



# NEWSLETTER 125

## FEBRUARY 2014

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## RESEARCH NEWS

### THE ESSO BERNICIA OIL SPILL – 35 YEARS ON

The last of several notorious oil spills to occur in 1978 involved the unladen tanker *Esso Bernicia*, which ruptured its fuel tanks during a berthing accident at the newly opened Sullom Voe oil terminal in Shetland on 31<sup>st</sup> December. Nearly 1,200 tonnes of heavy bunker fuel spread widely in the ensuing weeks, and by mid March 1979 some 3,700 oiled birds had been found. Although this included over 300 Common Guillemots, the recorded mortality was dominated by resident and migrant inshore species: European Shag (683 dead), Black Guillemot (633), Common Eider (570), Long-tailed Duck (306) and Great Northern Diver (146).



For several winters the Nature Conservancy Council, RSPB and BP had counted seaduck, divers, grebes and other diving seabirds in Sullom Voe and adjacent Yell Sound. Based on this, a route was devised by which the main areas of interest could be covered by boat in a single day, in calm conditions and within the constraints of midwinter daylight. The first such survey was made by the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG) on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1978, just weeks before the spill, and confirmed the presence of small numbers of Velvet Scoters and Slavonian Grebes in Sullom Voe, and larger numbers of Long-tailed Duck and Great Northern Divers throughout the area (Table 1).

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Seabird-Group/505575036157550?fref=ts>

@TheSeabirdGroup

These standard surveys have continued through the 35 years since the oil spill, the latest on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2014, with a survey of most of the rest of the coast of Yell Sound having been made the previous day. Common Eiders are scarce now in Yell Sound in winter, reflecting the 70% decrease in the Shetland population since the late 1970s. After three winters of low counts, by the mid 1980s Long-tailed Ducks were back at their feeding locations in Yell Sound in reasonable numbers (although recent counts have been rather low), but curiously, they never re-occupied Sullom Voe, where 80-100 were regular before the spill. The oil spill did for the small wintering flock of Velvet Scoters in Sullom Voe, the only regular Shetland site in the 1970s, and just the odd bird is seen now, but as many Goldeneye use Sullom Voe in winter as they ever did. Red-breasted Merganser numbers have fluctuated over the years, but counts of over 100 in Sullom Voe became regular in the 1990s, and the 282 counted throughout the area in January 2014 was of national importance.

Of 131 Great Northern Divers picked up oiled in Yell Sound and Sullom Voe in early 1979, 110 were found by 12<sup>th</sup> February and will have been wintering there, while the 21 found in late February and March could have moved into the area to moult. From the number counted on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1978 (nine in Sullom Voe, 44 in Yell Sound) and maximum counts from other parts of Yell Sound in the mid 1970s, the pre-spill wintering population of the area was estimated at 120-150 birds. In Sullom Voe, 1-2 birds were seen on a few surveys in the 1980s, but they became more regular in the 1990s and there were eight in January 2014. Along the standard route in Yell Sound, the highest post-spill count (16) was in December 1979, 13 were seen in December 1984 and January 1986, but otherwise all counts have been in (usually low) single figures. This is despite better forecasting (more surveys are in 'perfect' conditions), better binoculars, and a better boat (a higher and more stable viewing platform). The total of 25 counted throughout Yell Sound and Sullom Voe in January 2014 shows numbers remain low 35 years after the oil spill.

	Survey route		Yell Sound total
	28/11/78	10/1/14	9-10/1/14
Common Eider	561	57	94
Long-tailed Duck	214	75	106
Velvet Scoter	16	1	1
Common Goldeneye	19	24	28
Red-breasted Merganser	50	146	282
Great Northern Diver	53	10	25
Cormorant	55	238	486
Shag	620	598	1436
Slavonian Grebe	13	36	58
Black Guillemot	486	669	1216
Pelagic auks	11	16	50
Other species	5	2	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>2103</b>	<b>1873</b>	<b>3794</b>

**Table 1. Seaduck and diving seabirds recorded on the Sullom Voe and southern Yell Sound survey route on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1978 and 10<sup>th</sup> January 2014, and the total recorded throughout Yell Sound and Sullom Voe on 9-10<sup>th</sup> January 2014.**

More positively, although Slavonian Grebes were virtually absent from Sullom Voe in the 1980s, they became more regular during the 1990s and, as elsewhere in Shetland, numbers increased markedly during the 2000s and the 58 counted in January 2014 (32 in Sullom Voe, 26 elsewhere in Yell Sound) were of national importance. The Black Guillemot population of northeast Shetland was hit badly by the 1978 oil spill, but had probably recovered by the late 1990s, and along with Shags once again dominate the winter seabird scene!

