the Seabird Group

NEWSLETTER 139

October 2018

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News

Report from the International Seabird Group Conference, Liverpool, 3-6 September 2018

Katherine Booth Jones, Seabird Group Newsletter Editor

I was delighted to be able to attend the **14th International Seabird Group Conference** this year. The conference, magnificently hosted by the **Seabird Ecology Group at the University of Liverpool (SEGUL)**, was our biggest to date and got off to a fantastic start on Monday 3rd September. Delegates from around the world signed up to begin the week with one of two exciting parallel workshops: **Using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) in seabird research and monitoring**, an area that is burgeoning in possibilities for monitoring and surveillance, and the regular **Early Career Researchers** event. The ECR event this year included the unusual format of the popular TV show, 'Would I Lie To You', which enabled the audience of fledgling seabird researchers to quiz the expert panel on topics such as interacting with the media, careers outside academia and securing post docs and grants, while having a laugh with new acquaintances and old faces alike.

The ECR 'Would I lie to you' expert panel, left to right: Phil Collins, Kate Parr, Thierry Boulinier, Sophie de Grissac, Tim Guilford, Liz Humphries. Photo by Suzanne Yee.

The fantastic selection of plenaries was kicked off on Monday evening by BirdLife International's **Cleo Small**, who set the scene for the conference by painting a bright future for seabird research with her perspective of the conservation successes of the past 20 years. On Tuesday, **Ana Sanz-Aguilar** (Population Ecology Group at the Mediterranean Institute for Advanced Studies) opened the day of talks with an exploration of the critical moments in the long lives of seabirds that can affect their survival and the possible consequences of reduced adult survival on many seabird populations. **Thierry Boulinier** (National Centre for Scientific Research –CNRS), gave a fascinating plenary on Wednesday on why seabirds make interesting model organisms for investigating host-parasite interactions and the implications for seabirds of conservation concern. The final plenary speaker on Thursday, **Kyle Elliot** (McGill University) shared the highlights of recent cutting-edge research into seabird energetics, illustrating how the constraints of energetics and physiology have shaped the ecology and evolution of seabirds.

The standard of posters at this year's conference was extremely high and the conference organisers were also able to keep the delegates well supplied with pizza and drinks, fuelling plenty of networking and productive discussions between researchers and

seabird enthusiasts alike. Each day of the conference was jam-packed full of short but impactful presentations, so although a full day of sitting still might have felt long, the quality of the research and the delivery of each talk kept the audience glued to their seats. Topics ranged from conservation management to physiology, and the joint prize-winning presentations were given by **Alice Trevail** ('*the consequences of environmental heterogeneity for foraging behaviours and reproductive success*') and **Ruth Dunn** ('*a model to estimate field metabolic rate in seabirds*').

Congratulations to all those who presented their research via talks or posters and to the SEGUL team for hosting such a successful event. Seabird Group Conferences never fail to inspire and I am already looking forward to the next instalment.

If you were not able to attend but would like an insight into the action, I recommend exploring the commentary of delegates at the conference via the Twitter hashtag **#Seabirds18**.

New Executive Committee members

This year, four committee members ended their rotations. Many thanks to our outgoing committee members: Will Miles (Treasurer), Hannah Watson (Newsletter Editor), Alice Trevail (Membership Secretary) and Viola Ross-Smith (Ordinary Member, Social Media).

During the 53rd Annual General Meeting at the International Seabird Group Conference elections for new committee members were conducted. Changes are as follows:

- Ian Cleasby was elected Treasurer.
- Danni Thompson was elected Membership Secretary and Zoe Deakin was elected as an Ordinary Member to assist with membership duties.
- Katherine Booth Jones was elected Newsletter Editor.
- Saskia Wischnewski was elected Ordinary Member with responsibility for Social Media.
- Stuart Murray was re-elected as Census Representative.

Welcome to our new committee members. If you would like to contact any member of the Executive Committee, details can be found at the end of the Newsletter.

Update from the 'Seabirds Count' census

Daisy Burnell, JNCC Seabirds Count Project Coordinator

2018 was a big year for **Seabirds Count**; publicity was significantly increased and this season was the first to have a dedicated census coordinator in place. Through the continued dedication of the SMP partners, substantial progress had been made in the "specialist" sites, such as SPAs and reserves, by the end of the 2017 season. Although these sites contain some of the largest numbers of breeding seabirds, colonies out with reserve and protected site boundaries still constitute the largest proportion of known sites in the SMP database. These 'non-specialist' sites, which range from short lengths of coastline to remote inland colonies, have been more challenging to census.

With a pressing need to cover these remaining gaps and a decision to survey all tern breeding sites, the task at hand for 2018 was substantial. Thus, from the start of the coordinator appointment in July 2017, a concerted effort was made to assemble a large network of volunteer surveyors to increase census coverage. By the start of the 2018 season, 53 volunteer regional coordinators, hundreds of volunteer surveyors were in place and ready to tackle the breeding season.

Although a little early to give a full update on coverage, there is no doubt that an incredible amount of time and effort has been put into this season by everyone involved. To date, there has been data entered for over 1000 sites, for 2018. There have been reports of full coverage (not including urban sites) in some regions from several regional coordinators, which is an impressive achievement. In the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland, where approximately 70% of the UK population of **Arctic Terns** bred during Seabird 2000, over 95% of the tern colonies were surveyed. Many of these surveys were aided by grants provided by the Seabird Group. **These achievements could not have been accomplished without the determination and dedication shown by the volunteers involved.**

Now it's time to start looking forward to the 2019 season. The momentum carrying this project towards completion needs to be sustained, and volunteer engagement must continue and possibly increase. The focus for 2019 will be to survey the UK's urban gull population, in addition to mopping up the remaining natural nesting sites. Survey methods for these urban sites are currently being designed, although are likely to be based on counts of birds within defined 1km squares. All survey information, recording forms, instructions and lists of sample squares will be sent out to Regional Coordinators by the end of this year.

If you would like to get involved as a volunteer surveyor, please contact **Daisy Burnell**, the **Seabirds Count Project Coordinator** by email: **SeabirdsCountCoordinator@jncc.gov.uk**. From there, she will put in touch with the respective regional coordinator involved with organising surveys in your area.

Grant Report

Expedition Simmer Dim 2018 – Royal Air Force Ornithological Society (RAFOS) expedition to Orkney, June 2018. A volunteer citizen scientist's perspective.

Keith Cowieson, RAFOS Field Activities Liaison Officer

Every 15 years or so, I start to hanker after a week's seabird surveying on one of Scotland's magnificent Northern or Western Isles. Thoughts stray to the delights of dangling over the edge of some dizzying precipice counting auks, **Shags** and **Kittiwakes** on narrow ledges, crawling around on all fours sniffing peat hags or drystone dykes for the tell-tale musty smell of nesting petrels or steeling oneself to walk briskly, yet carefully, through a ternery, gullery or skua colony counting nests, eggs and chicks as the local inhabitants attempt to terrorise intruders into retreat through dive bombing, showering with guano or playing chicken with you during intimidating, low-level, head-on attacks.

The 'Simmer Dim' – John Nigel Wells. Orkney's latitude at 59 degrees north means the sun is above the horizon for 18 hours in mid-summer. It rises at around 4am and sets at about 10.30pm. But it is still twilight for much of the night as the sun only dips just below the horizon. This period of not-quite darkness is known in Orkney as the 'simmer dim'.

