



NEWSLETTER 147

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News

Unveiling seabird soundscapes at sea

Aline da Silva Cerqueira, Kings College London

In the summer of 2019, I travelled to Grassholm Island, off the Pembrokeshire coast in Wales, to embark on my first fieldwork expedition and join an amazing team of seabird researchers led by Professor Steve Votier. Steve is a Professor of Seabird Ecology & Conservation at Heriot-Watt University and has been researching the population of **Northern Gannets** (*Morus bassanus*) at Grassholm, the third largest in Britain, since 2006.

The objective of my expedition was to deploy miniature audio recorders, in combination with GPS trackers, directly onto Gannet individuals to explore their marine soundscapes. This study is part of my PhD research which is investigating the behaviour and context of seabirds foraging at sea by recording and analysing seabird sounds remotely.

Seabird sounds provide acoustic cues to everything these animals do. As birds vocalise, move, feed and socialise they produce sounds that reflect the types of activities they engage with in their environment. Likewise, environmental sounds, namely nonbiological natural sounds (geophony) and the sounds produced by other organisms (biophony) and humans (anthropophony), create a diverse acoustic soundscape that helps build the context in which animals exist. Together, these sounds provide an insight into the ecology, behaviour and physiology of wildlife and comprise a valuable set of information for biodiversity and ecological research. The soundscapes of seabirds are therefore a repository of information waiting to be explored, with potential to unveil new insights into seabird social behaviour and interactions with their environment.

We successfully collected sounds from 10 Gannets using AudioMoth acoustic loggers made by Open Acoustic Devices. In total, over 600 hours of seabird sounds were recorded, across all audio recorders, corresponding to 55 GB of data, which must be analysed. I recently completed a chapter of my thesis based on the marine soundscapes of two species of albatross at Bird Island,



Professor Steve Votier and Aline Cerqueira fitting an AudioMoth acoustic logger onto a Northern Gannet at Grassholm. Photo: Hannah Meinertzhagen.

South Georgia, in which I manually analysed and classified over 650 hours of albatross sounds. It was a very labour-intensive and time-consuming process, albeit very interesting. So, to speed up the sound analysis process and create opportunities for public participation in seabird ecology research, I recently created a citizen-science project called **Seabird Soundscapes** hosted by the online platform Zooniverse.

The Seabird Soundscapes project is powered by volunteer citizen-scientists who can help classify Gannet sounds through simple online tasks. Each task consists of participants listening to and visually inspecting spectrograms of 10-second excerpts from the original audio files that were recorded during the Grassholm expedition. Citizen-scientists can then classify each sound they listen to by choosing from the sound category options in the Seabird Soundscapes 'Classify' task. All sound classifications are then stored and subsequently used to create a library of seabird sounds. In the next stage of this study, I will be using this library to create an automated seabird sounds classifier based on parameters learnt from the classified data. These steps will enable faster analysis of the Gannet acoustic dataset and at the same time allow the public to delve into Welsh marine soundscapes from a bird's ear perspective. This is a unique experience that I am very happy and excited to share with many seabirders and citizen-science enthusiasts.



The Seabird Soundscapes project logo. Art design created by Alexandra McGoran.

Once the Gannet audio data are fully classified, I will be able to link the sounds to the GPS data to determine the spatial distribution of sounds along each foraging track. This step is important because it will allow me to identify specific locations where birds congregate at sea and understand how individuals interact and react to other individuals and their surroundings across broader scales of space and time.

Seabird soundscapes remain underexplored outside of nesting sites, highlighting the importance and the potential of at-sea acoustic surveying to fill in the knowledge gaps about seabird ecology and behaviour at sea. We hope the Seabird Soundscapes project will help refine our knowledge about seabird social interactions and communication during foraging. Acoustic tracking of seabirds at sea can also be used to detect human activity such as fisheries and provide valuable information on how seabirds respond to the presence of fishing vessels. This type of information has particular relevance to seabird conservation as it can help identify areas where fisheries and seabird foraging overlap, and thus inform policy to support both seabird protection and marine resources management.

The Seabird Soundscapes project is the result of a collective effort, which besides me includes my PhD supervisors Professor Terry Dawson from King's College London and Dr Robin Freeman from the ZSL Institute of Zoology, research collaborators Professor Steve Votier & his team, the Zooniverse crew and the amazing citizen-scientists that voluntarily dedicate their time to help us classify gigabytes of acoustic data and without whom this study would not be able to achieve its objectives.

You can take part in the Seabird Soundscapes project [here](#). You can also follow Seabird Soundscapes on Twitter at [@SeabirdSounds](#) and join the project's [Facebook page](#).