Paul Harvey and Howard Towll (Shetland Amenity Trust) assisted with the January 2014 counts, and Jonathan Wills and Tom Bradshaw crewed the *Dunter III*; many thanks also to all who have helped with counts over the years. SOTEAG's seabird monitoring is funded by the Sullom Voe Association Ltd.

Martin Heubeck ([martinheubeck@btinternet.com](mailto:martinheubeck@btinternet.com))

## RESIGHTING COLOUR-RINGED EUROPEAN SHAGS IN WINTER

As part of a collaborative project between the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, the University of Aberdeen and the Scottish Ornithologists Club we are using resightings of field-readable colour-rings to locate shags in winter in order to understand why they go where they do.

Since 2009, shags at multiple colonies along the east coast of Scotland and England have been ringed with a coloured plastic ring engraved with 3 letters; allowing individuals to be identified in the field using binoculars, a telescope or camera zoom. The shag is an inshore species and individuals of all ages can be seen in winter at coastal roost sites.

Intensive winter resighting of colour-ringed shags began in 2009 and since then individuals have been reported wintering in the UK as far north as Yell, Shetland, and as far south as Brighton, East Sussex. Every year we also receive reports of individuals going further afield to France, Belgium and the Netherlands.



Colour-ringed juvenile European shag – Red WAT – seen this winter roosting at Peterhead harbour, Scotland. Ringed at the Bullers of Buchan (Aberdeenshire, Scotland) WAT has been seen 5 times since it fledged; unlike some other individuals that travel hundreds of kilometres after fledging this individual has stayed within 20km of its natal colony (photo by Jenny Sturgeon).

During summer 2013 shags were ringed at 12 colonies and despite last winter's wreck (when over 500 dead shags were found) many colonies had moderate breeding productivity. Thanks to the amazing efforts of ringers, 1,449 shags were colour-ringed and since September 2013 we have amassed 7,013 resightings of 1,882 individuals from more than 80 observers along the UK coastline. Of these resightings, 2,343 are of 782 individuals that were ringed as chicks in 2013. This amounts to over 50% of all colour-ringed chicks from 2013!

So far this long-term resighting data has shown that while some adults from the Isle of May stay at the breeding colony year round others disperse to different areas along the coast in the autumn and winter months. These individual differences seem to persist over several seasons. The challenge now is to understand when these different strategies become fixed, why these differences occur and whether winter location is important in determining how well birds survive and/or breed.

The winter season for resighting colour-ringed shags runs from September until the end of March each year and we are always grateful to hear of resightings. Please email Jenny Sturgeon at [shags@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:shags@ceh.ac.uk) with resightings (including date seen, location, 3-letter code and ring colour) and get in touch if you are interested in becoming more involved.

Jenny Sturgeon

## SEABIRD WRECK

Recent poor weather in north east England and eastern Scotland has resulted in difficult feeding conditions for shags with the result that a number are appearing ashore in a weak or dead condition. This follows a high mortality of shags in the 2012/13 winter when over 300 ringed shags were reported dead. Please send reports of location, numbers and any ringed birds to: [manew@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:manew@ceh.ac.uk)

Recent bad weather has also resulted in hundreds of auks washing up in the South-west of England from Hampshire to Cornwall.

Please continue to send Mike Harris information on any dead puffins found including date, location and wing measurement together with any photos of heads and wings. See newsletter 124.

Mike Harris ([mph@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:mph@ceh.ac.uk)) Centre for Ecology & Hydrology,

Home address: Pittenkerrie Cottage, Glassel, Banchory AB31 4DD



**Puffin found at Scalloway - Martin Heubeck.**

## BEACHED BIRD SURVEY 2013 RESULT

The 2013 Beached Bird Survey was held during the weekend of 23rd and 24th February. Around 650 volunteers participated, walking 2,120 km of beaches around the UK (Figure 1). A total of 375 seabirds were found dead. This includes seaducks, divers and grebes but excludes corpses recorded as 'wings only'. The resulting density, 0.18 seabirds found per kilometre walked, is the fourth lowest since 1991 (range: 0.14 to 3.80).

