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NEWSLETTER 72

NOVEMBER 1995

NEW SPECIES OF SEABIRD DESCRIBED

A recent issue of the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologist's Club* (Vol. 113, no. 2) announces the discovery of a new species of *Puffinus* shearwater in the western Indian Ocean. Hadoram Shirihai, Ian Sinclair and Peter Colston have located two specimens in museum collections and have numerous sight records. They name the new species Mascarene shearwater *Puffinus atrodorsalis*. Sight records come from Eilat, Israel; off South Africa, but more particularly north and south of the Comoro Islands; west and south of Aldabra; in the Mozambique Channel, and east of Mozambique. They were recognised at sea by being larger than little shearwaters, but smaller than Manx shearwater with much quicker wing-beats. In a preliminary review of the small shearwater complex, the authors tentatively suggest splitting the current species/subspecies into eight separate species. They admit also that much work is still to be done.

Mark Tasker

THE NEXT SEABIRD GROUP CONFERENCE

Just when you thought Seabird Group conferences were out of the way for a while, we are pleased to announce a joint ICES/JNCC/Seabird Group Symposium on Seabirds in the Marine Environment. The Symposium will take place in the Department of Zoology, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK from 22-24 November 1996.

The Symposium has four main objectives:

- 1) to critically review recent themes in the ecology of seabirds at sea and suggest future directions;
- 2) to report on current scientific research in marine ornithology;
- 3) to provide a forum for scientists to meet and discuss issues in seabird research;
- 4) to serve as a platform for seabird ecologists to communicate the results of their work.

Contributions to the Symposium will be of three kinds. Invited oral presentations on selected topics will be given by acknowledged leaders in their respective fields. These papers will aim to review and assess current progress in these topics. These will be followed by submitted oral presentations on any aspect of the ecology of seabirds at sea divided into thematic sessions. Oral presentations will take place in non-overlapping sessions. Posters, again on any relevant topic, will be displayed during the Symposium. The organisers are particularly keen to attract marine scientists from disciplines outside ornithology.

For further details, see page 6 of this Newsletter.

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GEORGE DUNNET

Everyone was shocked and saddened to learn of the death of George Dunnet on 11 September while he was in Copenhagen advising on the proposed fixed link between Denmark and Sweden. George was the founding Chairman of the Seabird Group, and had carried out one of the classic long-term studies of seabirds - on fulmars on Eynhallow, Orkney. He had been a good friend to many of us. Personally, I shall never forget his kindness, humour and enthusiasm for all aspects of life. A full appreciation will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Seabird*.

SOUTH WEST OILED SEABIRD GROUP SEMINAR

On 7 October 1995, the South West Oiled Seabird Group held a one day seminar at BP Exploration's offices at Holton Heath, Dorset. The purpose of the day was to expound the work of the group and hopefully to extend its involvement to cover more of the English Channel mainland coast into Hampshire, Sussex and Kent. The day was hosted by BP Exploration who generously provided the venue and an excellent lunch. Some 25 delegates attended but unfortunately some key workers, from Sussex and Kent, were unable to attend.

The programme included consisted of six speakers chaired, very ably, by Dick Best MRCVS. The talks were:

An overview of oil pollution, by Ken Partridge
Oiled seabird rescue, by Carol Laban
Cleaning, medication and rehabilitation processes, by Colin Seddon
Pathological problems encountered, by Vic Simpson
Oil field contingency planning, by Mike Mason
Wintering populations of seabirds, by Steve Colombé

The talks were followed by an open forum, which developed into a very lively discussion, only curtailed by time and the need for attendee to start their journeys home. The day succeeded in bringing together workers in the field of oil pollution of the sea and its effects on seabirds. Exchanging points of view, putting forward ideas and experiences, attempting to keep in context the problems and pointing the way forward to cope with them in the future. The proceedings will be published in due course. It was unanimously agreed that a further seminar in the future would be a very good idea.

