

Short papers

Wilson's Storm-petrels off the Isles of Scilly: a ten-year analysis, 2000–09

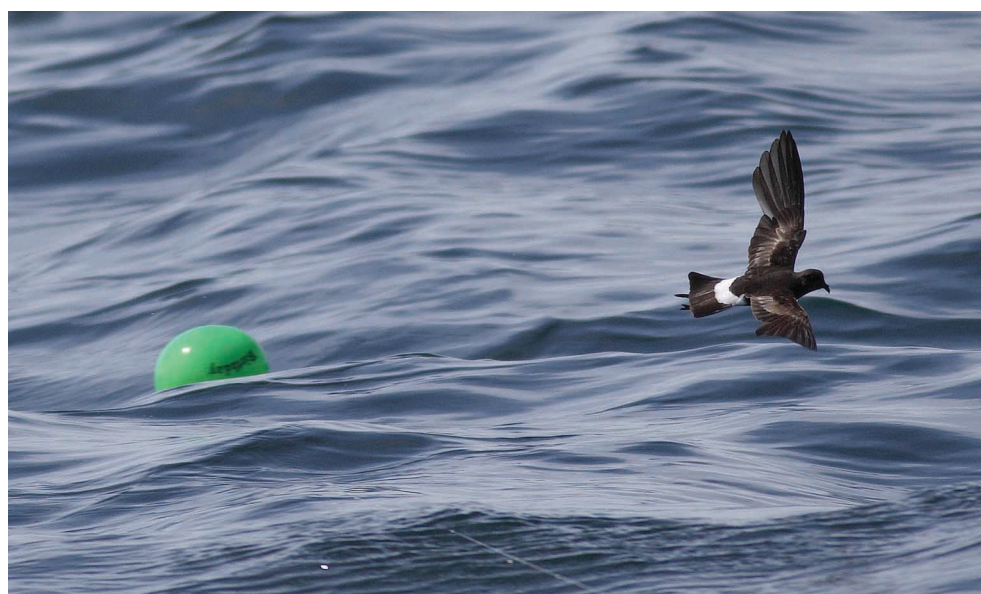
Abstract This short paper presents a ten-year analysis (2000–09) of the occurrence of Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* seen from short-range pelagic trips off the Isles of Scilly. We discuss the overall passage period, peak passage, exceptional happenings and the variation between years.

During the mid 1990s, RLF joined several evening shark- or reef-fishing trips out of St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, in late August, to observe seabirds. The trips proved to be productive as shark fishermen deployed 'rubby-dubby' (the local name for chum) to attract sharks and waste offal was thrown overboard during reef-fishing trips, and these proved highly attractive to storm-petrels. Following a sighting of a possible Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* in 1995 and a probable in 1996, one was positively identified by RLF on 23rd August 1997, the first known record for Scilly. The following evening, Ren Hathway and Viv Stratton joined RLF on a shark-fishing trip, when another Wilson's was observed. This sparked interest among local birders: three Wilson's were seen in August 1998, and on six trips during July and August 1999 up to 14 were seen. Subsequently, a Wilson's photographed by Paul Whittaker on about 15th August 1995 was retrospectively identified as such in 2003 (by Paul Stancliffe), while a review of sightings from MV *Chalice*

and RMV *Scillonian III* revealed that two Wilson's were sighted from each vessel within the Scilly recording area on, respectively, 24th July 1991 and 8th August 2004 (Flood *et al.* 2007).

By 2000, both RLF and EAF were resident on St Mary's. We joined most evening shark- and reef-fishing trips, during June–September 2000–09, keeping detailed records of the Wilson's observed. Our counting method for multiple sightings assumed the minimum number of birds proven by differences in plumage characteristics (e.g. strength of carpal bar), state of wear of the remiges, and moult in the primaries. This maintained consistency in data and facilitated meaningful comparison. In that period, we made 448 trips and tallied 338 Wilson's, the earliest on 5th June and the latest on 6th September. An interim report on our findings was presented in Flood & Fisher (2005).

A detailed weekly analysis is given in table 1, which shows the number of trips, number of successful trips and the total number of



Joe Pender

218. Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, off the Isles of Scilly, July 2009.

Table 1. Occurrence of Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* in Scillonian waters, 2000–09. WB = week beginning; trips = number of pelagic trips undertaken that week; scored = number of trips that week when Wilson's were seen; birds = total number of Wilson's seen that week.

