

Seabirds at sea, September - October 1991

Most ship-based surveys were on board of MV Tridens II, and all were organised by Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ, MFL). In September, most effort was directed to Britain's east coast (HB, PD, JH, MFL). Late October, the German Bight was visited (RH, HO) and the northern part of the Dutch sector of the Continental Shelf (BB, TG). Data from November surveys have not yet been received.

East British waters were, as usual this time of year, very rich in fish, seabirds (and marine mammals). Locally, very high densities of Razorbills and Guillemots were encountered. Manx and Sooty Shearwater, Pomarine and Long-tailed Skua

were frequently seen. From 10-12 September, off East England, total numbers were 37, 30, 2, and 11 respectively (PD, JH). Massive numbers of Fulmars were encountered near the herring fleet, working at approximately 54°N, 01°E. During the second half of September, shearwaters and the rarer skuas were not as often seen anymore. Several Manx Shearwaters were seen near Teesmouth, in waters with high densities of Guillemots. Puffins were numerous around the Farne Islands. Several Sooty Shearwaters and Little Gulls were seen there also. Large concentrations of Kittiwakes (including several flocks of over 1000 individuals) were seen off the Moray Firth on 19 September (HB, MFL). Many feeding Gannets were seen on 23 September, associated with some dolphins. Storm Petrels (and migrant House Martins!) were seen off Norfolk on 24 September (HB, MFL). Off Flamborough Head on 25 September, Guillemots appeared to be abundant in waters they had hardly been seen only three weeks earlier. Several Manx and Sooty Shearwaters and 4 juvenile Pomarine Skuas were seen here, and because the weather finally turned into something quiet, Harbour Porpoises were seen in numbers (see below).

October, in the Dutch sector and the German Bight, was not quite that spectacular. Low densities of Guillemots were seen in most areas, while only the first Razorbills and Little Auks had entered these waters.

Rarer sightings included Spotted Crake (12 September, 54°32'N, 00°09'E; PD, JH) and Grey Phalarope (20 September, 57°01'N, 01°13,W; HB, MFL).

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