Ken Partridge

SEABIRD STATISTICS: A REVIEW OF SEABIRD Nos. 13-17

With *Seabird* 18 about to go off to the printers I thought it might be interesting to look at a break-down of papers in issues 13-17 of *Seabird*.

A total of 49 papers were published: eleven in *Seabird* 13, eight in *Seabird* 14 and ten each in *Seabirds* 15-17. Ninety percent of contributions were relatively short (2-10 pages), the longest of the four which exceeded this length was Heubeck *et al's* 19 pages in *Seabird* 13. Multi-authorship was the norm, only 10% were single author papers, 47% had two or three authors, the maximum being del Nevo plus six others in *Seabird* 15. Although in a few cases it was difficult to "pigeon (guillemot) hole" authors, about 80% of first authors were professionally engaged in seabird research when they submitted their papers. The vast majority (94%) of papers had male first authors; and women also made up less than 10% of supporting authors. Seventy-one percent of the 49 contributions had British authors; 18% were from elsewhere in Europe (Norway (3), Spain and Holland (2 each) and Denmark and Portugal (1 each)); 10% had a multi-national authorship. Auks were the subject of one third of the papers; gulls and skuas (22%), terns (12%) and cormorants and shags (10%) were also popular groups.

Contrary to what some people seem to believe, paper submitted to *Seabird* are not automatically published. Only in a few instances are papers rejected outright. In most cases failure to appear is because the amount of revision requested by the referees disheartens the author(s) and a revised version never materialises. Despite this the acceptance rate for *Seabird* is undoubtedly higher than many other journals, averaging about 90%.

I am now starting to turn my attention to *Seabird* 19. Whilst I have no intention of discriminating against papers from BPMs (British Professional Males), I would like to receive more contributions from women/non-professionals and foreign authors!! If you've got a paper which you

think might be suitable for *Seabird* why not get it into the right format and submit it?

Sarah Wanless
(Editor of *Seabird*)

NATIONAL BEACHED BIRD SURVEY, FEBRUARY 1995

Over 700 volunteers this year walked beaches as part of the annual beached bird survey at the end of February, covering a distance of approximately 2,600 km of coastline. Thankfully, there was no repeat this year of the 1994 'wreck' in which many thousands of guillemots are estimated to have died.

The survey is co-ordinated by regional staff of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and in Shetland, by Martin Heubeck of the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group. Excluding wings, the survey recovered a total of 1,770 dead birds, 1,560 of which were seabirds. Other finds included several seals, sheep and at least 28 leeks! The figure of 1,770 birds is almost seven times lower than the 1994 figures (which were greatly inflated by the auk wreck), and lies within the range of 1991-1993 surveys.

The average density of dead birds found on a national scale was approximately 0.67 per km walked but as in previous years, there was much regional variation (Table 1).

Of the seabirds found, auks occurred at highest densities, followed by gulls, with the lowest densities recorded for cormorant and shag, fulmar and gannet (Table 2). The low overall figure for shags in the Northeast (11 birds in total) is welcome news following the recent major declines seen here following the 'wrecks' of early 1994.

Of the 1,678 seabirds, wildfowl, divers and grebes, 450 (26.8%) were recorded as slightly or heavily oiled. This figure represents the highest rate of oiling since

the survey was re-instated in 1991. Much of the figure is accounted for by the large numbers of oiled guillemots and razorbills occurring in the Channel area, probably as the result of a spill in the Dorset area which occurred just prior to the survey. The highest oiling rates continue to be found along the south coast, although a relatively high proportion of oiled birds were also found in Wales this year. In terms of species oiled, gannets and auks incurred the highest rates of oiling (47.5% and 35.3% respectively), again as has been the case in earlier years. Continuing the trend of 1991-1994, the percentage of beach length with oil present was highest in the south (32%),

where 74% of dead birds were recorded as oiled. Beaches were least oiled in the Northwest, where only 1% of beach length was reported as even slightly oiled. On a national level, 8% of all beach length walked was reported as slightly or heavily oiled.

