

Seabirds at sea, June - August 1990 (Ship-based observations)

In June and July several trips on board MV Aurelia and MV Holland were completed in Dutch coastal waters (MFL, HO, TP, PAW). The number of birds

at sea in the Dutch sector was low, generally speaking. Lesser Black-backed Gulls predominated up to 20 nautical miles from the coast, while Fulmars predominated further out to sea. East of the Dogger Bank some concentrations of Guillemots and Puffins were spotted. Sandwich Terns were sometimes very numerous close to the coast.

On board MV Holland, late August sailing its usual route off the Dutch coast (AMN), interesting sightings were >1300 Fulmars some 110km NNW of Terschelling in an area with many fishing vessels and a flock of some 200 swimming Common Terns, 10km off Walcheren. Swimming terns at sea are an unusual sight in itself, let alone the number reported here! One Manx Shearwater of the Balearic race (*P.p.mauretanicus*) was spotted, some Great (4) and Arctic Skuas (7), and some Guillemots (25). Most abundant (next to the Fulmar) was the Lesser Black-backed Gull (*ca.* 1250). Great Black-backed Gulls were scarce (7), as were Kittiwakes (22) and Black-headed Gulls (10). With Crossbills all over Europe it was inevitable that two specimens had to be spotted also on this ship.

Also late August, a two-week trip on board MV Tridens II (MHL, MFL) in the German Bight and in Danish waters. Fulmars were common and one or two Great and Arctic Skuas were observed every day. Two Pomarine Skuas, immatures of the light phase, were seen on 29th August. Four migrating Grey Herons (heading WSW) were spotted at 57°13'N, 4°40'E, i.e. in the Central North Sea. Larger concentrations of Guillemots were observed in more northerly waters, particularly at the 100m depth contour, and NE of the Frisian Front. It is thought that this front has an extension further to the north (NE) than was previously thought. Minke Whale and a number of Harbour Porpoises were the only high-lights during this trip, spotted in an area with large numbers of Guillemots in the Central North Sea. In all, this was a rather boring journey, typical for these waters, especially compared to what can be seen in the western half of the North Sea (see next issue).

Information from: M.H.Laks (MHL), M.F.Leopold (MFL), A.M.van der Niet (AMN), H.Offringa (HO), T.Postma (TP), P.A.Wolf (PAW)