



**7TH INTERNATIONAL SEABIRD
GROUP CONFERENCE,
WILHELMSHAVEN, GERMANY,
17-19TH MARCH 2000.**

On the evening of Friday 17th March, people began arriving at the Stadthalle in Wilhelmshaven for the Seabird Group's 7th International Conference, the first to be held outside the United Kingdom. Some overseas visitors were perhaps surprised to find that the city hall was not an imposing historic building, but an extremely spacious, modern conference facility above a WalMart shopping complex (the previous town hall was destroyed by bombing raids during World War II, as was two-thirds of the city). The conference was hosted by the Institut für Vogelforschung "Vogelwarte Helgoland", and after having renewed acquaintances over a buffet supper and a few beers from the bar, we gathered in the auditorium for welcome speeches from Sarah Wanless, Chair of the Seabird Group, and Peter Becker, Chair of the Organising Committee. This was followed by talks by Ommo Huppopp on the importance of the German Bight for breeding, wintering and migratory seabirds, and by Daniela Guicking on the seabirds of Isla Mocha off the coast of Chile. Despite the announcement that one of the sponsors of the Conference, the Jever Brewery, had donated a considerable quantity of beer to be served free at the bar, the 34th Annual General Meeting of the

Seabird Group was then held, but thankfully didn't last too long!



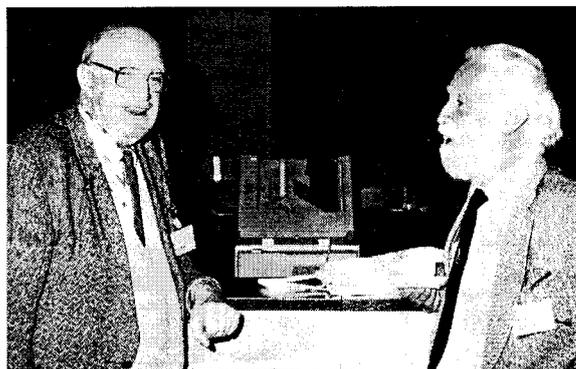
Delegates stayed in medium-priced hotels near the city centre, as well as more economical ship-board accommodation along the harbour-front, and once we collected the list of participants the international mix became clear: Germany (58 delegates), UK (27), Netherlands (11), France (8), Norway (8), Canada (7), Spain (5), Argentina (3), Russia (3), Ireland (2), Poland (2), Portugal (2), USA (2), Belgium (1) and Lithuania (1). A novel aspect of the Conference was a welcome overture by the brass ensemble Blaserkreis Jaderberg, which was followed by welcome addresses from the Lord Mayor of Wilhelmshaven, and Franz Bairlein, Director of the Institut für Vogelforschung, and well as by Sarah and Peter again.

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The conference theme was "Seabird Reproduction", and Ian Jones from the Memorial University of Newfoundland gave the opening keynote talk on the life history implications of mate choice, mating success and sexual selection among the auklets of Alaska, stressing the importance of social factors for reproductive success of individual birds. Loud, taped Herring Gull calls signalled the end of the coffee break (another novel feature of the conference) and the start of the session "Reproductive Strategies and Parental Condition". Ruedi Nager and Kat Jones from Glasgow University manipulated body condition and clutches of Lesser Black-backed Gulls on Walney Island, and found that the low survival and growth of male chicks reared by adults in poor condition was due to both egg quality and parental rearing ability. Female gulls in poor condition decreased their time spent brooding and foraging for chicks, although males were able to compensate for this and reproductive output didn't suffer. Mark Hipfner told how experimentally removing the eggs of early-laying female Thick-billed Murres had no measurable effect on the chicks reared from relay eggs: compared to non-manipulated early laying females, they incubated as long and fed the chicks as much, the chicks grew as well and survived as well to resighting in the colony 4-5 years later. Peter Becker then talked of the costs to Common Terns of laying replacement clutches, while Ian Nisbet told of his long and fruitless search for evidence of senescent decline in breeding success among Common Terns in Massachusetts: birds aged 18-23 years were more successful in raising chicks than any control group of younger birds, probably because they were high quality individuals. In an interesting twist to the sex allocation story, Ellen Kalmbach described how stressed adult Great Skuas (of which females are larger than males) skewed the sex ratio of their offspring to favour rearing males.