The 7th World Seabird Twitter Conference #WSTC7

WSTC Committee

From 4th-6th May, seabird lovers from all around the world gathered on Twitter for **the 7th World Seabird Twitter Conference (WSTC7)**. Once again, this event provided an inclusive, low cost, low carbon opportunity to 'meet' and share research, art, and conservation management projects related to seabirds. Over the three days of the conference, the tracked statistics revealed that 887 people contributed to the conference with over 4,000 tweets, and a potential audience of over 8 million users across 25 countries! In what has been an extremely challenging year, WSTC7 was a very welcome event that allowed our community to catch up on projects and discover new ones, to follow well-known PIs and meet new, young seabirders.



Drawing this audience was the > 140 presentations spanning the full range of current seabird work, including three great plenary presentations. **Jonas Hentati-Sundberg (@hentatisundberg)**, lecturer at the Swedish University of Agricultural Science in Uppsala (Sweden), showed the use of bioenergetics, drones and Artificial Intelligence to help make fisheries sustainable for seabird populations. **Emily Choy (@Emily_S_Choi)**, postdoctoral researcher at McGill University, focused on the direct effects of Arctic climate change as well as anthropogenic stressors on **Brünnich's Guillemots** (*Uria lomvia*, or **Thick-billed Murres** depending on your part of the planet); and **Akiko Shoji (@AkikoShoji)**, Associate Professor at the University of Tsukuba, presented on the topic of trans-ecosystem transferral of contaminants by seabirds comparing mercury biotransport by auks breeding on both sides of the North Pacific.

Old favourites like the Tracking and Distribution and Foraging Ecology sessions, as well as our (new to last year) Art and Communication session, were a great success. Every year we are blown away by the incredible graphics and outreach the presenters create. But this year was also the sign of novelty with three new fantastic thematic sessions: Conservation Management and Policy, Energetics and Physiology, and Seabirders Diversity. Here, we will focus on the Seabirders Diversity Session, but you can catch up on any of the presentations you are interested in by using the [links in our abstract book](#).

The **Seabirders Diversity** session focussed on how those with protected characteristics can find representation and support within the seabird, and wider STEM community, with a view to also celebrating the incredible work done by different groups. Such a session was also important to us as we were willing to present the diversity of the seabird community and how we can be more inclusive.

The session opened with a presentation on 'Decolonising the Ornithology Curriculum' by **Fay Morland** on behalf of the University of Sheffield. This group has provided an excellent handbook for those wishing to apply a decolonial framework to both their teaching and research in ecology (see the [handbook](#) for more information on the group's work). Then **Alyssa Paparella** from [@DisabledStem](#) shared some useful and important tips on how to make online presentations more accessible. For instance, she reminded us of the importance to add descriptions to the legends when including pictures so that those who use a screen reader can follow along. Definitely worth taking a look before preparing your next online talk.

Representing the British Ornithologist's Union (@IBIS_journal), **Steve Dudley** highlighted the fantastic work the BOU has been undertaking to promote LGBTQIA+ ornithologists with their [#RainbowBlog](#). Since Global Pride in June 2020, this blog has featured several stories aiming to educate the ornithology community on LGBTQIA+ issues. This work is now being expanded to a [#BOUDiversityBlog](#) 'as a vehicle to discuss all diversity issues in ornithology'. Judging by the success of the [#RainbowBlog](#) this new blog is sure to be one to follow in the future. Following, The Seabird Group presented on their recently formed Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan, for improving diversity, networking opportunities, removing bias in grant applications and supporting and improving the knowledge base of EDI-related issues in seabird research (see page 8 for more information).

To conclude the session, **Danita Burke** presented on behalf of Women in the Arctic and Antarctic, [@arctic_in](#). Women are usually underrepresented in public communication, while actually so many work there, and on so many different topic and research areas. So, this group is working to build awareness about the diversity and skills of women working in the polar regions in a variety of research areas. Their website (<https://womeninthearticandantarctic.ca/wiaa-blog/>) contains a useful resource featuring profiles of women researchers to aid 'networking and acknowledgement of women as experts in their field'. You can there find some impressive speakers to keep in mind to invite to your future local talk series.

The inaugural Seabirder Diversity session at WSTC7 was a useful and important way to communicate ways in which the seabirder community can better support their peers, as well as highlighting groups where seabirders with protected characteristics can find representation. If you have any comments on the session, or suggestions for groups you'd like us to invite for future conferences please do get in touch via our Twitter [@Seabirders](#), or email at wstc.seabirds@gmail.com. And if you have some seabird work you'd like to share, please do consider presenting next year.

