

SEAWATCHING, DECEMBER 1987-FEBRUARY 1988 (CVZ)

The Hondsbossche Zeewering (Hbz., Noord-Holland) was the only regularly manned seawatching site in all months. Additional data were obtained from Westkapelle (Westk., Zeeland) in December, Ameland in January and Schiermonnikoog in February.

Like the last three winters good numbers of divers were observed served. Daily totals in the third week of December often exceeded 100 on Westk. and Hbz., all heading south. On 12th December over 500 divers were counted on Hbz. Huge numbers were seen on Ameland in January, with a grand total of 1900 individuals from 5-10th, including a one-hour-maximum of 540 divers. Because of the daily changes in flight directions it is felt that these observations concern local movements of a concentration of divers along the Wadden Sea coast. Further south divers were much less numerous but on 10th January 400 ind. were observed at Hbz. Northbound passage started in the second week of February and from now on over 10/hour heading north were counted regularly. More than 95% of all identified divers were Red-throated.

Due to the mild winter, no real hard weather movements of Great Crested Grebes and other species such as waders and wildfowl were recorded. However, some migration of Great Crested Grebes took place during the first half of December, with a maximum of 2000 heading north on 10th. Since that period numbers seldom exceeded 100/hour. Flight directions changed frequently, so it seems likely that most grebes stayed along our coast rather than migrating any further. Red-necked Grebes visited the Noord-Holland coast in small numbers during the second and third week of January and during the last week of February. The smaller species of grebes (Slavonian and Black-throated) were seen quite regularly in small numbers at Hbz. in the second week of December.

Small numbers of Fulmars, including some coloured ones, were seen with strong westerlies in the beginning of January. A westerly gale in the end of February produced an unprecedented 1500 Fulmars at the Hbz. The next day another 80 were seen. These are by far the largest numbers ever reported in February along our coast since seawatching started on a regular basis in 1972.

Gannets, which are normally quite rare in winter, were also rather numerous on 28th February (ca. 50) and were regularly seen in December.

On 19th December 340 Scaup were counted at Hbz. Eider Ducks were seen in good numbers only during the first two weeks of January on Ameland; with several hundreds per hour not being exceptional. Some 2500 Common Scoters were seen on 8th January flying westwards at the same site. In early January Common Scoters were very common along the Noord-Holland coast as well.

Waders, including Knot, Purple Sandpiper, Sanderling, Oystercatcher and Turnstone were present but did not migrate. Curlew is the only species worth mentioning, with 70 flying past at Hbz on 5th January.

Great Skuas were irregularly seen throughout the period, especially on days with strong westerlies.

Common Gull showed large scale migration during late December and on 5th February, when 2100 individuals flew south. Little Gulls were unusually

numerous in February with up to 200 on one day (6th) at Hbz. Kittiwakes were often seen during strong westerly winds, but not in large numbers. On 19th December 'hundreds' were seen at Westk. and Hbz. In February again, when strong winds occurred frequently, (adult) Kittiwakes were numerous. On Schiermonnikoog in minor influx was noted on 12th. Best day, however, was 11th January with 1500 Kittiwakes in one hour.

Small numbers of auks were observed this winter, except for one day with a reasonable 80 Razorbills/Guillemots at Hbz. on 3rd December. Oiled birds were frequently seen swimming close to the coast in January, most of them being Guillemots. Remarkable numbers of Razorbills were identified in December; obviously more than usual. Fourteen records of Little Auk from Hbz. were received, which may have been but the remains of the November influx in 1987.

Important information from: N.van der Ham, J.E.den Ouden, L.Stegeman.