One Gannet was found dead entangled in netting and one Shag was entangled in fishing line. Two Guillemots were recorded sick but free of oil.

Several beaches were reported to being cleaned regularly, but equally, many others were found littered with plastic and other rubbish and debris from the fishing industry. Slight oiling was recorded on only eight beaches in the North-East, South-East, South and Wales.

As in most years, auks were the most numerous amongst the dead seabirds found (36%), followed by cormorants/shags (26%) and gulls (23%), but all seabird species were at or below average densities (Table 1). Figure 2 shows the fluctuating trends in density for the three main species groups auks, gulls and cormorants/shags since 1991.

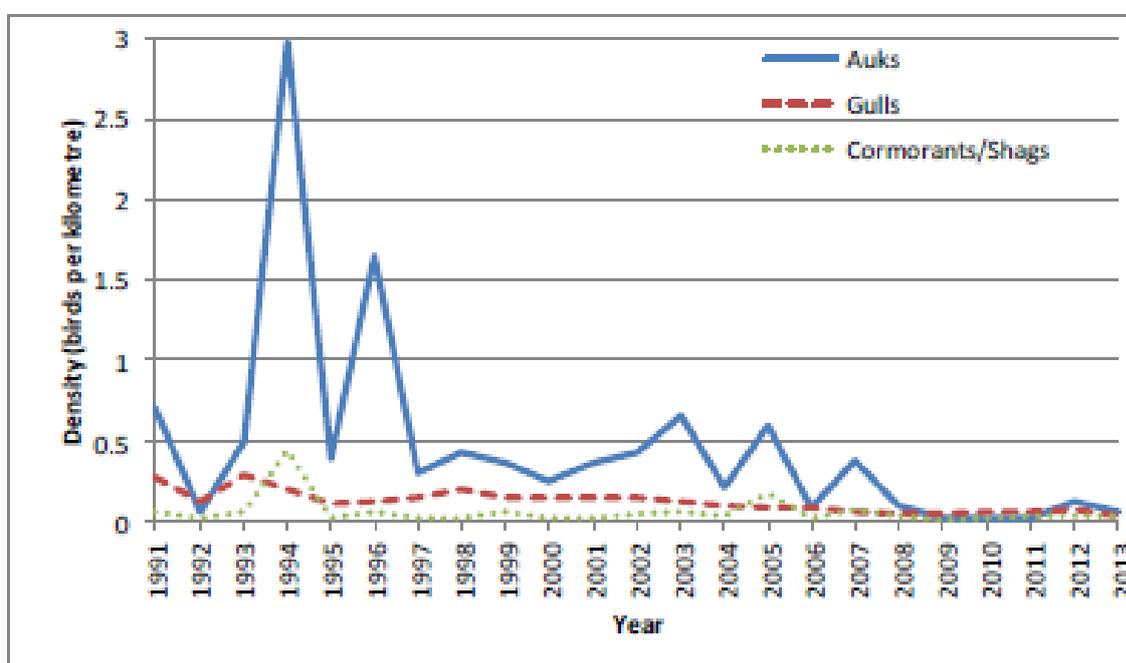


Figure 2: Trends in overall density on auk, gull and cormorant/shag corpses, 1991-2013

Densities of dead seabirds were higher in the north and east of the UK (Table 2), partially attributable to the prevailing onshore winds prior to the survey in these areas and the winter distribution of auks at sea, and also in the South due to a contamination incident.

Of the seabirds found, only 1.8% showed some degree of oiling. This is the lowest oiling rate since 1991 (range 1.8 – 26.8%). Unfortunately, this low oiling rate is deceptive and does not include birds that died from a substance called polyisobutylene (PIB). A pollution incident involving PIB occurred in the South about four weeks prior to the Beached Bird Survey. Most of the dead and dying birds would have been removed from the beaches by the time the Beached Bird Survey took place, but still 32 birds were recorded covered in the glue-like substance. All but one which was found in south Devon, were found on a 14 km stretch in Dorset (South region). In addition, a Great Skua was found in East Riding of Yorkshire (South-East region) with a sticky substance on its plumage that was not thought to be oil.