Many thanks to everyone, volunteers and regional co-ordinators, who give up so much time for this survey each year. These results continue to contribute to international efforts to monitor oil discharge and to promote adequate methods of controlling chronic pollution. The 1996 survey is again planned for the last weekend in February.

Table 1. Numbers, density and proportion oiled of all seabirds found dead in the national Beached Bird Survey, February 1995.

Region	Distance walked (km)	Number dead birds	Density (no./km)	% Oiled
Shetland	48.3	56	1.16	17.8
Orkney	34.1	151	4.43	3.9
Northeast	465.3	360	0.77	6.4
Southeast	378.2	39	0.10	12.8
South	314.0	435	1.39	74.0
Southwest	254.4	81	0.32	21.0
Wales	304.3	151	0.50	35.1
Northwest	568.5	260	0.46	3.8
Northern Ireland	255.8	30	0.12	6.7

Wings are not included. 'Oiled' includes lightly and heavily oiled. Seabirds include: auks, gulls, petrels, cormorants, shags, shearwaters and gannets.

Regional boundaries:

Northeast. Cape Wrath (NC256750) to the border between North Yorkshire and Humberside (TA168750).

Southeast. The border between North Yorkshire and Humberside (TA168750) to the border between Kent and East Sussex (TR007177).

South. The border between Kent and East Sussex (TR007177) to Land's End (SW342254); including the Isles of Scilly.

Southwest. Land's End (SW342254) to the border between Lancashire and Cumbria (SD454757).

Northwest. The border between Lancashire and Cumbria (SD454757) to Cape Wrath (NC256750); including the Outer Hebrides).

Northern Ireland. Republic of Ireland/Northern Ireland border (Lough Foyle, C474245) to Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland border (Carlingford Lough, J133185).

Table 2: Average densities and proportion oiled for seabirds found in the national beached bird survey, February 1991 - February 1995

	1991			1992			1993			1994			1995		
	No	Density (no/km)	% oiled												
Auks	994	0.71	11.7	158	0.07	46.2	1379	0.50	13.7	8764	2.98	4.4	1010	0.40	35.3
Gulls	387	0.28	19.6	283	0.13	6.0	821	0.30	3.3	620	0.21	7.2	303	0.12	9.0
Cormorant & Shag	91	0.07	14.3	62	0.03	4.8	170	0.06	6.5	1337	0.45	2.6	89	0.03	15.7
Fulmar	78	0.06	10.3	30	0.01	33.3	103	0.04	9.7	123	0.04	10.6	90	0.03	18.8
Gannet	23	0.02	21.7	24	0.01	41.7	52	0.02	26.9	36	0.01	25.0	61	0.02	47.5

JOINT ICES/JNCC/SEABIRD GROUP SYMPOSIUM ON SEABIRDS IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

There has been much intensive research on the breeding biology of seabirds but despite their role as important predators at the top of the marine food chain, our knowledge of seabirds and their marine ecology remains patchy. The relationship between seabirds and the marine environment has proved particularly difficult to study. The reasons for this are diverse but are mainly practical and logistical ones. Unlike terrestrial birds, most seabirds inhabit a comparatively inaccessible environment for the major part of the year, and therefore their lives. However, the mosaic of habitats that comprise the open sea and their influence on seabird dispersion and behaviour are increasingly a focus of attention in seabird research. This research focuses on seabirds as marine organisms that are behaviourally and ecologically adapted to life at sea and on seabird communities as important components of the marine ecosystem. Knowledge of the life of seabirds at sea is seen as crucial to a complete understanding of this ecosystem. A major, international symposium that aims to report on current progress in ecological research on seabirds at sea will occur in November 1996.