Therefore, after a couple of years of champing-at-the-bit as funding for the statutorily-mandated census of all breeding seabirds in Britain and Ireland was finalised, it was with a sense of joy that I espied **Daisy Burnell**, the overall JNCC Seabirds Count coordinator, at last year's Scottish Ornithologists' Club's winter conference. Daisy was actively recruiting volunteers for this, the 4th Periodic Seabirds Census, and a quick 15-minute chat later, we were on, with Daisy promising to allocate RAFOS some under-recorded Scottish islands or stretches of mainland coastline to survey. And following discussions with Daisy, **Drs Liz Humphries and Niall Burton** of the **BTO** and **Kate Thompson** of **SNH**, we were allocated the Northern Orkney Islands of Eday and Stronsay. Previous RAFOS seabird censusing forays had been to Mingulay and Berneray in 1979, Mingulay again in 1985 for the Seabird Colony Register, the Flannans in 1998 and Benbecula, North & South Uist for Seabird 2000, so Orkney would represent exciting new ground for us. Ringing round some of the RAFOS old guard revealed that despite a distinct greying and general diminution of hair, expansion of girth and stiffening of various joints over the years, most were up for it and raring to go.

So it was with a sense of keen expectation that our 2 parties of 6 enthusiastic citizen scientists each disembarked on a glorious evening in mid-June at the jetties on Eday and Stronsay, having had our first taste of things to come watching local **Arctic** and **Great Skua** (scootie-allan and bonxie in Orcadian parlance), **Arctic Terns** (pickieterno) and **Guillemot**, **Razorbill**, **Puffin and Black Guillemot** (aak, baukie, tammie norrie and tystie) from the decks of Orkney Ferries' inter-island services. Our task was to survey all 103 main island SMP sites on Eday and Stronsay, and as many of the outlying smaller islets as time and resources permitted. This account is focussed on Eday and its outliers, where I was to spend the next week.

Seabirds Count Priorities

During pre-expedition planning, it was stressed that the priorities for Seabirds Count should be on skua, tern and gull colonies, as some of these species were those giving rise to the greatest conservation concern. For example, the State of the UK's Birds (SUKB) 2017 (JNCC 2018) states that kleptoparasitic Arctic Skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus)* numbers have declined by a whopping

76% since 1986, and 64% since Seabird 2000 – the greatest decline of any UK breeding seabird over the period. Conversely, Great Skua (*Stercorarius skua)* numbers have continued their seemingly inexorable increase with SUKB 2017 charting a 53% increase in numbers since 1986 and 18% since Seabird 2000 (JNCC 2018). Reviewing the Seabird 2000 results for Eday on the Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) website revealed that Arctic skua had been 3 times as numerous as Great Skua 18 years ago, so it was interesting to speculate what we might find. Similarly, SUKB 2017 held that Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea)* numbers had steadily increased over the period 1986-2017, by an average of 18%, - albeit mainly in England - yet anecdotal evidence in recent years recorded widespread breeding failure of some tern colonies in UK's northern isles. Again, we looked forward to discovering the level of change, if any, between Seabird 2000 observations and our own.

Observations

So, what did we observe during our survey and what tentative conclusions were we able to draw? The task on Eday was simple, walk the entire coastline and visit all 43 seabird colonies counted during Seabird 2000 and conduct a snap-shot, single visit survey, with repeat visits to particularly large, difficult-to-survey colonies if time permitted. Our observations are tabulated in the table below, alongside Seabird 2000 results.

Changes in seabird populations on Eday (inc Faray and Calf of Eday, 2000 – 2018)[1]

Species	Seabird 2000	Seabirds Count	% Change
Northern Fulmar	7533 AOS	3099 AOS	-59
Great Cormorant	138 AON	187 AON	+36
European Shag	56 AON	52 AON	-1
Arctic Skua	76 AOT	58 AOT	-24
Great Skua	26 AOT	104 AOT	+300
Black-legged Kittiwake	779 AON	148 AON	-81
Great Black-backed Gull	1520 ind	41 ind / 74 AON-AOT	N/A[2]
Lesser Black-backed Gull	38 ind	1 ind / 49 AON-AOT	N/A
Herring Gull	70 ind	40 ind / 42 AON-AOT	N/A
Common Gull	512 ind	83 ind / 217 AON-AOT	N/A
Black-headed Gull	20 ind	11 ind / 2 AOT	N/A
Arctic Tern	727 ind	161 ind /62 AON	-78 (ind)
Common Guillemot	2610 ind	5524 ind	+112
Razorbill	100 ind	101 ind	+1
Black Guillemot	349 ind	100 ind	N/A[3]
Atlantic Puffin	0 ind	48 ind	-

Source: Seabird Monitoring Programme On-line Database

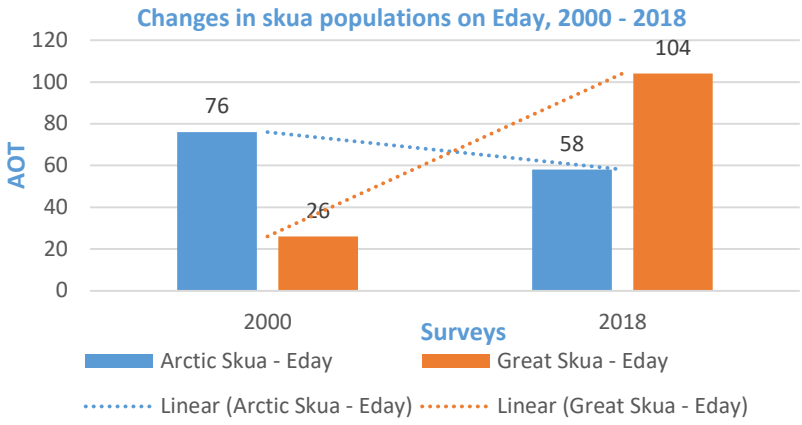
While clearly only representing a specific, small island, snap-shot sample, the declines in Eday's Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) and Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) populations at -59% and -81% respectively, are almost double the overall SUKB trends (-31% and -44%). Meanwhile the 78% decline in Arctic Tern numbers is not consistent with the positive overall SUKB increase. Trends in gull populations are harder to discern as it seems that a different emphasis in recording methodology was employed by the surveyors in Seabird 2000, with less emphasis on nest/territory recording. On auks, the positive trend for common Guillemots (*Uria aalge*) at +112% was very encouraging, although very few young or eggs were spotted on the nesting ledges.

Skua observations.

On Eday and the outliers that we were able to visit (Calf of Eday and Faray), our skua observations mirrored the SUKB trends, if not the scale of the reported national Arctic Skua decline. Arctic Skua numbers were down 24% from 76 to 58 Apparently Occupied Territories (AOT) while Great Skua numbers had increased by 300% from 26 to 104 AOTs. It was also apparent that where Great Skua colonies were most dense, Arctic Skua were least common, and generally located on the fringes of the bonxie colonies often in boggier, lower-lying wet terrain than that favoured by their larger cousins. Although no 'top down' intra-guild predation by Great Skua of Arctic Skua eggs or chicks was observed on Eday, the 'bottom-up' pressure of decreasing trends of some host/victim species' numbers (Kittiwake & terns) coupled with the burgeoning population of competing/predatory Great

[1] 2018 figures not yet checked
[2] Different emphasis in gull census unit methodology employed in Seabird 2000 & Seabirds Census
[3] Suboptimal timing period for 2018 counts

Skua does conform to the broad thrust of the 'combined bottom-up / top-down pressures' effect judged to have led to catastrophic Arctic Skua declines in Scotland - as detailed in a recent Journal of Animal Ecology paper (Perkins *et al*, 2018).