In total, the contamination rate (oil, PIB or similar) of seabirds in 2013 was 10.4%. Of these, 92.3% were auks.

Oiling rates were highest in the South and in Shetland (Table 2) but actual numbers involved were very low (four and one oiled birds respectively). No oiled birds were recorded in six out of the nine Beached Bird Survey regions

**Table 1: Numbers, density and % oiled for different groups of seabird species found during the 2013 National Beached Bird Survey**

Species Group <sup>1</sup>	Number found	Density (no./km)	% Oiled <sup>2</sup>
Auks	137	0.06	3.7
Gulls	87	0.04	1.1
Cormorant & Shag	96	0.05	0.0
Fulmar	13	0.01	0.0
Gannet	14	0.01	0.0
Kittiwake	16	0.01	0.0
Seaducks	9	<0.01	0.0
Divers	0	0	N/A
Grebes	0	0	N/A
Terns	2	<0.01	0
Skuas	1	<0.01	0
Petrels	0	0	N/A

<sup>1</sup>Auks: Guillemot, Black Guillemot, Razorbill, Puffin, Little Auk, auk sp. Gulls: Great Black-backed, Lesser Black-backed, Herring, Glaucous, Iceland, Common, Black-headed, gull sp. Seaducks: Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Scoter, Velvet Scoter, seaduck sp. Divers: Great Northern, Red-throated. Grebes: Great Crested, Slavonian. Terns: Common. Skuas: Great.

<sup>2</sup>In addition, 22.6% of auks and 6.3% of Kittiwakes, and the single Great Skua, were contaminated with polyisobutylene (PIB).

**Table 2: Numbers, density and % oiled for all seabirds in each region found during the 2013 National Beached Bird Survey.**

Region	Distance walked (km)	Number of dead seabirds	Density (no. dead birds/km)	% Oiled
Shetland	48.4	10	0.20	10.0
Orkney	48.5	15	0.31	0.0
North-East	521.5	147	0.28	0.7
South-East	246.8	46	0.19	0.0
South	283.7	69	0.24	10.8
South-West	56.6	1	0.02	0.0
Wales	186.6	9	0.05	0.0
North-West	610.0	70	0.11	0.0
N. Ireland	118.2	8	0.07	0.0

Results presented here are those from surveys carried out between 16th February and 3th March 2013 (a week either side of 23-24th February). No data were available for Lancashire or Cheshire (North-West region).

**Sabine Schmitt & Mark Eaton.**

## BREEDING SEASON NEWS

### SHETLAND BREEDING SEABIRD SUMMARIES

The Shetland Bird Club has recently launched its own website and species-by-species summaries of the results of breeding seabird monitoring (as published in the Shetland Bird Reports for 2011 and 2012) undertaken by the different organisations and individuals working within the county are now available in pdf format at [www.shetlandbirdclub.co.uk/seabird-reports.html](http://www.shetlandbirdclub.co.uk/seabird-reports.html).

## CONSERVATION NEWS

### TYNE KITTIWAKES PARTNERSHIP (TKP) – NEWS UPDATE

There are three current items of news ...

1. The public showing of a short film about the Tyne Kittiwakes is to be at 7.30pm on 12 March 2014 at the Star and Shadow cinema, Stepney Bank, Byker.

<http://www.starandshadow.org.uk/on/film/1353>

This is an open and free event, with several showings planned during the evening. Feel free to attend and meet those involved.

Gateshead Kittiwake Tower, 9 July 2009, showing nearby vegetation. Photo by Daniel M Turner.

2. Remedial work is underway (w/c 3 Feb 2014) at the Gateshead Kittiwake Tower. This is due to crow predation which caused the site to be abandoned by nesting kittiwakes in summer 2013. Spikes are to be placed on the tower top and nearby vegetation will be cleared – organised through Gateshead Council.
3. Due to the purchase of the McNulty Offshore site by the Port of Tyne, the building on which the kittiwakes nest is planned for future demolition. By working with Port of Tyne planners various agencies (including TKP) have negotiated a tower structure to be brought into play on the site for the kittiwakes to move onto. The tower is to have four nesting faces, each with seven ledges. The planning application is due for approval in early February so the tower may be placed at an interim position by early March. Movement to the tower's final position will occur at a future date before demolition of the current nesting building.