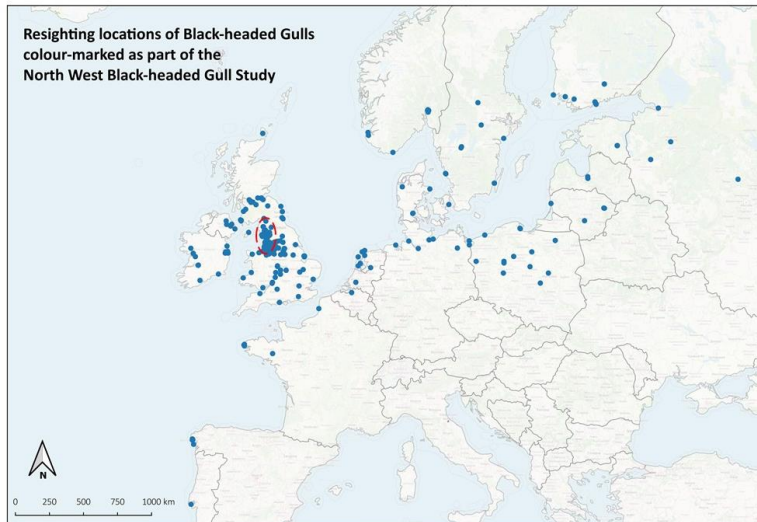
Finally, the organisers would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all the wonderful sponsors of this year's conference, including the Seabird Group for sponsoring the Early Career Researcher prize, the winner of which will be announced as soon as judging is completed.

North West England Black-headed Gull study

Scott Petrek and Kane Brides

The **Black-headed Gull** (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) is a familiar species to many, found on our coastlines, inland waters, refuse tips and sewage works, local parks and even gardens. It is often seen making use of human-derived food sources and its accessibility in public spots lends this often under studied species to be easily caught for further study. Found across Europe and Asia the species has an estimated global population of between 4.8 to 8.9 million individuals, with around 2.2 million birds wintering in the British Isles¹.

The North West Black-headed Gull study began in 2011 and mainly targets full-grown wintering birds in the north west of England for colour-marking, with the majority of birds caught by hand when attempting to take food being offered. Our study aims to learn more about the seasonal movements of Black-headed Gulls, including studying winter and summer site fidelity, looking at within winter movements and contribute to survival information. The project also includes the colour-marking of chicks and breeding birds in the region.



Top: Colour-marked Black-headed Gulls. Photo: Jamie Green.
Bottom: Re-sighting locations of Black-headed Gulls colour-marked as part of the study. The study area is shown in red.

By February 2021, over 1,200 individual birds have been colour-marked with blue alpha-numeric leg rings as part of the study, generating over 4,500 sightings from across the UK and from 16 countries across Europe with the majority of overseas re-sightings coming from Poland, Norway, Finland and Germany. To date, 75 birds have been recorded overseas (excluding Ireland). All this would not have been possible without the hundreds of people contributing their sightings.

Ringling efforts from the most recent catching season (September to February) in the winter of 2020/21 produced our furthest known distance. An adult bird ringed at Southport Marine Lake, Merseyside, UK in December 2020 was later reported 2,552 km away on the River Lazur near Dubna, just north of Moscow. This becomes our fifth bird to be re-sighted in Russia.

The vast majority of re-sightings at both wintering sites in the UK and breeding sites across Europe show the east to west movement of birds between the two periods. That said the 2020/21 season also produced an unusual movement of a wintering bird ringed on 15th November 2020 at Bowness-on-Windermere, Cumbria, UK which was then seen in Algés, near Lisbon, Portugal on 9th January 2021, becoming our first recovery to Portugal. Re-sightings of breeding birds and those ringed as chicks in our study area have shown similar direction of movement in a west or southerly direction with most re-sightings coming from Ireland.

In the UK over 420,000 individuals have been ringed under the BTO ringing scheme since 1901², but the

addition of using colour-marking has greatly increased our understanding of the species, including their site fidelity, particularly at the wintering sites. With this knowledge, we hope in the future to delve deeper into the seasonal movements through the use of telemetry as GPS tags become smaller, lighter and as funding allows. Recently we have also begun collecting additional data for

¹ BirdLife International (2021) Species factsheet: *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> accessed on 13/05/2021

² Robinson RA, Leech DI & Clark JA (2020) The Online Demography Report: bird ringing and nest recording in Britain & Ireland in 2019. BTO, Thetford (<http://www.bto.org/ringing-report>, created on 27-June-2020)

a new study in collaboration with the University of Liverpool looking at whether urban stresses, such as the difference in food sources, have an impact on the species.

The species can be surprisingly long-lived, with the longevity record of 32 years, 3 months and 26 days set by a bird ringed at a landfill site near Stretton Sugwas, Herefordshire, UK in February 1986. The bird was seen alive and well in June 2018 on Norderoogsand Island off the north-west coast of Germany. Another candidate for the longevity record comes from a bird ringed near Alytus, Lithuania in June 1979 and subsequently found dead near Debenham, Suffolk, UK in May 2019. This would give a longevity record of nearly 40 years, but details are unconfirmed².

The Black-headed Gull is an understudied species in the UK and we welcome effort by other ringers and ringing groups in contributing to the colour-marking effort and increasing knowledge further. We are happy to provide any advice or support to others interested from the experience we have gained over the past 10 years.

