

GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Woods, R.W. 1988. Oswestry, Shropshire, United Kingdom: Anthony Nelson. 256 pages, 21 colour plates, 2 maps, numerous black and white drawings. UK £14.95. ISBN 0 904614 22 0.

Guide to the birds of the Falkland Islands by Robin Woods is a follow up to his first book published in 1975. The present book, produced by the same publishers, is more along the lines of a conventional field guide and has the species illustrated by paintings rather than photographs. However, the format of the text for each species (identification, voice, food, habitat, status and breeding, distribution abroad) remains the same. The main difference in the text is the long introductory sections describing the Falkland Islands' environment, the effects that man has had on the vegetation (and hence birds) and attempts at conservation. The history of ornithology and the special importance of Tussac Grass as a bird habitat provide interesting additions.

The Falkland Islands became the focus of world attention during the unsuccessful attempt by Argentina to invade in 1982. After the re-establishment of British government major social changes took place, including the splitting up of most large farms into small units and the provision of improved transport. The conflict also highlighted the need for the protection of surrounding waters and currently fishing rights are leased and policed.

The Falkland Islands' avifauna is heavily biased towards seabirds, both in terms of the number of breeding species (five penguins, one albatross, nine petrels and shearwaters, two cormorants, five gulls, terns and skuas) and in terms of the number of individuals. Numerous other species visit the islands. Woods gives a short account of the ecology of the seabirds, drawing the distinction between the oceanic species associated with the nearby area of upwelling, where two currents meet, and the inshore species that are associated with the extensive kelp beds. He indicates that there is a dearth of knowledge about the population and feeding ecology of these seabirds and how the present fishing activities may be affecting them.

Like its predecessor, the current book is a very useful introduction to the avifauna of the Falkland Islands and will be an essential starting point for visiting ornithologists, especially as books dealing with the identification of birds in this part of the world are a rarity. Only the seabirds and the waterfowl of the Falkland Islands are adequately dealt with elsewhere. The only criticism I have is that the rare birds are given almost the same amount of space as the common species. I would have preferred to have seen fuller accounts for the latter.

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BIRDS OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Hollom, P.A.D., Porter, R.F., Christensen, S. & Willis, I. 1988. Calton, Staffordshire, United Kingdom: T. & A.D. Poyser. 280 pages, 40 colour plates, numerous black and white drawings and maps. UK £14.00. ISBN 0 85661 047 X.

This book covers the southern part of the western Palaearctic comprising the North African countries bordering the Mediterranean, Turkey, Iran and all the countries in southwest Asia southwards. Geographically it is meant to take over where Peterson, Mountfort & Holloms's *A field guide to the birds of Britain and Europe* (1954) leaves off. In fact the text often refers the reader to 'PMH' and one would need to carry both books to cover many vagrant species.

The book is well bound in a waterproof cover but, unusually for Poyser, the text print in my review copy is of very variable quality and in one or two places it is virtually illegible. The colour plates are well produced, although I found some of them

rather crowded and the individual illustrations lacking in detail.

The individual species descriptions are divided into sections on identification, voice, status and habitat. For breeding species maps showing the breeding range are given. Interest in the area for seabird watchers is mainly restricted to the gulls and terns. I found the identification descriptions sufficient and accurate for the species with which I am familiar. There are useful additional comments on subspecies.

This will be a useful book for those birdwatchers spending time in this interesting, and somewhat undercovered, part of the world. However, you will also need to buy an accompanying field guide to the rest of Europe, which makes the price of this one a bit excessive.

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SEABIRDS IN THE NORTH SEA

VULNERABLE CONCENTRATIONS OF BIRDS IN THE NORTH SEA

Tasker, M.L., Webb, A., Hall, A.J., Pienkowski, M.W. & Langslow, D.R. 1987. Peterborough: Nature Conservancy Council. 336 pp. ISBN 0 86139 3945.