**Daniel M Turner**



Kittiwakes at the McNulty engineering workshop, Tyne Dock, 8 July 2012. Photo by Daniel M Turner.

## **SUSTAINABLE SHETLAND vs. VIKING ENERGY – TIME'S RUNNING OUT**

One of the less reported (at least nationally) conservation battles of this millennium so far has been that over plans to build a giant wind farm on the blanket bog moorland of the central Mainland of Shetland, home to Great and Arctic Skuas, Red-throated Divers, and an enviable suite of breeding waders including a significant population of Whimbrel. In 2012, the Scottish Government granted permission for this development, which was formally opposed by, among many others, Scottish Natural Heritage, the RSPB, the John Muir Trust, the Shetland Bird Club and, crucially, a local group called Sustainable Shetland.

Sustainable Shetland was granted a Judicial Review of the Scottish Government's decision, and this was held in early 2013 but instead of an anticipated four days it dragged on for 14 days, resulting in a legal bill of nearly £100,000 for Sustainable Shetland, which was met by many fund-raising events and the generosity of its members, who are just ordinary, concerned citizens (there are no millionaire backers!).

In autumn 2013 Lady Clark of Colton found in favour of Sustainable Shetland on two counts:

1. Ministers were incompetent in granting consent for the Viking wind farm since the Viking Energy partnership did not have a licence to generate electricity.

2. Ministers did not properly take account of their obligations under the EU Wild Birds Directive, specifically in relation to Whimbrel, of which 95% of the UK breeding population is in Shetland, and concentrated on the windfarm site.

Scottish Government Ministers are appealing this decision on both counts. The Appeal is to be held at the end of February 2014, in the Inner House of the Court of Session, Edinburgh, with three days allocated to the competency issue, and three to the Wild Birds Directive. Due to the cost of legal action, Sustainable Shetland is opposing the appeal in relation to the Wild Birds Directive only.

To fund this latest court action, and bearing in mind the financial commitment already given by its local members, Sustainable Shetland launched a crowdfunder appeal for £20,000 on 16<sup>th</sup> January, which needs to be raised by 5pm on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014. At the time of writing (13<sup>th</sup> February) this has raised just over £6,000, with only four weeks to go.

If you are interested in this story, please visit [www.sustainablesketland.org](http://www.sustainablesketland.org) and

[www.crowdfunder.co.uk/sustainable-shetland](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/sustainable-shetland) for more information.

## MARINE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE: PROPOSALS FOR UK MARINE MONITORING PROGRAMMES

In early January, all four UK Governments launched a three month consultation on the “Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) Proposals for UK Marine Monitoring Programmes. The consultation will run until **2 April 2014**.

This consultation seeks views on the ways in which we monitor the marine environment around the UK. Specifically, this is about how we monitor progress on achieving Good Environmental Status (GES) by 2020 as required by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

The consultation covers monitoring proposals for each of the eleven Marine Strategy Framework Directive descriptors. These relate to:

- biological diversity
- non-indigenous species
- commercially exploited fish and shellfish
- food webs
- human-induced eutrophication
- sea floor integrity
- hydrographical conditions
- contaminants
- contaminants in fish and other seafood
- marine litter
- introduction of energy (including underwater noise)

This consultation will be of interest to groups or individuals who use or have an interest in the sea, business users of the sea, national and local interest groups, statutory advisers and governments in other EU Member States.

For more information please see:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/marine/msfd-proposals-for-uk-marine-monitoring-programmes>

**Exploring the consequences of reducing survey effort for detecting individual and temporal variability in survival.**

J.J. Lahoz-Monfort, M. P. Harris, B. J. T. Morgan, S. N. Freeman & S. Wanless. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 2014. doi: 10.1111/1365-2664.12214

Mark recapture techniques are used extensively in order to establish population size, survival and other aspects of demography. Both the marking and follow up resighting or recapture can be hugely time consuming and costly and increasingly difficult to justify as part of long term monitoring. This paper uses 26 years of data and artificially removes various datasets in order to establish which components are most vital in order to give robust results. If studies require a physical input of resighting this can be the most time consuming component and this paper illustrates that continuing the level of marking is vital but the resighting effort can be reduced while still maintain robust survival estimates.