The catastrophic decline of the Arctic Skua populations in Scotland also raises the age-old conservationists' dilemma of whether to intervene or not. Perkins *et al* (2018) explore a range of 'direct intervention' conservation solutions, such as supplementary feeding of Arctic Skua and predator control i.e. Great Skua management at certain colonies with low host/victim numbers and high bonxie density. Such potential national level intervention considerations have of course to be seen in the context of the global picture where Scotland's Arctic Skua population represents only 1% of the world's widespread and abundant Arctic Skua numbers, while the Scottish Great Skua population represents 57% of world Great Skua numbers (Perkins *et al*, 2018). Finally, it is worth noting that globally, both species are categorised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as of 'Least Concern' (BirdLife International, 2018).

Dark phase Arctic Skua and Arctic Skua chick still with egg-tooth – Keith Cowieson

Non-native species

Meanwhile, ground-nesting seabirds (and all other ground-nesting species) benefit tremendously from the lack of mammalian predators on UK's northern and western islands. Indeed this is one of the reasons why these outlying islands are so vital for the internationally and nationally important populations of seabirds, waders and some ground-nesting birds-of-prey that they hold, and why major efforts are being made by national authorities and NGOs to clear islands of destructive, non-native species that have established themselves in the region – **Black** and **Brown Rats**, **American Mink**, **Hedgehogs** and most recently on Orkney, **Stoats** (SNH 2017a). So it was with a sense of dismay that we spotted a European Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) trundling along one of the roads on Eday, not far from both a small moorland Arctic Tern colony and a large mixed gullery. The Hedgehog is a non-native species in the Orkneys and has wrought significant damage to the internationally important populations of wading birds (and others) on the Hebridean islands of North & South Uist and Benbecula since their unfortunate introduction there in the mid-1970s (SNH 2017b). On reporting our sighting to the authorities, it was surprising to learn that there was no Hedgehog removal programme in place, unlike that in the Hebrides where significant efforts are underway to protect vulnerable ground-nesting species (SNH 2017b). The last thing some of our vulnerable ground-nesting seabird populations need is another pressure added to those already combining to depress populations – climate change-related factors, over and under-fishing and its effect on prey availability, off-shore wind farms, disturbance, land-use changes etc. It will be interesting to see what actions the authorities eventually contemplate, if any. For example, an extensive Stoat trapping programme has been rolled out on some Orkney Isles to counter that particular threat (SNH 2017a).

Some Lessons Identified

A spell of concentrated surveying effort always helps identify useful lessons for the next time round and for sharing 'top tips' with other contract and volunteer surveyors. Most of these 'lessons' are not new, but nevertheless bear repeating. The question of how best to survey terns, gulls and skuas, whether to walk transects or to view from suitable vantage points, is addressed in the 'Seabird monitoring handbook for Britain and Ireland' (Walsh *et al*, 1995) and was discussed in detail with Liz Humphries and Niall Burton as part of our pre-expedition planning considerations. Our experience leant heavily towards transect walking. Even on the relatively flat, gently undulating moorland of Eday, many skua territories would have been missed if we had not slogged to and fro across the peatlands. Much 'dead ground'[4] existed on the island, including significant areas of historical peat diggings, meaning that large tracts of suitable terrain and habitat could not be satisfactorily surveyed from SMP-defined vantage points. It was surprising how many hitherto hidden birds & territories were revealed during walked transects using what were essentially old-fashioned 'flush count' techniques (Bibby *et al,* 1992) over areas that appeared devoid of birds when scanning from vantage points.

One other good giveaway for locating Great Skua (and Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)) territories and nest sites were the vivid patches of well-manured, green plots in the otherwise uniform brown peat and heathland-dominated landscape. These invariably indicated historical breeding sites and lookout posts, well-fertilised by guano and the decomposing corpses of prey over the years, and sometimes with previous seasons' nest bowls clearly visible, close to the current nest.

Disturbance

Disturbance to nesting seabirds is a well-known hazard and one that surveyors must always strive to minimise. It was instructive therefore to note just how sensitive and vulnerable to disturbance a **Great Cormorant** (*Phlalacrocorax carbo)* colony on our patch was. This particular colony is on the Calf of Eday SPA, a little-visited site according to the local boatman. The usual landing point for the island is directly onto a convenient shelf of rock by a small geo, some 2-300 metres from the moorland edge-based colony. On the day of our visit, a sea-haar[5] was just lifting, limiting visibility to around 2-300 metres. It became apparent that as we approached the landing site by small boat, several of the closest cormorants were flying off their nests into the adjacent water below. This served as a timely reminder for us to 'box' around the colony once ashore, giving it a wide 150 metre berth before we started transect walking outbound and when returning later to re-embark. The colony itself was ringed by 3-4 pairs of nesting great black-backed gulls, ideal for 'convenience' foraging when the cormorant nests and young were left unattended, as the rather pathetic remains of indigestible cormorant flippers by the gull nesting areas reminded us. In our subsequent in-house debrief, the utility of using 'drones' for surveying such colonies of easily-disturbed seabirds was discussed, but they are not without their own issues and may increase the risks of disturbance in untrained hands (SNH, 2018b).

Seabird Nest Incorporation of Plastic

Dr Nina O'Hanlon of the **University of the Highlands and Islands** had requested that surveyors note any seabird nest incorporation of plastic during their work, in order that the proportion of nests affected could be ascertained. Although small amounts of plastic litter were apparent on Eday's beaches, only two nests were definitely identified with plastic incorporated, that of a Shag, on the western coast of the outlying island of Faray and an old Raven/crow's nest that a Fulmar had expropriated on the Calf of Eday. The Shag's nest was one of a small colony of 15.

Non-target bird species

Eday's appeal was not limited to seabirds either, there were good numbers of wetland birds and waterfowl such as Eider, Greylag Goose, Mallard, Red-throated Diver, Red-breasted Merganser, Shelduck, Teal & Tufted Duck; resident breeding raptors included Buzzard, Hen Harrier, Kestrel, Peregrine, Short-eared Owl & Sparrowhawk; waders abounded including Curlew, Dunlin, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Ringed Plover, Snipe & Whimbrel and passerines and doves included Blackbird, Collared Dove, Hooded Crow, sea cliff-nesting House Martin, Jackdaw, Linnet, Meadow & Rock Pipit, Mistle & Song Thrush, Raven, Reed Bunting, Rock Dove, Sand Martin, Skylark, Starling, Stonechat, Swallow, Twite, Woodpigeon and Wren. All in all a fantastic assemblage of birds for an island only 14 x 4 kms and 2,745 Ha in extent.

Overall, 103 SMP main island sites, 2 outlying island sites and 2 new main island sites were surveyed by RAFOS personnel on Eday and Stronsay i.e. 107 of Orkney's 1,200 seabird breeding sites. The sites ranged in character from 250ft vertical cliffs,

[4] An area of ground hidden from an observer due to undulations in the land.

