

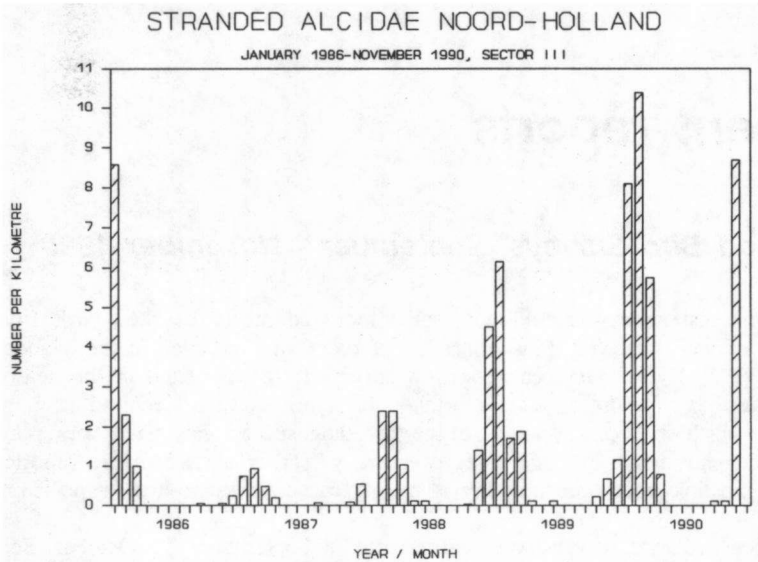
Recent reports

Beached Bird Surveys, September - November 1990

Since *Sula's* last issue was published, some more counts of beached birds from last summer were received. Mass mortality of Eider was recorded in the Wadden Sea area (PW, KvD), but because so few surveys were conducted in this season it is impossible to estimate total mortality. It is not quite understood why the Eider, in which in recent years also the breeding success has been very poor, dies in such numbers! Extreme cases of primary feather abrasion were reported and it is possible that this mortality is mainly caused by parasites or poisoning (KvD, MFL).

Few beached bird surveys were carried out in September and October. September surveys were dominated by stranded Fulmars and Herring Gulls. None of the reported corpses of these two species were oiled. The first few Kittiwakes and Guillemots were found dead and following the severe September storms and the remarkable influx of Storm Petrels along the coast, corpses of Storm Petrel (3034, Wbr), Leach's Petrel (2023, JvD) and Manx Shearwater (5078, GOK) were picked up. September densities were rather low overall, with exceptions being 5.2/km on Schiermonnikoog (GOK) and 3.7/km near Sexbierum (DS; in both cases mainly Eider). Also October produced low densities, with 2.4/km on Texel being the highest on record (CJC), with again several Fulmars, Eiders and Herring Gulls. Most other species (wildfowl, waders, Kittiwake, terns, and auks) were recorded incidentally. Passerines were found wrecked in relatively small numbers regarding the enormous numbers seen migrating and found disorientated on board vessels in fog conditions this month.

Several oil slicks were reported by the Dutch authorities in November, and because very high densities of Guillemots were present in Dutch coastal waters in this month, mass mortality was feared. Low densities were reported during the first week of November, but onshore winds mid November made our worst expectations become true. Very large numbers of heavily oiled Guillemots were found stranded dead or were caught alive on the mainland coast (Zuid- and Noord-Holland). Densities varied from 4.8/km (2023, JvD) to 25.6 (2026, SG) and 28.2/km (2027, SG) on the mainland coast of Zuid-Holland and from 8.4 (3033, CJC) to 12.5/km (3029, GOK) in Noord-Holland. Several counts, which are known to have produced similar figures, are not yet received. Already can be



said that such high densities are extremely unusual for November and that the numbers are very high compared to other winter strandings (figure 1). Large numbers of oiled seabirds were also reported from Wadden Sea islands (MFL, EvL), but densities were low in Zeeland (SH). Some 40 Guillemots were collected and dissected. Adults predominated, and most of the birds which were totally covered in oil were in good physical condition, and in active body moult, at the time of dying (CJC, GOK). Stomach analysis and chemical analysis of oil samples are yet to be carried out. We will report on the incident in more detail in due course.

Entanglements in plastics were reported several times: 4 Gannets, 2 Herring Gulls, 1 Guillemot. An interesting finding was the corpse of a Gannet with a Norwegian ring (2024, 21 Nov 1990, SG). Very large quantities of plastic pellets, in fact an estimated 12.9 tonnes, were found in Noord-Holland, late November (200m x 20m, average density 100,000/m², 1800m x 2m, average density 1000/m², assumed weight 96g/3000 (see J.A. van Franeker 1989: Nog meer Plastic op het strand. *Sula* 3(4): 141-142), stretch 3033, CJC).

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