**Colonization pathways of the northeast Atlantic by northern fulmars: a test of James Fisher's 'out of Iceland' hypothesis using museum collections.**

T. M. Burg , H. Bird , L. Lait & M. de L. Brooke. *Journal of Avian Biology* 45: 001–010, 2014.

Up until about 350 years ago Northern fulmars in the north-east Atlantic were restricted to St Kilda in the Outer Hebrides and Grimsay in northern Iceland before a steady colonisation, initially to the Faroes then steadily southwards. This led James Fisher in the 1940's to propose a sole Icelandic origin as the St Kilda population had been heavily harvested by the native population. Previous studies had shown little variation in the contemporary genetic make-up of the different populations but this recent study has given greater credence to Fisher's theory. By studying specimens collected 100 years ago and locating a stronger Icelandic signal in these museum samples enabled the authors to support Fisher's theory. St Kilda birds also contained a number of closely related haplotypes especially compared to the Grimsay samples suggesting this population, although long established was also younger. Further work established a that more recent samples from Fulmars on St Kilda had greater variation than those collected 100 years ago suggesting that immigration from other colonies had occurred.

**Mark Newell**

**SEABIRD JOURNAL**

Apologies to members that *SEABIRD* 26 (2013) arrived through your letterboxes in January 2014. It did actually make it to the printers in 2013, but after the proofs were checked and the sheets printed, binding and shipment had to wait until after the Christmas and New Year holiday. To try and get around this end-of-year problem, we are boldly attempting to publish *SEABIRD* 27 in June/July 2014, and stick to this schedule thereafter. A good number of manuscripts are currently in progress, but we could still do with more material, either full papers or short notes. If you have anything to submit, please send to Martin Heubeck ([martinheubeck@btinternet.com](mailto:martinheubeck@btinternet.com)) as soon as possible, to begin the peer review process. It is difficult to stick to deadline threats, but if there is enough material completed for a decent-sized volume by 28<sup>th</sup> May 2014 then anything received after this date (including final resubmissions) will be held over for *SEABIRD* 28 (2015).

## CORRECTION TO SEABIRD BOOK REVIEW

We are grateful to Pete Morris and *Seabird* for the review of our multimedia ID guide *Pterodroma Petrels*. One small correction, if we may. Pete says, not surprisingly, "Surely Herald *Pterodroma heraldica* and Trindade Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* do not both breed on Round Island?" In fact, Ruth Brown and colleagues demonstrated that both taxa do indeed breed on Round Island, along with Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*, and that they appear to be interbreeding.

### Bibliography

Brown, R. M., Nichols, R. A., Faulkes, C. G., Jones, C. G., Bugoni, L., Tatayah, V., Gottelli, D., & Jordan, W. C. 2010. Range expansion and hybridization in Round Island petrels (*Pterodroma* spp.): evidence from microsatellite genotypes. *Molecular Ecology* 19: 3157–3170.

Brown, R. M., Jordan, W. C., Faulkes, C. G., Jones, C. G., Bugoni, L., Tataya, V., Palma, R. L., & Nicols, R. A. 2011. Phylogenetic relationships in *Pterodroma* petrels are obscured by recent secondary contact and hybridization. *PLoS ONE* 6: e20350. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0020350.

**Bob Flood and Ashley Fisher, Isles of Scilly, UK**

## SEABIRD GROUP GRANTS

Five applications were received for grants in the October round and the following were awarded:

- Thomas Foxley – Red-billed Tropicbird breeding success
- Christopher Gibbins – Status and identification of Common Gull taxa
- Colin Carter – Lowestoft Kittiwakes

## NEW EX-COMM MEMBERS

### Membership secretary

Lucy Quinn has taken over from Ilka as membership secretary. The contact email remains the same:

seabirdgroup.membership@gmail.com

But please note the postal address for membership and Gift Aid forms is now different and can be found on the website:

Lucy recently completed a PhD identifying non-breeding foraging areas of the northern fulmar and investigating whether individual differences in area use affects subsequent reproduction or survival. She has also worked on skuas with Bob Furness and with CEH on the Isle of May.