[5] In meteorology, sea haar or sea fret is a cold sea fog. It occurs most often on the east coast of England or Scotland between April and September, when warm air passes over the cold North Sea.

through heather moorland and peat bog, to glorious stretches of sandy beaches. Personnel covered between 5-12 miles on foot, daily, often over demanding and unforgiving terrain and in all weathers. In addition, the teams completed 15 species lists for BTO's BirdTrack at the 10 Km square level. A total of 589 BirdTrack records were created in the survey area with 74 species recorded. Meanwhile, 1 x British Birds Rarities Committee, Rarity Submission was raised, many individual nest and colony nest record cards covering 25 species are in the process of being generated for the BTO Nest Record Scheme, 14 individual birds from 5 x species were ringed on Stronsay, 2 x Nest Incorporation of Plastic Monitoring Forms were generated, a non-native hedgehog sighting on Eday was forwarded to SNH and the Orkney Mammals Recorder and 3 x Pollinator Monitoring Scheme, Flower Insect Timed (FIT) count records were submitted to the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology FIT database – including that of a **Great Yellow Bumblebee** *(Bombus distinguendus),* one of Britain's rarest.

Finally, the RAFOS Chairman and Committee would like to express their sincere gratitude to **The Seabird Group** and to the **Royal Naval Birdwatching Society** for their generous grant and donation towards the costs of our 2018 expedition.

Roll on the Seabirds Count 2019 season…..

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Breeding season 2018

St. Kilda

Ciaran Hatsell, St. Kilda Seabird and Marine Ranger

I came into the role of Seabird and Marine Ranger on St. Kilda in 2018 as maternity cover for Gina Prior who has been in the role for several years – big shoes to fill! Luckily the weather in the critical period for seabirds was generally kind and most species had a reasonable year.

The occupancy in the **Leach's Storm Petrel** nest boxes continued to rise, with 22 out of 48 boxes showing some signs of inspection/use, including eight eggs laid and five chicks hatching. At the time of writing all five chicks are alive and kicking and we've got everything crossed they'll go on to fledge.

Northern Fulmars had a mixed year, with contrasting productivity values from the two monitored sites – at 0.53 and 0.14. The inland population rose from 25 to 39 Apparently Occupied Sites.

Unfortunately, for the first time since monitoring began, there were no nesting attempts in any of the seven **Black-legged Kittiwake** plots on Hirta. A small sub-plot on Dun appeared to fair reasonably well however, with several large chicks seen late in the season and a good number of juveniles in Village Bay. This species is now at crisis point, with the last all island count in 2016 revealing an 88.5% decline since the last count in 1999, with the population now down to just 448 breeding pairs.

Our **Arctic Skua** pairs were once again productive, fledging four chicks from the three pairs in An Lag. Another pair held territory at the top of the hill but no nest was found.

The number of Apparently Occupied Burrows in the **Manx Shearwater** population plot at Carn Mor remained stable, with only a minor change since the last count in 2015.

Atlantic Puffin productivity in the plot on Dun was high, at 0.82 chicks fledged per egg laid –the second highest productivity value in the history of monitoring on St Kilda and the highest value since 1977 (0.84). A team of Puffin researchers came on the island in May to census the population. The results will be released in due course. An attempt to further understand the diet of St. Kilda Puffins was made, with several visits to Carn Mor/Dun through the season to photograph birds carrying food. Again, the results of this will be released once the data is analysed.

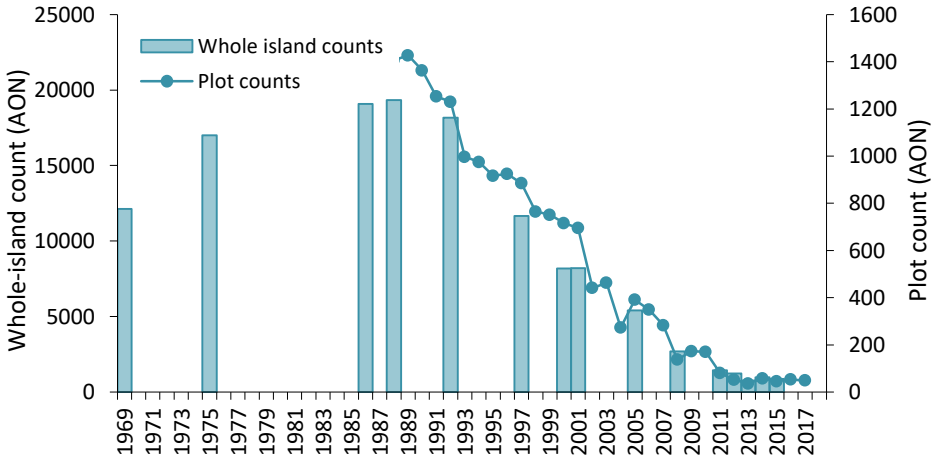
The triennial monitoring plots produced some interesting results. Fulmars showed a 2.2% increase, **Common Guillemot** a 0.48% decrease and **Razorbill** a staggering 50.5% increase on the previous count in 2014.

Fair Isle

David Parnaby, Fair Isle Bird Observatory

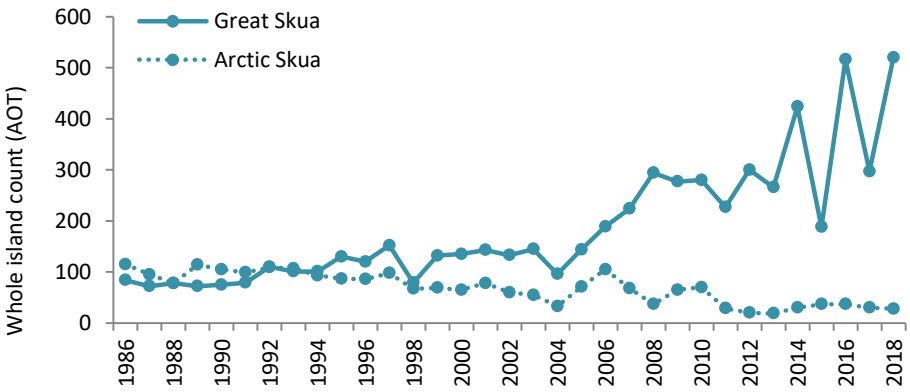
It seemed like a very slow start to the breeding season and, as ever, we were keeping an eye on the seabirds with an air of nervous trepidation. Thankfully our pessimistic thoughts were, by and large, unwarranted and it proved to be a reasonably successful season, certainly in comparison to some of the disastrous years we have endured since the turn of the century.

There were some negative points however, so let's get them over and done with first. **Black-legged Kittiwake** numbers in the monitoring plots dropped to their lowest ever, continuing the sad decline of this species, which was once so numerous on Fair Isle the islanders likened the clouds of birds coming off the cliffs ahead of an approaching plane to a 'snowstorm'.



Population change of Black-legged Kittiwakes on Fair Isle, 1969 – 2018: annual counts of apparently occupied nests (AON) across whole island (bars) and in plots (circles).