WB	2000			2001			2002			2003			2004		
	trips	scored	birds	trips	scored	birds	trips	scored	birds	trips	scored	birds	trips	scored	birds
25 May (M4)	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1 Jun (Ju1)	1	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
8 Jun (Ju2)	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	0
15 Jun (Ju3)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0
22 Jun (Ju4)	2	1	2	2	1	0	2	1	1	4	0	0	2	0	0
29 Jun (Ju1)	3	2	3	2	0	0	2	1	3	4	2	2	1	1	1
6 Jul (Jl2)	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	5	2	5	1	1	4	3	4
13 Jul (Jl3)	3	3	6	3	1	1	5	1	1	4	1	1	5	1	4
20 Jul (Jl4)	3	3	4	3	3	4	5	4	6	4	3	4	5	0	0
27 Jul (Jl5)	4	3	4	2	1	1	5	3	11	4	1	1	4	2	2
3 Aug (A1)	4	2	3	2	2	3	4	2	3	5	1	2	4	3	7
10 Aug (A2)	3	2	4	4	3	3	6	3	9	5	2	4	3	2	3
17 Aug (A3)	4	3	4	2	1	2	4	1	1	6	1	1	3	2	2
24 Aug (A4)	6	1	2	5	0	0	6	1	1	6	2	2	4	1	3
31 Aug (S1)	2	0	0	2	1	1	5	1	1	3	0	0	4	1	1
6 Sep (S2)	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
13 Sep (S3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

	2005			2006			2007			2008			2009		
	trips	scored	birds	trips	scored	birds	trips	scored	birds	trips	scored	birds	trips	scored	birds
25 May (M4)	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1 Jun (Ju1)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
8 Jun (Ju2)	3	1	4	1	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
15 Jun (Ju3)	2	1	2	2	2	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
22 Jun (Ju4)	2	1	1	2	2	8	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0
29 Jun (Ju1)	3	2	6	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	3	0	0
6 Jul (Jl2)	5	3	5	3	2	3	4	1	3	1	1	3	2	1	1
13 Jul (Jl3)	4	1	1	5	3	4	5	4	7	2	1	1	2	0	0
20 Jul (Jl4)	5	1	1	5	2	4	3	2	3	2	1	2	3	3	10
27 Jul (Jl5)	5	1	1	3	2	9	6	3	5	3	2	2	5	3	13
3 Aug (A1)	3	1	2	4	2	3	5	4	8	4	1	1	5	2	3
10 Aug (A2)	5	3	4	4	2	4	4	3	4	5	1	1	5	4	9
17 Aug (A3)	5	2	2	5	4	14	4	3	10	3	0	0	4	2	11
24 Aug (A4)	4	1	1	4	3	5	6	2	3	3	1	1	3	1	2
31 Aug (S1)	3	0	0	2	0	0	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
6 Sep (S2)	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
13 Sep (S3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Short papers



219. Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, off the Isles of Scilly, August 2009.

birds seen. Fig. 1 illustrates how the number of records has varied annually over the period, showing the number recorded, and the estimated number when corrected for effort (number of trips). In fig. 2, the (total) number of birds seen in each individual week of the season (summed across the decade) is presented, together with the percentage of successful trips. In broad terms, success rate increases from about 20–25% during June to

40–60% in July and 50–55% during the first three weeks of August, then declines quickly; this characterises the passage period off Scilly.

Counts of five or more on a single trip were as follows: 18th June 2006 (8), 26th June 2006 (6), 23rd July 2009 (5), 30th July 2002 (8), 31st July 2006 (8), 1st August 2009 (9), 14th August 2002 (6), 15th August 2009 (6), 18th August 2007 (6), 20th August 2006 (5)

and 23rd August 2009 (8). The count of 9 on 1st August 2009 probably involved 12–15 birds. Apart from the two large counts in June 2006, a year in which there was an exceptionally strong passage in June, the large counts fall within the main passage period of July and August.

Each year, the overall passage period has remained fairly well defined. The first of the year has been recorded between 5th June (in 2001) and 7th July (in 2009). In 2001 we saw a fresh individual on 5th June and a heavily worn one on 7th June, with no further sightings until 13th July. Typically the success rate and number of

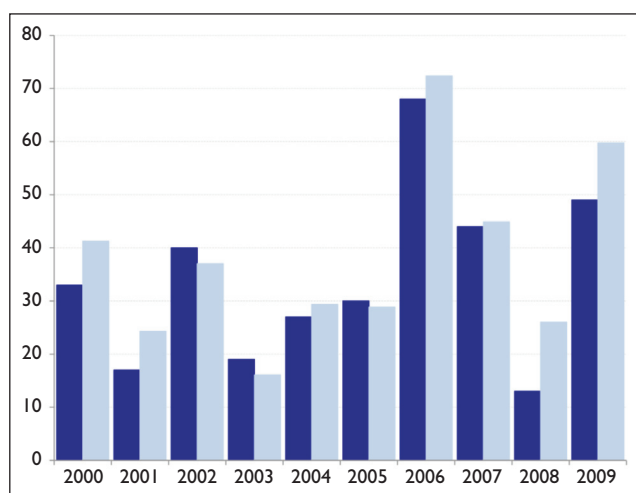


Fig. 1. Total number of Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* recorded each year, 2000–09. Dark blue bars show actual numbers, while pale blue bars estimate numbers with a correction for effort (calculated as mean number seen per trip multiplied by a nominal value of 50).

