

**SEABIRDS AT SEA, DECEMBER 1988 - FEBRUARY 1989 (SHIP-BASED OBSERVATIONS CvZ/DGW, NIOZ)**

Three three-days trips were made with MV Holland (CvZ/DGW) in Dec, Jan, and Feb, mainly in coastal waters. P.Wolf entered the English Channel on board MV Katwijk 34, the third week of Dec. Two trips on board of MV Aurelia (NIOZ) were carried out in Jan and another one in Feb, on the Dutch part of the Continental Shelf. During the first half of Jan the coastal waters off Zeeland were visited on board MV Navicula (NIOZ), and on board the MV Tridens long trips were made in Feb visiting the waters between Holland and Shetland.

Besides a concentration of Red-throated Divers in coastal waters off Zeeland and near the mainland coast of Noord-Holland, only few divers were recorded. Divers seem to be overlooked mostly during ship based surveys. Divers were remarkably common off the English east coast (aerial survey Andy Webb, SAST, pers comm.).

The record of a British Storm Petrel on the Dutch part of the Continental Shelf on 10 Jan and a record of a Manx Shearwater east of

Scotland on 3 Feb are worth mentioning. Fulmars were abundant 5 miles from the coast and further offshore throughout the period. Very large concentrations could be found in the vicinity of fishing vessels. Gannets were seen in small numbers in Dec and Jan, mainly in the English Channel. Their numbers increased dramatically in Feb in the North Sea.

Some Red-breasted Mergansers were recorded off Zeeland on 3 Jan. Common and Velvet Scoters occurred in numbers almost exclusively along the mainland coast of Noord-Holland. A flock of 3,000 Common Scoters was seen here on 3 Jan.

Skuas were more numerous than usual in winter, with the Great Skua being most frequently seen (10 records). Few Pomarine Skuas (5) and a single Arctic Skua were observed.

Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls were the most abundant species offshore, with the largest numbers off the mainland coast of Zuid-Holland and, more generally, near fishing vessels. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were still present in fair numbers in the English Channel in Dec. A few adult Glaucous Gulls are noteworthy too. Kittiwakes were constantly abundant offshore (5 miles from the coast and further away).

Auks were numerous all winter, but concentrations were observed in some regions. Little Auks occurred in good numbers in the Central North Sea (Dogger Bank and further north). Puffins were seen frequently in small numbers.

Important information from: C.J.Camphuysen, M.F.Leopold, A.M.van der Niet, A.Webb.