### Student Ordinary Member

This is a new post within the Ex-Comm and is incorporated in the updated constitution and there will be an early careers session at the upcoming conference.

Jenny Sturgeon is a PhD student at the University of Aberdeen and CEH looking at the winter movements of sub-adult European shags from multiple colonies on the east coast. You can contact her on: [Jenny.sturgeon@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:Jenny.sturgeon@abdn.ac.uk)

## **Website Officer**

Jeff Stratford was nominated as Website Officer.

## **Farewell Ilka!**

After 3.5 years, Ilka Win stepped down as membership secretary in 2013. Ilka worked extremely hard to tidy up the membership list, saw us through an increase in subscription rates, a new way of paying and also achieved a lot of extra income through Gift Aid and encouraging new and existing members to sign up to this.



**Ilka and Eilah stuffing envelopes for Seabird 26. Listening to music we filled 326 envelopes on 16 January after Eilah had finished school. Eilah loved attaching address labels so she was a great help to mum!**



## SEABIRD GROUP CONFERENCE

The 12th Seabird Group conference will be held at Merton College, University of Oxford from **21-23 March 2014**. The conference organiser is Prof Tim Guilford, assisted by PhD student, Akiko Shoji. The conference has proved so popular that all 150 spaces available for registrants were filled by early February! Apologies to those members that missed the cut and are therefore unable to attend; the 150 capacity was based upon attendance at recent Seabird Group conferences, but will clearly have to be reviewed for future meetings.

A total of just over 100 abstracts were received for consideration by the scientific committee (comprising Tim Guilford, Steve Votier, Mark Newell and Russell Wynn), and from these 40 were selected for oral presentation with a further 50 poster presentations accepted. These will be underpinned by three invited keynote speakers: Chris Perrins (Uni Oxford), Francesco Bonnadonna (CNRC, Montpellier) and Judy Shamoun-Baranes (Uni Amsterdam). We also received 25 applications for travel grants and, after careful consideration by an expert panel, a total of 10 were awarded totaling about £2000. These are particularly targeted at early career researchers from elsewhere in Europe, e.g. Portugal and Spain, who may not have been able to attend without this financial support. A further initiative to support early career researchers is a workshop organised by our co-opted student representative on the Executive Committee, Jenny Sturgeon. This workshop has already attracted 30 registrants and is supported by several experienced seabird experts. Finally, the conference will be backed by at least ten sponsors, with cash contributions to date totaling £1700 and several donations of prizes. Further details can be found at: <http://oxnav.zoo.ox.ac.uk/seabirdconference>

## SEABIRD GROUP AGM

### Minutes of the 48th Annual General Meeting, Carrbridge, 3pm 16<sup>th</sup> November 2013

#### I. Present/Apologies

Present: Russel Wynn (Chair), Ellie Owen (Secretary), Martin Heubeck (Journal Editor), Claire Smith (Newsletter Editor), Mark Newell (Ordinary member of excom), Jenny Sturgeon (Ordinary member of excom), Mike Harris, Sarah Wanless, Alan Leitch, Ian Darling, Mark Oksein, Adam McClure, Ben Herschell, Rachel Jenkins, Andrew Ramsey, Claire Bailly, Bernie Zonfrillo, Alan Barclay, Rab Morton, Rob Robinson, Nina O'Hanlon, Alex Robbins, Chris Redfern, Alice Trevail, Jez Blackburn, Jim Lennon, David Steventon, Bob Swann, Derek Robertson, Brian Etheridge.

Apologies: Ilka Win (Membership Secretary), Chris Thaxter (Ordinary Member of Excom), Jeff Stratford (Website officer), Mark Lewis (Ordinary member of Excom).

Russell Wyn opened the meeting and set out the aims of the Seabird Group.

## 2. Minutes of the 47th AGM

The minutes had been previously published in the newsletter. These were proposed by Mike Harris and seconded by Bernie Zonfrillo.

