

Charity number 260907

## NEWSLETTER 73

JANUARY 1996

# BLOODY BONXIES!

Back in 1981 Bob Furness warned that if sandeel abundance was reduced close to their colonies Shetland's bonxies might increase their predation of other seabirds, some of whose populations might then decline. This prediction was realised during the years of sandeel scarcity in the late 1980s; although sandeel abundance around Shetland has increased again in the past few years, this habit of killing other seabirds has actually increased in intensity. Few species are safe - even gannets are being killed in increasing numbers - but at the population level the situation is probably worst for kittiwakes.

Bonxies have long been known to predate kittiwakes at some Shetland colonies and in terms of species conservation any increase in their depredations should probably be shrugged off by stating that Shetland holds only 0.5% of the world population of kittiwake, but 40% of bonxies. Nature is rough in beak and claw and while predation has contributed to a considerable decline in, and a redistribution of, breeding numbers of kittiwakes the species is unlikely to become extinct in the islands.

However, there is another aspect to consider, namely that predation by bonxies is beginning to impair our ability to carry out the monitoring of seabird populations in the way it was intended. Predation by bonxies was a significant factor at all seven kittiwake colonies where breeding success was monitored in 1995 and it has become

increasingly difficult to disentangle the effects of predation on breeding success from the effects of food availability. In the south-east Mainland, where the newly resumed sandeel fishery is concentrated, the monitored kittiwake colony at Troswick Ness "collapsed" in 1995 after intense predation in 1994. There is only one other suitable colony (at Noness) for monitoring breeding success in the area and while that is literally below the territory of bonxies, those birds fortunately specialise in killing adult guillemots and razorbills!

In north-west Shetland the only large kittiwake colony readily visible from land is at Eshaness, and predation by bonxies there has become so intense that not one chick fledged in 1994 or 1995. Recording the ability of kittiwakes to relay, and initial brood sizes, provides information on likely food availability early in the breeding season, but the number of nests in the colony has fallen from 1,130 in 1989 to 480 in 1995 and it is feared that continued predation will soon cause birds to desert the colony completely, as has happened elsewhere. Only one bonxie, thought to be the same individual, was seen attacking the colony in 1995 and to make matters worse it displayed a new habit of deliberately flushing guillemots from ledges in attempts to catch them. This has obvious implications for interpreting population counts of guillemots, and it is not a habit one would wish to see become widespread.

Should one intervene (with extreme prejudice!), not to protect populations of predated seabirds but to maintain "undisturbed" seabird colonies for monitoring purposes? Perhaps only one or two offending birds might have to be removed, but one might find that as fast as one bonxie is shot at Eshaness another reappears. When would the exercise become futile?

For some time now the Shetland staff of Scottish Natural Heritage have proposed a study to discover how widespread seabird predation is among the bonxie population; it is hoped that high priority will be given to this, not least because predation by bonxies has contributed significantly to the disappearance of some 10,000 pairs of kittiwakes from the National Nature Reserves of Noss and Hermaness.

When I raised this issue at the Seabird Monitoring Programme liaison group meeting in Aberdeen on 23rd November it was suggested I explain the situation in this Newsletter, not to promote persecution of bonxies, legal or illegal, but to initiate a reasoned debate and to help secure a proper study of the problem.

Martin Heubeck

### IS IT A NEW SHEARWATER?

The headline story of Seabird Group Newsletter No. 72 was about a new species of shearwater which may have been found in the western Indian Ocean. Bill Bourne has written to point out that he considers it highly possible that the birds observed are fledgling Audubon's shearwater in very fresh, dark-backed plumage. The issue should be settled by DNA analysis which is presently under way.

Mark Tasker

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### OIL POLLUTION IN SHETLAND

The south-east gales that cleared the New Year snows in Shetland also brought crude oil onto some beaches in south-east Mainland. It was first noticed on 7th January and analysis found it to be a North Sea crude that had been in the sea for less than 48 hours. Lying snow and bad weather had delayed the routine Beached Bird Survey (BBS) at the end of December; those east coast beaches that had already been surveyed were revisited over the next few days and the birds found were simply incorporated into the December BBS results (48% of corpses oiled, 2.3 oiled corpses per km).

