

The Study of Ecological Seabirds in Algeria

Authors : A. Baaloudj, F. Samraoui, B. Samraoui

Abstract : We have been studied the reproductive ecology and dispersal of Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* for three years 2009-2011. The study of the breeding ecology of the species was undertaken at the Srigina Island (Skikda). The mean clutch size was 2.64 ± 0.62 , 2.49 ± 0.72 and 2.37 ± 0.77 eggs in the three study years 2009-2011 respectively. Hatching success was similar for the first two years of study (53% in 2009 and 54% in 2010) but significantly lower in the third year (27% in 2011). The same trend was found for the fledging success, it was 33% and 32% in 2009 and 2010 respectively and only 14% in 2011. Cannibalism and predation by cats were the two likely causes of low reproductive success in the third year. Regarding the species dispersal, we started a banding program of the yellow-legged gulls *Larus michahellis michahellis* in 2009, the first scheme of its kind in North Africa. Banding of chicks was initiated at Skikda and extended, a year later, to four other colonies located along the Algerian coast. Preliminary analysis of ringed yellow-legged gulls from Algerian colonies indicates that juveniles dispersed in a north-westerly direction to the Balearic Sea, the Bay of Biscay, the Alboran Sea and the western Atlantic coast from the Bay of Cadiz to the Galician shores. Preliminary data suggested two distinct routes: gulls from the eastern North African colonies moved N/NW to eastern Spain and overland to the Bay of Biscay, a pattern of dispersal previously reported for birds from Spanish and French western Mediterranean colonies. Juveniles from western colonies seemed also to move N/NW to the Alboran Sea and the Bay of Cadiz. In Spain, where most of the dispersal took place, data suggested that Algerian gulls occupied coastal areas which are used as aestivating refuges before returning to North Africa in late autumn and winter.

Keywords : breeding ecology, population dynamic, dispersal, yellow-legged gull *Larus michahellis*, sea bird, banding scheme, Srigina, Algeria

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