

Korte bijdragen

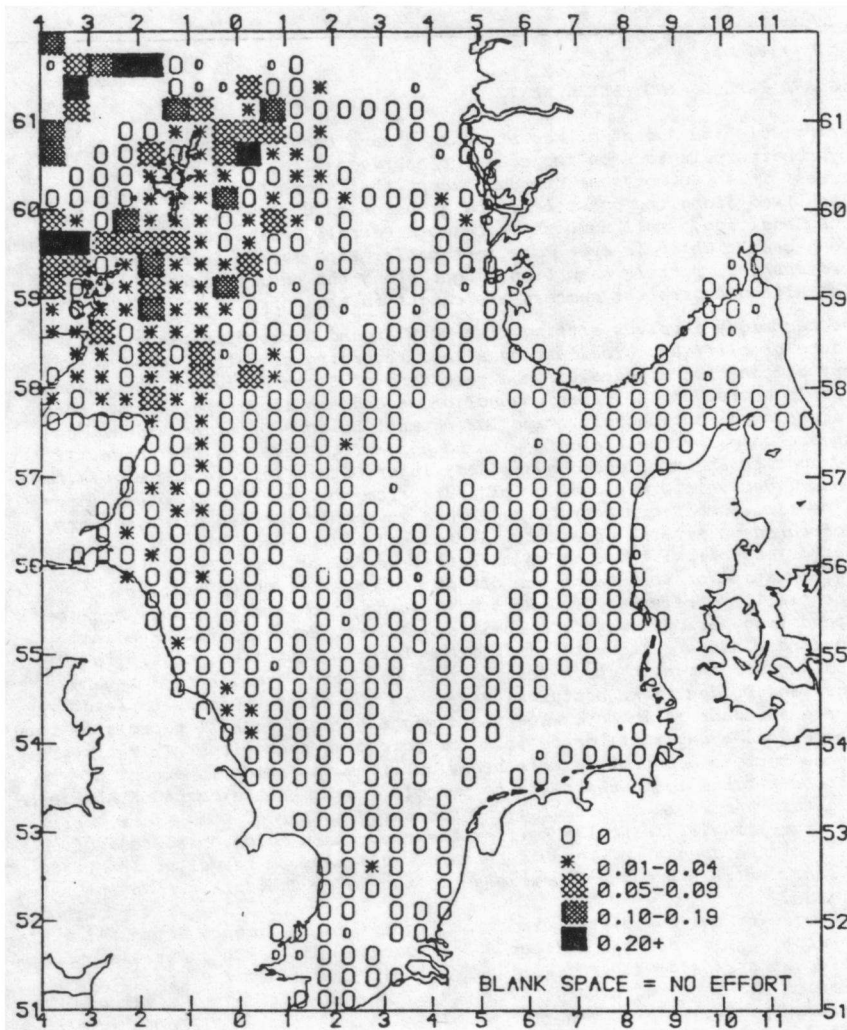
PETRELS AND TAPE LURING: WHERE NEXT?

During July and August of recent years I have been catching Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* on the coast of Aberdeenshire, Scotland using tape lures. This may not seem unusual except that Storm Petrels are not known to breed along the coast here and are seen only very rarely from the coast. In addition, small numbers of Leach's Petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* have been caught which is even more improbable. Tape luring is not confined to Aberdeenshire; petrels have been caught along the entire coast of eastern Britain, although greatest numbers are caught in the north.

The technique involves setting mist nets around a cassette player on a steep dune or cliff and broadcasting a loud recording of petrel sound to sea. The best combination appears to be a recording of Storm Petrel on one channel and Leach's Petrel on the other channel of an endless loop tape so that both songs are played continuously. Tape luring must be done by night; ideal conditions are calm, overcast nights with no noise from waves on the shore. It must be done by an experienced qualified ringer. Storm Petrels are exquisite birds and I derive a great deal of pleasure from showing them to other interested people. Some Storm Petrels make long movements between sites, others are recaptured on several occasions. At the end of the day (night?) they remain mysterious birds; there is so much that we do not know about Storm Petrel biology, in spite of them being one of our commonest breeding species.