There were slight declines in the numbers of **Northern Fulmars**, **European Shags**, **Arctic Terns**, **Black Guillemots** and **Arctic Skuas** in the monitoring plots, with the latter falling to 28 apparently occupied territories (AOT), the lowest total since 2013. In terms of productivity, the only species to fledge fewer chicks per nesting attempt than 2017 was **Bonxie**, with numbers dropping by around a third to 0.35 chicks fledged per AOT, with intraspecific predation an issue for a number of nests, particularly later in the season. Given the very high number of breeding Bonxies though, this figure still represented 183 chicks fledged. The single most disappointing figure was that only a single Arctic Skua chick fledged, with most territories either failing to produce a breeding attempt, or failing at eggs stage. This was especially disappointing



Population change of Arctic Skuas (dashed line) and Bonxies (solid line) on Fair Isle, 1986–2018: annual whole-island counts of apparently occupied territories (AOT).

considering the amount of prey brought in by the species that Arctic Skuas kleptoparasitise. The **British Trust for Ornithology** continued their research this summer into the foraging and wintering areas used by Fair Isle's Arctic Skuas, so hopefully we will start to get some idea as to why they are struggling so badly.

On to happier news though and, starting with population figures, it was the best year ever for **Gannets** (4,291 AONs) and Bonxies (520 AOTs), whilst the **Razorbill** monitoring plot recorded the highest numbers since 2006.

The main good news came from the productivity studies however, where almost all species showed an increase on last season's poor figures. The most notable results included **Puffin** (0.90 chicks fledged per egg laid) and Razorbill (0.79 chicks fledged per egg laid), both the highest figures ever recorded in the monitoring plots. There were also pleasingly good seasons for Guillemot (0.58 chicks fledged per egg laid, the second best year in the last 12), Kittiwake (0.47 chicks fledged per AON, the third best year in the last 16), Arctic Tern (0.13 chicks fledged per nest, the fourth best year in the last 18) and Shag (0.9 chicks fledged per AON).

Feed-watches and food sample collection showed that many birds were feeding their young on sandeels of 6-8cm in length and young gadoids, a considerable improvement on the much smaller sandeels, rocklings and other small fry recorded in 2017. One notable result of this was the noticeably better condition that some birds were leaving the nest in, with Razorbill chicks fledging at more than double the weight recorded in 2017.

As well as the Arctic Skua work already mentioned, FIBO hosted **Professor Bob Furness** of the University of Glasgow who was collecting tags deployed on Razorbills and Guillemots in 2017 with a view to discovering their wintering areas, **Elizabeth Holmes** who collected over 700 Bonxie pellets as part of her dissertation looking at plastic in seabird diets, **Nina O'Hanlon** as part of her studies into plastic incorporation in Gannet nests and a meeting of the Fair Isle Marine Protected Area steering group, which will lead to a variety of further research projects in coming years.

Shetland (excluding Fair Isle)

Will Miles & Mick Mellor (SOTEAG), Jennifer Clark, Andy Denton & Mike Pennington (Scottish Natural Heritage), Lynne McKenzie (RSPB), Sheila Gear (Foula Ranger Service), Phil Harris & Roger Riddington (Shetland Ringing Group).

On the whole, population and productivity estimates remained stable or were higher than in 2017. Notable this year was high **Black-legged Kittiwake** productivity (the highest on record since 2005) and increases in **Common Guillemot** and **Razorbill** population numbers.

Northern Fulmar numbers at the four Mainland and Yell population monitoring plots remained stable (average change since 2017 = +1%) and there was little change in productivity at these plots (average of 0.40 chicks per mean June AOS count in 2018, 0.35 in 2017). At Noss and Hermaness, numbers had increased slightly (population change since 2017 = +6.1% and +9.5%, respectively) but productivity slightly decreased (0.47 compared with 0.51 in 2017 on Noss; 0.36 compared with 0.49 in 2017 at Hermaness). **Northern Gannet** productivity on Noss was 0.68 chicks fledged per AON (down from 0.73 in 2017), whereas at Hermaness it was 0.73 (up from 0.67 in 2017). **European Shag** numbers at Sumburgh Head and No Ness had decreased to 179 AON (221 in 2017), while on Noss numbers decreased to 85 AON (104 in 2017). The Shag breeding season was slightly delayed, probably by the easterly gales in March, and was protracted this year, with nests still active at Sumburgh in mid-September. Productivity on Noss was 1.85 chicks fledged per AON in 2018 (up from 1.1 in 2017), while at Burravoe it was 1.55 (up from 1.27 in 2017).

On Foula and Noss, **Arctic Skua** AOTs numbered 20 and 1, respectively (compared with 23 and 2 in 2017). Productivity on Foula was 0.10 chicks fledged per AOT (up from zero in 2017), while on Noss, remarkably, two chicks fledged and productivity was 2.0 (up from 1.5 in 2017). **Great Skua** productivity had increased at the monitoring plot on Foula, with

Kittiwake nests, adults and chicks, Sumburgh Head, July 2018 (Will Miles).

0.22 chicks fledged per AOT (0.04 in 2017). Similarly, productivity had risen at the monitoring plots at Hermaness and Noss, with it 0.44 chicks fledged per AOT at Hermaness (0.11 in 2017) and 0.16 at Noss (zero in 2017). Whole-colony population censuses of Great Skuas were carried out this year at Noss and Hermaness, with a total of 476 AOT counted on Noss (up from 465 in 2013) and 955 on Hermaness (down from 973 in 2013).

Kittiwake productivity at the monitoring plots on Mainland Shetland, Yell, Foula, Noss and Hermaness was considerably higher than in 2017 (mean productivity of 0.89 chicks fledged per apparently laying pair in 2018, range = 0.00-1.20, compared with mean productivity of 0.15 in 2017, range = 0.00-0.47). It was an excellent year for this species at all the monitored plots except for St Ninian's Isle, where the colony was suddenly abandoned in mid-July and productivity was zero (excluding St Ninian's Isle, mean productivity across the monitoring plots was 1.05, range = 0.76-1.20). **Arctic Tern** productivity was monitored on Noss and was comparatively high, at 0.84 chicks fledged per AON (0.06 in 2017).

Guillemot numbers had increased on Noss (+13.4%) and across 4 sites on Mainland and Yell (average +49.5%) but had decreased slightly at Hermaness (-4.2%). Guillemot productivity was 0.54 chicks fledged per laying pair at the Sumburgh Head plot (up from 0.42 in 2016) and 0.69 at Burravoe (zero in 2017). At the Sumburgh Head monitoring plot, chick diet was 11% sandeels, 80% gadids and 7% clupeids. **Razorbill** numbers at the four monitoring sites across Mainland and Yell had increased since 2017, on average by 71.6%. **Black Guillemot** numbers on Mousa increased slightly, from 101 pre-breeding adults counted in 2017 to 112 in 2018.

Canna

Bob Swann, Highland Ringing Group

This year marked the 50th consecutive year of seabird monitoring on Canna, surely one of the longest running monitoring programmes conducted by volunteers. A series of posters highlighting some of the key findings from our work was on display on the island all summer. Glorious weather on all visits assisted us with the normal monitoring work in our study areas, along with covering areas outwith our plots for the Seabirds Count census. In addition we managed to count the offshore islet of Hyskeir for the first time since 1999.