Scope

There will be several important themes of the Symposium, but the overall focus will embrace all aspects of seabird biology at sea.

The nature of seabird dispersion will be a major topic of interest. Long running research programmes, especially in north-western Europe, have elucidated patterns of distribution and abundance of birds at sea. Appropriate ways of describing these patterns, especially with regard to scale, will be featured. Patterns of seabird biodiversity, as revealed using numerical methods, also will be highlighted.

Identification of the physical and biological processes that govern patterns of dispersion follows logically from a description of these patterns. The spatial associations between seabirds and their prey and also hydrographical features such as fronts have been examined using multivariate models. Such techniques also should aid in illuminating community attributes of seabird aggregations at sea. This will be an important theme of the Symposium.

In addition to aspects of dispersion, the main subject area of seabirds at sea research has been foraging and feeding ecology. Overcoming the obvious technical difficulties has not proved easy but recent work, including radio-tracking studies, has advanced greatly our knowledge of where, when and how seabirds gather food. The Symposium will consider this area in some depth and will emphasise the importance of feeding ecology as an influence on seabird survival and population growth.

Energetic factors clearly influence all aspects of seabird life in the open sea. Energetic studies of seabirds at sea - either direct or modelling approaches - also will be a significant theme.

The impact of fishing and fisheries on seabird populations has dominated much research and thought in recent years - for example, work on the effects of fishery discards. Implications for the ecology of seabirds at sea will be explored further at this meeting.

Breeding biology research will not be excluded from the Symposium programme but it will have as its main focus the activities of birds away from the breeding site or colony.

Objectives

The Symposium has four main objectives:

- 1) to critically review recent themes in the ecology of seabirds at sea and suggest future directions;
- 2) to report on current scientific research in marine ornithology;
- 3) to provide a forum for scientists to meet and discuss issues in seabird research;
- 4) to serve as a platform for seabird ecologists to communicate the results of their work.

Format

Contributions to the Symposium will be of three kinds. Invited oral presentations on selected topics will be given by acknowledged leaders in their respective fields. These papers will aim to review and assess current progress in these topics. Submitted oral presentations on any aspect of the ecology of seabirds at sea will follow the invited contributions in thematic sessions. Oral presentations will take place in non-overlapping sessions. Posters, again on any relevant topic, will be displayed during the Symposium. The organisers are particularly keen to attract marine scientists from disciplines outside ornithology.

The Symposium will be in English.

Organisation

The Symposium is jointly organised by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES - the pre-eminent international body concerned with fisheries and marine science), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC - the government agency that advises the United Kingdom government on nature conservation issues in the UK and in the wider international context) and the Seabird Group.

The scientific programme of the Symposium will be organised by a committee comprising Kees Camphuysen, Bob Furness, George Hunt, Jim Reid and Mark Tasker.

Date and Venue

The Symposium will take place in the Department of Zoology, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK from 22-24 November 1996. A choice of bed & breakfast and hotel accommodation will be available close to the University. Details of these will be sent to those registering for the Symposium.

Participation

Participation in the Symposium is open to all with an interest in seabird ecology. Those wishing to contribute to or attend the Symposium should contact Dr. Jim Reid, 'Seabirds in the Marine Environment', Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 17 Rubislaw Terrace, Aberdeen AB1 1XE, UK. Tel: +44 1224 642863; Fax: +44 1224 621488; e-mail: jim.reid@aberdeen.ac.uk

Contributors of oral presentations and posters will receive guidance on the submission procedure and should submit an abstract of not more than 250 words in the agreed format by 1 May 1996.

The Symposium fee is £65, inclusive of lunches and Symposium dinner and exclusive of accommodation.

Publication

The Symposium Proceedings will be published as a special volume in the ICES Symposium Series. Invited and submitted presentations will be selected for publication following a peer review process. Poster abstracts also will be published.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

A new research initiative is under way which aims to explore patterns of, and processes governing, seabird distribution at sea. The research programme is organised by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) in the United Kingdom.

