

INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS  
 STANDING COMMITTEE FOR COORDINATION OF SEABIRD RESEARCH  
 MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING AT THE 20TH INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL  
 CONGRESS,  
 CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND, 4 DECEMBER 1990

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chairperson, Dr D.N. Nettleship, welcomed members and observers to the IOC-SCCSR meeting and described the current function of the group. Particular reference was made to the report of the Standing Committee submitted to the IOC Permanent Executive Committee immediately prior to the Congress. [Note: see *Proc. Int. Orn. Congr.* 20: 87-90, 1991.]

The special symposium, entitled 'Seabirds as Monitors of Changing Marine Environments', organized for the Standing Committee by Drs R.W. Furness and D.N. Nettleship, had been most successful. All participants were thanked for submitting their manuscripts on time. [Note: oral presentations were made on 9 December 1990 and were well received by a large audience. For details, see *Proc. Int. Orn. Congr.* 20: 2237-2279, 1991.]

2. REPORTS FROM SEABIRD STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUPS

2.1 Bibliographies

Dr J. Warham described the current status of his bibliography of the Procellariiformes which is keyworded as in *Zoological Record Aves*. The bibliography will ultimately be available as an ASCII file on computer disk at cost price. At present it contains 7 000 entries, but about another 6 000 remain to be incorporated. Assistance with relevant Scandinavian, Japanese and early German literature will be particularly welcome.

The compilation of material on the pelagic distribution and ecology of seabirds by Dr R.G.B.

Brown is currently inactive, but likely to resume soon.

2.2 Nomenclature

No reports on any activities had been received and the group had not met at the 20th IOC. It was agreed that any discussions on issues of seabird nomenclature were best conducted through the main Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature. The Working Group was therefore discontinued.

2.3 Seabirds at sea

Dr G.L. Hunt summarized the nature of the methods currently in use by the major schemes recording distribution and abundance of seabirds at sea. In the California and Alaska programmes, and in the Southern Ocean (Antarctic) scheme, the basis of recording was the use of a transect (zone) of standard width. In the Atlantic Ocean, Canada (PIROP) in the northwest and the various nations operating in the northeast (except France) do not use a transect system. There are fundamental difficulties, therefore, in trying to devise standard worldwide survey methods. The meeting generally felt that further progress on this issue was not feasible at present.

2.4 Technological innovations

Drs G. Gabrielsen and G.L. Kooyman had corresponded extensively intersessionally to convene the IOC-SCCSR Workshop on 'Technological Innovations For Examining Activity Budgets of Seabirds'. The conveners and participants were thanked for their efforts. A recommendation was made to convene another workshop on the same

topic with the aim to produce a special publication on technological innovations. [Note: The Workshop, held on 5 December 1990, was extremely stimulating and productive and attracted a considerable audience.]

### 3. REPORTS FROM SEABIRD GROUPS

#### 3.1 International Council for Bird Preservation Seabird Specialist Group

Dr J.P. Croxall, deputizing for Chairperson Dr D.C. Duffy, reported on relevant activities during the ICBP 20th World Conference held from 19-27 November at Hamilton, New Zealand.

The major seabird event there had been a very successful special symposium on 'Seabirds on Islands: Threats, Case Studies & Action Plans' organized by Drs J. Burger, M. Gochfeld and D.N. Nettleship. The symposium included three plenary reviews of the main current threats to seabirds (Effects of pollution on marine birds; Seabird-fisheries interactions; and Human disturbance and predation), complementary presentations of the major seabird conservation problems in 16 areas where serious difficulties currently exist, and for some of which implementation of action plans has already seen substantial remedial progress. The resulting publication is scheduled to appear in the *ICBP Technical Publication* series with Dr D.N. Nettleship serving as senior editor.

As part of the workshop there were special sessions to consider three topics:

##### a) Eradication of problem animals

There was unanimous agreement that urgent field action was needed at priority sites, and that ICBP should try to raise funds to put a task force into the field. Mr Brian Bell agreed to coordinate necessary action.

