

FORTH ISLAND SEABIRD COUNTS 1968

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1968 is the tenth year of our island bird counts. It is interesting to compare the 1959 with the 1968 figures for some of the species counted. Cormorants have steadily increased and have multiplied five-fold from 44 to 240 nests. Kittiwakes have colonised two new islands and the numbers have jumped from just over 400 to 1,100 pairs.

On the Farne Islands disaster struck the Shags in May of this year, many birds dying and others leaving their nest-sites after eating fish poisoned by an alga. Fortunately the Forth birds were not affected. The Lamb population went up by 15 per cent to 159 nests from 1967; there were 35 in 1959.

Sandwich Tern numbers seem to be on an upward trend again with 405 nests (300 in 1967) all on Inchmickery. The Fidra Terns are all but gone with only a dozen or so Common Terns weaving rather forlornly overhead - and two broken eggshells on the ground. The Eider and Oystercatcher too, and even the Herring Gulls, are having a very thin time there. The presence of rats could have just this effect but the Pest Control Officer could find no trace of these animals on the island. Whatever the cause, Fidra's glory as a bird island has been sadly dimmed.

The most exciting seabird news of 1968 was undoubtedly the return to the Bass of the Black-browed Albatross. Other titbits of our island year were the 3 Manx Shearwaters which crossed our bows as we returned from Inchkeith. More unusual perhaps was the Drake Tufted which flew, with a long line of Guillemots, past Craigleith. Non-seabird records of interest are the empty Carrion Crow's nests on Inchkeith and Craigleith; the three Reed Bunting territories, with adults carrying food, noted on Inchkeith and the reports of a Corncrake (on the latter island) which spent at least the whole of June there.

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	Inch- mickery	Inchkeith	Fidra	Lamb	Craigleith
Fulmar		uncounted	28	1	40
Cormorant				240	
Shag				159	80
Great Black Back					1
Kittiwake		163	83	153	700
Sandwich Tern	405				
Razorbill (sea)		1 b			35 b
Razorbill (land)				10	25
Guillemot (sea)		17 b			500 b
Guillemot (land)				90	900 b
Puffin		43 b	15 b		400 b

In the above the Fulmar figures are 'sites', those followed by an 'b' are birds, all others are pairs or nests.

Please note that the numbers in this table may not agree with those in the main Forth Seabird Group tables. In some years some islands were counted more than once. When this happened the Forth Seabird Group figures reflect the main count.