The JNCC is the government agency which advises on nature conservation in the U.K. Seabird conservation issues are addressed by the Seabirds and Cetaceans Branch of the JNCC and over the past 16 years the Seabirds at Sea Team has been collecting data on the distribution of birds at sea. This has culminated in a large database containing over one million records. While several analyses and publications have resulted and the data have been well used in a conservation context, the database remains comparatively untapped as a research tool. The research initiative aims to exploit the database to greater effect and we invite proposals for research from interested individuals and institutions.

The database is maintained by JNCC in Aberdeen by a full-time data specialist (presently Andy Webb). The data consist of records of seabird sightings made in linear transects on board ships (and also aircraft) in all waters around the United Kingdom using standardised methods. In addition to numbers, species, age/sex (when possible) and behaviour, routine location (lat.-long.), weather and sea state data are also stored in the database.

Several publications have already been generated from this large bank of data, many of them describing the patterns of seabird distribution and vulnerability at sea (e.g. Webb *et al* 1990: *Seabird distribution west of Britain*. NCC, Peterborough; Carter *et al* 1993: *Seabird concentrations in the North Sea: An atlas of vulnerability to surface pollutants*. JNCC, Aberdeen). Research aimed at identifying associations between distribution patterns and environmental variables, such as oceanographic features, has also been carried out using

the SAST database (e.g. Stone *et al* 1995: *Bird Study* **42**, 50-56).

A number of investigations using the SAST database, both in-house and with external partners, are currently under way. Most are at an early stage and the topics include the importance of scale in seabird distribution studies, spatial aspects of distribution, seasonal and annual consistency of distribution patterns, associations between birds and their prey and energetic modelling of fulmar distribution.

In relation to its size and the variety of data it contains the number of studies generated by the SAST database is relatively modest. This initiative wishes to increase use of the SAST database and has three main objectives. These are

- the establishment of a programme of further research on the patterns and the processes underlying seabird distribution at sea using the SAST database;
- the organisation of an international symposium on the ecology of seabirds at sea (see announcement elsewhere in this issue);
- the publication of a volume of papers which presents the results of the latest research on seabirds at sea.

The Seabirds at Sea Team invites any scientist or research institution to take part in this initiative. The topics for study may be any aspect of seabird ecology at sea - from methodological studies to descriptive ones, on patterns of occurrence and abundance or on biological processes shaping these patterns, using either tried and tested approaches or the application of new technologies. We particularly welcome analyses which will further our understanding of seabird occurrence in relation to oceanographic fronts, apply remote sensing techniques, investigate the effects of exploitation of the sea such as oil/gas developments and fisheries, and general studies which promote the conservation of seabirds.

A full data support service will be offered to those wishing to receive and analyse data. Anyone interested in using the SAST data, please contact:

Dr. J.B. Reid, Seabirds at Sea Team, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 17 Rubislaw Terrace, Aberdeen AB1 1XE.

NORWAY RATS ERADICATED FROM THE SEPT-ISLES ARCHIPELAGO (ROUND 2)

Remember SGN 70: "We have been attempting to eradicate rats *Rattus norvegicus* from three islands (41 ha) of the Archipelago of Sept Isles...have we been successful? The definitive answer to this question will come in September 1995"?

Between 20 and 29 September 1995, 495 live-traps and 495 plastic tubes for toxic baits were set on a 30m x 30m grid. The tubes remained empty because not a rat was trapped, not a track was discovered and not a tooth mark on bird carcasses and egg shells was observed.

It seems that we are now in a position to say with a high probability that we succeeded. If forthcoming data definitely confirm this result, it implies that eradication was obtained in less than a single 17 day operation. The use of trapping and poison successively allowed a 76% cut in input of poison to the food chain, and an equivalent reduction in the risk of secondary poisoning.