Most of the 123 oiled birds found were fulmars and guillemots, whose North sea populations are large. Because of this and because very few of the more resident inshore species with smaller populations were being affected, it was decided not to keep on collecting dead birds but maintain the monthly periodicity of the routine

surveys. Many of the oiled birds found were decomposed and so could not have been killed by the freshly spilled oil that was sampled; at least two and probably three separate spills were involved. The south-east winds continued through January and spot checks of beaches found that oiled auks continued to come ashore; it seems probable that the end of January BBS will locate at least 75-100 oiled birds. Eric Meek (RSPB), who co-ordinates the monthly BBS in Orkney says few oiled birds were found there in January, although there was a modest wreck of unoiled guillemots.

1995 was already going to have been a 'dirty' year for the Shetland BBS, with unusually high numbers of oiled birds on the west coasts of the isles between April and August, and some pollution that almost certainly came from the klondyker fleet anchored north of Lerwick in late August. The former mostly involved North Sea crude oils, presumably discharged from tankers, and affected a wide range of species including some that have only rarely been recorded oiled (e.g. bonxies, common gulls and arctic terns). The pollution at the turn of 1995/96 meant that 1995 was by far the dirtiest year recorded by the Shetland BBS since the bad old days of 1979; 349 oiled birds were found, 17% of the total and 0.6 oiled birds per km (a further 141 birds were judged to have been oiled after death). Concerns over the development of oil fields to the west of Orkney and Shetland highlight the value of the long-term BBS data sets now accumulated in the Northern Isles of Scotland, and emphasise the need to maintain the monthly surveys.

Martin Heubeck

## **AFRICAN-EURASIAN WATERBIRD AGREEMENT**

An ambitious intergovernmental agreement aimed at conserving the migratory waterbirds of Africa and Eurasia was adopted on 16 June 1995, at a meeting held under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species. Representatives of over 60 countries were able to reach agreement covering more than 150 species

over an area of 60 million square kilometres.

The African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) covers species of birds which are ecologically dependant on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle, including many species of pelicans, storks, ducks, terns and gulls. The Agreement concerns 116 countries in Europe, parts of Asia and North America, the Middle East and Africa. The Agreement provides for co-ordinated and concerted actions to be taken by the so-called 'Range States' throughout the migration systems of the waterbirds concerned. Parties to the Agreement are called upon to engage in a wide range of conservation actions which are described in a comprehensive Action Plan. The plan addresses such key issues as species and habitat conservation, management of human activities, research and monitoring, education and information, and implementation.

The African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement is the largest of its kind concluded so far under the Convention on Migratory Species. This global treaty, which is also referred to as the Bonn Convention, deals with many other types of migratory species of wild animals including small cetaceans and marine turtles.

For further information on any of the initiatives undertaken within the framework of the Convention on Migratory Species contact CMS Secretariat, Mallwitzstrasse 1-3, D-53177 Bonn, Germany.

## **LAUNCH OF WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL**

The three major wetland study and conservation groups of the world have joined forces to create Wetland International. The integration will involve the Asian Wetland Bureau, the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau and Wetlands for the Americas. The new organisation draws together and builds upon the strengths of the three founding organisations and will provide a powerful force to drive forward the conservation and

study of wetlands internationally. Wetlands International will be important in advancing the cause of the Ramsar Convention and the new African-Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement, made under the Bonn Convention. Wetlands International have produced an extensive publications catalogue, with a few items of direct relevance to seabirds. Copies of the catalogue are available from their book distributors; Natural History Book Service Ltd (see below under Seabird Monitoring Handbook for contact details).

### **SEABIRD MONITORING HANDBOOK FOR BRITAIN AND IRELAND**

This new handbook was published towards the end of 1995 jointly by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology and the Seabird Group. It was written by a team led by Paul Walsh. It is a loose-leaf ring-bound format. It is designed for fieldworkers, and contains an introduction to the science of monitoring seabird colonies and a discussion of the general methods. The main part contains detailed instructions for monitoring gulls, terns, auks, cormorant, shag, fulmar, Manx shearwater, gannet and skuas. Sixteen black and white photographs are used to clarify methods and illustrate different stages of chick development. These methods are the standard ones used for the UK and Ireland co-ordinated Seabird Monitoring Programme. The loose-leaf format allows only the sections needed on a particular day to be taken into the field. Plastic envelopes are supplied for this purpose, plus a small supply of recording forms which can be photocopied when more are needed. The loose-leaf format will allow easy updating should this be needed in the future. The handbook costs £44.50 plus postage and packing, although all regular contributors to the Seabird Monitoring Programme have been given a free copy. Copies and information on postage and packing charges may be obtained from the Natural History Book Service, 2-3 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5XN (Tel: 01803 865913; Fax: 01803 865280).