Potentially petrels can feed at some distance from their colony, because they spend long periods away from their nest sites. However, non-breeding and immature birds are known to visit other breeding colonies, mostly in July and August; the main chick-rearing period. Petrels, which feed beyond sight of land by day, make nocturnal visits to the coast, perhaps to feed (gulls are abundant in inshore waters and might be able to kill petrels if they feed there during daylight) or to look for potential nest sites. There is probably some hormonal control of this behaviour. The variation in extent of their brood-patches indicates that the petrels caught on the coast of Aberdeenshire contain a mixture of breeding and non-breeding birds. Some Storm Petrels must be travelling at least 175 km from their northern colonies to feed off the coast of Aberdeenshire. Leach's Petrels would need to travel at least 300 km. Do Storm Petrels breed anywhere else in the North Sea, other than on Orkney and Shetland?

If we are to believe distribution maps published in Cramp & Simmons (1977) and seawatching records than neither Storm Petrels, nor Leach's Petrels occur off the coast of Aberdeenshire. Fortunately, our knowledge of Storm Petrel distribution has improved considerably since the publication of "Birds of the Western Palearctic" in 1977. The Seabirds at Sea Team (SAST) (of which I have been a member for the past four years) is a group of ornithologists employed by the Nature Conservancy Council who have been mapping the distribution of seabirds in the North Sea using ships. Around the large breeding colonies on Orkney and Shetland Storm Petrels are abundant at sea and concentrations stretch southwards to the tip of East Scotland (figure 1). Lower numbers extend eastwards to the Norwegian coast and south to Flamborough Head. Storm Petrels, although recorded only rarely during the Seabirds at Sea Project elsewhere, may be present off the remaining coastline on occasions. Storm



figuur 1. Verspreiding van Stormvogeltje *Hydrobates pelagicus*, juni-oktober, 1979-86 (Seabirds At Sea Team, Aberdeen). Aantallen per afgelegde kilometer.

figure 1. Distribution of Storm Petrel, June-October, 1979-86 (Seabirds At Sea Team, Aberdeen). Unit of measurement is number of birds seen per kilometer travelled.

Petrels have been caught at Sandwich Bay in Kent using the tape luring technique. This being the case, it seems likely at virtually any coastal site bordering the North Sea.

De laatste jaren heb ik in juli en augustus met behulp van luid afgespeelde geluidsopnamen op de kust van Aberdeenshire (Schotland) zowel het Stormvogeltje als het Vaal Stormvogeltje gevangen. Voor zover bekend zijn geen van beide soorten broedvogels in de directe omgeving van deze locatie. Door een 'oneindig' bandje te vervaardigen met opnamen van de zang van het Stormvogeltje op het ene, van het Vaal Stormvogeltje op het andere spoor, en door deze opname luid af te spelen op een rustige, donkere (bewolkte) nacht op de kust worden de vogeltjes met succes aangetrokken en in mistnetten gevangen. Ofschoon in de Oostelijke en Zuidelijke Noordzee weinig stormvogeltjes voorkomen, loont het de moeite om ook elders eens te trachten deze soorten te vangen. De vangst van Stormvogeltjes in Sandwich Bay, Kent, Engeland, toont aan dat het op iedere willekeurige kust in de Noordzee in principe mogelijk zou moeten zijn.

Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. 1977. The Birds of the Western Palearctic, 1. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.

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Naschrift redactie: Inmiddels zijn plannen gemaakt om ook in ons land een poging tot het vangen van stormvogeltjes te wagen. Vermoedelijk in 1988 zal Rombout de Wijs het eens proberen. We hopen de resultaten in dit tijdschrift te kunnen meedelen in de herfst van 1988.