Starting the afternoon session "Reproduction and Population Ecology", Thierry Boulinier told how non-breeding and failed Kittiwakes are more likely to prospect nest sites in successful areas of the colony, while Norman Ratcliffe described how the use of field-readable rings has helped elucidate Roseate Tern demography in the north-east Atlantic. Rob Lindner explained that the reproductive output of Guillemots on

Skomer has increased as the population increased - a clear example of positive density dependence, and Gilles Chapdelaine told how breeding success and population increase at Gannet colonies in the Gulf of St. Lawrence has been greatest among birds colonising "upper plateau" rather than cliff habitat. Steve Votier then returned to Shetland Great Skuas and their predation on other seabirds, explaining that those with a specialist diet are likely to be the highest quality pairs. Finally, Suzanne Finney described an experiment on the Isle of May to see whether experimentally delaying the breeding season of Herring Gulls might reduce kleptoparasitism on Puffins.



An evening session on the "Breeding Ecology of Southern Hemisphere Seabirds" began by Jeroen Creuwels investigating the relationship between egg laying dates, weather, and breeding success in the early breeding Antarctic Petrel and the later-laying Southern Fulmar. Alejandro Simeone then described habitat partitioning and breeding cycles of Humboldt Penguins, Chilean Pelicans and Kelp Gulls on a tiny island in Chile, while Janos Hennicke compared the foraging effort and breeding success of Humboldt Penguins at two Chilean colonies 1700km apart. Jacob Gonzales-Solis then talked of sexual segregation in foraging behaviour of Northern Giant Petrels, the most sexually dimorphic of all seabirds, while Daniela Guicking returned to Isla Mocha off Chile to tell of the results of radio-tracking Pink-footed Shearwaters. Finally, Bill Bourne gave an intriguing talk on the likely size and foraging areas of seabird populations on Ascension Island before their decimation by introduced predators, and the connections between their breeding success and historic climatic events.

The conference dinner on Saturday evening was a spectacular affair, held below a variety of seabirds, stuffed and suspended from the ceiling (I told you this conference was a novel affair). A massive buffet of different fish starters plus salads and dressing was followed by a fine variety of fish fillets, or an alternative of roast pork. Wine (free) flowed liberally, a band played for us as numerous photos were taken, and Sarah Wanless scaled the balcony to give a rousing thank you to Peter Becker, his helpers, sponsors, and the staff at the Stadthalle for such an evening.



Among the more mature seabirders, Bill Bourne, Ian Nisbet and Oscar Merne were on fine form (*previous page*), Pat Monaghan and Peter Becker clearly had a lot to talk about (*above*), but one abiding question is what happened in the stage area to cause Jim Reid such consternation and Rob Barrett obvious jubilation (*below*)? Can anybody remember?



On Sunday morning, Pat Monaghan renewed the session "Reproductive Strategies and Parental Condition" with a keynote speech on resource

allocation and life history trade-offs in seabirds, emphasising the importance of maternal condition in reproductive output. The Lesser Black-backed Gulls of Walney Island were revisited by Andrea Fidgett, who described changes in composition of eggs laid in experimentally extended clutches, while Ingveig Langseth took us to Svalbard to describe changes in female Kittiwake body mass and metabolic rates during the breeding season.

After the coffee break, Sarah Wanless kicked off a session on "Reproductive Success" with an exploration of changes in laying dates of seabirds in eastern Scotland in relation to global climate change. Sergey Pyzhjanov then described the breeding success and colony fluctuations of Mongolian Herring Gulls around Lakes Baikal and Khubsugul in central Siberia.



Continuing with gulls, Monika Bukacinska (*above*) then gave a fascinating talk on the impact of recent mass outbreaks of black flies on the breeding success of Common Gulls on the Vistula floodplains in Poland. Steve Newton took us back to the Irish Sea Roseate Terns, looking at the influence of foraging behaviour and weather on their breeding success. Jeroen van Waeyenberge followed this with a talk on the reproductive success and feeding behaviour of Common Terns at Zeebrugge, where foraging in the wakes of ferries is common behaviour. The final talk before lunch was by Bernard Cadiou on the breeding biology of Storm Petrels in Brittany, where timing of laying varies greatly between years and is probably linked to oceanographic factors and food resources prior to laying.