### **A VISIT TO THE DESERTAS, MADEIRA**

In June 1995, thanks to Paulo Olivera of the Madeira Natural Parks, I was able to visit the Deserta Islands, some 40 kilometres from the main island of Madeira, Portugal. There I was able to observe the oceanic breeding birds and give some help to Manuela Nunes of the Zoology Department at Lisbon University, who was studying Bulwer's petrel on Deserta Grande.

Bulwer's petrel is a fascinating species, an all dark bird with a muffled "woof-woof" call. I was able to see the white eggs in crevices and under boulders and help ring many of the breeding and non-breeding birds sitting around in the nesting areas.

At twilight when they arrive back at the colony their manoeuvrability as they chase each other around the large boulders was amazing to watch. Their fanned tails were obvious as they made sharp turns and could be clearly seen against a fading sky. Their flight at sea was no less amazing even in calm conditions. They appear to ride on an air cushion, the long wings acting as hydrofoils forcing their bodies upwards. In rougher seas their flight was more erratic, moving fast in arcs and bounds over the waves. Their buoyant flight graphically reinforces the fact that they have the lowest wing loading of any tube nose (see Warham, 1990: *The Petrels*).

By day near to the breeding colonies on the Desertas and at the peninsula of Sao Lourenco, on Madeira only a few birds could be seen at sea. However in one evening at Deserta Grande as a storm moved north west, the sea was full of Bulwer's petrels. In nearly 4 hours of sea-watching I counted circa 17,400 Bulwer's petrels flying south west, past Deserta Grande. Over a thousand birds were passing every 10 minutes during the last 2½ hours. As far as the eye could see with a telescope the sea was a mass of little dark shapes rising in little arcs as they headed into the wind. During this same sea-watch

period many Cory's shearwaters passed with up to 975 per 10 minute period. Smaller numbers of other species were also seen, 3 Fea's petrels, one little shearwater and some Manx shearwaters. The next evening there were still many birds around but conditions were calm. A gathering of 190 Bulwer's petrels offshore were associating with feeding dolphin species.

The observed mass-movement of Bulwer's petrels appears to be undescribed from the Desertas but similar movements around Pacific colonies have been recorded (see Warham's, *The Petrels*).

Back on Madeira, even from Funchal, I counted 360 Bulwer's petrels one evening and at the Sao Lourenco peninsula both *Puffinus* shearwaters could be seen with little shearwater observed at every seawatch.

I am grateful to the Natural Parks department of Madeira, particularly Paulo Olivera for making my visit possible and to Manuela Nunes and the Deserta Grande wardens for their kindness during my stay.

Sam Taylor  
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### **EXTENSION OF THE BARCELONA CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN**

The contracting parties to the above convention have decided to enlarge its field of competence to include the coastal habitats around the Mediterranean, and have enlarged their list of marine species requiring joint conservation action. Seabirds included on this list are: Cory's shearwater, storm petrel, Audouin's gull, shag, pygmy cormorant, white pelican, Dalmatian pelican, Mediterranean shearwater, little tern, Sandwich tern and lesser-crested tern.

### **CONFERENCE ON BIRDS IN THE CHANNEL**

The Groupe Ornithologique Normand (GONm) are organising a symposium on Birds in the Channel from 5-6 April 1997. Sessions include seabirds at sea, seabird colonies, seashore birds, and protection and conservation problems. The symposium will be in French, and will be held at the University of Caen. For further details, a booking form and an abstract submission form, please contact the Local Organising Committee at Groupe Ornithologique Normand, Université de Caen, 14032 CAEN Cedex, France (Tel: +33 31 43 52 56, Fax: +33 31 93 27 07).

### **COLOUR RINGED GULLS**

Voorne Bird Observatory in the SW Netherlands has continued its colour ringing programme of gulls, in some cases co-operating with others. We have received the following list of combinations of birds ringed in SW Netherlands.

Lesser black-backed gulls *Larus fuscus* and yellow-legged gulls *Larus cachinnans* have been marked with either a single white, green or orange engraved PVC ring or a combination of two rings (one on each tarsus). Some white and orange rings may have discoloured, as a result they may now be yellowish or rusty coloured.

Common gulls *Larus canus* have been marked with a single green or black engraved PVC ring.

Great black-backed gulls *Larus marinus* have been marked with a single green engraved PVC ring.

Voorne B.O. have also co-operated to put on the following rings:

Latvia: Yellow-legged gulls *Larus omisus* have been marked with a single black engraved PVC ring.

