

## **Seabirds at sea, September - November 1990 (Ship-based observations)**

Surveys on board MV Tridens II included trips to east Scotland and east England in Sep (CJC, MFL, PW) and journeys into the German Bight and the Central North Sea in Oct (CJC, MH, EVK, PW). MV Holland was manned in Sep (AvdN) and Nov (BC, WvL). On board MV Aurelia and MV Navicula surveys were conducted in the southern part of the Dutch sector in Oct and Nov (MFL, MH, PvdW *et al.*).

Sightings off the British east coast were rather spectacular, including Great Northern Diver, a Black-browed Albatross (5 Sep, PW, MFL), many Storm and Leach's Petrels, Sooty and Manx Shearwaters, Grey and Red-necked Phalaropes, Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas, and a Dougall's Tern. More interesting for our surveys, however, were massive numbers of auks feeding in Herring-rich areas. Feeding Gannets were spotted in association with feeding cetaceans (one of the more spectacular records was a mass-feeding including 11 Minke Whales, 34 Harbour Porpoise and 50 Gannets, 10 Sep 90, MFL, PW). Violent weather on 19 and 20 Sep prevented us from seeing much apart from scattered records of Storm and Leach's Petrels, some shearwaters, and relatively low numbers of auks and Gannets (CJC, PW).

The (short) September trip on board MV Holland must have been rather boring, with low numbers of gulls and Gannets (AvdN).

Calm and sometimes foggy weather in Oct in the German Bight led to sightings of (disorientated ?) passerines, owls and raptors (including Hen Harrier, Sparrow Hawk, Long- and Short-eared Owls, many pipits, thrushes, Starlings and finches, an Oortolan Bunting and several Crossbills. Single Mediterranean and Sabine's Gulls were interesting seabirds. Rather high densities of Guillemots were encountered in the German Bight in an area off the Danish Wadden Sea islands ( $\pm 55^{\circ}30'N$ ,  $7^{\circ}28'W$ ), where the catch of fish included high numbers of immature Herring, Sprat and immature Whiting (CJC, EVK). Late October, on board MV Tridens II, bad weather prevailed again (PW, MH).

Some surveys off the Dutch coast in early November showed that unexpectedly high densities of Guillemots were present in shallow, coastal waters (MFL). Densities up to 25/km<sup>2</sup> were not unusual and the knowledge that several large oil slicks were discovered during aerial surveys in the vicinity of the Dutch coast made us feel quite uncomfortable. Mass mortality of Guillemots was indeed reported in Beached Bird Surveys later this month (see that section).

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