

2018 AMAPPS Shipboard Surveys – Seabirds

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Seven shipboard surveys were completed in 2018 during Ecosystem Monitoring Surveys (EcoMon), a beaked whale survey, and NOAA Ship transits (Table 1). Cruises sampled regions from the Gulf of Maine to the Gulf of Mexico (Figure 1). A total of 10,711 sightings of birds and other marine megafauna were recorded in the survey zone and 18,021 in total. The majority of sea bird species for each cruise varied by survey season and region and was dominated by Storm-Petrels and Shearwaters. Wilson’s Storm-Petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*), Great Shearwaters (*Puffinus gravis*), and Sooty Shearwaters (*Ardenna grisea*) were most frequently sighted birds on the spring (HB1803) and summer (GU1804) EcoMon surveys of the Northeast US Shelf and the transit north from Key West, Florida, to Newport, Rhode Island, (GU18TN). Greater Shearwaters, Wilson’s Storm-Petrels, and Leach’s Storm-Petrels (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*) were the most abundant species sighted on the beaked whale survey (GU1803) off the shelf of Georges Bank. Wilson’s Storm-Petrel and Sooty Tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) were the most abundant birds on the transit from Miami, Florida to Newport, Rhode Island (HB18TN), which included a track into and out of the Tongue of the Ocean off the Bahamas. Observers also counted 117 endangered Black-capped Petrels (*Pterodroma hasitata*) on the offshore transit between South Carolina to North Carolina. Dominant species shifted on the Northeast US Shelf in the fall. Northern Gannets (*Morus bassanus*) and Bonaparte’s Gulls (*Chroicocephalus Philadelphia*) were the most abundant on the fall EcoMon (S11802). Finally, the transit from Norfolk, Virginia, to Pascagoula, Mississippi, (GU18TS) through the Gulf of Mexico had a different bird community that was dominated by sightings of Black Terns (*Chlidonias niger*), Royal Terns (*Thalasseus maximus*), Cory’s Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*), and Sooty Tern.

Table 1. A summary of 2018 NEFSC AMAPPS Shipboard Surveys on which observers sailed with the primary goal of conducting seabird surveys to collect abundance and distribution data and the secondary goal to collect abundance and distribution data for other marine megafauna including marine mammals, sea turtles, sharks, and other large pelagic fishes. Number of sightings (no.) within the 300-m survey zone and total include birds and megafauna.

Cruise	Program	Start Date	End Date	Duration (days)	Sightings (no.)	
					Survey Zone	Total
HB1803	Ecosystem Monitoring	23-May	04-Jun	13	3026	5472
GU18TN	NOAA Ship transit	11-Jul	16-Jul	6	1094	1666
GU1803	Beaked Whale survey	21-Jul	18-Aug	13	1111	1214
HB18TN	NOAA Ship transit	01-Aug	06-Aug	6	665	2651
GU1804	Ecosystem Monitoring	22-Aug	30-Aug	9	1459	2267
GU18TS	NOAA Ship transit	02-Sep	09-Sep	8	838	1246
S11802	Ecosystem Monitoring	01-Nov	12-Nov	10	2518	3505

Figure 1. A summary of 2018 NEFSC AMAPPS Shipboard survey tracks.

