

Recent reports

Beached Bird Surveys, Dec 1989 - Feb 1990 (NSO)

Many counts were received in Dec, particularly from Texel, the mainland coast and the Delta area (sectors I-IV). Unfortunately, little is known from beached birds on Vlieland, Terschelling and Ameland for this month. Densities were rather low many stretches, with exceptions being 5.4/km on Walcheren, 6.0/km Bergen aan Zee, 5.4/km Hondsbossche, 7.2/km Hors, Texel, 11.3/km Cocksdoorp, Texel, 6.0/km Schorren, Texel, 7.2/km Wadden Sea dike, Texel, and 7.4/km Schiermonnikoog. It is a pity that we cannot confirm this trend (higher densities on the Wadden Sea islands) with more counts in this region. Larus-gulls predominated in all districts (42.4% of all birds found dead, n= 571), with auks (mainly Guillemots) ranked second (29.6%). All other species were scarce, Eiders, no doubt, because so few counts from the Wadden Sea mainland coast were to be included. Interesting species were 1 Little Grebe and 2 Little Auks.

January was a stormy month, with hurricane force winds on the 25th. Perhaps linked with the adverse environmental conditions, but without doubt caused by a huge amount of oil discharged in the Dutch sector of the North Sea, many oiled birds washed ashore at the end of the month. Densities were low south of Bergen aan Zee, but very high near Camperduin 9.4/km, and on the Hondsbossche 11.6/km). Almost all these birds were fresh Razorbills and Guillemots, often severely oil contaminated. At the Hondsbossche, surveyed virtually every day, it could be demonstrated that the peak of the stranding took place around the 25th, but the first casualties were recorded some 10 days earlier.

February was again a stormy month with hurricane force winds. Participants in the Beached Bird Survey scheme had great problems with planning their counts at the right date: one day too late and all corpses were buried with sand or washed away. Of marked corpses very few were rereported when the same stretch was visited one or two days later. Razorbills and Guillemots (and quite a few Puffins) washed ashore in very large numbers, particularly between 10 and 20 Feb. At the Hondsbossche, daily visits showed that 14.0/km washed ashore in these ten days (13.5/km Razorbill and Guillemot). Several counts indicated that these densities were also to be found at other stretches on the mainland coast, but calving dunes (due to the storms) and the collection of large quantities of birds by the coastguard (not reported to NSO) made that important numbers were lost for our surveys. The disappearance of corpses took place at such a

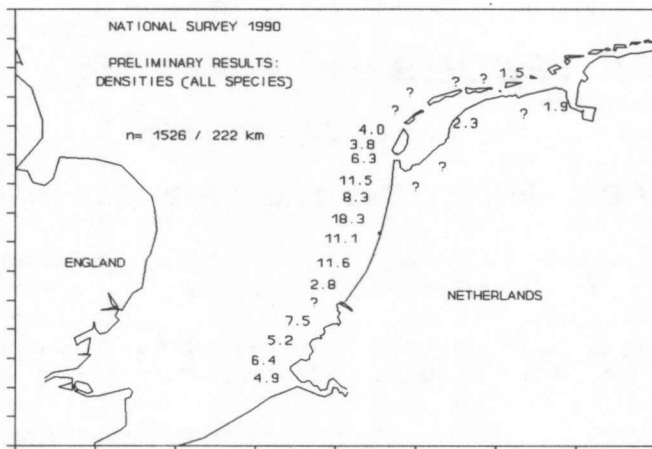


figure 1. Preliminary results of the National Survey in February 1990: densities of birds found dead.

rate that densities were dropped by 50-75% at the time of the National Survey at the end of February (figure 1).