In 2018 the numbers of **Northern Fulmar**, **European Shag**, **Great Skua**, **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, **Herring Gull** and **Great Black-backed Gulls** all showed small declines, whilst **Black-legged Kittiwakes** suffered quite a large drop in the number of AONs. **Common Gull**, **Common Guillemot** and **Razorbill** all showed increases with the two auks having the highest recorded counts since the poor breeding seasons of the late 2000s.

Herring Gull and Kittiwake all had breeding productivity figures above their long term averages. Shag and Great Skua had figures just below average, whilst Fulmar and Great Black-backed Gull had well below average productivity.

The weights of adult Guillemot and large Guillemot chicks were not significantly different from the long term averages. Fish collected from adult Guillemots were dominated as usual by sprats (46%) and sandeels (35%).

A total of 417 fully grown seabirds and 1,578 seabird chicks were ringed with BTO metal rings and 1,224 fully grown birds were re-trapped in breeding colonies. 49 geolocators were retrieved and a further 67 deployed. Re-trapping of adult Guillemots resulted in 160 birds ringed as chicks being re-trapped in the colony for the first time. Recruitment rates from the 2009 and 2011-2013 cohorts continue to be above average and in the case of the 2011 and 2012 cohorts are at unprecedented levels.

On our final day on the island we held our golden anniversary party, which was attended by team member and their families, past and present, and most of the islanders. A grand time was had by all.

Isle of May

Mark Newell, Mike Harris, Sarah Burthe, Sophie Bennett, Carrie Gunn, Sarah Wanless and Francis Daunt, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Edinburgh

After a fairly cold but benign winter early spring blasted in with strong onshore winds when the '**Beast from the East**' hit in early March to be followed over the next month by its subsequent diminishing relatives. This resulted in over 2500 dead seabirds

washing up along the Scottish east coast although most were immature birds. The result of a month of rough sea conditions was a late breeding season for most species and a drop in the numbers making a breeding attempt.

The 2018 season proved a mixed year amongst the main study species. With **CEH** present on the island continually for 3 and a half months, the cliff-nesting seabirds are monitored on a daily basis identifying just when any failures occur and establishing the effects of any extreme weather. The Isle of May was hit by a westerly gale in early June but it had minimal effect on the breeding success of any of the study species, otherwise it was an extraordinarily calm season.

With the exception of **European Shag** the average or above average return rate for the other study species indicated that the seabird mortality during March and April largely affected immatures rather than the breeding population which were either still offshore or able to seek foraging in less turbid sea areas. However, it clearly affected condition as all species except **Northern Fulmar** commenced laying much later than average and significant numbers of individuals did not attempt to breed even though they returned to the colony. The numbers of pairs nesting in the plots showed a decrease from 2017 for all species and this was reflected in a decrease in the all isle counts carried out by Scottish Natural Heritage.

Breeding success

- **Common Guillemot** breeding success at **0.70** chicks per pair laying was average.
- **Razorbill** breeding success at **0.50** chicks per pair laying was one of the poorest on record.
- **Atlantic Puffin** breeding success at **0.67** chicks per pair laying was the lowest for 6 years
- **Black-legged Kittiwake** breeding success at **0.56** chicks per completed nest was slightly below average.
- **European Shag** breeding success at **1.52** chicks per incubating nest was well above the long-term average (1.15) for the **11th consecutive year**.
- **Northern Fulmar** breeding success at **0.49** chicks per incubating nest was above average.

Return rates

- **Common Guillemot** return rate at **89.1%** was average.
- **Razorbill** return rate at **92.3%** was above average.
- **Atlantic Puffin** return rate at **95.2%** was the highest on record.
- **Black-legged Kittiwake** return rate at **87.6%** was above average with only five higher years.
- **European Shag** return rate at **68.0%** was below average and the lowest since 2012.

The Isle of May's oldest Guillemot, ringed 32 years ago as an adult (Mark Newell).

Sandeels (*Ammodytes sp.*) remained the main food of young Puffins, Shags and Kittiwakes. The diet of Razorbills and Guillemots was dominated by clupeids.

For more information check out our website.

Twitter: @CEHseabirds @ShagMigration

St Abb's Head

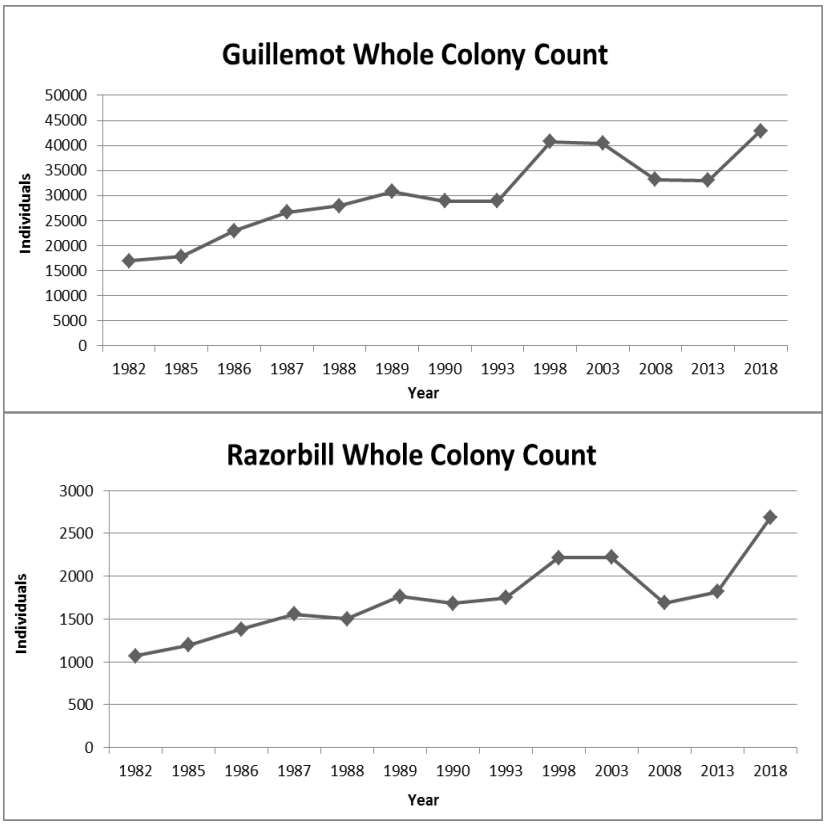
Liza Cole, Lizy Smith & Chris Haimes, National Trust for Scotland

Yet again it has been a mixed year for the seabird colony at St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve. **The Beast from the East** and its sequel caused havoc with our **European Shags** which were just gearing up for the start of the breeding season. Consequently we only recorded 95 Apparently Occupied Nests (AON) this year which was a decrease of 25% on last year, representing just 43% of the 34 year mean of 226 AON and the lowest count on record. However, those that did return had a successful breeding season with a mean productivity of 1.76 chicks fledged per active nest which represents 133% of the 29 year mean of 1.32.

Northern Fulmar numbers were down too, with just 77 Apparently Occupied Sites (AOS) recorded; a decrease of 19% on last year, representing just 35% of the 34 year mean of 223 AOS and the lowest count on record.

Black-legged Kittiwake numbers were also down, the whole colony count of 3,244 AON being 32% down on last year, representing just 34% of the 34 year mean of 9,403 AON and the second lowest count on record. However, breeding success was above average with a mean productivity of 0.83 chicks fledged per active nest which represents 125% of the 32 year mean of 0.66.

