

Preliminary results of ringing Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* breeding in the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy

PAOLO BOLDREGHINI*, PETER L. MEININGER** and RICCARDO SANTOLINI***

* *Inst. Zooculture, University of Bologna, via S. Giacomo 9 - 40126 Bologna, Italy*

** *Rijkswaterstaat Tidal Water Division, Po Box 8039 - 4330 Ak Middelburg, The Netherlands*

*** *Inst. Scienze Morfologiche, University of Urbino, via M. Oddi 23 - 61029 Urbino, Italy*

The number of breeding Mediterranean Gulls has increased markedly in north-western Europe during the past ten years (Meininger and Bekhuis 1990) and in Italy since the first settlement in 1978 (Boldreghini et al. 1986).

At present, over half of the northern, still relatively small, population breeds in the Netherlands (c. 120 pairs in 1991, c. 75 pairs in 1992) and Belgium (c. 25 pairs in 1991, c. 50 pairs in 1992); the population breeding in Italy amounts to c. 1400 pairs in 1991 and c. 900 pairs in 1992 (Figure 1).

To obtain information on population dynamics and movements, a ringing programme was started in both areas. Between 1989-92 330 Mediterranean gulls were ringed in the Netherlands and Belgium, 179 of which were also ringed with a WHITE, engraved darvic (PVC) ring. In Italy about three thousand chicks have been ringed since 1978; in 1990-92 463 of them were also marked with a BLUE, engraved PVC ring (Table 1).

In north-western Europe, the recovery rate of colour-ringed birds was remarkably high (Table 1).

By 1st September 1992, 53% of the birds ringed as adults and 31% of the birds ringed as chicks in 1990-92 were resighted away from the ringing site at least once. First year birds (1st year running from hatching to 30 June of the next year, >1cy subsequently) have hitherto been resighted predominantly west of their natal areas, mainly in northwest France, southern England, Wales, with one sighting in Denmark. Birds older than one year have been resighted in southern England, Wales and along the Atlantic coast between northwest France and Morocco (Figure 2).

In Italy the efficacy of the ringing programme was very low (Table 1): up to now only 2% of colour ringed birds and 1% of metal-ringed birds have been resighted or recovered away from the ringing site. It seems that there are two main areas of distribution: the upper Adriatic coast and the northern coast of the Western Mediterranean. A few individuals reached the Atlantic coast of France, three the Netherlands, one Tunisia and one the Atlantic coast of Morocco. There appeared to be

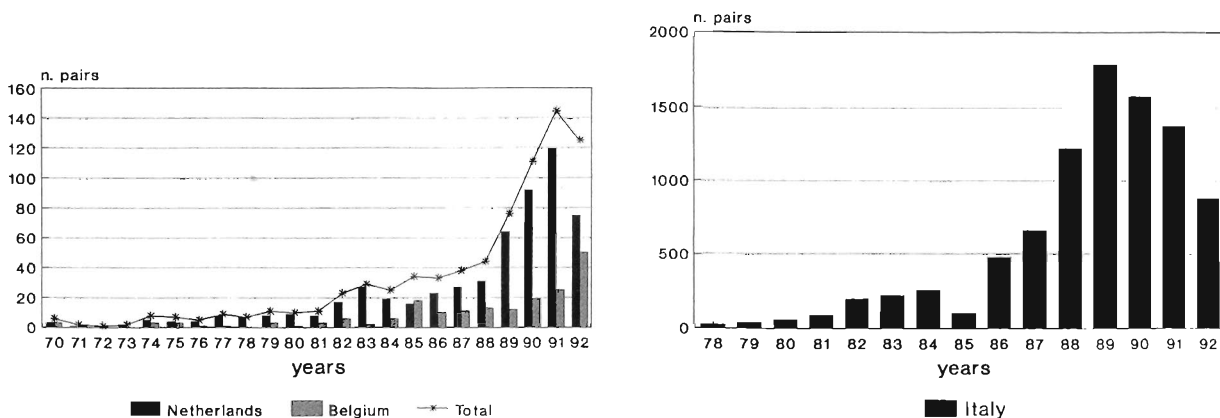


Figure 1 - Breeding population in NW Europe and Italy.

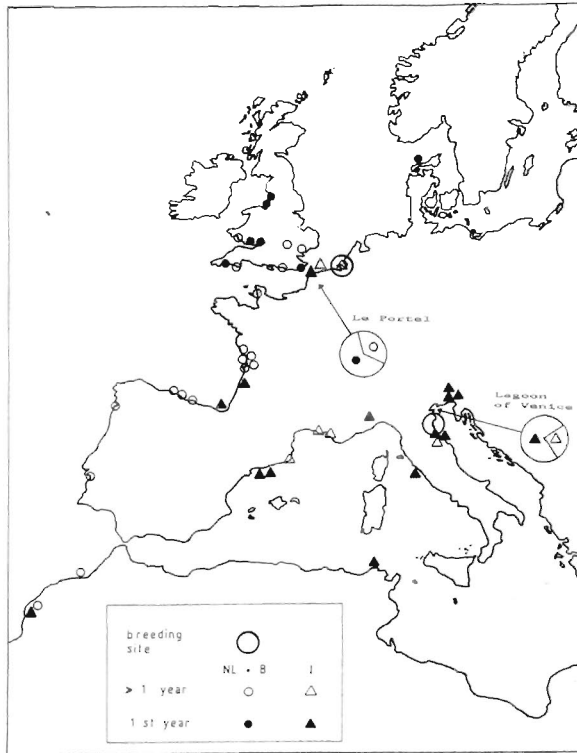


Figure 2 - Sightings of Mediterranean Gulls ringed in the Netherlands/Belgium and in Italy. In the larger circles: Le Portel, France, tot. 30 birds; Lagoon of Venice, Italy, tot. 8 birds.

no difference between first year birds and older ones (Figure 2).

There is no indication (as yet) that birds ringed in north-western Europe enter the Mediterranean whereas there is at least some flow from the Po Delta to north-western Europe (including birds establishing as breeders).

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Table 1 - Number of Mediterranean Gulls ringed in the SW-Netherlands (1989-92), Belgium (1992) and Italy (1978-92) and recovered until 1 September 1992 (number with colour-rings in parentheses).

	chicks			adult breeders		
	Ringed	rec.	%	ringed	rec.	%
NETHERLANDS						
1989	42	(0)		1	(0)	
1990	71	(35) 0	(11) - (31)	23	(23) 0	(15) - (65)
1991	79	(42) 0	(13) - (31)	11	(11) 0	(5) - (45)
1992	50	(27) 0	(3) - (11)	11	(11) 0	(4) - (36)
Tot.	242	(104) 0	(27) - (26)	46	(45) 0	(24) - (53)
BELGIUM						
1992	42	(30) 0	(5) - (17)			
Tot. NL + B	284	(134) 0	(32) - (24)	47	(46) 0	(24) - (53)
ITALY						
1978-81	155	(0) 2	1			
1982	44	(0) 0	-			
1983	91	(0) 1	1			
1984	127	(0) 0	-			
1985	40	(0) 0	-			
1986	163	(0) 3	2			
1987	229	(0) 0	-			
1988	352	(0) 1	.3			
1989	726	(0) 4	.6			
1990*	*	(102) 5	(4) ?	(4)		
1991	*	(169) 2	(6) ?	(4)		
1992	*	(192) 0	(0) -	(-)		
Tot.	c.3000	(463) 18	(10) 1	(2)		

* data not yet fully available.

P. Brichetti and U.F. Foschi provided us with data referring to the breeding population in the Comacchio lagoon and F. Spina (INFS) supplied part of the recovery data.

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