

SEAWATCHING, DECEMBER 1988 - FEBRUARY 1989

Seawatching sites on the Frisian mainland coast and at Terschelling were manned 20 hours in December. Another 75 hours of seawatching were carried out in Zuid-Holland (mainly Noordwijk, Scheveningen and Bloemendaal), and 85 hours were received from Noord-Holland (Hondsbosche Zeewering (Hbz) and Egmond aan Zee). In January and February some 200 hours of seawatching were carried out, mainly in Noord-Holland (Hbz).

In 1988/89's exceptionally mild winter, hard-weather movements were not recorded. It is perhaps because of this mild winter that so few divers have been seen; most were recorded at Terschelling, with 800 in 6 days in the second week of December and an extraordinary 335 individuals in 10 minutes on 21 January. The first half of December has produced the greatest numbers along the coast of Noord-Holland. The onset of northbound passage was witnessed here in early February.

By far the largest number of Great Crested Grebes this winter was recorded on the coldest day: on 1 December 331 headed south at the Hbz, and 1,052 individuals were recorded heading south along Scheveningen. Since then, numbers were very low, but in the last week of January hundreds were seen swimming in coastal waters all along the mainland coast. Most Red-necked Grebes were seen in December; the maximum number was 11 individuals seen on 11 December at Terschelling.

The frequent occurrence of strong westerly winds, notably in December, led to many sightings of Fulmars and other Procellariiformes. The best days for Fulmars were 6 December (27) and 16 February (75), both at the Hbz. Remarkable were 9 shearwaters recorded in December (including 3 Manx, 5 Sooty, 1 'great'). Some Leach's Petrels were noted in January in IJmuiden, and a fresh corpse was found on the beach near Egmond shortly thereafter.

A inconspicuous southbound movement of Wigeon (323 ind.) was noted at Scheveningen on 30 Dec. More unusual were 117 Red-breasted Mergan-

sers heading S there on 17 Jan. Eiders passed along in numbers twice: on 1 Dec (323 S Hondsbossche Zeewering) and on 7 Feb (758 N Scheveningen). Peak numbers of Common Scoters were recorded in the second half of Dec, with over a thousand birds on several days. Velvet Scoters were seen frequently in Feb.

/ Pomarine Skuas were relatively numerous last autumn, and good numbers were still seen in Dec. Unusual were 7 sightings of Great Skuas in Feb.

Remarkable movements of waders were scarce, but two species are worth mentioning. On 5 Feb 154 Sanderling flew S at Scheveningen, and 50 Curlew were seen at the Hbz on 21 Feb.

Common Gulls were common only on 11 and 13 Jan (few hundreds). Westerlies on 9 and 10 Dec produced hundreds of Kittiwakes along the mainland coast of Noord-Holland. Remarkable was a flock of 600 Kittiwakes off Egmond on the first date.

Auks were not seen in exceptional numbers. 204 large auks heading N at Hbz is the largest number on record. Razorbills were scarce. Little Auks were more numerous than usually. 60 were seen at Hbz on 5 Dec, and since that day another 30 individuals were reported, mainly in Dec.

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