

EXPERIMENTS TO DETERMINE THE FATE OF DEAD SEABIRDS OFF WOLLONGONG, NEW SOUTH WALES

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To simulate a seabird mortality incident, marked floats (total 375) were dropped in batches of five at 9 km, 35–45 km and 50–90 km east of Wollongong, New South Wales during each of 25 cruises from June 1985 to October 1987. Overall, 85 (22.7%) were recovered between Budgewoi (110 km N) and Bermagui (198 km S). Recovery rates for near-shore, mid-distance and furthest dropped batches were 29.6, 28 and 10.4 per cent respectively and the corresponding median recovery intervals were 4, 7 and 7 days. The reporting rates for floats presumed to have come ashore were 25.7 per cent from April to September (cool months) and 49.6 per cent from October to March (warm months). In a supplementary speed test, floats and Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris* corpses moved at five per cent and 3.1 per cent of wind speed respectively. It was concluded that the East Australian Current generally controls movement of floats parallel to the coast whereas wind controls east-west movement.