

### **Seawatching, Nov 1990 - Jan 1991**

About 90 hours of seawatching were carried out in November, December and January at Ameland and on the Frisian mainland coast. From sites in Zuid-Holland (ZH) and Zeeland another 50 hours were received (mainly from Noordwijk and Bloemendaal, November and December). Seawatching sites in Noord-Holland (NH) (at Hondsbossche Zeewering (Hbz) and Egmond aan Zee) were almost daily manned.

Southward movements of divers were reported early and late November (mainly NH and ZH), the first week of Dec and early Jan. In this last period, a huge westward movement of divers was recorded at Ameland, including ca. 1000

individuals in 6 hours on 3 Jan. Cold-rushes were not occurring in these months. Even though, there was some passage of Great Crested Grebes during the first half of Nov and on 14 Dec (1920 individuals S in 1 hour, Noordwijk). Grebe passage in northerly direction was already recorded in the first half of January.

Common Scoter and Eider were seen in large numbers throughout these months. In Nov, along the coast of ZH and NH, and in Jan off NH, thousands of scoters and Eiders could be seen. Some hundreds of Velvet Scoters were involved in the Jan movements. In 'normal' years, small numbers of Eiders move south of the Wadden Sea. This winter, as in winter 1975/76, considerable flocks of Eiders were to be seen feeding along piers and headlands all along the mainland coast (Beached Bird Surveys). Few other ducks were seen in numbers. An exception was 23 Nov at Egmond: 500 Scaup, 100 Tufted Duck, and 54 Goldeneyes. Remarkable numbers of Barnacle Geese were seen migrating during 15-20 Jan at NH (over 2500 individuals).

Wader movements were unimpressive, with some good days for the Avocet being the only exceptions: 140 on 2 Nov (Frisian coast), 26 on 24 Nov (Noordwijk). These numbers are pretty large, but also late in the season.

Skuas were seen frequently in Nov and Dec, but in small numbers. Pomarines (14) and Great Skuas (10) were doing well on 14 Nov., and 6 Great Skuas were seen as late as 6 Jan (Hbz).

Some hundreds of Kittiwakes were seen early Dec and in Jan, but overall numbers remained low. The Little Gull did better, with several hundreds on one day in the beginning of Nov at Ameland and in NH.

Most large auks were seen during the second half of Nov and the first half of Dec. The mass movement of 1500 individuals on 18 Nov (Hbz) coincided with mass strandings in ZH and NH, due to chronic oil pollution off the mainland coast (see BBS *Sula* 4(4) and this issue). Late Nov, a lot of oil-contaminated auks were seen swimming in the surf, with proportionally many Razorbills. The latter is odd, since few Razorbills were found stranded compared to the number of Guillemots!

Undoubtedly the most 'thrilling' event this winter was a Little Auk influx. In the beginning of Nov, some tens were seen, but the main influx took place on 11/13 Dec (ca. 1500 individuals), 27 Dec (766 individuals) and 6 Jan (ca. 300). On all days, the Little Auks were seen during severe westerly storms and almost exclusively at the coast of NH. A more detailed paper on the influx will be published in *Sula*.

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