Poland, Rumania and Ukraine: Yellow-legged gulls *Larus cachinnans* have been marked with a single red engraved PVC ring.

Russia and Siberia: Siberian lesser black-backed gulls *Larus fuscus heuglini* and Taimyr gulls *Larus taimyrensis* have been

marked with a single white or red engraved PVC ring.

Faroes, Iceland, Norway and Spain: Lesser black-backed gulls *Larus fuscus* have been marked with a single blue or orange engraved PVC ring.

Anyone seeing any of these birds is invited to send details of the sighting to:

Norman van Swelm, Ornithologisch Station Voorne, PO Box 305, 3233 ZG Oostvoorne, The Netherlands.

### **FROM SEA SWALLOW, Vol. 44**

The first 14 pages are a summary of seabird observations reported to the Royal Naval Bird Watching Society in 1994. This followed by 12 pages of reports on landbirds for 1993 and 1994. A paper on the birds of Motley Island in the Falklands follows. Storrs Olson reports on observations made from HMS *Blonde* in 1824-1826! Beau Rowlands describes his investigations of the seabirds of St Helena's outliers (islets, stacks and rocks). Bill Bourne then usefully synthesises knowledge on the movements of Bulwer's petrels and the larger shearwaters in the Atlantic Ocean, based on published and unpublished records. Several short notes follow. This journal continues to be one of the few places where observations from the less visited parts of the planet are published.

### **FROM MARINE ORNITHOLOGY, Vol 22, No 2**

This issue, dated 1994, arrived at the end of 1995. Cyrus and McLean describe the impact of water temperature on the breeding success of Caspian terns on the southern coast of Africa. A cold snap early in the breeding season led to a fish kill, and the loss of all the clutches of Caspian terns breeding locally. Hodges and Woehler review the association between seabirds and cetaceans near Australia. Crawford and Boonstra show that counts of active nests of jackass penguins at Robben Island

correlated well with numbers of penguins recorded during moult later in the year of the island. Creet *et al.* examined the stomach contents of pintado petrels at King George Island in 1990/91, and found 60% of food by mass was Antarctic silverfish. Scolaro and Suburo found that Magellanic penguins forage during the day, and feed their chicks by night. Bost *et al.* attached recorders to gentoo penguins and found maximum depth reached was 210m. Dives were either shallow (less than 5m) or deeper, flat-bottomed dives. Notes include a useful summary of measures used in the southern oceans to prevent incidental mortality of seabirds by fisheries. The minutes of a working group on bird biology in the Antarctic provides a summary of current activities.

Mark Tasker

## **FROM MEDMARAVIS NEWS, Nos. 16 & 17**

Issue 16 includes summaries of papers on Egyptian wetland seabirds, papers on Mediterranean seabirds published elsewhere and news of the establishment of a nature reserve in Albufero di Valencia in 1993. This is an important site in the Mediterranean for terns (particularly little and common). Issue 17 includes a summary of the Medmaravis meeting in Tunisia in April 1995. Much of the issue summarises papers on Mediterranean seabirds published elsewhere.

## **FROM WORLD BIRDWATCH, Vol. 16, No. 4**

A four page article by Mike Brook on seabird conservation worldwide is the cover feature of this issue. He points out that around 20% of the world's seabirds are classified as globally threatened, against an overall bird figure of 12%. Man's impact has been severe, particularly in the past when mammalian predators have been introduced at colonies. Conservation needs to be placed on an international basis; there is no point in protecting Manx shearwaters from the effects of lead pollution off Brazil, if six months later they are killed in an oilspill off Milford Haven. Fishing takes its toll both directly and indirectly. BirdLife International is developing a plan to conserve the world's seabirds, including the development of a colony database.

## **OTHER NEWS FROM BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL**

The Seabird Group, an associate member of BirdLife International, receives a number of newsletters from the organisation. Recent reports include the decline of the Socotra cormorant to 11 extant colonies (from a historical minimum of 28) and a world population estimate of between 500,000 and 1 million birds. On the positive side, research on islands off Abu Dhabi has found larger seabird populations than expected. These included over 40,000

pairs of bridled tern, 21,000 pairs of white-cheeked tern, 24,500 lesser crested terns and 1256 swift terns. The Haribon Foundation has found 1500 pairs of breeding boobies, 5000 pairs of breeding noddies and large numbers of sooty terns in the Sula Sea. The Australian government has listed the longline bycatch of seabirds as a Key Threatening Process under the Commonwealth Endangered Species Protection Act. This means that the government must, within three years, develop a legally binding plan to address the problem. As an estimated 15% of the albatross bycatch occurs in Australian waters, the decision should have a beneficial effect on the ongoing international negotiations to end this longline fishing completely.