Short papers

birds in June is relatively low, but in 2006 there was a 100% success rate in June on five trips between 11th and 28th, producing 20 birds. Overall success rate was lowest in 2003 (19 individuals from 59 trips), highest in 2006 (66 individuals from 47). Annual variation is to be expected given that winter snow may arrive early in the Antarctic forcing the early departure of Antarctic breeders, and that there is a multitude of poorly understood oceanic factors that influence migration between Antarctic and sub-antarctic breeding grounds and Scilly.

References

- Flood, B., & Fisher, A. 2005. Wilson's Petrels off the Isles of Scilly: a five-year analysis, 2000–2004. *Birding World* 18: 247–249.
—, Hudson, N., & Thomas, B. 2007. *Essential Guide to Birds of the Isles of Scilly*. Isles of Scilly.

Robert L. Flood, 14 Ennor Close, Old Town, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0NL;
e-mail tubenose@tiscali.co.uk

E. Ashley Fisher, Trehill, Silvester's Lane, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0NA

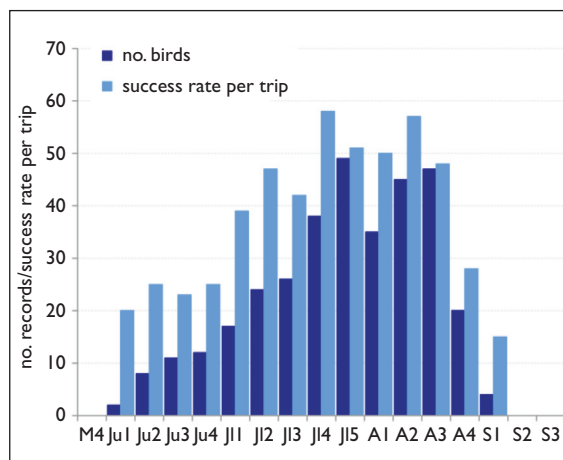


Fig. 2. Cumulative total of Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* recorded off Scilly in particular weeks of the spring/summer period, 2000–09. Dark blue bars show the actual number of records. Pale blue bars show the percentage of trips in that week when at least one Wilson's was recorded (success rate, derived from table 1; note that week numbers relate to those in table 1 also).

First breeding record of North African Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus cirtensis* in continental Europe

Two subspecies of the Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* are recognised. Nominate *rufinus* is a partial migrant, and occurs from the Balkans and Asia Minor to western Mongolia and northwest India, while the smaller and less well-known *B. r. cirtensis* inhabits North Africa, from Mauritania and Morocco to Egypt (del Hoyo *et al.* 1994). The latter is regarded as sedentary and dispersive, but has recently been found breeding on Pantelleria, in the Sicilian Channel, 70 km north of Tunisia (Corso 2009). In Spain, the species is rare, and the distribution of records has a marked southerly bias (de Juana 2006). The closest African breeding grounds are on Morocco's Tangier Peninsula (thus within 20 km of the Iberian Peninsula), where the species is uncommon to locally common (Thévenot *et al.* 2003). In recent years, sporadic breeding attempts have been recorded in Ceuta (an autonomous Spanish city on the southern shore of the Strait), and nesting was confirmed there in 2004 (Ávila *et al.* 2004;

Cambelo 2008).

Prior to our observations, there has been no recent or historical record of the Long-legged Buzzard, which is listed as Vulnerable in Europe (BirdLife International 2004), breeding in the Iberian Peninsula (Martí & del Moral 2003). However, during the last decade, there have been an increasing number of observations from the Spanish shore of the Strait and here we report the first confirmed breeding of *cirtensis* in the Iberian Peninsula (and continental Europe).

Methods

During 2008 and 2009, a 5 km² area within Parque Natural del Estrecho (Cádiz, Spain) was monitored regularly. It is a densely forested area of predominantly Cork Oak *Quercus suber* and Olive *Olea europaea* groves, with narrow valleys, sandstone cliffs and scrubby pastures (with *Erica* and *Cistus* spp.). The altitude ranges from sea level to 360 m. Regular observations were carried out