Tasker, M.L. & Pienkowski, M.W. 1987. Peterborough: Nature Conservancy Council 38 pp. ISBN 0 86139 393 7.

Studying seabirds in their natural environment, at sea, is difficult. Yet there is a growing need for precise information on the distribution patterns, food and general ecology of seabirds at sea. The North Sea is a productive area, which houses over four million seabirds, but which is also heavily exploited by man for fish, oil and transport. Pollution, most visible as oil-incidents, takes its toll, and little information was available about the whereabouts of seabirds in time and space, making assessments of risks very difficult.

In view of this paucity of knowledge about the distribution of seabirds in the North Sea and their vulnerability to (mainly) oil pollution, the British Nature Conservancy Council decided to start research at sea in 1979. The recruited "Seabirds At Sea Team" (SAST) faced a formidable task, since the whole North Sea, with a surface area of around 617 000 km², was to be studied. The present two reports form the second and third major publications of the team, and are an extension of the first report, published in 1984. Data from 125 000 km steaming, or 35 000 km² of sea area observed by standard transect counts are summarized in 78 maps in the main report, and in 12 monthly overviews in the vulnerability report.

The main report, *Seabirds in the North Sea*, presents the results in a scientific way, with distribution maps for all major species, in combination with sometimes impressive monographs on all species concerned. Bird distributions at sea are discussed against the

background of the distribution of their breeding colonies, migration patterns, their feeding ecology and the oceanographic features of the North Sea.

The most important bird species, such as Arctic Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Northern Gannet *Sula bassana*, some gulls and auks, received attention in distribution maps for several periods of the yearly cycle. These maps cover the whole North Sea, as do all maps in the report. Only the Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle*, being the favourite hobbyhorse of one of the authors, gets a special treatment in maps for the Shetland area. Rarer seabirds are dealt with in one map each, where all sightings are summarized. The introductory part briefly discusses the goals of the project and informs the reader about the North Sea environment, the survey methods, data handling and map interpretation. The main goal was to find the broad distribution patterns of seabirds at sea. Therefore, the North Sea has been divided into 15' N/S x 30' E/W rectangles, in which the data, obtained as ten-minute counts, were grouped. For discussions of the results, rectangles were taken together as areas of larger surfaces. Twentyeight of these "standard areas" are used, in which the rectangles share major oceanographical features. This rather large scale approach gives a good overview of the distributions, but may hide important smaller scale distribution phenomena. For instance, the authors argue that seabird distribution patterns are likely to be affected by the distribution of their main food. Small schooling fish, the main prey for many seabirds, usually occur in a patchy fashion, often associated with the edges of banks in the sea. Some areas in the North Sea offer an excellent opportunity to study this prediction. Off Great Yarmouth, to the southeast of the large Flamborough Head Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* colony, an area is found where deeps and banks occur closely together. This area did not get special attention, however, and any details of Common Guillemot distribution are lost

in the rectangles that are simply too large for such a question. A second problem is that depth contours are not indicated on the distribution maps, so that links between depth and seabird distribution are difficult to make. Bathymetry, as well as the distribution of sediments and salinity, are present in maps in a separate section. The part on sediments is on a very crude scale and hardly useful. The occurrence of frontal systems is also briefly mentioned, but their importance to seabirds in the North Sea is not thought to be high. This may be true in the British sector of the North Sea, but on the eastern side fronts have been shown to be important to several auk species since the publication of the report. A final shortcoming is the lack of statistical treatment of the results. Although research effort is listed for each rectangle in each month, it is not evaluated how much of the presented distribution patterns should be attributed to chance, or how different years contributed to the final picture. Only small symbols have been used for rectangles with "insufficient cover" (less than 2 km² surveyed, which is about equal to 20 minutes presence of the observers). This "confidence limit" seems rather low to me. However, offering criticism is easy, while sitting behind a desk. Gathering data at sea is a completely different affair than on the land, and the form of presentation chosen in these reports gives a good idea of what the patterns of occurrence of seabirds look like to the observer. The North Sea could not be covered completely in every month, but the main parts (especially from a British point of view) have been counted with remarkable precision. The set of maps give a true representation of the results obtained. All species that were regularly observed are treated in separate chapters that discuss the distribution at sea in relation to the location of the main colonies, migration patterns and food. This part is very clearly written, very informative and together with the distribution maps by far the best section of the report. The maps "come alive" while the species accounts are being read. A problem is that holes in the observation sometimes may lead to a wrong impression. The coastal species, notably the seaducks, got too little attention. By just