On both the Saturday and Sunday, lunchtimes were extended to allow examination and discussion of the 33 excellent poster

presentations. The subjects, too numerous to describe in detail here, were as varied as the breeding biology of Argentinian Red-legged Cormorants, chronic oil pollution off Newfoundland, and the thermal characteristics of Shetland Puffin burrows.



Eric Stienen began the final session, "Food Provisioning and Foraging", with an account of the pros and cons Sandwich Terns have to balance by nesting among kleptoparasitic Black-headed Gulls, while Keith Hamer contrasted the foraging ranges of Gannets breeding at colonies in the North and Celtic Seas from satellite telemetry. Stefan Garthe stayed with Gannets and data loggers, describing (and showing us with remarkable video footage) how deep dives for capelin off Newfoundland include a 'bottom time' of pursuit using under-water wing-flapping flight. Catherine Gray then took us back to the Celtic Sea with a talk on the parental roles during chick provisioning in Manx Shearwaters, before we returned to Newfoundland for the last two talks of the conference. Bill Montevecchi gave a fascinating account of prey selection by Common Murres on Funk Island (they go for gravid female capelin), while Gail Davoren described the foraging locations and times of murres breeding at colonies on Funk Island (offshore) and Great Island.

With 36 talks over the weekend, it was with mixed blessings that the conference ended. Relief at getting out into the warm afternoon sunshine, but sadness that, as ever, it seemed to have gone so quickly. One thing was sure - we'd been listening to the cutting edge of research into seabird breeding biology, and a big thanks should go to the speakers for their clarity, and to the majority of attendees who coped so well with English, not their native language. Afterwards a trip was arranged to the Institut für Vogelforschung in Wilhelmshaven, but a number of the punters gave up waiting for the bus and went for a wander along the harbour and seafront instead, before reconvening for a beer and then running up a considerable bill in an otherwise deserted Chinese restaurant!



On the Monday, about 30 of us gathered for an early morning coach journey to Cuxhaven to catch the ferry to Helgoland. Extensive seawatching from the stern of the ferry picked up flocks of Eiders heading north-east as well as several flocks of Jackdaws heading vaguely north in the increasing murk. By the time we got to the island the fog was descending fast, but we enjoyed a walk around the island and the bird observatory garden guided by Volker Dierschke, Barbara Caspers and Anne-Kathrin Heibges. Helgoland was nothing at all like my preconceptions of a remote observatory island such as Skokholm or Fair Isle. It was bombed to bits during World War II, now has 10,000 visitors a day during summer, nudist beaches, a desalination plant, and a thriving little town. There were migrant Blackbirds everywhere and we got close up views of Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Gannets on the west cliffs, before discovering that Helgoland is a tax-free zone and that shops by the pier stocked spirits and liquors at ridiculously low prices! One delegate from Leicester panicked slightly when told that a

notice on the return ferry restricted people to one bottle each, but he clanked safely back to England and I am told the contraband malts have now been consumed.



All in all, the 7th Seabird Group Conference was a spectacular success. Many thanks should go to Peter Becker and Elke Weichmann and the local organising committee, to Peter Becker, Kees Camphuysen and Mark Tasker who arranged the scientific programme, and to the city of Wilhelmshaven and the numerous sponsors who made the weekend such a hospitable event. It'll be a hard one to follow.

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We are very grateful to Peter Becker for providing the photos for this article. Helgoland photo by Chris Wernham. Apologies to anyone who doesn't like their mugshot.

WHEN A DOCTRINE BECOMES A DOGMA

This article is about the effects of American mink on seabirds in west Scotland... *No, don't switch off! It is also about a more general topic which may be important for other seabird workers....*

The seabird species concerned are all ground-nesting terns and gulls - Common and Arctic Terns; Black-headed, Common and Herring Gulls. The study area consists of about 150 small islands in sealochs, firths and sounds along about a thousand kilometres of mainland coast, from Mallaig in the north to West Loch Tarbert (Kintyre) in the south. Here these birds almost always breed on small islands, one reason being the need to avoid land predators. The situation has now changed dramatically, particularly within the last decade or so. Mink are excellent swimmers and they regularly reach most small islands, helped by the tendency of islands to be in chains or groups. Every year mink severely reduce the breeding success of gulls and terns throughout this large area, preventing many entire colonies from rearing young. However, mink normally kill only small numbers of adults.