We regularly share news of our catching attempts and re-sightings of our study birds on Twitter using the hashtag [#NWBHGs](#).

www.waterbirdcolourmarking.org

River Tyne Kittiwakes, Northeast England: 2020 summary and North Shields petition

Daniel M Turner (North Shields)

The River Tyne **Black-legged Kittiwakes** (*Rissa tridactyla*) nest on a range of buildings and structures such as the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (at Gateshead), the Tyne Bridge (between Newcastle and Gateshead), a paint and coatings factory (Felling Shore) and the historic Guildhall of Newcastle quayside. The first COVID-19 lockdown restrictions eased sufficiently in May 2020 to allow surveys of the River Tyne to begin and continue through to the end of the season. Overall, it was a great nesting season with 1,639 Apparently Occupied Nests (AON) recorded and a minimum breeding success of 0.92 young fledged per AON. This was an incredible increase by 284 AON compared to 2019 and the highest



Kittiwake nesting on Phoenix House, Newcastle. Photo: Daniel Turner.

count of nests occurring along the river since Kittiwakes began to nest here in 1949. During my annual monitoring since 1994 there has been a steady increase in population size along the Tyne³, with some dips along the way which have often occurred in association with poor spring weather. Since 1994 the average annual Tyne Kittiwake breeding success or productivity has generally been strong (above 0.9 young per pair). In addition, the natural cliff site at Tynemouth, showed a decrease in AON from 350 (2019) to 328 (2020) and a productivity of 1.02 in 2020.

I raised an online petition '[Save North Shields Kittiwakes](#)' on [change.org](https://www.change.org) after deterrent netting was installed in December 2020. The petition was directed towards the local Mayor and borough council, hoping they may persuade the landlord to remove the netting which was placed on a building where the Kittiwakes have nested since 1960; it covered their main nesting ledge. This ledge held 10 nests in 2020 and fledged 14 young. I hoped we may maintain a presence of Kittiwakes at North Shields, where they first nested on the River Tyne in 1949 (first noted by Dr John Coulson), and have used a few different buildings to nest on. We were at risk of losing urban nesting Kittiwakes in North Shields and, indeed, in North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough after nesting

³ Turner, D.M. 2020. Kittiwakes breeding along the River Tyne, 1994-2019: A brief overview.

had occurred there for the previous 72 years. North Tyneside Council cannot ask the landlord to remove the netting as it was legally installed outside of the breeding season. Three main locations were investigated for placement of some nearby ledges or a structure for the Kittiwakes to move onto, but each time these ideas and plans were disallowed. I plan to investigate the potential of two further locations for a new nesting structure – one at North Shields and another 2.8 km upstream at East Howdon. My petition found over 7,000 supporters and many offers of financial assistance towards new nesting features; it is now closed to new signatures. The petition and its history of more than a dozen updates may be read online.

Seabird Sessions – connecting our research community during the COVID-19 pandemic

Grant Humphries, HiDef Aerial Surveying Ltd.

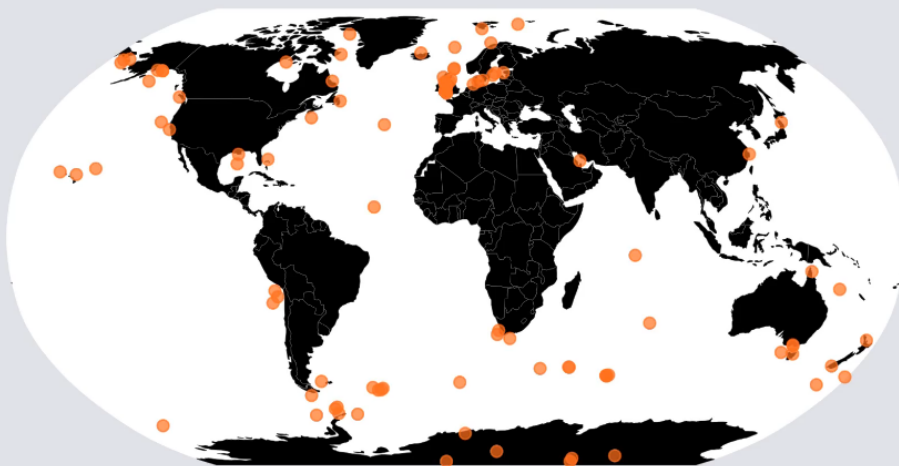
When COVID-19 started to take hold in countries around the world and lockdowns were becoming commonplace, it was very clear that 2020 would be a year where conferences and in-person meetings would be impossible. Foreseeing the possible outcomes of a prolonged lockdown, David Grémillet approached me with the idea of doing a Zoom-based discussion group to talk about recent seabird papers. This was prompted by two very interesting papers that had just been published; one on how seabirds' impact freshwater ecosystems, and another on a massive tracking and modelling effort around Antarctica. We quickly agreed on a format where we would summarise each of the papers in our own words, and then ask the authors questions about their work. I set up an information page on seabirds.net and got to work advertising this first “Seabird Session” through Twitter and several e-mail lists. Our first session had just over 60 people attending from all over the world, and it became apparent to David and myself that this was going to be something that could help us as a community. Not just to get through the pandemic, but also to reach out to people in remote corners of the world that typically don't have access to other seabird researchers.

