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Valuable seabird study

Hallvard Strøm from the Norwegian Polar Institute at Bjørnøya.

DEA participates in research project that maps seabird breeding in North Atlantic waters.

The study area covers 38 study sites in the Barents Sea, Norwegian Sea and the northern North Sea and includes colonies in Russia, Norway, Great Britain, the Faroe Islands and Iceland. The research project SEATRACK was formally launched in spring 2014 and is scheduled to run for four years. DEA Norge has supported the project all the way.

DEA HSSEQ Manager in Norway, Jan Andreassen follows the study with interest.

"For DEA Norge, access to data and reports from the study will help us take the necessary steps to minimize effects on the existing ecosystem in the areas that we plan to operate. It will also allow us to set up a more precise emergency response and oil recovery plan", Andreassen says.

A new light-logging technology has enabled mapping of important seabird wintering areas and migration routes yielding new and important information needed for the management of seabirds in North Atlantic waters.

"Many seabird species are spread over vast oceanic areas for most of the year and only aggregate on land during the breeding season. Consequently, little is known about many aspects of their life away from the breeding grounds leaving large gaps in our knowledge and understanding of seabird life-histories", explains Hallvard Strøm from Norwegian Polar Institute.

According to Strøm, the SEATRACK study will help researchers identify:

- The most important moulting areas, migration routes and wintering areas for different seabird populations.
- The size and the composition of seabird populations during the non-breeding season.
- What environmental threats the different populations face.
- The origin of birds (i.e. the breeding population) that will be affected in acute incidents such as oil spills, mass mortality due to starvation or drowning in fishing gear.
- The different environmental conditions characterizing the different habitats occupied by Norwegian seabirds, how these change over time, and how they are reflected in the population dynamics and demography in the colonies
- Responses to climate change and how this affects the different populations.

A dedicated SEATRACK web-application provides open access to project results in a manner that is simple to use and understand. The application allows users to select results for different species, years, seasons, and colonies and display them on a map. The maps display the likelihood of birds within a given selection being in the area given the data available.

SEATRACK is a module to SEAPOP, but has its own project staff and is led by a project-group with representatives from **the Norwegian Polar Institute (NPI)**, **Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA)** and **Norwegian Environment Agency (NEA)**.