I have found it difficult to persuade some seabird biologists that this is a matter about which we should be concerned. A common reaction has been the standard argument, more or less as follows:

"Regular breeding failures in long-lived organisms such as seabirds do not matter very much. In a lifetime of ten or twenty years, each pair needs to produce only two surviving offspring for the population to remain constant. Various factors, such as pools of non-breeding adults and variable age of first breeding, can buffer the harmful effects of breeding failures. Mink may be causing widespread breeding failures but, as they are only killing small numbers of adults, they won't have serious effects on population numbers. We don't need to worry."

But how can this be reconciled with the fact that numbers of all five species *have* decreased noticeably in this large area - by 30-50% in the last 10-12 years. Each of the five species has decreased at about 5-7% per annum. Quantitatively, the widespread annual whole-colony breeding failures caused by mink account surprisingly well for the losses. As part of this overall decrease, again after repeated annual breeding failures caused by mink, several whole sealochs and sounds have lost all or nearly all their breeding seabirds - appalling losses which, if they had been caused by, say, oilspills, would have made headline news.

Few people care about gulls (why?) but most of us are saddened by the loss of terns. In 1987 this area held 1839 pairs of Common Terns, about one-eighth of the British Isles total; by 1998 this had decreased by 48% to 954 pairs. In 1987 there were 20 Common Tern colonies of ten or more pairs; by 1998 there were only seven. Just how can all this be squared with the conventional argument that regular breeding failures don't matter?

The answer seems to be because mink are causing these breeding failures *every year*. With Herring Gulls, for example, I compared productivity of colonies where mink were removed each spring with productivity of unprotected colonies (where mink were not removed). This showed that mink reduced total numbers fledged by 53% in 1997, 68% in 1998 and 53% in 1999. By no means all the colonies in the unprotected group were affected by mink (8 of 14 unprotected colonies were affected in 1997; 14 of 25 in 1998; and 19 of 42 in 1999), but almost all the colonies affected by mink produced no young. Roughly speaking, mink are halving the productivity of these five species here every year. What are the long term effects of this likely to be?

In a stable closed population, only two of the lifetime offspring of each pair *do* survive to maturity. Suppose we then start to kill half the chicks each year. If there is a simple linear relation, this will also halve the number that fledge and the number that reach breeding age. Density-dependent effects at various points in the life-cycle may alter this simple picture and soften the impact. The effects of chick mortality may be buffered by a pool of non-breeding birds that now have a chance to breed. But if we continue killing half the chicks every year, sooner or later most of

these buffers will be exhausted and adult numbers must then be expected to decline. Because of such complications, the rate of decrease is hard to predict but we can put broad limits on it.

If the population is closed and the adult mortality rate is (like the Herring Gull) about 10%, then killing *all* the chicks every year would lead to a population decline of 10% per annum. By killing *some* of the chicks annually, we would expect a decline of between 0 and 10% per annum. The observed annual rates of decline of around five to seven percent are within this range. Moreover, the fact that five species with such different lifestyles and requirements are all decreasing at about the same rate is consistent with a single common cause.

Mink are having more measurable effects on seabird numbers and distribution than all the notorious oilspills of recent decades, from Torrey Canyon through Braer to Sea Empress. (For example, the 48% mink-related decrease of Common Terns in this area is itself a loss of 6% of the British Isles total. Oilspills, which tend to be mercifully localised, rarely have such large effects.) Yet the mink/seabird situation gets much less publicity. Terrible though such oilspills are, surviving birds are able to breed and their numbers always recover after a few years (like Common Scoters in Carmarthen Bay after the 1996 *Sea Empress* spill, despite dire headlines at the time). The crucial aspect of mink predation is that affected seabirds are unable to breed adequately. This is not easy to detect or (more importantly) to show on TV. Most of the evidence is well hidden, and the breeding failures may go undetected unless someone is measuring productivity every year at a number of colonies and identifying causes of failure. Because of movements between sites, the slow decrease in adult numbers is also unlikely to be noticed unless counts are being made at all sites in a large area over many years.

