

PREFACE

At the 1985 joint meeting of the Pacific Seabird Group and the Colonial Waterbird Group held 4–8 December at the Financial District Holiday Inn in San Francisco, one day was devoted to a symposium on gull biology. Speakers represented a broad spectrum of interests in current studies of gull ecology and behavior, coming from Canada, Mexico, Iceland, The Netherlands, and various parts of the United States. Altogether, 23 papers were delivered, and 21 appear in the text which follows, 11 as full papers and 10 as abstracts. That eleven other papers on gulls were also presented at the 4-day meeting reflects the continuing broad appeal of gulls and the places gulls inhabit for studies of a wide variety of ecological, behavioral and evolutionary problems.

It was for this reason that, as series editor, I urged the three organizers of this symposium to include in its published form an introductory paper scanning the current horizon of recent work. The result is Bill Southern's introductory overview. The guest editors and I hope that this review along with the symposium papers will provide useful background and cues for new work.

At an editorial staff meeting I attended for another publication, a fairly strong view was expressed questioning the utility of any "grab-bag" collection of papers on birds of a particular major taxon. I disagreed, also fairly strongly. General principles and rules cutting across species rest on in-depth studies of patterns in individual major

taxa. The diversity of birds, their popularity as subjects for field studies, and their importance in the explosion of literature in ecology, behavior and evolution create a need for periodic assessment of directions and goals that taxon-oriented symposia can provide. Of course, the success of such symposia varies, but the need remains.

More particularly, a major group, such as gulls, displays a characteristic set of shared morphologic, physiologic, behavioral, and life-history features differing fundamentally from other such sets in the class Aves. These provide critical bases for between-population and between-species comparisons useful in the analysis of factors governing a group's success in functional, demographic, and evolutionary terms. For other major taxa, less well known and differing in basic features of design, symposia such as the present one do, or should, provide useful perspective for both choice and focus of research and for the testing of theory. These are among the worthy goals that symposia on the biology of major taxa can serve, and I believe this one does its share.

This is the third PSG symposium devoted to marine birds published in *Studies in Avian Biology*. Earlier ones dealt with tropical seabirds (1983, SAB 8) and shorebirds (1979, SAB 2). At least one new one is in the planning stage.

Frank A. Pitelka

11 February 1987

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors express special appreciation for the considerable and critical assistance given by the following reviewers of manuscripts for this symposium. Names of those reviewing more than one manuscript are followed by an asterisk.

D. W. Anderson
D. A. Bell
H. Blokpoel
B. M. Braune
J. Burger
R. G. Butler*
R. W. Butler
J. W. Chardine
M. Conover
M. Coulter
R. M. Evans
M. Fitch
G. A. Fox
D. M. Fry
M. Gochfeld
L. A. Hanners
A. B. Harper
W. Hoffman
T. R. Howell
G. L. Hunt, Jr.
D. B. Irons

J. R. Jehl, Jr.*
P. A. Jones
S. A. Mahoney
M. K. McNicholl
R. D. Morris*
W. A. Montevicchi
E. C. Murphy*
I. C. T. Nisbet
S. R. Patton
R. Pierotti*
J. B. Ryder
G. A. Sanger
R. W. Schreiber
G. W. Shugart
L. K. Southern
A. L. Spaans
J. A. Spindelow
B. Termaat
N. A. M. Verbeek
D. W. Winkler*
K. Winnett-Murray