glancing at the distribution maps and the number of text pages dedicated to the ducks, one could get the impression that divers are more common in the North Sea than Scoters, which they certainly are not.

The second report takes the viewpoint of the conservationist who wants to know which parts of the North Sea are most vulnerable to pollution incidents and in what time of the year. The layout of this second report is more attractive, in that a glossy rather than ordinary paper has been used, with more side-illustrations. From this one might get the impression that this report is mainly aimed at the sponsors, but even if this were so, it offers nicely condensed information to anyone interested in the birds of the North Sea. It also includes the Wadden Sea and other estuarine areas, where the team did not gather their own data, and which are therefore left out of the main report. The maps presented in the vulnerability report give monthly overviews of the North Sea. These maps are built out of several shades of blue, representing areas of different bird densities, with little bird symbols superimposed to show what families are mainly involved. Including the coastal areas more emphatically than the main report, this vulnerability report not only offers more information on waders, but also on the seaducks than does the main volume. Only the Dutch Delta area suffers from a lack of recognition.

Going out to sea is time consuming, and may be very expensive. Sponsorship was thus needed, and this was obtained from the major oil industries and from governmental bodies. This alone, and the subsequent organization of the project, including the data handling and storage, is a major achievement (the acknowledgements take three full pages). The work of the SAST also had a large spin off in the form of a large number of smaller publications, listed as an appendix.

A counting method, suitable for calculations of seabird densities rather than just numbers seen per distance travelled was developed. This new method

has been criticized by some workers in other seas, but teams of observers that have started similar projects from other North Sea countries have all adopted the SAST methods, and are all happy with them. The list of references used is extensive, and includes quite a few foreign language papers. The only ones obviously missing here are the Cape Griz Nez reports from France on seawatching in the "English" Channel, that, although being far from complete, offer a rather good impression of the importance of the southern exit of the North Sea to migrating seabirds.

The combined effort of the team members has resulted in a data set that allows a discussion about the whole North Sea. Obviously, the best coverage is in waters around Scotland, where most of the (British) North Sea birds breed and find their food, and where the SAST is housed. Offshore areas further away from Aberdeen need more work, as do some shallow parts where large research vessels

cannot go, but here the team has now been joined by Danish and Dutch workers. The high standard of the present report makes their job easier. Not only can they concentrate on "home" waters, but the present report will serve as baseline information for decades to come. The two reports give an excellent overview of the general distribution and dispersal pattern through the year of the North Sea seabirds. They will be an inspiration for biologists working at sea, and especially for those working on seabirds. Conservationists will be delighted to have these reports at hand. The two reports can be obtained by remitting 12 pounds to: Interpretive Branch, Nature Conservancy Council, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA, England. A must for every seabird person!

M. Leopold, Netherlands Institute for Sea Research, Texel, Netherlands. Received 10 May 1988.

SHOREBIRDS: AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE TO THE WADERS OF THE WORLD

Hayman, P., Marchant, J. & Prater, A.J. 1986. London, Sydney: Croom Helm. 412 pages, 88 colour plates, 214 distribution maps and some line drawings.

This beautifully illustrated and well laid out book, which describes all 214 species of the world's waders - or shorebirds - surely needs no introduction. Together with its companion volume, "Seabirds" (Harrison 1983), all of the charadriiform species are now covered in detail. The book is divided into three sections. A short introduction covers such subjects as how to use the book and how to identify the major groups and families of waders; as well as an interesting note on the painstakingly accurate drawing techniques used.