Doctrines provide us with useful frameworks of knowledge for everyday use. If doctrines are taken too far, they may become dogmas, hindering understanding and perhaps even blinding us to what is happening. Occasional years in which no young fledge have little effect on seabird numbers. In such long-lived creatures, there will be good years to balance the bad ones. Compare the 10% adult mortality rate of a typical seabird with, say,

the 50% or so of a typical passerine. Two or three successive poor breeding seasons will greatly reduce passerine numbers but affect a seabird much less. We can all agree on that particular deployment of the argument that "killing chicks doesn't matter". But, surely, it is wrong and misleading to extend this same argument to inordinate losses of chicks when they happen *every* year.

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TYSTIES 2000 IN SHETLAND

The Tystie counting season in Shetland got off to a good start on 30th March, when Martin Heubeck, Roger Riddington and Jonathon Swale launched a Zodiac at Vidlin in near darkness and headed for Out Skerries in a vague westerly wind and a calm sea. Out Skerries, the most easterly group of islands in Shetland and therefore the most easterly breeding site for Black Guillemots in the British Isles, had never been properly surveyed before during the pre-breeding season. Large numbers of Tysties were known to moult around the islands, but whether they bred around Out Skerries or came from the c.1,200 strong population on Fetlar was unknown. Despite drizzle towards the end of the count, by 0930 we'd totalled 687 adult birds making this breeding concentration (for just c.12 km of coastline) one of the largest in the UK. One of the more memorable sight was flushing birds out of Corbie (= Raven) Geo on the south side of Mioness. They just kept coming and coming, and once we'd hollered and clapped for long enough, we motored out to find a flock of 93 on the sea.

The early morning starts continued for the next 5 weeks and by 5th May, teams from SOTEAG, SNH, and some stalwart volunteers had virtually completed coverage of coastlines not surveyed in 1998/99. Figures are being checked and rechecked at the time of writing, but it looks like the Shetland population estimate for Seabird

2000 will be slightly over 16,000 adults, about a third higher than the Seabird Colony Register figure of 12,000 in 1982-84. One should be cautious about making too close comparisons between the two censuses because of some differences in methodology (e.g. counts from land or sea) and coverage (greater in 1998-2000), but some genuine changes have undoubtedly occurred, as monitoring in the intervening years have shown. Numbers in Yell Sound, hit by a serious oil spill in early 1979, have more than doubled, but numbers in the Scalloway Islands (hit by the Braer oil spill in January 1993) remain less than half that in 1982-84. Less explicable is a 50% decrease on the seven islands between Unst, Fetlar and Yell, particularly on Linga (72 in 1983, 22 in 2000) where there has been evidence of predation of nests by otters in recent years.

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Martin, you didn't really think that your photo would escape publication, after selecting embarrassing ones of everyone else – did you?

JOURNAL REVIEWS BY MARK TASKER

From *PACIFIC SEABIRDS* Vol 26 (2)

The continuing saga of the largest Caspian tern colony in the world continues. Readers will remember that the US National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) blame Caspian terns nesting on the Columbia River for declines in salmon populations, and therefore want to eliminate them from the ecosystem by destroying nesting sites and encouraging them to nest elsewhere. There is a large hatchery on the river, and initial estimates indicate that terns consume about 5.7% of the hatchery produced smolts. Conveniently, hatchery managers appear to be overlooking the possible impacts of extensive dam systems in the Columbia catchment, and changing oceanographic conditions in their scramble to find a convenient scapegoat. PSG continues to lobby for a full EIA on the proposed (and current) actions of NMFS.

Work on Steller's eider by Lori Quakenbush indicates that this threatened species now only nests in years when there is a super-abundance of lemmings. The lemmings attract nesting skuas, which in turn drive predators such as foxes and ravens out of the area and enable the eiders to nest. A species recovery plan for the species is being prepared.

Most of the rest of the issue is taken up with reports from the Pacific Seabird Group's regional reps.