David and I started running weekly Seabird Sessions and had no issues with getting new papers every week due to the constant stream of interesting new research coming in from all over the world. From April until about October 2020, we went back and forth between European evening sessions (covering Europe and North America), and morning sessions (covering the Pacific and Asia). However, our vision of inclusivity and sharing in the community prompted us to begin inviting guest hosts. This proved to be a big success and allowed us to invite some amazing guest speakers like Dr. Michelle LaRue, and Juita Martinez.

However, with growing demands on our time, David and I noted that we needed more help and after a call to fellow 'seabirders', we were approached by Marianna Chimienti, who has been an asset since she joined Seabird Sessions.

For the one-year anniversary of Seabird Sessions held on 1st April, we collated a list of all the studies that had been covered during Seabird Sessions. During those 31 sessions, we presented 61 papers which covered > 103 study areas from every continent. Of those papers, 33 were international collaborations, while the other 28 had authors all from the same country. Furthermore, most lead authors were based in either the USA, the UK, France, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, however we also had authors from other countries such as Estonia, the UAE, Poland, Chile, China,

Study Sites of Seabird Session (ID): 31



made with gganimate by Marianna Chimienti - @MariannaKimient

Denmark and Spain. A survey we sent out in early 2021 showed that we have visitors from 28 countries in all six inhabited continents, and we're expecting this to grow as Seabird Sessions continues into the future.

For all our videos visit [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com).

Twitter: [@SeabirdSessions](https://twitter.com/SeabirdSessions)

Latest SMP report published

Ilka Win, Seabird Ecologist, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)

Since 1986, 25 seabird species have been monitored annually by the [Seabird Monitoring Programme \(SMP\)](#) to enable their conservation status to be assessed. This work is co-ordinated by JNCC, in partnership with 18 other organisations.



Last week the SMP's latest [Seabird Population Trends and Causes of Change: 1986–2019 Report](#) was published. This comprehensive report presents 215 figures of abundance, breeding success, diet studies, return/survival rates and phenology and information derived from data submitted to the [SMP database](#) by all countries of the UK, the Channel Islands, Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland. Data collected from these annual surveys are also used for reporting on international conservation agreements.

In the UK, some species have declined more substantially than others. For example, the breeding abundance of **Arctic Skuas** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) has decreased by -70% between 2000 and 2019, more than any other seabird species. One of the main factors contributing towards this national decline is likely to be the continuous decrease in their annual productivity (number chicks fledged per pair) and that of their host species from which they kleptoparasitise food (**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*, **Kittiwake**, **Common Guillemot** *Uria aalge*, and **Atlantic Puffin** *Fratecula artica*). Other notable declines have been seen in natural-nesting **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (*Larus fuscus*, -78%) and **Herring Gull** (*L. argentatus*, -54%), **Northern Fulmar** (*Fulmarus glacialis*, -33%), Kittiwake (-29) and **Little Tern** (*Sternula albifrons*, -28%).

While some species are in decline, others have shown long-term increases in their populations, which include Guillemot (+60), **Razorbill** (*Alca torda*, +37%), **Gannet** (+34%) and **Black-headed Gull** (+26%). Guillemots are our most numerous seabirds. Based on data submitted to the SMP their numbers have increased at most colonies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since the Seabird 2000 census.

Regular counts at a sample of colonies provide robust trends, which help highlight problems, but we also require entire population censuses to add context and help to identify why changes might be happening. The fourth seabird census (Seabirds Count, 2015-21) is about to be completed and in due course will provide an update on the status of all our seabird species in the UK.

This work would have not been possible without the SMP partnership and the amazing contributions of our keen seabird volunteers. Thank you for your continued support!

Seabirder Spotlight

Seabirder Spotlight is a new feature of The Seabird Group newsletter, initiated by our Early Career Representative Zoe Deakin, which aims to illuminate the variety of career paths and roles available to aspiring seabirders. Contributors are asked a range of standard questions about their careers, for example on what their current job involves, what aspects they love about their work and what skills have been important to cultivate on their journey. In particular, we hope that the contributions from members of the seabirder community will inspire and motivate people in their early careers to work with seabirds.

Zoe aims to champion the interests of early career seabirders, so if you are an ECR please get in touch (DeakinZ@cardiff.ac.uk) with any comments, concerns, ideas or questions about how The Seabird Group can best support you.