It is now possible to initiate the second phase of the "Rodents, biodiversity and islands" project. This phase will evaluate the consequences of the removal of the Norway rats on the fauna and flora of the islands. We speculate, *inter alia*, that the eradication of rodents will allow the recolonisation of Manx shearwater, storm petrel and puffin to past breeding areas. We continue our surveys for these species.

François Soirat, Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux, Station Ornithologique île Grande, 22560 Pleumeur Bodou, France
Michel Pascal, Laboratoire de la Faune Sauvage du Centre INRA, Campus de Beaulieu, 35042 Rennes cedex, France

FROM SULA, Vol. 8 No 3

The longest paper in this issue is by Mardik Leopold and compares the results of two methods of counting cetaceans in the southern North Sea. A dedicated cruise was carried out in July 1994, and compared with July data from the longer term year-around dataset available from the European Seabirds at Sea database. Seabirds at Sea counters appear to miss a good proportion of cetaceans, but overall patterns of distribution are very similar (with the exception of the eastern North Sea (but since Danish cetacean observations are not included in the ESAS dataset, this is not surprising). Kees Camphuysen reviews records of entangled seabirds found in the Dutch beached bird survey between 1990-93. Only 46 out of nearly 20,000 were found entangled. Of these, 59% were entangled in nylon fishing line, 24% in net, 13% in rope and 4% in plastic beer can rings. Gannets were proportionately the most frequent victims at 5.4% of all dead gannets found. Cindy van Damme reviews the diet of cormorants feeding near Terschelling based on pellet contents. Flatfish (plaice, flounder, sole and dab) were the most important in terms of biomass, whereas gobies were the most important by number.

FROM SULA Vol. 9 no. 1

Kees Camphuysen reviews methods of ageing guillemots and razorbills in the hand. This is an important review paper that brings together information from several, often obscure sources. It is difficult to summarise here, and I suggest anyone interested in this topic gets hold of

the paper. The paper is considerably better than the recently published *Identification guide to European non-passerines* (Baker, 1993, BTO Guide 24) which appears to have entirely overlooked much of the continental work on these species. Kees also describes the establishment and expansion of a coastal cormorant colony in the Netherlands. It appears that cormorants in the Netherlands are moving from inland to the coast; the exact opposite to the "problem" in the United Kingdom! The issue is complete with reviews of no less than six recent publications on seabirds in the North Sea.

Mark Tasker

FORTH SEABIRD GROUP - FORTH ISLANDS BIRD REPORT 1994

A report, published a year ago, details counts of breeding seabirds in the Firth of Forth. The main features of the 1994 season were late breeding by kittiwakes and cormorants, full counts of breeding gulls and eiders (lesser black-backed gulls up by 72% since 1987), very low numbers of shags, normal guillemot numbers (despite the February 1994 wreck) and successful habitat management for terns on one of the islands. This is an impressive report on the area; it is good to see such regional co-ordination. The report is edited by Ian Andrews, 33 Clayknowes Drive, Musselburgh, Midlothian, EH21 6UW.

FROM AUSTRALASIAN SEABIRD GROUP NEWSLETTER, No. 28

This issue includes articles on short-tailed shearwaters and a review and analysis of albatross ringing data held in Australia. This review has a series of recommendations for future work including adoption of a comprehensive conservation plan, further demographic studies, further use of satellite tags, encouragement of

analysis of existing data and a study of albatross mortality around long-line fishing boats. Cindy Hull and Jenny Scott argue that Macquarie and Heard Islands should be considered as part of the Antarctic when regional conservation plans are being developed for the Antarctic. There is a press announcement of an investigation into penguin chick deaths at Béchervaise Island in Antarctica. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority recently issued the proceedings of "Workshop on oiled seabird cleaning and rehabilitation" edited by J. Lash and S. Raaymakers. It includes six original papers. Costs are \$Aus 11.20 (including postage, but probably anyone ordering from outside Australia should include a further contribution). It is obtainable from: Information Officer, GBRMPA, PO Box 1379, Townsville, Queensland 4810, Australia.

