



## **REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON SEABIRD ECOLOGY**

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**International Council for the Exploration of the Sea  
Conseil International pour l'Exploration de la Mer**

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This working group was not scheduled to meet during 1995. The main objectives of the group during 1995 were to develop work reported in the two Study Group reports for publication in internationally-recognised scientific journals. One part, the analysis of fish consumption by seabirds in the North Sea, has been drafted by R.W. Furness for submission to Marine Ecology Progress Series, but is now with M.L. Tasker (senior author) for further development. Due to work priorities (no time being available for ICES-related activities during the working schedules of either author) the completion of this MS will have to await a suitable opportunity. We hope to have the MS suitable to submit to the journal during 1996. Analysis of seabird breeding success domains around the British Isles in relation to likely oceanographic domains and sandeel stocks has been started, but again must be low priority in terms of the senior author's work schedule so is unlikely to be ready for a journal until during 1996.

Almost all members of the Working Group strongly favour the suggestion that the two Study Group reports now produced should be published as an ICES Cooperative Research Report. We ask for a Council Resolution that this should be done in the nearest possible future, under the editorship of Professor G.L. Hunt, the chairman of the Study Group during the period of those two reports.

We propose a meeting in 1996 to:

- i) evaluate the role of discards in supporting bird populations and their effects on the species composition of seabirds in the North Sea;
- ii) explore the short- and medium-term consequences of a reduction in the quantities of fish discarded;
- iii) review data related to the cause and consequences at the population-level of mass mortalities of seabirds;
- iv) expand the analysis of spatial concordance of reproductive parameters between seabird colonies, and relate the observed patterns to physical oceanographic conditions and prey stocks;
- v) prepare data on seabird predation on fish by size group; vi) review issues related to seabird consumption of fish and shellfish stocks, discards and mariculture as well as the trophic role and ecology of seabirds and waders.

It is recommended that the Group would meet in Glasgow from 15–19 November 1996 (so we can meet for half a day before the proposed Symposium on "Seabird distributions and ecology in relation to the marine environment" (see below) starts and then substantively in the two days after. Thus the date and venue of the meeting will link with the proposed Symposium.

We propose that ICES supports the holding of a Symposium in Glasgow from 15–17 November 1996, to be organised by M.L. Tasker and colleagues, on the theme "Seabird distributions and ecology in relation to the marine environment". The meeting will be held, subject to confirmation, at Glasgow University (Kelvin Conference Centre) with local organiser Dr R.W. Furness. This is a most appropriate and timely meeting as there is now an excellent data base on seabird distribution in the North Sea (by far the best such data base in the world) and analytical results of this study of causes of seabird distribution patterns are now coming out rapidly from research groups in most North Sea countries, especially Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Norway and the UK. There is no doubt that there would be wide interest in the theme of this meeting, and much of scientific interest. Furness and Tasker were organisers of two conferences held in Glasgow University Kelvin Conference Centre hosted by The Seabird Group, which attracted full houses (150 delegates) and were highly successful, so we can provide assurance that the organisers are well experienced in dealing with such a meeting. It would be most appropriate that the papers presented should be considered for inclusion in an ICES publication.

It was agreed that the following could comprise the steering Committee for the symposium: Mark Tasker (JNCC Aberdeen and also symposium convenor), Jim Reid (Seabirds-at-Sea Team Aberdeen), Bob Furness (Glasgow University), George Hunt (University of California, Irvine) and Kees (CJ) Camphuysen (Netherlands Institute for Sea Research).

The Symposium will be co-sponsored by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, and probably also by The Seabird Group (these organisations, like ICES, have yet to put the proposal to their governing bodies though). Both JNCC and The Seabird Group will put forward cash towards the symposium.