From *SEEVÖGEL* Vol 21 (1)

In a study that ran from July 1998 to April 1999, Gerhard Dahlmann and Annabel Secheyay examined samples of oil from the feathers of 316 dead oiled birds from beaches on North Sea coasts. Not surprisingly, nearly all samples came from illegal discharges of sludge residues of heavy fuel oil. Walther Striberny summarises the history of seabirds breeding on Sylt. This used to be a very important seabird site until the middle of the 19th century, when construction and egg collecting started to take its toll on habitat and nesting birds respectively. Military fortification and human influx (both residents and tourists) have taken a further toll.

From *WWF ARCTIC BULLETIN* Vol 1.00

This is a very varied issue, with much focus on protecting and saving the arctic seas. There are some massive arctic marine protected areas, with those around Svalbard and Franz Josef land being particularly large (>30,000 km²) and important for seabirds. Most of the north-east coast of Greenland, including a nearshore strip of water is also protected. Sustainable fisheries practice and the opposition by Iceland to fishing subsidies are featured. A new threat to the Arctic is the possibility that the northern sea route along the coasts of Russia might be opened up. It is apparently economically difficult to justify, except for the exporting of oil from Russia's northern oilfields.

From *WORLD BIRDWATCH* Vol 22(1)

The news of the addition of the two giant petrels and five further petrel species to Appendix II of the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species is featured. These additions occurred owing to research indicating that they were at risk from bycatch on longlines. They join the southern albatrosses on this Appendix. News from New Zealand that after intensive protection measures, all known eggs of the critically endangered Taiko produced fledgings is welcomed, but tempered by the fact that there were only two known eggs. Euan Dunn updates the BirdLife work on the Erika spill in a two-page spread.

ERIKA UPDATE

In the February edition of the Newsletter, we provided a first report on the *Erika* oil spill of December last year. It is now many months since the *Erika* foundered but the number of ringed birds reported to the BTO falls far short of that expected. We are very much afraid that many (very many) rings were not found in the chaos of the events, particularly as the oil was so thick that rings could not be seen but rather had to be felt for. However, there is a large batch, containing some dozens of rings, on its way from the French ringing office - more of that in a later Newsletter. This update contains all records that have been spotted by ourselves as they have gone through the administrative process. If any members who are ringers have

additional records that we have missed so far, please e-mail me on chris.mead@zetnet.co.uk.

The list of ring-recoveries is already many times as long as for the notorious *Torry Canyon* wreck. The records so far received and traced are as follows ('adults' are birds of breeding age, 'immatures' those not yet of breeding age and 'juveniles' birds ringed as nestlings in 1999):-

Species	ads	imms	juvs	Total
Red-throated Diver	1	0	0	1
Gannet	1	1	0	2
Cormorant	1	0	0	1
Great Skua	2	1	0	3
Kittiwake	1	0	0	1
Guillemot	17	23	20	60
Razorbill	3	1	2	6

The Red-throated Diver was ringed as a nestling on Orkney in 1998. Of the Gannets, one was from Ailsa Craig in the Clyde where it was ringed as a nestling in 1995; the other was from Shetland (nestling in 1984). The Cormorant was from the relatively new colony at Abberton Reservoir in Essex (nestling in 1990). The recovered Great Skuas were ringed as chicks on Handa (1990) and Noss, Shetland (1994 and 1996). The Kittiwake was ringed on the Isle of May, Firth of Forth as an adult in 1986. Of the six Razorbills recovered, four were ringed as nestlings on Great Saltee, (1978, 1995 and two in 1999), one was ringed on the Scillies as an adult in 1996 and one as an adult on Fair Isle in 1989.

The breakdown of the 60 Guillemot recoveries so far is as follows:-

Area of origin	ads	imms	juvs	Total
Irish/Celtic Sea	2	10	10	22
W Scotland	13	12	7	32
N Scotland	2	1	1	4
North Sea	0	0	2	2

Over one million Guillemots have been ringed in Britain and Ireland, and long-term studies on Saltee (Wexford, Ireland) and Canna (Western Scotland) have each included the ringing of *ca* 2,000 birds per year for many years. According to the recoveries so far, the most serious losses

may be those of adults from Western Scotland, which may constitute 5% of the breeding population. A higher proportion of adults from the Irish/Celtic Sea colonies may have already returned to the vicinity of these colonies at the time of the spill and therefore fared better. Notwithstanding the high risk to the French seabird colonies local to this spill, the incident once again emphasises the importance of considering oil pollution as an international problem.