Several oil spills occurred in the Baltic during February-March 1995. Reports of oiled birds came from Bornholm, Denmark, Poland, Lithuania and Finland. A large incident, probably involving cargo wastes, affected several thousand birds near Ertholmene, Denmark and southern Sweden. At least 1200 birds were affected in Gdansk Bay in February. All this in a sea meant to specially protected under the MARPOL convention. The Helsinki Commission has the urgent task of preparing proposals to protect offshore congregations of seabirds in the Baltic.

The Hellenic Ornithological Society has started surveys in the Aegean Sea, eighty-eight islands were visited in summer 1995. Seven new Audouin's gull colonies were found - doubling the known population of this species in Greece to 210 pairs. A potential marine park containing monk seals was also found.

## **FROM BUTLLETÍ DEL GRUP CATALÀ D'ANELLAMENT Vol. 11**

The only paper of direct seabird interest in this issue is on ringing recoveries of kittiwakes in the Iberian peninsula by Francisco Docampo and Alberto Velando. Many juvenile kittiwakes are recovered in the Bay of Biscay between November and January. Many are killed in fishing nets, or by hunting. Most (80%) of recoveries come from Britain, with the Farne Islands being particularly well represented.

## **FROM CIRCUMPOLAR SEABIRD WORKING GROUP**

A report of a meeting of this group, which works under the auspices of the agreement on conservation of arctic flora and fauna has been received by the Seabird Group. The meeting happened in Oslo in March immediately before our meeting in Glasgow. Among items discussed were the knowledge that indigenous people have of seabirds and a murre conservation strategy. A review of seabird hunting revealed that maybe 400,000 seabirds are harvested per year in Greenland, there is a harvest of 20,000 shags and cormorants per annum in Norway (where a further 30,000 to 50,000 gulls and kittiwakes(!) killed as pests); Iceland was the only other country at the meeting with a large seabird harvest (the Faroes were not represented). Eggs and down are harvested in most circumpolar countries.

There was considerable discussion on the need (or otherwise) for a circumpolar seabird colony register and the format it might take. A discussion on the incidental catch of seabirds in fisheries revealed some anecdotal reports of large catches, but a lack of independently gathered information to base firm conclusions on. A review of legislation on regulations to reduce human disturbance of seabirds showed that most countries had legislated for this problem. The meeting agreed to develop a circumpolar eider conservation strategy. A review of international co-operation on seabird conservation appears to have

missed mentioning the development of the BirdLife International habitat action plan for European seas; this plan includes a substantial part of the arctic.

Mark Tasker

## **FROM WWF ARCTIC BULLETIN No. 3.95**

This issue reports the discovery, by Mats Forsberg, of a colony of 750 ivory gulls at an abandoned military station on Victoria Island. This is one of the largest colonies in the arctic, presumably the remote location of the island (between Svalbard and Franz Josef's Land) has led to a paucity of other suitable nest sites in the area. Yet another gull species using man-made structures.

## **FROM SOUTH WEST OILED SEABIRD GROUP BULLETIN, No 6**

This issue reviews the Glasgow Seabird Group conference. Information on beached bird surveys around the south-west English peninsula in 1994/95 is presented in full. There are two pages of proceedings of a workshop on medication regimes for rehabilitated oil contaminated seabirds - recommended reading for anyone undertaking rehabilitation work. Conditions suffered by birds include foot problems, ingested toxic oil, hypothermia, dietary deficiencies and infections. The group has also produced a leaflet on roof-nesting gulls, and what to do with "orphaned" chicks. Supplies are available from the secretary, Jeff Stratford, 93 Reddicliff Close, Radford Park, Plymouth, Devon, PL9 9QL.



## **FROM SULA Vol. 9, no. 2**

Kees Camphuysen follows up his article on ageing and sexing guillemots and razorbills with a long paper on identification of divers in the hand. This guide, along with the illustrations in Lars Jonsson's field guide should prevent future mis-identification of this group. Kees notes that there are considerable overlaps in the biometrics of the group, but four measurements can be used to separate species. Plumage differences are highlighted. Bill colour is unreliable. Leo Stegeman and Jan den Ouden analyse records of black-throated divers along the Dutch coast. Considerable mis-identification of birds in the 1970s meant that many red-throated divers were described as black-throated. Only a few hundred birds occur each year, most while on migration northwards off the Dutch coast in spring, presumably while moving from their wintering areas off northern France. Mardik Leopold and co-workers describe the very large numbers of red-throated divers that can occur to the east of Helgoland in the south-eastern North Sea. An estimated 43,000 divers winter in this area.

