

Satellite tracking of gannets at Bempton Cliffs



In 2010, the UK Government Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) funded the RSPB to carry out satellite tracking of breeding gannets during the chick-rearing period, to investigate foraging ranges and destinations in relation to proposal sites for offshore wind farms. On 14th July, thanks to collaboration between the Joint Services Mountain Training Wing, Defence Training Estate North, the University of Leeds, East Yorkshire Ringing Group, RSPB staff and volunteers, 14 satellite tags were fitted to adult gannets breeding at RSPB Bempton Cliffs. This unique collaboration made the study possible at a site inaccessible without the best climbers.



The tags lasted for 13-84 days; a few were still transmitting in early October. These tags show that, during chick rearing in 2010, the majority of gannet locations were within 50-100km of Bempton Cliffs, overlapping with the Hornsea proposed wind farm area in particular. The average foraging range (straight-line distance from Bempton) was 63.6 ± 8.9 km, whilst the average length of foraging trip (total distance covered during a foraging trip) was 158.6 ± 22.7 km. It is hoped to be able to carry out further tracking studies in 2011 for comparison with 2010.

Rowena Langston, 22 February 2011

