

SEAWATCHING, MARCH - MAY 1989

From Scheveningen (Sch), mainland coast of Zuid-Holland, 20 hours of seawatching were carried out. In Noord-Holland results of over 150 hours were received, mainly from the Hondsbossche Zeewering (Hbz) and Egmond aan Zee (Egm). A few days were 'covered' on sites on Ameland and the Frisian coast.

Northbound diver migration was not very spectacular, with daily totals never exceeding 100 individuals. Summer plumage Black-throated Divers were observed as usual in April and May, totalling some 80 specimens. Also grebes were observed in smaller numbers than usual. A distinct peak of migrating Red-necked Grebes and Slavonian Grebes was recorded in the second half of April.

The weather was nice and calm throughout the period, with the exception of a few days in May. As a result, true seabirds were scarce. A few Manx Shearwaters and a daily maximum of 120 Gannets were seen in the only stormy period (12-15 May).

Most spectacular days for dabbling and diving ducks this spring were: 8 March, with 2,200 Wigeons and 800 Teal (Hbz); and 27 March, with 357 Shovelers (Egm). The Common Scoter had a rather late start this spring (the end of March), but numbers were quite considerable in April. On many days a couple of thousand of scoters were counted, and the maximum was 11,000 Common Scoters heading north on 7 April (Hbz). Remarkable was the westward movement of 9,000 Common Scoters on 29 April off Ameland. Velvet Scoters were not very common this spring. As could be expected, with regard to the exceptional numbers of Long-tailed Ducks seen last autumn, northward migration of this species was impressive for Dutch standards. The one day maximum was 45 Long-tailed Ducks on 23 April (Hbz). Brent Geese were scarce this spring, after 5 years of rather large numbers. Most geese were seen in March, with peak numbers on 20th (2,500 heading N; Hbz).

On 6 March, 114 Black-tailed Godwits were seen heading north (Hbz). 1,140 Dunlins were spotted on 17 March (Hbz). A species which is normally seen in very small numbers, the Avocet, was now very common. The 1,250 individuals heading north on 27 March (Egm) was outstanding. Migrating Avocets flying over land were observed as well, so the actual number heading north this spring must have been much larger. Late April and early May, usually the best period for waders migration along our coast, produced only few 'good' days. Bar-tailed Godwits were most numerous.

Arctic Skuas were regularly seen in small numbers this spring. Of the gulls only the Little Gull was seen in unusual numbers. Northward migration of the Little Gull started late March and this species was seen on every day in April. Mass-migration was recorded on 28 and 29 April, with 3,500 (Egm) and 3,700 (Hbz) individuals respectively. Also in May Little Gulls were numerous, now also including many immatures.

'Comic' Terns were frequently seen since early April, and large numbers were observed in early May. Common Terns predominated on most days, but 660 Arctic Terns were seen on 6 May (Bergen aan Zee). Little and Black Terns were most numerous in early May (e.g. 472 Little Terns on 5 May, 269 Black Terns on 8 May; Egm). Sandwich Terns were not very common this spring: 100 on one day was exceptional. The first individual was seen on 14 March.

Information obtained from: M.Argeloo, L.Bruinzeel, N.F.van der Ham, A.A.Kraus, T.Mank, P.Nijhuis, D.Schut, L.Stegeman, R.van Splunder, W.van Splunder, M.Versluys, C.J.N.Winter and B.Winters.