

SEABIRDS AT SEA, MAY - AUGUST 1988 (SHIP-BASED OBSERVATIONS CvZ/DGW, NIOZ, MV PLANCIUS)

MS Holland was manned during three one-week trips in June, July and August (CvZ/DGW), visiting about the entire Dutch continental shelf. On board RV Aurelia a trip was organized in June to the Frisian Front, NW of Texel (NIOZ) and another four trips, using RV Aurelia, RV Tridens and MV Breeveertien, were organized to visit the Dogger Bank area in July (NIOZ). MV Plancius left Holland in May and birds were observed during its crossing to Britain.

Throughout this period, Fulmars were abundant in the Southern North Sea, especially near the Frisian Front and in the Dogger Bank area. Several Manx Shearwaters were observed in July and these scattered records do explain its occurrence at seawatching sites in certain conditions. Gannets were widespread, but always in low numbers.

On 5 July some migrating waders were noted, especially Redshank and Whimbrel. Great Skuas showed increasing numbers from the beginning of August onwards. A flock of 10 birds at ca. 85 km NW of Texel on 23 August is worth mentioning. Arctic Skuas were observed in lower numbers and exclusively in August.

The presence of the commoner gull-species was clearly declining throughout the period, but Great Black-backed Gulls were increasing sharply at the end of August. The first juvenile Kittiwakes were seen in early August, after which numbers increased rapidly. Terns were seen regularly. At the end of August hundreds of Common Terns were seen migrating to the SW.

Auks, including Razorbills, Guillemots and Puffins, were scarce in the Dutch sector in May, but already quite numerous slightly to the west (ca. 53°40'N, 01°10'E), including mainly immature birds. Guillemots were discovered summering on the Frisian Front. On 5 July the first downy young, accompanied by an adult, were seen. More chicks were recorded from this date onwards, but almost exclusively on the Frisian Front and the in Dogger Bank area.

Important information from: Kees Camphuysen, Mardik Leopold, Anja van der Niet.