Vikash Tatayah – Conservation Director of the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (a BirdLife International partner)

I'm in charge of all the various conservation programmes that the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF) runs on Mauritius, Rodrigues and their offshore islands. We run 22 different projects, of which 18 are bird, plant, reptile and island restoration programmes, the rest being education and ecotourism programmes. Managing so many conservation projects is more than a full-time job and with so many demands on my time unfortunately I don't manage to get out into the field very often, although I would love to.

At school I desperately wanted to become a pilot. I did the sciences, not because of the birds or plants, but because I had to have my physics and maths to become a pilot. I was lousy at both! I worked in sugar cane research and then studied Agriculture at the University of Mauritius. I did my BSc study on the Madagascar Tenrec (*Tenrec ecaudatus*) and it was during this study that I met Carl Jones (founder and Scientific Director of the MWF), who has been a huge inspiration to me. After graduating I went into commercial poultry farming but a year later I got a job at MWF. I started working in admin but asked if I could join a trip to Round Island a few months later. When we were there we went 'petrelling' – catching and ringing petrels – and I then ended up doing my PhD on the breeding biology of the Round Island Petrel (a hybrid population of *Pterodroma arminjoniana*, *heraldica* and *neglecta*), while also having more than a full-time job at MWF and a family. I eventually completed my PhD in nine years, after abandoning it several times!



“You can learn how to ring seabirds or take morphometrics... but passion is something that has got to be in you.” Vikash with a Red-tailed Tropicbird (*Phaethon rubricauda*) on Round Island, Mauritius.
Photo: Helen Gath.

I've been at MWF for nearly 25 years now and I don't see myself going anywhere else. I love that I can see the rewards of the effort I'm putting in, especially over projects that we've been managing for as long as I've been here. My job is challenging and definitely not boring. It involves lots and lots of meetings, reporting on lots of different projects, fundraising and public relations. I also contribute to the education, ecotourism and policy work. Policy work can be challenging because you're talking to people in the higher echelons of government who don't necessarily understand the value of birds or plants versus building a new road or hotel that will bring jobs and tourists. Conflict situations are becoming more common. One thing that is going to be very important in conservation is the ability to convince others and to forge partnerships with the right people. You might have to form alliances with hunters or the fishing industry to achieve your conservation objectives.

The most important attribute for someone aiming for a similar role is to be prepared for a lot of hard work. People often idealise the conservation world, but it is really challenging. If you really love the job it is going to bring a lot of happiness, but there are a lot of sacrifices as well. Be prepared for long hours and a lower salary than you would get elsewhere. That's the reality of conservation: it's rewarding, but it's tough. When I interview somebody for a job, I'm not necessarily looking at their qualifications. I'm looking for somebody who's dedicated and passionate. You can learn how to ring seabirds or take morphometrics. With some help you can learn about genetics and population dynamics. But passion is something that has got to be in you. We are at a crossroads when it comes to the planet, with climate change, pollution and mass extinction. It will take a lot of hard work, dedication and devotion to reverse the trend.

Working towards a more inclusive and diverse seabird community

Liz Humphreys, Seabird Group Chair

Although COVID-19 has impacted us all in one way or another, the scale of the pandemic was not uniformly felt across society. Not only were we all not in the same boat, we were not even in same flotilla. People who are on minimum wage have kept the country going and often at great personal risk. The pandemic also threw a spotlight on gender, with mothers taking the brunt of childcare whilst trying to work from home; and race, as the Black Lives Matter movement highlighted the inequality of how people from different ethnicities were being treated. I also started thinking more about prejudice around sexual orientation – I had never previously considered the full implications of not being able to talk about one's lifestyle without fear of judgement, retribution, or the threat of violence or imprisonment. And that's when it hit me. I have lived a relatively privileged life – in that barriers around race, sexuality and disability had never been an issue for me in terms of opportunities and my career progression. The Seabird Group is now working with other organisations to tackle EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) issues and our efforts are being led by Lila Buckingham. This is the start of a long journey but working collectively may help us identify positive steps that can help make the ornithological world a more supportive, inclusive and fairer one.



Seabird Group Teemill Pride in STEM design, by Lila Buckingham.

Lila Buckingham, Seabird Group Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer

The Seabird Group has done a fantastic job in developing their approach to EDI issues. I was glad to see that the organisation were taking a more active role in improving EDI, and jumped at the chance to get involved with their first EDI working group, focussing on LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and all other non-heteronormative gender identities and sexual orientations) issues, in October 2020. It was a really positive experience and the opportunity for my voice to be heard left me feeling hugely inspired. Following this meeting, it was great to see their dedication progress, with a unanimous vote in favour of a new EDI-focussed committee role at the AGM. I was delighted to be co-opted to this role and have very much enjoyed working on the committee since. I think it is important at this point to state that I am by no means an expert on EDI, I am just a PhD student who believes that opportunities should be open to all people. It is also important to acknowledge that I am where I am today because of my privilege, being white and cisgender (my gender corresponds with my birth sex). However, I am dedicated to using this privilege and the voice it has given me to improve EDI and will do this to the best of my ability during my time on The Seabird Group committee.