##### b) Seabird-fisheries interactions

The main focus was on serious levels of incidental mortality of seabirds arising from gill-net, drift-net and longline fisheries. Formal ICBP resolutions were prepared and passed on these issues. The need for accurate monitoring, which would only come through an observer programme, was stressed. Dr A.J. Bartle agreed to coordinate the preparation of a report of appropriate standardized data to be collected on seabirds.

##### c) Ecotourism and education

The particular plight of boreal and tropical seabirds from human depredation was highlighted in several presentations. Consideration of appropriate initiatives in respect of education programmes in the field, and of the related use of ecotourism was devolved to a group to be coordinated by Dr K. Blanchard.

Seabird biologists with interests in these issues are invited to contact the above mentioned individuals.

Reports on many other important seabird initiatives were made at ICBP including: (e.g. eradication of rats from small islands by the Department of Conservation, New Zealand; serious potential threats to the newly discovered breeding site of Saunders Gull in China; and the imminent appearance (February 1991) of *ICBP Technical Publication* 11, the supplement to the 1984 volume on the *Status and Conservation of the World's Seabirds*).

#### 3.2 The Seabird Group

Dr R.W. Furness mentioned items of current and future interest: the next conference - on European seabird populations - at Glasgow in March 1992; the imminent appearance (May 1991) of the book on the *Status of Seabirds in Britain and Ireland*, reporting on the comprehensive surveys of 1985 - 1987; the work of the Nature Conservancy Council Seabirds At Sea Team; and the current status of Shetland

seabird populations.

### 3.3 Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research: Bird Biology Subcommittee

Dr J.P. Croxall, the Chairperson of this Committee, reported that the full biennial report on current activities of the group, which coordinates many aspects of seabird research in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic, would soon be appearing in the journal *Marine Ornithology* (see vol. 18: 79-89, 1990). Some details were summarized.

### 4. SEABIRD JOURNALS

There was an extensive discussion of the desirability and feasibility of consolidating existing seabird journals (e.g. *Colonial Waterbirds*, *Marine Ornithology*, *Seabird*) into a single international journal of marine ornithology. There was a majority consensus that such a journal would be desirable. However, certain strong concerns were voiced about the potential loss of places to publish papers by amateurs and material of local interest. Such material might be appropriate for upgraded newsletters produced by the regional societies.

Progress will probably depend crucially on the outcome of current and planned discussions between the Pacific Seabird Group (PSG) and the Colonial Waterbird Society (CWBS) on the one hand and between the African and (British) Seabird Groups on the other. [Editor's note: The PSG Executive Council decided at their 1991 Annual Meeting not to pursue a joint publication arrangement with the CWBS at the present time despite a large majority of the PSG general membership wishing to do so.

Debate continues. In 1991, the (British) Seabird Group declined to combine publications with the African Seabird Group.]

### 5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Dr D. Murray referred to the continuing series of articles on Australian islands (most of which include extensive seabird data) in the journal *Corella*. He noted that there would be a forthcoming workshop on seabirds of the Great Barrier Reef.

5.2 Dr W. Montevecchi requested information from members concerning evidence of anomalous reproductive performance of seabirds, particularly on the east coast of North America, in 1989; an informal discussion on this topic was subsequently arranged.

### 6. FINAL REMARKS & ADJOURNMENT

The Chairperson, Dr D.N. Nettleship, briefly summarized IOC-SCCSR events still to take place during the Congress (5-9 December), and underlined the importance of participation by everyone interested in seabirds. He also encouraged individuals to identify topics of interest and concern to members of the standing committee, and welcomed direct involvement in IOC-SCCSR working groups. Dr Nettleship then thanked people for attending and adjourned the meeting.

David N. Nettleship  
Chairperson, IOC-SCCSR

John P. Croxall  
Secretary, IOC-SCCSR