

THE STATUS OF SEABIRDS IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Lloyd, C., Tasker, M.L. & K. Partridge. 1991. London: T & A D Poyser, 355 pp. 63 tables, 41 figures and 30 monochrome plates and many line drawings. Price £20.00. ISBN 0-85661-061-5.

This book brings together data from the Seabird Colony Register of Britain and Ireland, particularly that collected during a complete survey of the coastline during 1985-88. It compares the information collected during this survey with that of Operation Seafarer which occurred during 1969-70.

The first part contains a general introduction to seabirds in Britain and Ireland, a discussion of the reasons for changes in seabird numbers and an outline of how the data were collected and analysed. There are 2-2.5 million auks (Alcidae) and 2.5-3 million pairs of other seabirds; 24 species breed regularly. They face many pressures. Whereas direct exploitation of breeding seabirds for food, feathers or sport has now mainly ceased it has been replaced by the threats of pollutants, introduced predators and incidental destruction by fishing nets and traps. Changes in food supplies have had mixed consequences: increased fishery offal and discards have provided a major new source of food for species such as Gannets *Morus bassanus* and Great Skuas *Catharacta skua* while declining sandeel stocks have led to reduced breeding success in some Shetland seabirds.

The second part of the book contains individual species accounts for the regular breeding species.

Each account opens with a short summary of the species biology and then describes its distribution and international status. The particular census methods used to count the population are then outlined and followed by a detailed account of the results of the survey and other data. There are maps plotting the distribution of each species and information on changes in numbers. For instance, Arctic Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* have shown regional increases of 14% - 293% between 1969 and 1987 while Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* numbers have declined in most areas over the same period. The reasons for changes in numbers and status are also discussed.

There are several useful annexes including two that detail recording and counting methods and the book is well produced throughout with some excellent illustrations by Keith Brockie. The book will be of interest to all serious seabird enthusiasts, both professional and amateur. It provides a good account of how to organise and implement a national seabird survey and the results will be of longterm benefit to conservation monitoring in this important seabird region. The authors and their sponsors - the Nature Conservancy Council and the Seabird Group - are to be congratulated on bringing this project to fruition.

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BRITAIN'S BIRDS IN 1989-90: THE CONSERVATION AND MONITORING REVIEW

Stroud, D. & Glue, D. (editors). 1991. Thetford, United Kingdom: British Trust for Ornithology/Nature Conservancy Council, 216 pp. Numerous table, figures and monochrome plates. Price £6.95. ISBN 0-903793-10-5.

This book is a new departure for British ornithology. It is an attempt by the leading statutory conservation body, the Nature Conservancy Council, and the leading voluntary bird research organisation, the British Trust for Ornithology, to audit the state of British birds during the period April 1989 - March 1990. It is a yearbook that draws on the research, monitoring and conservation efforts of these and other organisations and provides a baseline for future annual reports.

The book is divided into four main sections. The first is a summary of the conservation headlines for the period followed by individual brief reports on the individual events and issues. The second section contains synopses of the results of the various monitoring schemes and specific projects undertaken during the period. It starts with a useful summary of the weather conditions. The third section integrates the results from these various projects and schemes into species accounts which give an idea of how each species has fared. The final section draws some conclusions from the rest of the book. The authors state in their introduction that, while the basic coverage of the yearbook will remain comprehensive from year to year, particular emphasis will be placed on different groups in different years. In this book wildfowl and

waders fall under the spotlight.

While there is much of general interest for the amateur and professional ornithologists alike there are specific items that will attract the attention of seabird enthusiasts. Early in section one we learn that the seabird colonies at Cape Wrath have been notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest while important seabird islands in the Firth of Forth, at Handa and Ailsa Craig have been designated as Special Protection Areas. We also learn about how vulnerable SSSIs remain to loss and damage. Section Two contains chapters on the Seabird Colony Register and the monitoring of seabird numbers and breeding success. The latter chapter shows the difficult times that Shetland seabirds, particularly Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* are having. Another interesting chapter looks at the reintroduction of the Whitetailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* into the west of Scotland. It will be interesting to see what impact these introductions have on local seabird populations. There are also species accounts for various seabirds.

This publication is certainly a good way of informing the layman about what is going on in British ornithology, particularly given its low cost. The idea of an annual report is one which could be worth adopting in other countries.

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SEABIRDS OF THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

Richards, A. 1990. Limsfield, United Kingdom: Dragon's World Books. 192 pp. Numerous colour plates and maps. Price £19.95. ISBN 1-85028-112-2.

In essence this book is a collection of photographs of European and North American seabirds. This is not surprising given that Alan Richards established Aquila Photographics, a British wildlife picture agency. Indeed, many of the photographs originate from that agency.

The photographs are all in colour and vary in size from about 10% of the page size to double page spreads. They are very well reproduced with generally good colour balance and high definition. They are informative and yet also artistic and certainly form an excellent portfolio of work from a wide selection of bird photographers. Having said that, it is a pity to see a number of good photographs ruined by laying them out across a double page.

There is a two-to six-page section for each species covered in full. A distribution map is accompanied by some basic biological data for each species (size, wingspan, clutch size, egg colour, incubation and fledging periods). The text includes a generalized description of the species and comments on its

history, distribution, population, migration, feeding and breeding behaviour.

Not all the seabirds occurring in the northern hemisphere are covered in the accounts of individual species. There is an appendix which purports to be "a list of seabirds that are irregular or scarce visitors in North America or Europe". Each species is followed by its length and a short paragraph giving its status and a brief field description; there are no plates. Unfortunately, the title of this appendix is rather misleading because it includes such common breeding birds as Redlegged Kittiwake *Larus breviarostri*s and Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquum* as well as abundant non-breeding visitors such as Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* and Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*. It seems to be more of a repository for species for which the author lacked good photographic material.

If you want a high quality collection of seabird photographs this is the book for you. If you want detailed accounts of northern seabirds then your money is better spent elsewhere.

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