

OISEAUX MARINS NICHEURS DE FRANCE METROPOLITAINE (1960–2000)

Cadiou, B., Pons, J.M. & Yésou, P. (Eds). 2004. Mèze, France: Editions Biotope. 218 pp. with 50 illustrations, 51 figures, 32 tables, 16 plates. Hard cover. ISBN 2-914817-03-7. €40.

Oiseaux marins nicheurs de France métropolitaine is the first attempt to present an overview of the breeding numbers and spatial distribution of seabirds breeding in France. It reports in detail on the 1997–2000 census of seabirds in France (excluding overseas territories), and builds on unpublished data from earlier national surveys made in 1969/70, 1977/78 and 1987–1989. Pre-1969 census data on eight common species are also included. Most of the data were collected by nearly 500 amateur and professional ornithologists, wardens and reserve managers. That huge task nicely illustrates an excellent collaborative effort at a national scale. Most of the census was coordinated by the GISOM (French scientific seabird group).

As in *Seabird Populations of Britain and Ireland* (Mitchell *et al.* 2004), the main objective of this book is to report population estimates and distribution of the 26 species of seabirds that regularly breed in France and to analyse population trends over nearly 30 years. Four species that occasionally breed in France are also included.

The strong points of the book are the seven introductory chapters that, although brief, place the census in a wider context. The first three chapters present the biogeography, taxonomy and conservation status of seabirds breeding in France. The next two chapters present the continental, coastal and marine habitats used by those species, and a too-brief chapter describes the mechanisms regulating seabird populations. A final introductory chapter presents the census methods. Each species chapter is divided into five parts: life history, historical data (before 1969), current status and trends, causes of change and conservation concerns. A map and a detailed table illustrate the spatial distribution and breeding numbers of each species. For some species, a graph also illustrates the population trends. Each species chapter has an English summary, and the figure legends and table titles are also in English.

The book reports considerable increases in the populations of Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*, Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*,

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, Slender-billed Gull *L. genei*, Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*, and Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*. In contrast, the Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, Roseate Tern *S. dougallii*, Common Murre *Uria aalge*, and Razorbill *Alca torda* have decreased.

For species breeding at several sites, an additional map representing changes in the numbers at major breeding sites would have helped the reader to better visualize and understand the spatiotemporal changes in breeding numbers. Perhaps the only serious criticism to note is the lack of detail on the census methods for each species. The introductory chapter on census methods is too brief, and few data are presented on the accuracy and precision of the counts. For example, burrowing species are more difficult to census than are surface-nesting species, and precision and accuracy of the counts may be more biased in some species than in others. Consequently, the population changes reported should be interpreted with caution, particularly the smaller ones.

The book is a nice contribution to seabird biology by filling a gap in the geographic coverage of seabird populations in France and Europe. It will be useful for ornithologists and managers new to the area or for general readers interested in an overview. Hopefully, it will provide a sound basis for the next censuses and for similar work in the French overseas territories.

REFERENCE

MITCHELL, P.I., NEWTON, S.F., RATCLIFFE, N. & DUNN, T.E. 2004. Seabird populations of Britain and Ireland. London: T & AD Poyser.

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