The middle section comprises the 88 excellent colour plates by Peter Hayman, which are the *raison d'être* of the book. These illustrate all 214 species, including variations in plumage due to sex, age, race and breeding status. A useful feature of

the plates is that similar, or easily confused, species are generally shown in similar stances, and to the same scale, on the same plate. Accompanying the plates are colour distribution maps which clearly show breeding and nonbreeding ranges for each species.

Finally, there is the detailed text by John Marchant and Tony Prater, which takes up the last 185 pages of the book. In this section each species is discussed in eight standardized paragraphs: identification, voice, habits, movements, description, age/sex, races and measurements, with selected references. One minor criticism leveled at the book is that the species list does not follow that used by Cramp & Simmons (1983, *Birds of the Western Palearctic*). However, this does not detract from the overall excellence of the book.

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BIRDS OF NORTH RONA AND SULA SGEIR
THE CONSERVATION OF SEABIRDS IN THE NORTH SEA

Benn, S., Murray, S. & Tasker, M.L. 1989. Peterborough, United Kingdom: Nature Conservancy Council. 48 pages, 17 black and white plates, maps and tables. UK £5.00. ISBN 0 86139 477 1.

Tasker, M.L. 1989. Peterborough, United Kingdom: Nature Conservancy Council. 19 pages, 19 colour plates, 2 maps. UK £1.00. ISBN 0 86139 493 3.

These two booklets are both produced by the Nature Conservancy Council's Seabirds at Sea Team and are available (post free) from the Publications Department BRV, Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough, United Kingdom PE1 1UA.

Birds of North Rona and Sula Sgeir is a comprehensive and interesting booklet which documents and reviews all that is known of the ornithology of these infrequently visited islands. Together they form a National Nature Reserve about 65 km to the north of the Outer Hebrides in northwest Scotland. North Rona is the larger of the two islands (c. 120 ha) and has seen human settlement in the past. Sheep are still present and the island is visited annually by shepherds as well as scientists from the Sea Mammal Research Unit. About 156 species of birds have been recorded, including 13 species of breeding seabirds. It holds over 1% of the British populations of the Northern or Arctic Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Great Blackbacked Gull *Larus marinus*, Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, Guillemot or Common Murre *Uria aalge* and Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*. Sula Sgeir is a much smaller island. It has an extensive Northern Gannet *Sula bassana* colony of over 9 000 pairs and significant populations of Northern Fulmars and Guillemots. The Northern Gannets are subject to an annual harvest or "guga hunt" when men from

Ness in the Hebrides exercise a traditional (and still legal) right to kill Northern Gannet chicks under a licence issued by the NCC. Otherwise, the island is rarely visited and there have been only 80 days of ornithological observations in the last 102 years.

After a general introduction describing the islands the booklet contains separate sections on the human history and ornithology of each island followed by a systematic list of the bird species recorded. There is then a final section on the seasonal distribution of seabirds in the waters around North Rona and Sula Sgeir and the relative importance of the area for different species.

The conservation of seabirds in the North Sea is an A5-sized booklet which is one of a series of 'Conservation of ...' produced by the NCC. It is aimed at the general public and contains a wealth of good colour plates. First, it introduces seabirds and their roles on land and at sea. The role of the Seabirds at Sea Team and the Seabird Colony Register (organized jointly by the Seabird Group and NCC) are outlined. Next, there is a section on the North Sea and why it is such an important area for seabirds, particularly in terms of food resources. A section on threats describes the problems of oil spills, chemical residues, net kills and competition with fisheries. Finally there is a short section on seabird conservation.

Whereas the first of these two booklets will mainly be of interest to seabird ornithologists, the latter will be more useful for schools or in promoting the cause of seabird conservation (and the NCC) to the public at large. Although they are well produced both may be a bit highly priced for their market.

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