A detailed list of casualties from the spill (collected either alive or dead) was issued to the press by la Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO) at the end of February. This included information from a large number of organisations involved in the clean-up efforts: ADEV, Bretagne-Vivante, Hironnelle, la Federation des Chasseurs des Landes, les Centres UNCS de l'ENV de Nantes, du CHENE, du Marais aux Oiseaux de Dolus, de la LPO de l'Ille Grande. A summary of the figures from this report follows:-

Group	Total	%
Divers (<i>Gavia</i> spp)	297	1
Grebes (<i>Podiceps</i> spp)	224	1
Petrels	32	<1
Gannet (<i>Sula bassana</i>)	985	2
Cormorants (<i>Phalacrocorax</i> spp)	205	1
Hérons	8	<1
Geese	30	<1
Ducks	2379	6
Rails	8	<1
Waders	51	<1
Larids	558	1
Alcids	32866	88
Others	6	<1
Total (known group)	37666	100%
Total (unknown group)	24012	
Total collected	61678	

Of the 32,886 auks of known species that were collected, 31,087 (95%) were Common Guillemots. The ducks included 1884 Common Scoter, 298 Eider and 128 Red-breasted Merganser. Including all casualties, it is likely that at least 51,000 Common Guillemots were washed up on beaches after the spill.

Chris Mead & Chris Wernham



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The Newsletter is published three times a year. The editor welcomes articles from members and others on issues relating to seabird research and conservation. These should be received by 15 May (for June edition), 15 September (for October edition) or 15 January (for February edition).

The Seabird Group promotes and helps co-ordinate the study and conservation of seabirds. Members also receive the journal *Atlantic Seabirds*, containing papers on current research. The Group organises regular conferences and also provides small grants towards seabird research. Current 2000 membership rates are:-

Ordinary £10.00
Direct Debit £9.00
Concession £5.00
Institution £15.00

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to Newsletter No. 85! As this is the first one that I have produced alone, I would welcome comments on the content and any suggestions for future editions. On behalf of the Seabird Group, I would like to offer many, many thanks to Mark Tasker for editing the Newsletter during the past (many!) years and for so kindly offering to continue to review a number of journals for our benefit in future editions. I would also like to thank Martin Heubeck for his mammoth contributions to this issue and his support in providing ideas for my first attempt and John Calladine for proof-reading and other suggestions. This is a special issue, featuring an article on our recent conference in Wilhelmshaven (see pp1-4). Selected papers from the conference will be published in a later volume of *Atlantic Seabirds*.

Chris Wernham

GROUP NEWS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
On behalf of the Group, I would like to welcome the new members to the Executive Committee, elected in at the AGM in Wilhelmshaven. These are Professor Mike Harris (Chairman), Mr Bob Swann (Secretary) and Dr Steve Hunter (Ordinary Member). Our gratitude goes to Sarah Wanless (retiring Chairman) and John Uttley (retiring Secretary) for the huge

contributions they have made to the Group.

GROUP MAILINGS

It is now our intention to produce three issues of the Newsletter each year (in June, October and February). There will also now be three issues of our journal *Atlantic Seabirds* per year. When these are ready to go out with a Newsletter, we will mail them together. Otherwise the Newsletter will be mailed at the scheduled time. To help save costs for the Group when this happens, we would be grateful if all members who have access to e-mail and would like to receive the Newsletter in this way could e-mail Sheila Russell to advise her of this:

Sheila-Russell@CloberFarm.in2home.co.uk

We think it important that members receive regular news via the Newsletter in this way.

SEABIRD 2000

The first edition of the *Seabird 2000 Biannual Review* was published in April. This is scheduled to be produced before and after each *Seabird 2000* field season (*ie* November and April). The first edition describes the launch of the project, in which the Seabird Group has large involvement. It then features short reports on some of the counts of cliff-nesting species that were carried out throughout the UK in 1999 and a larger article on progress in Ireland in 1999. We hope to include a full report on *Seabird 2000* in our next Newsletter.