent information on numbers and distribution in the islands. This last is sometimes a little dated, but that is a reflection of the current peer-reviewed literature

not being fully up-to-date. Where relevant, the status of any subspecies is described. Not surprisingly, regularly occurring and resident species receive greater treatment than vagrants - but there is greater detail on the taxonomy of some of these species, e.g. Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* and Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*, than perhaps their relevance to Britain and Ireland deserves.

Species lists for Great Britain, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man are provided as Appendix 1, a list of species where there is reasonable doubt that they have occurred naturally ('Category D') forms Appendix 2, and there are 20 pages of references cited (in very small type).

This book is a very good, accurate and concise summary of the avifauna of Britain and Ireland. As with all summaries, much further information can be found elsewhere and this is well signposted from the text. I found the taxonomic information of particular interest, perhaps because I have not been particularly diligent in keeping myself up-to-date with current literature in this area. The gull taxonomy accounts may be of particular interest to Seabird Group members intrigued by the seemingly constant changes in taxonomic interpretation.

Mark Tasker