Mark Tasker

FROM COLONIAL WATERBIRD SOCIETY BULLETIN, Vol. 19, No. 1

This bulletin is full of snippets of information rather than any larger papers. It also has a full CWS membership list. It announces that the 1997 CWS meeting will be in Lafayette, Louisiana, 29 October to 2 November 1997. Seven pages are taken up with reports (single paragraphs usually) from individual members on their activities. Gilles Chapdelaine completed a gannet survey of the Gulf of St Lawrence. As with the eastern Atlantic, numbers continue to increase (42,124 in 1994 compared with 31,911 in 1989). Jean-Phillippe Sibley reports 1239-1318 whiskered terns nesting in France, with the black tern population there dropping to only 95 pairs in nine colonies.

Mark Tasker

FROM PACIFIC SEABIRDS, Vol. 21, No. 2

Pacific Seabirds has evolved into the most entertaining and informative of the world's

seabird group publications. This issue is no exception. It starts with a discussion of the usefulness of rehabilitating oil spill victims, with author Scott Newman calling for further research on effectiveness of treatment. This seems reasonable given the approximate \$10,000 spent per bird rehabilitated after the *Exxon Valdez* spill! He also calls for the development of simple blood tests that can be used to decide whether or not to treat an oil spill victim. John Piatt follows this with a discussion of the role of PSG in relation to science and conservation. Much of this discussion is also very relevant to The Seabird Group. Gus van Vliet and Michael McAllister argue that Kittlitz's murrelet was the species most impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill. This had not been noticed before as rather few dead Kittlitz's murrelets had been identified among the oil spill victims. A reanalysis of available information indicates that between 5% and 10% of the estimated world population of this species was killed by the oil spill. (I note that this is probably the highest proportionate impact on any species world-wide ever recorded from an oil spill). Ann Harding records common murrelets are in the diet of sea otters, and Bill Bourne notes the difficulties in distinguishing lesser black-backed and Heuglin's gulls.

The Pacific Seabird Group's restoration committee has been active and sets out protocols over two pages for assessing what restoration actions might be followed if a population is impacted by e.g. an oil spill. Vivian Mendenhall visited the Okhotsk in summer 1994, and reports her experiences among Russian colonies. Harry Carter and Leah de Forest conclude their three part epic on the PSG going to Japan. A list of the salaries of the heads of the public and private conservation agencies in the USA is included! Eight pages of regional reports summarising members activities are included. Tony Gaston and Kaj Kamp report on a masturbating thick-billed murre. Abstracts of a meeting on the oceanography of the eastern Pacific, and a bulletin board complete the issue.

Vol. 22, No. 1

Bill Bourne kicks off this issue with a first hand account and view of the Gulf oil spills. He considers that although the oil spill mortality was deplorable, it was not a catastrophe as claimed at the time by some environmentalists. Three fully illustrated pages summarise a workshop on ridding islands of rat and cats held in Mexico after the January 1995 annual meeting. Several pages summarise PSG activities in 1994. The regional reports section includes a long summary of a very interesting meeting held in Nova Scotia to discuss the next few years of Atlantic Canada's seabird research and monitoring. A pronounced move to more ecosystem-based research seems likely. The majority of the issue is taken up with the abstracts of the 1995 annual meeting held in San Diego. These are many and varied and as usual, only make wish that I had gone!

Mark Tasker

NEW SEABIRD MONITORING PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATOR

Those used to corresponding or speaking on the phone to Paul Walsh about the Seabird Monitoring Programme will be sad to learn that he has moved back to Ireland to take up a post-doctoral post in University College, Cork. His work there will be on small birds in woodlands, but all is not lost - he promises to count some seabirds in the summer! We wish Paul the best of luck and thank him for his solid and valuable input to the programme. His replacement in Aberdeen is Dr Kate Thompson, who did her PhD on Manx shearwaters while at Glasgow University. Kate may be contacted at the usual Aberdeen address.

