

9.2 Seabird observations

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Seabird observations were carried out by standardized strip transect methodology. Birds were counted from the vessel's bridge while the ship was steaming at a constant speed of ca. 10 knots. All birds seen within an arc of 300 m from directly ahead to 90° to one side of the ship were counted. On the vessels «Helmer Hansen», «G.O. Sars» and «Johan Hjort», birds following the ship i.e. «ship-followers», were counted as point observations within the sector every ten minutes. Ship-followers included the most common gull species and Northern fulmar. Total transect length covered by the Norwegian vessels («Helmer Hansen», «G.O. Sars» and «Johan Hjort») was 6294 km. Total transect length covered by «Vilnyus» was 8630 km.

A total of 85 772 birds belonging to 32 different species were counted (Table 9.2.1). The density of seabirds was somewhat lower than in 2012, most notably in the southern areas (Fig. 9.2.1). Similar to previous surveys, the highest density of seabirds was found north of the polar front. These areas were dominated by Brünnich's guillemots (*Uria lomvia*), little auk (*Alle alle*), kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) and Northern fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*).

The distribution of the different species was similar to the distribution in previous surveys (Fig. 9.2.1). Alcids were observed throughout the study area but the abundance and species distribution varied geographically. Little auks were found in the northern area, Brünnich's guillemots were found in the central and northern area, Atlantic puffins (*Fratercula arctica*) were found in the western area and common guillemots (*Uria aalge*) were found in the south-eastern area. Among the ship-followers, black-backed gulls (*Larus marinus*) and herring gull (*Larus argentatus*) were found in the south, close to the coast. Glaucous gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) was found in small numbers in the central western area, kittiwakes were found in high density in the north-east, while Northern fulmars were encountered in highest numbers in the west and south.

Table 9.2.1. List of species encountered during the survey in 2013. Note that ship-followers were counted differently on the Norwegian and Russian vessels

English name	Scientific name	Norwegian vessels	Russian vessel
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	0	1
Little auk	<i>Alle alle</i>	199	364
Pipit sp.	<i>Anthus sp.</i>	0	1
Brent goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	0	5
Purple sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	1	4
Black guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>	33	33
Ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	0	20
Atlantic puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	649	60
Northern fulmar*	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	56178	4194
Herring gull*	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	2571	120
Heuglin's gull*	<i>Larus heuglini</i>	0	65
Glaucous gull*	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	263	133
Great black-backed gull*	<i>Larus marinus</i>	3237	104
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serratus</i>	0	5
Northern gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	14	4
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	0	3
Ivory gull	<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>	1	63
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax sp.</i>	0	1
Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	1	0
Snow bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	3	2
Sooty shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>	10	4
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	0	1
Black-legged kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	3947	2915
Common eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	0	7
King eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	0	2
Long-tailed skua	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	2	1
Arctic skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	140	47
Pomarine skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	103	305
Great skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	21	1
Unident. Skua	<i>Stercorarius sp.</i>	6	0
Arctic tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	296	6
Common guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	13	42
Brünnich's guillemot	<i>Uria lomvia</i>	2980	6453
Unspec. guillemot	<i>Uria spp.</i>	92	46
Total		70760	15012

*Ship followers

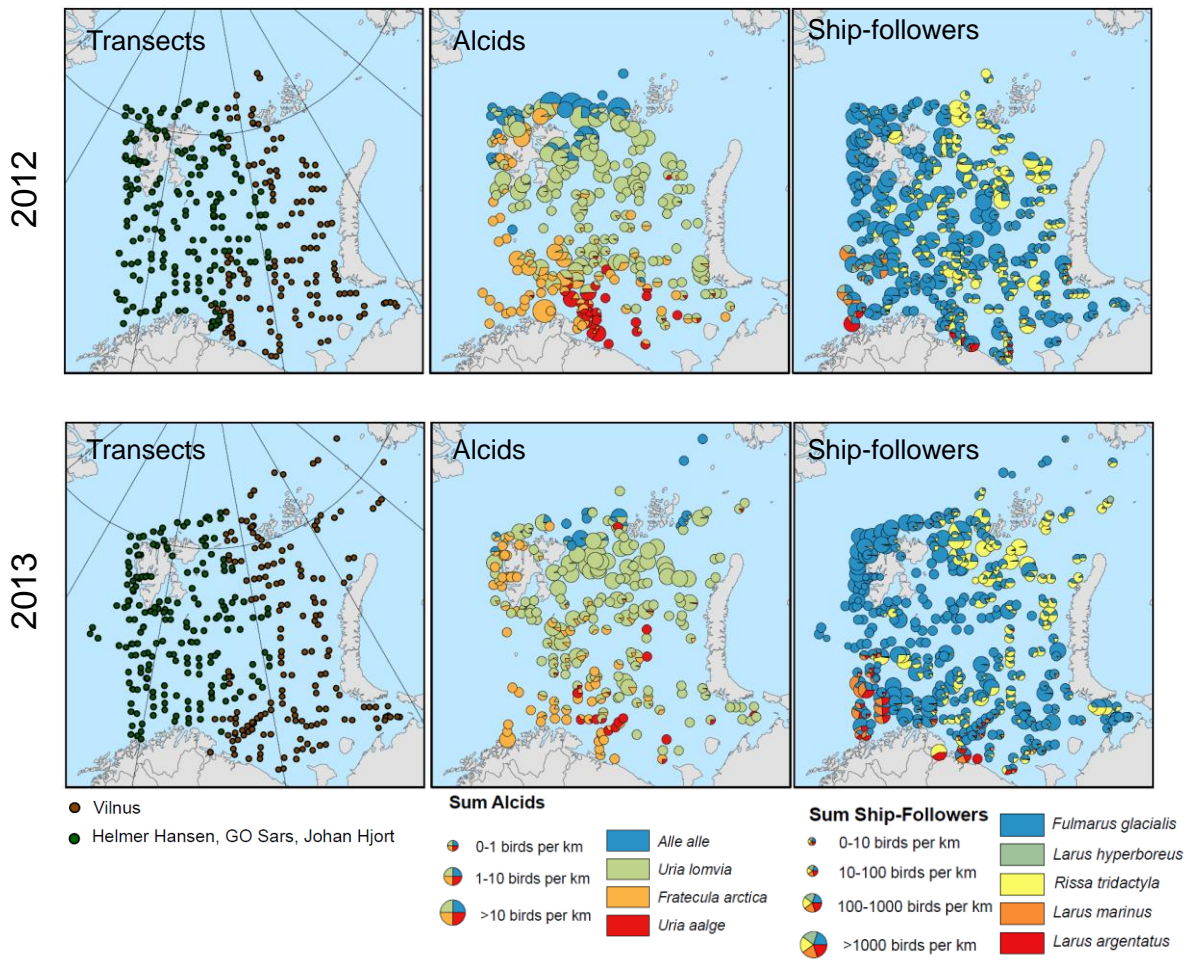


Figure 9.2.1 Seabird observations in 2012 (top) and 2013 (bottom). Left panel: positions of transects, middle panel: distribution of auks, right panel: distribution of ship-followers (gulls and fulmar)