## **FROM SULA Vol. 9, no. 3**

Following an issue on divers, this issue focuses on fulmars. Jan Andries van Franeker describes the colour phases in the North Atlantic. He advocates splitting observations and categorisation into light and coloured, rather than the four phase system devised by Fisher. This is because of the difficulty in categorising birds seen briefly at range or found dead and wet on a beach. Key characteristics separating light and coloured birds are described, as are their breeding distributions. Kees Camphuysen and others describe the fulmars of Svalbard in terms of biometrics and coloration. In another paper, a census of seabirds on the Alkhornet cliffs in west-Spitsbergen is described. Bert Winters and Kees Woutersen have ringed common gulls in the Netherlands for a number of years, and record two birds nearly 25 years old. Chris Winter records this species eating

large numbers of hoverflies in the centre of the North Sea.

## **PENGUIN CONSERVATION, Vol. 8, no. 1**

Along with a number of notices, this issue includes a description of breeding and rehabilitating African penguins *Spheniscus demersus* in South Africa, a plan to conserve the captive breeding population of Humboldt penguin in Japan (amongst nearly 1000 held, one individual is 29 years old), causes of sickness among little penguins *Eudyptula minor* being rehabilitated at Phillip Island and the status of penguin populations in the Falkland Islands, where virtually all are declining, possibly due to decreasing food availability.

## **FROM COLONIAL WATERBIRD SOCIETY BULLETIN, Vol. 19, No. 2**

Most of the first part of the issue is taken up with minutes of meetings and procedural items. CWS has joined the Ornithological Societies of North America organisation. OSNA is primarily a system to improve the mailing of literature and to cross-fertilise between the member societies and organisations. The 1996 CWS Annual Meeting will be held in Charleston, South Carolina on 16-20 October, with the 1997 meeting in Lafayette, Louisiana on 26 October to 1 November. An alarming article details the attempts being made by aviculturalists to reduce the effect of the US Wild Bird Conservation Act, and attacks in Congress on the Endangered Species Act. President Clinton is resisting the latter. The entire second part of the issue is taken up with abstracts of papers from the joint conference held with the Pacific Seabird Group in November 1995.

## **THE 30th ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SEABIRD GROUP, 1995**

There were three changes to the Executive Committee during 1995. Martin Heubeck retired as Honorary Secretary during the year and John Uttley was elected to replace him. Euan Dunn and Dave Okill were elected as full members after being co-opted in 1994. Kenny Taylor continued as Chairman for a further year after nobody came forward to replace him at the last AGM.

At the end of 1995 the Seabird group had 297 paid-up members, a further seventeen who had not paid for the year and four who still pay only £5 per year by standing order and do not receive *Seabird*.

*Seabird 17* was published and contained ten articles and one book review. The papers covered topics as diverse as the effects of mink on seabirds on the west coast of Scotland, skuas in Shetland in 1992, feeding associations of gannets and cetaceans and pellet production by shags. *Seabird 18* is due to be published shortly.

Two Newsletters (71 and 72) have been published since the previous meeting and Number 70 was also produced during the calendar year.

Two executive committee meetings were held, one immediately before the last AGM in Glasgow, and another in September in Edinburgh. The relatively light programme for the Committee came after a great deal of hard work in 1994 and early 1995 organising the Fifth Seabird Group Conference. The conference was a great success and was attended by delegates from as far afield as New Zealand, the U.S. and Lithuania. Thanks to Mark Tasker, the Proceedings were issued with the speed to which we have become accustomed.

Three grants totalling £450 were offered during the year for the ringing of auks on the Caithness coast, a census of gulls on Little Saltee Island and the ecology of Fulmars on Foula, the latter as part of a wider study. This was substantially less

than the amount disbursed in recent years; hopefully 1996 will see a revival of interest.

Finally, 1995 sadly saw the death of George Dunnet, founding Chairman of the Group, whose work and friendship were an inspiration to many members of the Seabird Group over the years.

John Uttley  
Hon. Secretary

22 December 1995

**NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF  
SEABIRD GROUP COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS**

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Ashbourne, Derbyshire, DE6 1BU.

The Seabird Group maintains an accommodation address at c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG14 2DL, UK. However, a more rapid response may be obtained to queries by writing directly to committee members. Please help the Group by enclosing an sae.

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