NEW SEABIRDS AT SEA TEAM

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee's Seabirds at Sea programme of research has focused on aspects of the dispersion of seabirds and cetaceans at

sea since 1979. During that time, the Seabirds at Sea Team has surveyed the seas around Britain and north-west Europe intensively. This has been done with many changes of personnel over the years. Recently, the project entered its fifth phase with another virtually new Team. The phase 5 team sees Andy Webb assuming the role of Data Specialist, Jim Reid Team Leader, Phil Bloor Marine Surveyor (Shetland-Faroes), Claire Pollock Marine Surveyor (Ireland) and Graham Begg Biological Oceanographer. The objectives of phase 5 include continued surveying of British and European seas but with a greater emphasis on areas where there has been little work in the past, notably Ireland. Other major aims of Phase 5 are to monitor the use of known marine hotspots and to investigate the ecological processes that govern observed patterns of dispersion. The Team remains based in Aberdeen, but Claire Pollock, for the time being, works out of University College Cork.

NEW PUBLICATIONS ON SEABIRDS AT SEA

Several new publications from the Seabirds at Sea Team have appeared recently. *An atlas of seabird distribution in north-west European waters* (£28.00 + p&p) by C.J. Stone *et al* shows the seasonal distributions and densities of all seabirds occurring regularly in these waters. This book, the culmination of a collaboration between SAST and its partners and counterparts on mainland Europe, covers the period 1980-1993. This publication is also available as the special *Electronic version of the atlas of seabird distribution in north-west European waters in UKDMAP* (free with the main atlas). This contains the same mapped information as the book but comes on disk for use with an IBM compatible PC. It is necessary also to own a copy of UKDMAP version 2.

Vulnerable concentrations of birds around south and west Britain: an atlas of vulnerability to surface and other

pollutants (£25) by A. Webb *et al* is a companion to several previously published vulnerability atlases. It shows, for waters south and west of Britain, including the English Channel and seas surrounding Ireland, the degree to which different areas are vulnerable to oil or other surface pollution.

The fourth SAST publication to appear recently is *Coastal birds and marine mammals of mid Dorset* (£9.50) by Richard White and Andy Webb. This presents the results of a study undertaken in 1994, the third in a series of south coast investigative projects.

All these publications are available from the Natural History Book Service Ltd, 2-3 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5XN. Tel: +44 (0)1803 865913; Fax: +44 (0)1803 865280. Postage and packing in the UK for orders up to £10 is £3; from £10.01 to £20 is £4; from £20.01 to £35 is £5; from £35.01 to £50 is £6 and over £50 is £7. To other parts of Europe postage and packing for orders up to £30 is £5; £30.01 to £45 is £6; £45.01 to £65 is £8; £65.01 to £100 is £10 and above £100 add 10% to the order cost. Please contact NHBS for other overseas rates.

THE THIRTIETH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SEABIRD GROUP

The thirtieth Annual General Meeting of the Seabird Group will be held at 1800 hours on Saturday 6 January 1996 during the British Trust for Ornithology's Ringing and Migration Conference at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Minutes of 29th Annual General Meeting held at Glasgow on 23 March 1995.
2. Matters arising.
3. Motion to adopt 30th Annual Report (1994-1995).
4. Hon. Treasurers report and motion to adopt accounts for 1995
5. Election of Auditors
6. Election of new officers

The following are due to retire from the Executive Committee at this AGM

Kenny Taylor
Mike Harris

Nominations are being sought by the Chairman for these two posts, any proposals should be notified to him (Dr K Taylor, Easter Brae, Springfield, Culbokie, Ross-shire IV7 8JU Scotland).

7. Any other business

John Uttley
Honorary Secretary