When I joined The Seabird Group committee, Liz was in the midst of organising a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous & People of Colour) working group. Conversations took place amongst a range of seabird and bird-focussed organisations and individuals to collate ideas for increasing access to and inclusion in marine ornithology within this highly under-represented group. Liz did a brilliant job of this, as she did with the LGBTQ+ working group, and we used the outcomes of both of these sessions to collate ideas for our EDI action plan. We published our action plan for EDI at the 7th World Seabird Twitter Conference (see our thread of tweets [here](#)) and are excited to share it with our membership. It is available on our website, along with our [EDI statement from July 2020](#).

One of the key things we can do to support individuals from marginalised communities is to use our platform to amplify diverse voices. We regularly do this across social media and particularly during events such as Black Birders Week and Pride in STEM Day. For Pride in STEM Day 2020, we ran a 'design a t-shirt' competition, with the winning rainbow seabird designs available on our [Teemill shop](#) and all proceeds going to LGBTQ+ STEM. In addition, following the enormous success of Pride in Polar Research's [#PolarPride](#), we created a new hashtag ([#SeabirdPride](#)) with the aim of increasing visibility and inclusion for LGBTQ+ seabirders. We'd love to see your photos during the upcoming field season! Secondly, to assess the diversity of our membership and so that we can measure our progress, we will soon be sending you a survey. This will include questions on your race, gender, sexual orientation and disability status and will be completely anonymous and optional. Thirdly, following our initial discussions focussing on LGBTQ+ and BIPOC inclusion, we will be running gender and disability working groups this year. Everyone is welcome to these, so please get in touch if you are interested in joining the discussion. Finally, we are looking to improve support and networking

opportunities for our membership and hope to implement a membership scheme, subject to enough interest from mentors. If you are interested in becoming a mentor or would be interested in mentorship, please contact us.

The thing I would most like to see change within the discussion surrounding EDI issues is a wider range of privileged people coming forward to help to make change. You don't need to identify as an under-represented or marginalised community to take part in our discussions and actually it really isn't those communities who need to change their actions – it is the rest of us. If there is anything we have missed or that you would like to see incorporated in our action plan, or you have any other comments or suggestions, please contact me on edi@seabirdgroup.org.uk. Likewise, if you are interested in joining either our gender or disability working groups, or are interested in mentorship or becoming a mentor, please get in touch.

Seabird Group Grants

Each year The Seabird Group awards small grants to help with costs associated with research or survey projects on seabirds. Grants can cover travel, subsistence, and equipment, but staff costs are excluded. Priority is given to Seabird Group members working on Atlantic seabirds, but applications from further afield and non-members are considered.

We received a record 13 applications for our February grant opportunity. Thanks to all those who applied; it was a very competitive round. Awardees from the February 2021 round were as follows:

- Nina da Rocha: Uncovering white-tailed tropicbird breeding sites in an understudied marine hotspot: the Island of Principe.
- Stephen Hurling: Distribution, population dynamics and conservation status of Iceland's nocturnal seabirds.
- Ben Porter: Investigating the impacts of light pollution and marine developments on nocturnal seabirds in the north-east Atlantic

The deadline for the next grant round is the 31st October. Please find more details on applying on our [website](#).

Seabird Group membership benefits

We're pleased to have secured some additional benefits for Seabird Group members. Please contact Seabird Group Executive Committee member Zoe Deakin (deakinz@cardiff.ac.uk) if you have any problems using the discount codes or if you have suggestions for additional member benefits.

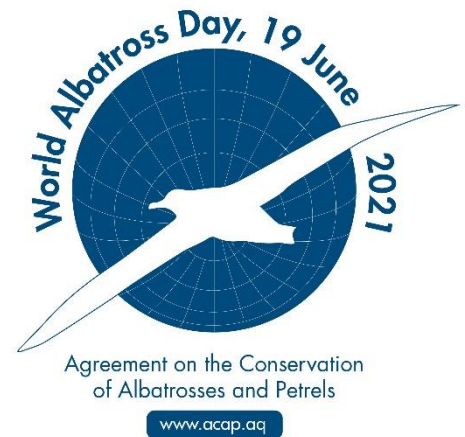
COMPANY	DISCOUNT	DISCOUNT CODE	WEBSITE
Pelagic Publishing	30%	SEABIRDG30	https://pelagicpublishing.com/
Poyser Monographs	20% off RRP	WW2EX	https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/series/poyser-monographs/
Cotswold Outdoor	10%	AF-LG-AF or present flyer (attached with newsletter) in-store.	https://www.cotswoldoutdoor.com/
Scottish Seabird Centre	20% discount for entry to the Discovery Experience 20% discount towards adoptions	SGSUMMER21	https://www.seabird.org/

Events

World Albatross Day, 19th June 2021: “Ensuring albatross-friendly fisheries”

John Cooper, ACAP Information Officer (secretariat@acap.aq)

Following last year’s successful inauguration of **World Albatross Day** on 19th June, Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) has adopted the theme “Ensuring Albatross-friendly Fisheries” to mark the day this year. The two Critically Endangered albatrosses, the **Tristan Albatross** (*Diomedea dabbenena*) of Gough Island and the **Waved Albatross** (*Phoebastria irrorate*) from the Galapagos, have been chosen to serve as ‘feature species’ to draw attention to the continuing threats all the world’s 22 species of albatrosses face at sea from fisheries.



