

# Press Release

October 8, 2007

## Growing concerns for seabird populations in Nordic Seas

**Large scale, climate related ecological changes have disrupted the food web of marine birds in Nordic waters. Over recent years, a decreasing number of birds have shown up in the colonies, and local populations are in trouble with few chicks being raised. Comprehensive and complex changes are now happening in the marine ecosystem, underlining more than ever the need to manage all other factors which affect seabirds such as commercial fisheries, oil spills, seabird harvest and environmental pollutants. This is the conclusion from a group of seabird experts that met in the Faeroe Islands one week ago.**

The group of experts gathered in Tórshavn discussed the situation of seabirds in the North-East Atlantic, and is particularly concerned about recent trends documented in the southern part of the area, from Iceland to the North Sea.

The Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*), Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*), Common Guillemot (*Uria aalge*) and Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) are all seabird species under severe pressure in a large geographic area, from Iceland, via Scotland and the Faeroes to Norway. Food shortages have caused a wide-ranging collapse in reproduction over the last four years. In the long term this may cause a marked population decline.

The experts believe that these changes are due to a combination of natural variations in climate and the human-induced changes which may be may significant as well. Climate changes have affected several key species in the marine ecosystem; the tiny crustacean *Calanus finmarchicus* is such a key species in the lower part of the food chain, and is now distributed further north than normal. It is almost absent from the southern part of the North East Atlantic - where the seabirds are facing serious problems.

*Calanus finmarchicus* represents a key food item for the Sandeel (*Ammodytes* spp.), a very important forage fish for several seabird species. Depletion of such fish stocks near breeding colonies of fish-eating seabirds may have a fatal impact on e.g. chick survival.

There is a large uncertainty as to the effects of future climate amelioration. The group of experts therefore draw attention for the need to improve the management of other factors negatively impacting seabird populations. They also underline that this is a huge challenge that includes many sectors and levels of human society. All relevant sectors share the common goal to reduce accumulated human impacts that may ultimately destroy traditional and important seabird colonies.

More specific actions to prevent negative impacts will be described in the report from the workshop that will be presented later this autumn. New regulations in the management of commercial fish species of direct or indirect significance to seabirds must be assessed. Seabird harvest, efforts to prevent oil spills from shipping, and new initiatives to reduce seabird bycatch in fishing gear are issues on the list. The report will also discuss other pressures and threats to seabirds and describe possible actions.

The group consisted of a variety of experts from different scientific fields such as seabird ecology, oceanography and marine resources. The participants came from Greenland, Iceland, the Faeroe Island, Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

The workshop was arranged by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management, based on a recommendation from a joint meeting of Nordic nature conservation NGOs in 2006 to the Nordic Council of Ministers. The main goal of the workshop was to discuss and describe the status, causal factors and threats, and mitigating actions relevant to seabirds in Nordic waters.

The final report will be presented to the Nordic Council of Ministers and distributed to all national authorities and relevant stakeholders.

### **Contacts of the expert group:**

#### **Iceland:**

- Ævar Petersen, Icelandic Institute of Natural History  
phone + 354 590 0500, e-mail: [aevar@ni.is](mailto:aevar@ni.is)

#### **Greenland:**

- Carsten Egevang, Nature Institute of Greenland  
phone + 299 36 12 41, e-mail: [egevang@natur.gl](mailto:egevang@natur.gl)
- Anders Mosbech, National Environmental Research Institute (Denmark)  
phone + 45 46 30 19 34, e-mail: [amo@dmu.dk](mailto:amo@dmu.dk)

#### **Denmark:**

- Ib K. Petersen, National Environmental Research Institute  
phone + 45 8920 1518, e-mail: [ikp@dmu.dk](mailto:ikp@dmu.dk)

#### **Faeroe Islands:**

- Bergur Olsen, Faeroese Fisheries Laboratory  
phone + 298 35 23 27, e-mail: [Berguro@frs.fo](mailto:Berguro@frs.fo)

#### **Norway:**

- Morten Ekker, Directorate for Nature Management  
phone + 4773580730, e-mail: [morten.ekker@dirnat.no](mailto:morten.ekker@dirnat.no)
- Tycho Anker-Nilssen, Norwegian Institute for Nature Research  
phone +47 73 80 14 43, e-mail: [tycho@nina.no](mailto:tycho@nina.no)

#### **Sweden:**

- Martina Kadin, "Projekt Havsfåglar i Östersjön"/Baltic Seabird  
phone +46 73 99 34 305, e-post: [martina\\_kadin@hotmail.com](mailto:martina_kadin@hotmail.com)

#### **General:**









- Morten Frederiksen, National Environmental Research Institute (Denmark)  
phone + 45 46 30 19 10, e-mail: [mfr@dmu.dk](mailto:mfr@dmu.dk)

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**List of seabird names in the different countries:**

UK:	<i>Scientific name:</i>	Sweden:	Denmark:	Greenland:	Iceland:	Norway:	Faeroe Islands
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Stormfågel	Mallemuk	Qaqulluk	Fýll	Havhest	Havhestur
Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Tretåig mås	Ride	Taateraaq	Rita	Krykkje	Rita
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Silvertærna	Havterne	Imerqulalaq	Kría	Rødnebbterne	Terna
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	Sillgrissla	Lomvie	Appa	Langvía	Lomvi	Lomvigi
Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	Lunnefågel	Lunde	.....	Lundi	Lunde	Lundi