This year we only had one pair of **Northern Gannets** making a nesting attempt (compared to 3 last year), they laid an egg but it did not hatch. However, many birds continued to prospect the area and settle on the stack and perform courtship displays.



Herring Gull numbers were up 13% on last year with 211 AON recorded. This represents 65% of the 34 year mean 327 AON.

This year was a quinquennial whole colony count year for **Common Guillemots** and **Razorbills** so it was a relief to have very settled weather in June with few days of haar. These two species appear to be bucking the trend shown by other seabirds with this year's count of 42,905 Guillemots (individuals) being an increase of 30% on the 2013 count and the count of 2,683 Razorbills an increase of 45% on 2013. Both represent the highest counts on record (records go back to the 1950s). We do not monitor Razorbill breeding success but Guillemot productivity was 0.83 chicks "fledged" per active site, a 2% increase on last year. Two **Atlantic Puffins** were recorded on land in late June suggesting breeding occurred this year.

Staffa SSSI

Emily Wilkins, National Trust Scotland

Saturday 28th April – early morning **Black Guillemot** count. Sunrise coincided with slack tide, so several birds may have already been feeding further out; certainly they were all in the water already as we walked around. There was a pair of **Great Skua** sitting on high point near gull colonies. Around 100 **Atlantic Puffins** were in the water early evening on Friday 27th April and anecdotal evidence from boat operators suggests high numbers of Puffins this year but a full count was not achieved.

Wednesday 6th June – volunteers conducted a count of **European Shag** and **Northern Fulmar** nests during an evening boat trip event – counted from both land and boat.

Friday 22nd June – flush count of gulls completed. Finlay from the Iolaire mentioned he had seen a **Great Black-backed Gull** being drowned by a Great Skua a few days ago.

Monday 9th and Friday 27th July – **European Storm-petrel** counts by were made by playing call and listening for chick's response. The highest count recorded was 22.

Species	Count	1999	2010	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Fulmar	AON	281	148	-	79	123	129	96	-	57
Greater Black-Backed Gull	AON	6	2	-	-	-	2	0	-	1
Lesser Black-Backed Gull	IND	6	32	-	-	-	12	6 AON	-	10
Herring Gull	IND	60	50	-	-	-	26	8 AON	-	30
Shag	AON	9	25	-	-	-	12	17	-	16
Puffin	IND	328	268	230	250	-	260	~200	-	~250
Black Guillemot	IND	-	106	-	60	76	111	101	121	108
Great Skua	AOT	-	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
European Storm-petrel	AON	5	-	-	-	5	7	15	-	22

AON = apparently occupied nest sites, AOT=apparently occupied territories, IND=individuals, a dash indicates that a full count was not carried out for that particular species/year.

Skomer Island

Edward Stubbings, Birgitta Büche (The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales) & Matt J. Wood (University of Gloucestershire)

Northern Fulmar

Numbers have dropped to 578 AOS since the last whole island count in 2016 when there were 675 AOS. Productivity was 0.30 which is a drop on the 2017 figure (0.41) and the lowest value since 2009.

Manx Shearwater

A whole-island census was conducted in June on the islands of Skomer, Skokholm and Middleholm (the three islands in the Special Protection Area), an impressive survey effort by volunteers and wardens. Data are currently being analysed, and it will be interesting to see how the results compare with the last census in 2011. Middleholm was included for the first time since 1998. Thanks are due to **The Seabird Group**, **The National Trust** and **Natural Resources Wales** for funding, and the **Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales**, **University of Oxford** and **University of Gloucestershire** for support. Within the standard annual census plots, the number of responses was up on the previous year. The study plot on the isthmus showed poor hatching success and therefore a fairly low productivity of 0.46.

European Storm-petrel

Skomer's adult survival study at the Tom's House colony continued, with 47 bird encountered: 26 new birds and 21 recaptures, including one first ringed in the first year of the study in 2006.

Herring Gull

This year's whole island count was up by 23% on the previous year at 365 AON. As vegetation height was very low during the counting period more pairs may have been visible. Productivity was extremely low at 0.36

Lesser Black-backed Gull

The whole island population estimate is still in preparation. Productivity was low at 0.5 chicks per AON and many chicks were found dead in or around nests.

Great Black-backed Gull

120 AON were counted in 2018 which is exactly the same number as the previous year. Productivity was 1.92, the highest figure since 1996

Black-legged Kittiwake

A continuing decline leaves the number of nests around the island at 1,236, the second lowest figure since records began in 1960. Productivity was 0.66. This result is higher than the productivity reported in 2017 (0.33) and the average productivity for the last five years (0.57), but lower than historical records (0.69).

Common Guillemot

There was no whole island count in 2018. Productivity was 0.76 which is higher than last year's figure of 0.66.

Razorbill

7,529 individuals were counted in 2018. This represents an increase of 4% since the last whole island count in 2016.

Puffin A total of 30,895 individual Puffins were counted in April. This represents another large annual increase (+22%) and is once again the highest total since modern records began in 1988. Puffin productivity was 0.62 which is lower than in recent years.

More information will be available once the full **Skomer Seabird Report 2018** becomes available on our website.

This report includes data collected by Julie Riordan (The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales) and Bryony Baker (University of Gloucestershire), both supported by funding contributions from JNCC's Seabird Monitoring Programme.

Bardsey Island

Billy Dykes, Bardsey Bird Observatory

Northern Fulmar

14 AOS counted on the East Side, 30% decrease on 2017 and 26.7% below the ten-year average (19.10±s.d.5.55). During visits in August no fledglings were seen and very few adults were noted around the cliffs.

European Storm-petrel

Adults heard calling in the usual spots around Briw Gerrig, Seal Cave and Bae Felen in June and July. Two chicks were ringed from accessible burrows at Briw Gerrig.

Great Cormorant

14 AON were found on Ynys Gwylan Bach which is the highest since 2007, but 47.5% down on the combined 2009-2018 mean for both islands (26.67±s.d.20.01). Nine juveniles and 32 eggs were found. The productivity of 0.64 is 54.9% lower than the 2009-2018 mean (1.42±s.e.0.17).

European Shag

45 AON. Joint highest total since 2006 and 25% above the 2009-2018 mean (36.00±s.d.6.60). 94 young fledged. Productivity of 2.09 is 4.5% above the 2009-2018 mean (2.00±s.e.0.13). 46 AON were found on Ynys Gwylan Fawr and 20 AON on Ynys Gwylan Bach. The combined 66 AON is 28.3% increase on the 2009-2018 mean (51.44±s.d.16.11). 56 young were found on Ynys Gwylan Fawr and 29 on Ynys Gwylan Bach. Combined productivity of 1.23 is 30.1% below the ten-year mean (1.76±s.e.0.13).

Lesser Black-backed Gull

177 AON, a 7.9% increase on 2017 but 12.9% below the 2009-2018 mean (203.06±s.d.47.24). Minimum of 99 juveniles fledged (compared to 62 last year). Productivity of 0.56 is the highest since 2015 and 69.7% above the 2009-2018 mean (0.33±s.e.0.07).

