

Colour phases of Atlantic Northern Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*

Derived from: Van Franeker, J.A. 2004. *Save the North Sea - Fulmar Study Manual 1: Collection and dissection procedures. Alterra Rapport 672. Alterra, Wageningen. 38pp.* (pdf file of full report may be downloaded from www.zeevogelgroep.nl click on 'downloads')

Colour phase of Fulmars is recorded because it may be indicative of the origin of a bird. **Coloured individuals** (colour phases Light L; Dark D; and Double Dark DD) are virtually limited to arctic populations (subspecies *F.g.glacialis*). **Double Light (LL or 'White') individuals** make up near 100% of the southern subspecies populations (*F.g.auduboni*) and a variable proportion of arctic populations. Colour phase can be determined using Fig.7 and Table 4.

In fairly clean birds one may be able to use the four colour phase system, but in dirty, fouled, wet or older corpses this is often not easy, and it may be more convenient to use the **white versus coloured** distinction (which for our purposes provides the same information). The best distinguishing character to split coloured birds (L+D+DD) from white ones (LL), even in old dirty corpses, is the coloration of the small central covert feathers on the underwing. In white birds, the underwing may have variable shades of grey around the edges, and sometimes a small partial grey inner area, but the main central underwing surface is white. In **all** coloured fulmars, the underwing is wholly grey. This underwing character is more easy to use than the presence/absence of colour difference between head/neck and mantle, which is often obscure. Coloured birds often have darker bills with more extensive black spots; however, apart from being of initial value as an indicator, the bill-colouration is an unreliable character.

Table Colour coding for plumages of Northern Fulmars

LL	Double Light	head and neck white, with fairly sharp demarcation between mantle and neck in all body positions; underbody and main underwing surface white	W
L	Light	variable grey on upper head, neck, and flanks; no clear distinction between colour of mantle and lower neck (in flight position); breast/belly white or whitish, but underwing grey, distinctively different from belly/breast.	C O L O U R E D
D	Dark	as L, but with more extensive grey on head and underparts; only breast/belly may be light grey	
DD	Double Dark	unmistakably grey on all body parts	