## 3. Matters arising from the minutes

A matter arising was the review of the Seabird Group constitution. The amended constitution had previously been published in the newsletter. The main changes were for a Website Officer and a Student Ordinary Member to be electable to the Executive Committee and to reflect that most correspondence is now done by email not post.

The new constitution was proposed by Sarah Wanless and seconded by Alan Leitch

## 4. The 48th Annual Report

RW went through the Annual Report which covers the previous financial year. The report was proposed by Bob Swann and seconded by Mike Harris.

## 5. 2012-13 Accounts and Treasurers report

Russell Wyn went through the Treasurer's report in the absence of Kerry Leonard.

Sarah Wanless asked if we were seeking sponsorship for the conference. Russell Wyn said that we were looking into this with LUSH cosmetics.

Bernie Zonfrillo asked why the bank interest was zero even though we had increased funds. Russell Wyn explained interest paid on this account was time limited and had expired and that if these funds were to stay in the Seabird Group's accounts while we await news of the next seabird census then we should look at putting it into a higher interest account for a short time.

The 2012-13 Accounts were proposed by Bernie Zonfrillo and seconded by Jim Lennon.

## 6. Nominations to the Executive committee (Membership Secretary, Student

Ordinary member, Website officer)

Russell Wyn invited nominations for Membership Secretary. Jeff Stratford was nominated as Website Officer, proposed by Sarah Wanless and seconded by Martin Heubeck.

Jenny Sturgeon was nominated as Student Ordinary Member. This was accepted by attendees. Sarah Wanless asked whether there would be an option for co-opting the Student Member for an extra year after the one year term. Russell Wyn said that there was and this was in the revised constitution.

## 7. Membership

Russell Wyn reported that at present there were 318 members with 25 new recruits and 8 resignations of which four were for reasons of limited funds and four were following the death of a member. The rising membership is very encouraging, particularly when other similar groups are not able to maintain their activities through difficult economic times (e.g. Medmaravis).

## 8. World Seabird Union

Russell Wyn informed members that the second WСУ conference will be 10<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> October 2015 and that the Seabird Group was a supporting organisation.

## 9. Update on Seabird

Martin Heubeck informed members that SEABIRD 26 was in the final design and print stage and would be delivered around Christmas; he explained the desire to aim to print SEABIRD 27 as early as June 2014 and then to keep to that cycle and invited manuscripts by February.

Russell Wyn reported that the journal is attracting members with its high quality and stated that the reviewers were of particularly high quality and therefore encouraged members to submit papers which could benefit from this review process.

Mike Harris commented that it was excellent that the journal is now made available online 6mo after printing. Martin Heubeck explained that the abstracts will now be made available immediately upon printing.

#### 10. The next Seabird Group Conference

Russell Wyn updated members on the details for the next conference and recognised concerns about the late timing of the opening of registration. The call for abstracts will open soon and close in mid January and there is no theme.

Alex Robbins asked if the dinner could be subsidised. Russell Wyn said yes, all meals will be subsidised.

Sarah Wanless asked if we could subsidise overseas delegates (e.g. from the Mediterranean). Russell Wyn felt this would be good and we could subsidise some costs. Martin Heubeck suggested that the anticipated one-off £2400 from gift aid in 2013/14 could be used for this purpose.

#### 11. AOB

Ellie Owen updated members on the formation of the early career wing of the student group and described the workshop planned for this group at the next seabird group conference. Four of the members present were students.

Mike Harris reminded the group that Bill Bourne had been unwell and suggested we send him our greetings.

Bernie Zonfrillo, Mike Harris, Sarah Wanless asked about the beached bird survey to see if there was progress in updating this.

**\*AP:Russell Wyn** said he would make efforts to find out from RSPB.



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

Seabird Group Forum:

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

**Registered charity No. 260907**

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:kerrysleonard@hotmail.com">kerrysleonard@hotmail.com</a>
Membership Secretary	Lucy Quinn (2016)	<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>
Student Ordinary Member	Jenny Sturgeon (2015)	<a href="mailto:Jenny.sturgeon@abdn.ac.uk">Jenny.sturgeon@abdn.ac.uk</a>
Website Officer	Jeff Stratford (2016)	<a href="mailto:jeff.stratford@pms.ac.uk">jeff.stratford@pms.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>

**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: 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.**