Herring Gull

417 pairs, 10% above the ten year mean (379.00±s.d.31.22) and the highest since the population crash in 2007. Minimum of 321 juveniles. Productivity of 0.77 is 18.5% above the 2009-2018 mean (0.65±s.e.0.04). 165 pairs on the Gwylans, 43.5% above the 2009-2018 mean (115.00±s.d.39.73). 357 eggs counted but no juvenile productivity was calculated.

Great Black-backed Gull

Three pairs, 37.5% below the ten-year mean (4.80±s.d.1.69). Two young fledged. Productivity of 0.67 matches the 2009-2018 mean (0.67±s.e.0.18). 35 nest platforms with 17 juveniles and 73 eggs on Ynys Gwylan Fawr, 15 nest platforms on Ynys Gwylan Bach with ten juveniles and 13 eggs. The total number of pairs is a 6.1% decrease on the 2009-2018 mean (53.25±s.d.25.22). A combined productivity of 0.54 is 31.6% below the 2009-2018 mean (0.79±s.e.0.07).

Black-legged Kittiwake

90 AON, the lowest since 2013 and 26.7% below the 2009-2018 mean (122.80±s.d.45.78). 36 fledglings from 39 AON at the study plot gives a productivity of 0.92 - 73.6% above the ten-year mean (0.53±s.e.0.09). A minimum of 49 fledged along the full length of the East Side.

Common Guillemot

1112 AOL is 29.4% less than 2017 and 5.2% below the 2009-2018 mean (1173.44±s.d.196.59). 29 chicks in sample plot of 95 AOL at Bae Felen. Productivity of 0.22 is 24.1% below the 2009-2018 mean (0.29±s.e.0.02). However, many more 'fledge-size' chicks

(94 in total) were seen on ledges on 6/7 and 9/7 suggesting a more productive year than the study plot would indicate. No ledge counts on Ynys Gwylan Fawr. 59 AOL and six eggs were counted on the south west side of Ynys Gwylan Bach on 30 May.

Razorbill

1972 AOL, 13.2% above the 2017 population count but 14.3% below 2016. A minimum of 277 eggs/young counted along the East Side, which is a slight 0.4% increase on the ten-year mean (275.90±s.d.92.91). 29 AOL counted on Ynys Gwylan Fawr with two chicks and eight eggs. 15 AOL on Ynys Gwylan Bach with six eggs.

Tern breeding successes in South Cumbria

Sarah Dalrymple (Cumbria Wildlife Trust) and Calum Booth (RSPB)

RSPB Hodbarrow and **Cumbria Wildlife Trust**'s South Walney and Foulney Island nature reserves all host breeding populations of **Arctic**, **Little**, **Sandwich** and **Common Tern** species. Lying adjacent to each other, it is believed that terns will move freely between the sites when choosing nesting locations and an early failure at one site will see a late arrival of the same species at a neighbouring site.

2018 saw a phenomenal increase in nesting Sandwich Terns at RSPB Hodbarrow, 1,950 nesting pairs up from 550 in 2017, itself a record year when numbers over the past decade tended to be at around 80-100 pairs with some years sandwich tern failing to breed entirely. Additionally, 11 pairs little terns and 60 pairs common tern nested at the site. A single roseate tern was also seen visiting the site earlier on in the season.

Foulney Island, 15km to the south east of Hodbarrow, had a fairly typical year, with an increase in little tern numbers after 2017's record success. The maximum count of Little Tern scrapes was 46, along with 43 Arctic Tern nesters. From these, 13 Little and 7 Arctic Tern fledged, the site having been hit badly by both a storm in early June coinciding with Spring tides, and mammal and avian predation.

South Walney, 3km south west of Foulney Island, has not held regularly nesting terns since the 1980s. In the last five years, four years have seen nesting attempts by Little and Arctic Terns, usually following a failure at Foulney. This year, three Little Tern scrapes were located, and of these, four chicks were seen to fledge, the first time this species has done so at South Walney in 36 years.

As part of **the EU Life Little Tern project**, and with support from **Natural England**, colour ringing is taking place of all tern species that nest at the three sites to help better understand movement of species in this area. Additional protections and habitat works are to be put in place in time for next year's breeding season, supplementing existing protections, and Hodbarrow's optimistic **Roseate Tern** nest boxes.

Events

New Networks for Nature

Tim Birkhead, University of Sheffield

At this year's festival which runs from **15-17 November 2018**, we have four seabird talks (amidst a lot of other environmental treats):
1. Adam Nicolson (author of The Seabird's Cry) in conversation with myself. Adam recently won the Wainwright Prize for his seabird book, and in doing so will have done a lot for seabird conversation.
2. Euan Dunn (RSPB) talking about the UK's seabird monitoring.
3. Keith Clarkson (ex-manager of Bempton Seabird Centre) talking about widening access at Bempton.
4. Chris Wallbank, an artist that spent time on Skomer Island involved with the long-term guillemot study there and producing superb artwork for an exhibition called The Loomery Scrolls.
Bookings can be made via the website.

Website: **www.seabirdgroup.org.uk**

Facebook: **www.facebook.com/pages/TheSeabirdGroup/**

Twitter: **www.twitter.com/TheSeabirdGroup (@TheSeabirdGroup)**

Registered charity No. 260907

The Seabird Group promotes and helps co-ordinate the study and conservation of seabirds. Members also receive the journal *Seabird*. The Group organises regular conferences and provides small grants towards research.

CURRENT SEABIRD GROUP COMMITTEE

Current retirement dates (at AGM) are shown in brackets:

Chairman	Stephen Votier (2019)	S.C.Votier@exeter.ac.uk
Secretary	Holly Kirk (2020)	secretary@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Treasurer	Ian Cleasby (2022)	ian.cleasby@rspb.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Danni Thompson (2022)	membership@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Seabird Editor	Richard Sherley (2019)	journal@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Newsletter Editor	Katherine Booth Jones (2022)	newsletter@seabirdgroup.org.uk
Website Officer	Jeff Stratford (2016)	jeff.stratford@pms.ac.uk
Ordinary Members:		
Assistant Newsletter Editor	Vivienne Booth (2020)	Vivienne.Booth@rspb.org.uk
Early Career	Beth Clark (2019)	b.l.clark@exeter.ac.uk
Seabird Census	Stuart Murray (2022)	murraysurvey@yahoo.co.uk
Social Media	Saskia Wischnewski (2022)	saskia.wischnewski@rspb.org.uk
Assistant Membership Secretary	Zoe Deakin (2022)	DeakinZ@cardiff.ac.uk

Current membership rates	
Standing Order	£20
Concession	£15
Institution	£35
International:	£21
Life	£300

The Newsletter is published three times a year. The Editor welcomes articles from both members and non-members on issues relating to seabird research and conservation. We aim to provide a forum for readers' views so that those provided in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor or Seabird Group.

Submissions for the newsletter should be emailed to the newsletter editor: newsletter@seabirdgroup.org.uk. We recommend a maximum of 1500 words and ask that photographs and figures are sent as separate files and with full credits, where appropriate. **Deadlines are: 15th January (February edition); 15th May (June edition); and, 15th September (October edition).** Every effort is made to check the content of the material that we publish. It is not, however, always possible to check thoroughly every piece of information back to its original source as well as keeping news timely. If you have any concerns about any of the information or contacts provided, please contact the Newsletter Editor.