Please visit the [ACAP website](#) to learn more about World Albatross Day and this year’s theme, and to view and download free, high-quality posters and infographics in four languages that feature the two Critically Endangered albatrosses.

Pride Month 2021

Every year in June, communities around the world celebrate Pride Month, marking the anniversary of the Stonewall riots in 1969. These events aim to promote the equality and visibility of the LGBTQ+ community and emphasise the continuing need to fight against homophobic discrimination and violence in society.

The ‘see-it-to-be-it’ principle is an extremely important part of inspiring others and highlighting diversity in our society. We’d love to see our LGBTQ+ Seabirders flying the flag this summer during their seabird fieldwork, so please tag The Seabird Group’s twitter account ([@TheSeabirdGroup](#)) and use the hashtag [#SeabirdPride](#) if you would like to share your work with us, or email your fieldwork photos to edi@seabirdgroup.org.uk.

Marine Fest 2021, 31st May – 13th June

Scottish Seabird Centre

Explore the wonders of Scotland’s marine environment at the Scottish Seabird Centre’s first ever Marine Fest!

In 2021, Scotland continues to celebrate its coasts and waters with a programme of activities and events which will shine a spotlight on these vital elements of our landscape. As part of the Year of Coasts and Waters 2021, Marine Fest is a celebration of Scotland’s amazing coastal habitats and wildlife.

With our exciting partners we’re hosting a series of outdoor and on-line events between 31 May and 13 June 2021.

Our stunning coastal location, overlooking the Firth of Forth islands, gives us unparalleled access to the sea, coast and beaches. The surrounding waters and islands are of international importance for their habitats and wildlife, including the world’s largest Northern Gannet colony (Bass Rock). Marine Fest will make full use of this stunning setting, including a mile of golden sand and rockpools full of fascinating wildlife. Outdoor events will be supplemented by digital events which will be accessible to those unable to physically visit the Centre.



Visit the [Marine Fest webpage](#) for more details.

The 15th International Seabird Group Conference, 2022

While there has been a lot of disruption to conference plans during the COVID-19 pandemic, The Seabird Group is pleased to announce that we will be holding the **15th International Seabird Group Conference** in **Cork, Ireland** in collaboration with **University College Cork**.

Exact dates have not yet been finalised, but the plan is for this to be an in-person event held in August or September 2022. Seabird Group members will receive a **discounted rate** to attend the conference.

Please watch this space for more details!



Common Guillemots. Photo: ©Danni Thompson



Website: www.seabirdgroup.org.uk
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TheSeabirdGroup>
 Twitter: [@TheSeabirdGroup](http://www.twitter.com/TheSeabirdGroup)

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

Chair	Liz Humphreys (2023)	chair@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Secretary	Annette Fayet (2023)	secretary@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Treasurer	Ian Cleasby (2022)	Ian.Cleasby@rspb.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Danni Thompson (2022)	membership@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Seabird Editor	Viola Ross-Smith (2023)	journal@seabirdgroup.org.uk
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Website Officer	Jeff Stratford (2021)	jeff.stratford@pms.ac.uk

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Seabird Census	Will Miles (2023)	willtsmiles@hotmail.com
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Social Media Manager	Ruth Dunn (2022)	rudunn@fiu.edu
EDI Officer	Lila Buckingham (2021)	edi@seabirdgroup.org.uk

Current membership rates	
Standing Order	£20
Concession	£15
Institution	£35
International:	£21
Life	£300

The Newsletter is published three times a year. The Editor welcomes articles from both members and non-members on issues relating to seabird research and conservation. We aim to provide a forum for readers' views so that those provided in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor or Seabird Group.

Submissions for the newsletter should be emailed to the newsletter editor: newsletter@seabirdgroup.org.uk. We recommend a maximum of 1500 words and ask that photographs and figures are sent as separate files and with full credits, where appropriate. **Deadlines are: 15th January (February edition); 15th May (June edition); and, 15th September (October edition).** Every effort is made to check the

content of the material that we publish. It is not, however, always possible to check thoroughly every piece of information back to its original source as well as keeping news timely. If you have any concerns about any of the information or contacts provided, please contact the Newsletter Editor.