

## Recent reports

### **Beached Bird Surveys, December 1991 - February 1992**

At first, December 1991 was a quiet month for our volunteers searching beaches. Densities were low and few birds were oiled. However, a massive oil- and bird stranding was reported at Walcheren (Zeeland, sector I) around Christmas (PAW). On 23 Dec, between Zoutelande and Westkapelle (5 km), 52 Guillemots, 4 Razorbills, 1 Kittiwake and 2 Larus-gulls totally covered in oil were found stranded, plus another 11 Guillemots (ranging 20-90% oiled), 2 Gannets, 1 Common Scoter and a Turnstone. Similar densities were reported from nearby beaches. Some of the Guillemots, even those covered in oil, were still alive, indicating that the spill had taken place rather nearby. Further to the north, at Neeltje Jans, Schouwen, and Goeree, casualties of the same incident were found but in lower densities (SH). At Voorne, nothing could be noticed of this incident (JAD). Mainland coast densities were generally very low and few birds were oiled. In the Waddensea area, the Eider (unoiled), dominated but densities were very low (JNY, SG), except on the Afsluitdijk (2.7/km; RH).

In January, densities (max. 11.4/km, 17 Jan Ameland; JO) and proportions oiled increased only slightly in all regions. Densities of Eiders increased most spectacularly, mainly in Noord-Holland and the Wadden Sea area, indicating another poor year with food shortages. The general picture was: low numbers, few birds oiled.

Mid February on Texel, and also at the mainland coast and on Vlieland, a mass stranding of birds and oil occurred (JAF, MFL, AG, FG). This stranding engendered considerable public attention through radio and television reports, particularly because there seemed to be a connection between the stranding and some large slicks in the southern North Sea which were claimed to have been removed by the Dutch Government. Some 30 m<sup>3</sup> of oil had to be removed from Texel's beaches, of an estimated 80 tonnes which should have been spilled at sea, while several hundreds of severely oiled pelagic seabirds were found dead (mainly Fulmars, Gannets, Razorbills and particularly Guillemots). The incident is studied in detail by a NIOZ-NZG/NSO team, by sampling birds for dissection and oil for analysis.

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